

Socialist solidarity in the German-German reality

Influences of East German dissidents on the West German radical left milieu in
the 1970s



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Rudolf Bahro (left) and Wolf Biermann (right)

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Abstract

This research sets out to examine the influence of the East German Marxist dissidents Wolf Biermann and Rudolf Bahro on the radical left milieu in West Germany in the late 1970s. In doing so, it aims to fill the historiographical lacuna of reciprocal influences between political activists on both sides of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. A more integrated history of East and West Europe has implications for contemporary debates on a common European heritage, and on the problems faced with European integration. Deploying the methodology of critical discourse analysis, within the theoretical framework of transfer history, leads to the a source selection that consists of the cultural media output of the radical left in West Germany, such as magazines, leaflets, journals, newspapers, published books, letters, and songs.

After a reasoned context overview of the rather elusive radical left milieu in West Germany in the 1970s, the influence of two particular East German dissidents is examined: Wolf Biermann and Rudolf Bahro. Biermann and Bahro were both active in the scenes in which the radical left in West Germany organised themselves: the music and youth festival scene, and the literature and intelligentsia scene respectively. Biermann came to the Federal Republic after his (in)famous expatriation from the German Democratic Republic in 1976. His songs critical of the GDR authorities were unacceptable to the SED. Bahro arrived two years later, when he was released from an East German prison as part of an amnesty, and was threatened with longer prison sentences if he did not leave the country. Bahro had been in prison because he had written a theoretical book which criticised the ‘actually existing socialism’ in eastern European states.

Both men’s arrival did not go unnoticed in the FRG, and especially not in the splintered and isolated radical left milieu. Critical examination of the sources, reveals that Biermann and Bahro had a legitimising, unifying, and pragmatizing effect on the radical left milieu in West Germany. Eventually, with the help of these legitimising, unifying and pragmatizing dynamics, the radical left started to organise themselves along other lines than ‘Marxism-socialism’, and even establish a political party that would participate in the political system of the FRG. This research proves that the iron curtain was not always as impenetrable as suggested by historians, and it challenges the often made assumptions that the West only influenced the East.

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Abbreviations

APO	Außerparlamentarische Opposition
AStA	Allgemeiner Studentenausschuss
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union (Deutschlands)
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union
DKP	Deutsche Kommunistische Partei
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
FRG	Federal Republic Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
KgU	Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
KU	Kritische Universität
ML	Marxism/Leninism
PCE	Partido Comunista de España
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
PID	Politisch-ideologisch Diversion
RAF	Rote Armee Fraktion
SA	Sturmabteilung
SB	Sozialistisches Büro
SDS	Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
UZ	Unsere Zeit
VOS	Vereinigung Opfer des Stalinismus
VPO	Vereinigung Politischer Ostflüchtlinge

Prologue

December 2015 on a cold winter day, I sat in the *Mensa* of the University of Leipzig. While eating my lunch in between the lectures for that day, my thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a student with a megaphone, shouting: ‘Anti-Legida demonstration tonight at 6pm! We meet at the *Moritzbastei*. Be there!’. I noticed myself taken by surprise. This kind of political engagement I did not see happening soon in the library canteen of the university in Utrecht. It reminded me of stories my father used to tell me about his hippie times at the PSP (*Pacifist Socialist Party – socialist political party in the Netherlands from 1957-1991*). During the stay of my exchange in Leipzig I encountered many more similar situations. I found it fascinating to notice how politically engaged the students there were. And how leftist they were – which formed a peculiar mix with the extreme rightist Legida adherents in the city. This experience fuelled my interest in (East-) German history and its protest culture. What was the historical context in which I should view these so publicly politically engaged students? Additionally, I have always had a fascination for dissidents: people going against the mainstream, doing something different from what their environment has taught them to be the truth. Inspiration in that sense might have come from my parents as well, both breaking away from (religious) traditions of their families. In deciding a topic of my thesis, I had a lot of difficulty choosing something from my far-ranging myriad interests in history. In hindsight it seems, however, that this topic of German radical left protest movements and dissidents was in fact always there in my mind, and was probably without me realising it, the inevitable topic of my thesis all along.

Utrecht, August 2018.

Introduction

Rudi Dutschke – who gained an almost mythical status in historiography as the unofficial leader of the West German student movement in the late 1960s – wrote his doctoral thesis in 1974 about Lenin and Russia.¹ He had chosen to study Russian social relationships and modes of production. According to his wife, Gretchen Dutschke-Klotz, he chose this topic because:

Was in Osteuropa geschehen war, betraf Rudi persönlich, einmal, weil er sich selbst als Revolutionär verstand, und dann auch, weil er selbst aus Osteuropa kam. Deswegen mußte dieses Geschehen den richtigen Platz in der Geschichte zugeordnet bekommen – nicht als leuchtendes Vorbild für alle gegenwärtigen und kommenden Revolutionen, sondern als zerschlagene Hoffnung, die trotz alledem gerettet werden mußte (er war insoweit ein guter Schüler Blochs, den er gut kannte), vielleicht unter anderen, westeuropäischen Bedingungen.²

This excerpt captures some of the most important aspects of the radical left milieu in the 1970s. The two reasons Gretchen mentions as to why Rudi took an interest in eastern Europe, were (1) because he saw himself as a revolutionary and (2) because he grew up in eastern Europe himself. In parenthesis she mentions that Rudi knew the scholar Ernst Bloch very well. She then continues with the argument that the worn out hope of the Russian 1917 revolution should be rescued, albeit ‘perhaps under different, western European circumstances’. What this excerpt thus reveals, is that eastern Europe was important for the radical left in West Germany; that many amongst the radical left grew up on the other side of the iron curtain, indeed, in the German Democratic Republic (GDR); that there were personal bonds and contacts between dissident Marxist East German intellectuals and West German radical leftists; and finally, that there was still a perceived hope to be retrieved for a socialist revolution in the West. The close ties between East and West of the iron curtain, moreover, between East and West of the Berlin Wall, are difficult to ignore. Therefore, it is surprising that the nature of the relationship between the West German radical left milieu in the 1970s and the East German Marxist dissidents has never been studied. The radical left political activists of the Federal Republic have been comprehensively studied in relation to other West European radical left movements, but an account of their relationship with their German neighbours is conspicuously absent until today. Therefore, the main question of this research is: *how did the East German political dissidents Wolf Biermann and Rudolf Bahro influence the West German radical left movement of the late 1970s?*

Historical research about the global events of the protest movements ‘of 1968’ has been blossoming in historiography for quite some time. Most of this scholarship focuses on the particularities and course of events in the year 1968, or its immediate aftermath. Not without reason of course, key events such as Prague Spring and French May took place that year. Everywhere across the globe young people,

¹ R. Dutschke, *Versuch, Lenin auf die Füße zu stellen. Über den halbasiatischen und den westeuropäischen Weg zum Sozialismus. Lenin, Lukács und die Dritte Internationale* (Berlin 1974).

² U. Wolter (ed.), *Rudi Dutschke. Aufrecht gehen. Eine fragmentarische Autobiografie* (Berlin 1981), p.22.

students, artists and intellectuals stepped into the breach to preach more democratic, less-authoritarian, more egalitarian times. Anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism and internationalism found resonance amongst many protest movements across Europe and in the United States. Students from Western Europe blamed capitalism for the decrying alienation and lack of democratic participation in their countries. As Tariq Ali, a prime mover of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign – the single most important British protest movement of 1968, pointed out ‘what unites us, those from capitalist societies, is our feeling that capitalism is inhumane and unjust and that we are all in favour of its overthrow’.³ Likewise, in eastern Europe, student representatives voiced strong critique on the bureaucracy, party oligarchy, and lack of freedom in Socialist societies. It was felt that what their societies needed was a turn to true socialism; socialism with a human face. As Jan Kavan, one the student leaders of the Prague Spring, explained: ‘the current situation in Czechoslovakia gives us hope that this may be the first country where a system of socialist democracy could be created’.⁴ For the participants of these protest movements, their global and transnational character was one of the most significant characteristics.

Unjustly, however, the 1970s, in which the implications and incentives of the revolutionary moments of ’68 started to consolidate in many states, have remained a historiographic no-man’s land.⁵ To write of the vibrancy and vitality of protests in the 1970s stands at odds with popular understanding of protest movements in the Sixties. The celebrated, tumultuous protests in the 1960s cast a shadow over the decade that followed. However, as Gerard DeGroot states in his kaleidoscopic history of the Seventies, contrary to much of the popular conceptions ‘much of the progress commonly associated with the Sixties actually occurred in the Seventies’.⁶ It was in the Seventies that mass-media gained a secure and important place in the daily life of individuals, the consumer society developed further in youth cultures of the West, family structures changed, as well as new ideas about sexuality and marital relationships, and innovative ideas about education and parenting gained momentum.⁷ Simultaneously, radical grassroots politics blossomed in Western Europe and America the 1970s, such as the second wave feminism, support groups for gay rights and the Afro American black liberation movement.⁸ In Western European historiography the appearance of ‘single issue movements’ and of ‘New Social Movements’, of which some entered the central political arena, either as a political party, or as an

³ Tariq Ali, cited in: M. Klimke and J. Scharloth (eds.), *1968 in Europe. A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977* (New York 2008), p. 1.

⁴ Jan Kavan, cited in Klimke and Scharloth (eds.), *1968 in Europe*, p.1.

⁵ Jacco Pekelder also states this in his ‘Towards another concept of the state: historiography of the 1970s in the USA and Western Europe’, in: C. Baumann, S. Gehrig, and N. Büchse, *Linksalternative Milieus und Neue Soziale Bewegungen in den 1970er Jahren*, Volume 5, (Heidelberg 2011), pp.61-83, p. 62. His article is an overview of the American and West European historiography of the 1970s, to counter the disbalance in comparison to historiographic overviews of the 1960s and 1980s.

⁶ G. DeGroot, *The Seventies Unplugged. A Kaleidoscopic History of a Violent Decade* (Basingstoke and Oxford, 2010), p. xi.

⁷ Sven Reichardt and Detlef Siegfried (eds.), *Das alternative Milieu. Anitbürgerliche Lebensstil und Linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa* (Göttingen 2010) p.15.

⁸ E.g.: Joshua Zeitz, ‘Rejecting the Centre: Radical Grassroots Politics in the 1970s – second wave feminism a case study’, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 43:4 (2008).

influential group within an established party, strikes many historians as typical for the decade.⁹ Additionally, and significantly, the 1970s have also been depicted as the decade of radical left wing terrorism in West European historiography. An important German monograph consequently framed the period between 1967 and 1977 as the 'Red Decade'.¹⁰ Hence, the demarcation of the Seventies in scholarship as the first act of the conservative turn in the Eighties is in need of reconsideration. Rather, this research sees the Seventies as the second act of the protest movements of the Sixties.

Moreover, the specifically European dimension of the protest movements during the Cold War have been analysed marginally from an integrative perspective.¹¹ This is especially surprising, since at this time Europe was the place where the geopolitical fault-line between East and West was most visible, with the Berlin wall as its most obvious visual embodiment. Therefore, Europe offers a variety of national experiences, from Communism in the Warsaw Pact states to the liberal democratic nations in the Western Alliance, at close geographical proximity for a more thorough examination of cultures of domestic dissent transcending borders.

For many of the protest movements, the Cold War was the context that defined their grievances. Anti-nuclear war protests, peace movements, anti- Vietnam War protests, the support of anti-imperial liberation wars in post-colonial states are a few examples that illuminate this. Therefore, this research is also embedded in Cold War historiography. The Cold War did not only set the temporal framework, but the two clashing ideologies and the contentions between East and West provide essential context for this thesis. Since the turn of the 20th century, historiography started to approach the history of the Cold War in a different way. The opening up of archives in many former Warsaw Pact countries promised a more balanced historical scholarship, focusing not only on the Western perspective of the Cold War or the power game between the two superpowers. The prefix 'multi' was central to the new way to approach the Cold War: using multi-archival primary sources and asking questions with a multi-polar and multi-national focus. Within Cold War historiography this led to illuminating new research, with studies which also examined interactions between the communist and capitalist world. For example in the field of cultural history, the collection *Music, Art and Diplomacy. East-West Cultural interactions and the Cold War*, edited by Simo Mikkonen and Pekka Suutari, examined how culture was exchanged between East and West, through a continuous circulation of cultural producers and products, in contrast to the orthodox understanding of two divided antithetical blocs. In a similar vein, the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD), published the collection *Divided Dreamworlds? The cultural Cold War in East and West*, contributing to Cold War historiography the idea of culture as 'universal ambassador',

⁹ J. Pekelder, 'Towards another concept of the state: historiography of the 1970s in the USA and Western Europe', p.67.

¹⁰ G. Koenen, *Das rote Jahrzehnt – Unsere kleine deutsche Kulturrevolution 1967-1977* (Cologne 2001).

¹¹ See also: Klimke and Scharloth, *1968 in Europe*, p. 2.

blurring the ideological boundaries by crossing the East-West divide in Europe.¹² In addition, within the field of the Cold War history of International Relations, for example research carried out by Laurien Crump, on the Warsaw Pact and the pan-European Conference for Security and Cooperation, and works of Jacco Pekelder and Beatrice de Graaf about relationships between the Netherlands and the GDR are crossing the divide of the ideological camps in their subject of analysis.¹³

Nonetheless, the histories of protest movements and youth culture during the Cold War, remained predominantly stuck in the dichotomy between East and West. This is perhaps even more curious, since the radical left protesters in the West, and the political reformist activists in the East all had a so-called ‘third-way thinking’ in common: against the capitalist West, but looking for an alternative socialism than that of the East. First of all, some notable exceptions to what is stated above will be outlined, as they provided the inspiration from which this research sets forth. These are the article written by Paulina Bren, on how echoes of student 1968 protests events in the West were interpreted in the East and what concrete effects these had on the Prague Spring debates; the article by Timothy Brown, on the reciprocal influences of the *Kommune 1* and *K1-Ost* during the late 1960s; and the study of Eva Maleck-Lewy and Bernhard Maleck on the comparison between the women’s movement in East and West Germany.¹⁴ Last but not least, in 2007 a collection in German language appeared, named *Wechselwirkungen Ost-West. Dissidenz, Opposition, und Zivilgesellschaft 1975-1989*. This collection is concerned with the reciprocal influences of intellectuals in the East-West European relations, and sets out to do so by examining the intellectual discourse in different West European states on the dissidence of East European states. Ultimately, this collection contributes to what is the question of East European dissidents’ legacy and what it is today in a unified and democratic Europe.

Leaving aside these exceptions, the more cited, English-language,¹⁵ voluminous, transnational monographs and collections on protest cultures in the Cold War were studied within the western and eastern alliances. For example, excellent transnational research on protest movements has been done by Holger Nehring, into how the protesters in Britain and West Germany came to develop very different ideas on ‘security’ than their governments in the early Cold War. The edited collection by Benjamin Ziemann on peace movements in Western Europe, Japan and the USA during the Cold War, is another

¹² S. Mikkonen and P. Suutari (eds.), *Music, Art and Diplomacy: East- West Cultural interactions and the Cold War* (Farnham 2016); P. Romijn, G. Scott-Smith, and J. Segal, *Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Amsterdam 2012).

¹³ Laurien Crump, ‘Nederland en het Warschaupact’ in: Pekelder, Raben and Segers (eds.) *De Wereld Volgens Nederland* (Amsterdam 2010), pp. 107-127, pp. 109-110 and J. Pekelder, *Nederland en de DDR. Beeldvorming en betrekkingen 1949-1989* (Amsterdam 1998) and B. De Graaf, *Over de muur: de DDR, de Nederlandse kerken, en de vredesbeweging* (Amsterdam 2004).

¹⁴ Brown, ‘1968 East and West: Divided Germany as a Case Study in Transnational History’, *AHR Forum* (February 2009), pp.69-96, and P. Bren, ‘1968 East and West. Visions of political change and student protests from across the iron curtain’, in: G.R. Horn and P. Kenney (eds.) *Transnational moments of change: 1945, 1968, 1989* (Online 2004), chapter 7. Maleck-Lewy and Maleck, ‘The Women’s Movement in East and West Germany’, in: C. Fink, P. Gassert, and D. Junker (eds.), *1968: The World Transformed*, pp.373-396.

¹⁵ To be sure, with ‘English-language’ I do not mean that they are of better quality, I merely mean that they are accessible for a much broader readership basis to read.

engaging example of a compilation of studies that deal with the transnationality of the peace movements within the capitalist camp of the Cold War. Another much cited example is the collection that appeared in 2006, edited by Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, this volume is very valuable for the insights different contributors offer to the study of the transnationality of youth culture in European societies from 1969 until 1980. Yet, all these studies researched transnationality within the confines of the ideological camps of the Cold War.¹⁶

However, as Europe, and more particularly Germany shows, this separation is not always tenable. On grassroots level, activists on both sides of the iron curtain did indeed find resonance in each other's grievances. Solidarity with each other's cause was everything but exceptional for youth protesters in East and West Europe. Fundamentally, protests in the East and West were understood as part of the same phenomenon. As Frank Havemann, the son of the famous East German physicist and dissident Marxist Robert Havemann, and a member of the East German *KI-Ost* commune, pointed out: 'for us, the Paris May and the Prague Spring were two sides of the same coin – the necessary prerequisite for the end of the [Cold War] bloc confrontation'¹⁷. Ultimately, nowhere was the cross-national exchange between East and West dissidents more profound than in the two states that owed their entire existence to the Cold War division of post-war Europe; the Federal Republic Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic. Therefore, this research focusses on the exchanges between activists in these two states.

The connections between East and West Germany's radical left milieu, and in particular, their political activists, have rarely been studied. The only exceptions is the aforementioned work Timothy Brown and Maleck-Lewy and Maleck. Brown's work defines the relationship between the East and West German counterculture as one in which the West influenced the protest in the East, and not the other way around, and Maleck-Lewy and Maleck make a comparison between East and West German women's activists. In fact, more generally speaking, I want to argue in line with Paulina Bren, that most Cold War scholarship on protest movements has a bias towards portraying the cultural and student protests in the East as lagging behind to the ones in the West. Examining how intellectuals and artists of the East shaped ideas of the protest movement in the West can alter this bias in fundamental ways. Not only does it offer the valuable insight that the iron curtain, or Berlin Wall if you will, seems to have been less impenetrable than imagined and that the difficulties of finding a common political language between East and West existed prior to 1989, it also undermines the idea that the East was lagging

¹⁶ The examples mentioned here, and a few more: A. Schildt and D. Siegfried (eds.), *Between Marx and Coca Cola. Youth cultures in changing European societies, 1969-1980* (New York and Oxford 2006); H. Nehring, *Politics of Security. British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War, 1945-1970* (Oxford 2013); T.S. Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties. The anti-Authoritarian Revolt* (2013); B. Ziemann (ed.), *Peace Movements in Western Europe, Japan and the USA during the Cold War* (Essen, 2007); Thomas R. Rochon, *Mobilizing for Peace, the anti-nuclear movements in Western Europe* (2014); Poigner, Uta, G., *Jazz, Rock and Rebels. Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 2000); and most of the contributions in: C. Fink, P. Gassert, and D. Junker (eds.), *1968: The World Transformed* (Cambridge 1998).

¹⁷ F. Havemann, cited in T. Brown, "'1968" East and West: Divided Germany as a case study in transnational history', p.90.

behind to the West.¹⁸ The experiences of the East German activists who already lived in a real socialist world were of important value to the formation of ideas for the West German radical left.

Finally, to be sure, there are many publications on the radical left alternative movement in the FRG in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Examples of contemporary writing about the alternative milieu are for example Wolfgang Kraushaar's *Autonomie oder Ghetto? Kontroversen über die Alternativbewegung*, in which Kraushaar describes how the alternative movement developed out of the disintegration of the extra-parliamentary opposition in the late 1960s; Joseph Hubner's *Wer soll alles ändern? Die Alternativen der Alternativbewegung*; and the volume edited by Dieter Hoffmann-Axthelm, *Zwei Kulturen? Tunix, Mescalero und die Folgen*.¹⁹ Also in the last decade, studies appeared about the historical development and characteristics of the alternative milieu in the late 1970s and early 1980s, such as the collections *Das alternative Milieu. Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa 1968-1983*, edited by Sven Reichardt and Dieter Rucht; and *Linksalternative Milieus und Neue Soziale Bewegungen in den 1970er Jahren*, edited by Cordia Baumann, Sebastian Gehring, and Nicholas Büchse. Sven Reichardt also wrote an engaging and detailed monograph about the milieu, named *Authenzität und Gemeinschaft. Linksalternatives Leben in den siebziger und frühen achtziger Jahren*. A good English-language overview of the West German counterculture from the late 1960s until the early 1980s is Sabine von Dirke's, *All power to the imagination! The West German counterculture from the student movement to the Greens*.²⁰ Even though all these volumes give an extraordinary insight in the alternative milieu of the FRG, none of them describes the relationship of this milieu with the East German dissidents. This dissertation sets out to fill this gap. Before the theoretical framework and methodology of this research are outlined, first the histories of radical left activism in the FRG and of communist dissidence in the GDR are shortly introduced.

Radical left activism in the FRG: a context

Activism in West German society and the separation of the 'two cultures' has its origin in the development of the left-wing protest culture of the Sixties. In 1949, the FRG was founded as a merger between the French, British, and American occupation zones. Konrad Adenauer was the man who led the country during the reconstruction period from 1949 until 1963. West Germany became closely

¹⁸ P. Bren, '1968 East and West. Visions of political change and student protests from across the iron curtain', chapter 7.

¹⁹ W. Kraushaar, *Autonomie oder Ghetto? Kontroversen über die Alternativbewegung* (Frankfurt a.M. 1978); J. Hubner, *Wer soll alles ändern? Die Alternativen der Alternativbewegung* (Berlin 1980); and D. Hoffmann-Axthelm (ed.), *Zwei Kulturen? Tunix, Mescalero und die Folgen* (Berlin 1978).

²⁰ S. Reichardt and D. Siedgfried (eds.) *Das alternative Milieu. Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa 1968-1983* (Göttingen 2010); C. Baumann, S. Gehring and N. Büchse (eds.) *Linksalternative Milieus und Neue Soziale Bewegungen in den 1970er Jahren*, Volume 5 (Heidelberg 2011); S. Reichardt, *Authenzität und Gemeinschaft. Linksalternatives Leben in den siebziger und frühen achtziger Jahren* (Berlin 2014); S. Von Dirke, *All Power to the imagination! The West German counterculture from the student movement to the Greens* (Lincoln and London 1997).

anchored in the Western Alliance; a liberal parliamentary democracy was established, as well as a federal state system and a capitalist 'social market economy'. Amongst the West German population, the questionable past of some of the members of the political and administrative elite, the ban of the communist party in 1956, and the 'Spiegel scandal' of 1962 – in which journalists of *Der Spiegel* were unlawfully arrested abroad at the initiative of Defence Minister Franz-Josef Strauss – provoked a fear of the decay of democracy. This mood's apogee was reached during the discussions of the so-called emergency laws in the mid 1960s, which would drastically expand the powers of the executive branch at the expense of constitutional rights in the event of a state of emergency.²¹

The Socialist German Student Union (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, SDS) was amongst the most fervent groups to criticise the West German state. The SDS emerged in the '60s as the main representative power of the New Left in West Germany. As many European New Left movements of that time, its cognitive orientation was one of theoretical Marxism and the theories of American sociologist C. Wright Mills, which preserved a special role for students and intellectual elites – rather than workers – as catalysts for social change. The SDS transformed into a nationwide student revolt after the killing of Benno Ohnesorg by the West German police officer Karl-Heinz Kurras on 2 June 1967, during a demonstration against the visit of Reza Pelewi, the shah of Persia. Until then, the student revolt had been centred around Frankfurt and Berlin.²² The SDS was forging alliances with the Easter March campaign, a movement for peace and nuclear disarmament supported by the West German trade Unions, as well as with pacifists, liberals, trade unions, and socialist students. Due to the diversity of this alliance, common goals were limited. Opposition against the government plan to install emergency laws, democratisation of universities, and opposition to the Vietnam war were amongst the most important goals that united the SDS. With actions all over the country, the SDS took the leading role in the extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany. After 1968, the SDS slowly began to disintegrate as a national organisation, even though it kept growing on the local level.

The conceptual vacuum that the dissolution of the SDS in 1970 left behind, paved the way for various social and political groups. In 1969-1970, various sub-groups with different ideological outlooks emerged and several countercultures had begun to spread and diversify itself through the country.²³ It was out of some of these subcultural scenes that the self-described groups of 'armed struggle' which dedicated themselves to terrorism, such as the Movement June 2 (*Bewegung 2. June*) and the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*, RAF) emerged. It is these terrorist groups that dominate the historiography of West German protest in the 1970s. Far less researched, however, are the (some sympathising) radical left groups of the 70s that did not dedicate themselves to terrorist means. Counter to what the scholars' focus on groups that legitimised violence as a means of protest suggests, the West

²¹ M. Klimke, 'West Germany', in: Klimke and Scharloth (eds.) *1968 in Europe*, pp.97-110, p.97.

²² Klimke, 'West Germany', pp. 97 and 100.

²³ Klimke, 'West Germany', pp. 99.

German counterculture grew over the years into a significant political force. For example, this is seen through the success of the ecology movement and the first national alternative newspaper, *die Tageszeitung*.²⁴ Amongst the groups that emerged were for example the women's movement, the citizens' initiatives (*Bürgerinitiativen*),²⁵ the *Sponti*, and the ecology movement. Although these groups considered themselves to be socialist, they are not to be confused with the *Deutsche Kommunistische Partei* (DKP, 'German Communist Party'). This was the more dogmatic communist party of West Germany, who throughout its existence maintained very close ties with the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, 'Socialist Unity Party', the ruling organ of the GDR). As chapters one, two and three will reveal, the relationship between the elusive, undogmatic radical left milieu and the more dogmatic DKP often proved rather problematic, especially considering the instances of the dissidents of the GDR. From the mid 1980s onwards the radical left milieu, which by then was more broadly known as the 'alternative movement', slowly petered out. A significant exception to this was the ecology movement, which even became incorporated in the establishment of a new political party, the Greens (*die Grünen*).²⁶

Dissident activism in the GDR: a context

Considering activism in East Germany, the big question that looms over the historiography is whether opposition or dissent was a fringe phenomenon or a fundamental feature of the GDR.²⁷ The GDR was founded in October 1949, on the territory of the corresponding Soviet occupation zone. The Socialist Unity Party became the sole organ of rule. The SED emerged out of the 1946 merger between the Communist and Social Democratic Party. The GDR became part of the eastern Alliance, and was by some considered 'the most stable and successful Soviet satellite state'.²⁸ Consequently, the GDR is not famous for student revolt movements such as those in the West. Before 1989, the workers uprising of 17 June 1953 was the sole manifestation of mass protest. The protest was crushed by Soviet military forces, at least 32 people were shot and killed and around 1600 participants received jail sentence.²⁹

²⁴ The ecology movement eventually managed to establish a political party in the 1980s in West Germany, the Greens (*Die Grünen*). Moreover, the *Taz* reported daily on ecological issues, long before the traditional press paid attention to ecological problems, see: Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!* p. 122.

²⁵ Citizens' initiative groups date back to the 1950s and 1960, but there is a significant difference in the self-understanding between the early initiatives such as the campaigns against rearmament and nuclear armament of West Germany, and the initiatives of the 1970s, which were perceived as part of a practical expression of grass-roots democracy (whereas in the 50s and 60s participation was based on individual ethical commitment). See also S. von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!*, p.106.

²⁶ Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!* p. 128 and p.183. In chapter six of *All Power to the Imagination!*, Von Dirke discusses the establishment of the Greens Party, and their ties with several New Social Movements, most significantly the ecology and peace movement. Von Dirke asserts: '[A]nd the Greens can therefore be viewed as another mouthpiece and parliamentary arm of the New Social Movements', in: Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!*, p. 186.

²⁷ Corey Ross gives an extensive overview of this historiography in chapter 5 of his monograph: C. Ross, *The East German Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London 2002), pp. 97-125.

²⁸ T. S. Brown, 'East Germany', in: Klimke and Scharloth (eds.), *1968 in Europe*, pp.189-198, p.189.

²⁹ Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, p.101.

Opposition to the East German regime was extremely difficult not just because of strong state repression of dissent ideas, but also because criticising the East German regime would result in a paradox. By 1968, the East German regime defined itself exclusively in socialist terms (and not on a national foundation), therefore if one opposed the socialist regime doctrine, one simultaneously questioned the East German independent statehood. Many critics of the regime therefore were not against the state ideology, but wished for a transformation towards socialism 'with a human face', and wanted to achieve 'a transformation from within [the socialist regime]'. This type of opposition has also been dubbed 'reformist', because it did not reject the system, but it believed that the system could be amendable to democratic reform.³⁰ Dissidence in the GDR can simply not be measured along the line of the binary opposition 'for-or-against' the GDR. Hans-Eckardt Wenzel, a singer-songwriter of (critical) political songs in the GDR, said in an interview with Deutschland Radio in 1998, that the clear-cut distinction between dissidence and doctrine-adherents was not unambiguous, the divide between the two was often found within a person: 'Es ist ja so, daß heute die Geschichte so betrachtet wird, als ob es ein klare Trennung in Dissidenten und Doktrinäre gegeben hätte. Und so war es nicht. Der Riß ging durch die Leute durch'.³¹

To be sure, this does not mean that the GDR was void of activism and criticism. Willem Melching points out that during the 1960s the youth gradually started to retreat from identifying with the regime. The efforts of the regime to repress the emerging cosmopolitan tropes of the youth culture squandered the remains of loyalty towards the regime amongst them. As everything in the GDR was politicised, even aspects of the international youth culture such as the wearing of blue jeans or having long hair became tropes of dissidence – with which many youths in the late Sixties and Seventies challenged the regime. Another example of youth opposition to the SED are the members of the Havemann group, who were inspired by the Prague Spring to create *KI-Ost*. This 'commune' was modelled after its West German infamous brother *Kommune I*.³² The aims of *KI-Ost* were to politicise everyday life, to break up the 'bourgeoisie' idea of the family, and to overcome repressive psychological programming of the SED's moralising idea around socialism. From the end of 1965 onwards, following the 11th Plenum of the *Zentralkomitee*, the SED started with repression of 'liberalism' and 'western' trends in the arts. Many writers and artists were unable to produce in the GDR after this, as the SED considered their work to undermine socialism. This led many to leave for the FRG. The ones who stayed were in a constant state of war with the authorities.³³

³⁰ Brown, 'East Germany', p.190.

³¹ Eckardt, quoted in: D. Robb, 'Political Song in the GDR: The Cat-and-Mouse game with Censorship and Institutions', in: D. Robb (ed.) *Protest Song in East and West Germany*, pp. 227-254, p.249.

³² See for example T.S. Brown, 'A Tale of Two Communes: The Private and the Political in Divided Berlin, 1967-1973', in: M. Klimke, J. Pekelder and J. Scharloth (eds.), *Between Prague Spring and French May* (London/New York 2011).

³³ W. Melching, *Van het Socialisme, de Dingen die Voorbijgaan. Een geschiedenis van de DDR* (2005 Amsterdam), pp.136-137.

From the mid-1970s onwards dissident activism in the GDR became associated with intellectuals and cultural elites, such as Wolf Biermann, Rudolf Bahro, Christa Wolf, and Robert Havemann. Biermann's infamous *Ausbürgerung* – his forced expulsion to West Germany in 1976 – and Havemann's house arrest³⁴ awakened the flame of 'inner-communist' opposition, which gradually came to be regarded synonymous with 'opposition' in the GDR more generally. As Eva Maleck-Lewy and Bernhard Maleck point out, 'in the GDR literature often served as a substitute for public discussion'.³⁵ In literature, topics could be addressed that were otherwise subject to a strict taboo. One example is the literary feminism that emerged in the GDR by pioneers such as Christa Wolf, Maxie Wander, Irmtraid Morgner and Brigitte Reimann, which is regarded as the predecessor of the independent women's movement of 1989-90.³⁶ Notwithstanding, most authors did eventually get in trouble with the authorities, as the GDR and her actually existing socialism did not tolerate the voicing of doubts, problems and alienation of living in the GDR. The authors were forced to publish in the West, and many went to live there as well. Often personal relationships existed between the radical left publishing scene in West Germany and the dissident writers of the East.³⁷

Just as in the literature scene, the *Liedermacher* scene in the GDR was another space where there was some room for criticism of the regime. From the 1960s up until the *Wende* in 1989, the political song was a popular and important cultural force in the GDR. The GDR viewed the tradition of the political revolutionary song as its own legacy.³⁸ Simultaneously however, the political song was constantly viewed with suspicion by the authorities due to its potential for subversion. As David Robb explains, 'They [the *Singerbewegung*] were appropriating the sacred untouchable revolutionary *Erbe* of the GDR for their own purposes; approaching it with respect, but ultimately inverting it in such a way as to criticize the GDR'.³⁹ In other words, they were using the coveted socialist heritage to criticise the GDR itself. It is important to note that, similar to the literature scene, many of the *Liedermacher* were not against the GDR state so much as they were critical of the GDR reality. Consequently, the criticism of the singers did not go unchallenged. The aforementioned Wolf Biermann, but also Bettina Wegner, Gerulf Pannach, and Stephan Krawczyk were banned from performing in the GDR, and moreover, forced to leave for the West.⁴⁰

³⁴ The intellectual Robert Havemann held unorthodox views about Marxism. Publication of this work in the West and an interview with a West German newspaper were reasons for the SED to expel him from the party in 1964. He was not put in prison, as he was a famous anti-fascist, so the regime would look bad, had they imprisoned him. Later he received house arrest and was forced to live in isolation in the village Grünheide. More on Havemann can be read in chapter three.

³⁵ Maleck-Lewy and Maleck, 'The Women's Movement in East and West Germany' p. 391.

³⁶ Maleck-Lewy and Maleck, 'The Women's Movement in East and West Germany', pp. 391-392.

³⁷ Melching, *Van het Socialisme*, p. 134 and Maleck-Lewy and Maleck, 'The Women's Movement in East and West Germany' p. 391.

³⁸ Robb, 'Political Song in the GDR' p.228.

³⁹ Robb, 'Political Song in the GDR', p.238.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p.227.

It was only from the end of the 1970s onwards, up until 1989, that a general scepticism towards the grand narrative of socialism itself started to emerge. In political and intellectual life a shift towards post-social individualism took place, along with an increase in global concerns for peace, the environment, and human and women's rights. The opposition in the GDR remained mostly left-wing, and even socialist to some extent, but it started to be more and more concerned with individual human rights instead of collective social liberation.⁴¹

Theoretical framework: transfer history

As this research sets out to investigate the influence of East German individuals on protest groups in West Germany, its methodology is embedded in the theoretical framework of cross-national history. Engagement in cross-national history implies a focus on a topic beyond the national boundaries of the state. It seeks 'to understand reciprocal influences, as well as the ways in which the act of transplantation itself changes the topic under study'.⁴² A cross-national approach allows us to ask different questions about the radical left milieu of the FRG. For example, why do political activists of different state-systems find themselves fighting similar protests?

East and West Germany are very particular as a case study for cross-national history, as the reality of the two German states was not unproblematic at the time itself. In fact, part of the contention between the two states was exactly about the nature of that relationship. In the 1970s, the people living in the FRG and GDR had been living in the same country just over twenty years ago, they shared a language, a heritage, and a past. However, in the 1970s the people living in either of the two states, experienced a very different political, social, economic, and cultural reality. This makes it all the more interesting to examine cross-national influences between these two states that so weirdly relate to one another. The benefits of the juxtaposition and reciprocal influences of the ideas of East and West German protesters in understanding protest movements in the post-war years, remains curiously undefined and elusive. To illuminate these benefits is the aim of this study.⁴³

In particular *Transferygeschichte* ('transfer history') is important for this study. *Transferygeschichte* is a form of cross-national history, which looks at the transfer of 'knowledge' (defined broadly) across borders. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka explain:

Transfer history looks at the interrelationship between two entities, whether nations, regions, towns or institutions. It underscores the significance of intermediaries, such as booksellers,

⁴¹ P. Thompson, 'Wolf Biermann: Die Heimat ist Weit', in: D. Robb (ed.) *Protest Song in East and West Germany*, pp.199-225, pp.211-212.

⁴² D. Cohen and M. O'Connor, *Comparison and History. Europe in Cross-national perspective* (New York and London 2004), p.xii.

⁴³ Paulina Bren argued this for the juxtaposition of the Prague Spring protest with the student protests in Western Europe, in P. Bren, '1968 East and West. Visions of political change and student protests from across the iron curtain', chapter 7.

publishers, and universities; the weight of various media, above all cultural media; and the specific co-optation process of the transfer.⁴⁴

Michel Espagne has been one of the first scholars to deploy this methodology, for example in this study about the transfer of culture between Saxony and France in the 18th and 19th centuries. In his study, he demonstrates that what we know as ‘French’ incorporates a variety of foreign influences.⁴⁵ For this study the interrelationship between political dissidents of East Germany and radical leftists in West Germany is examined, and indeed, it is examined through an analysis of intermediaries: the cultural media output of the West German radical left scene, in which the East German dissidents played a quite prominent role. ‘Knowledge’ thus transfers with the help of intermediaries; such as songs, books, publishers, and universities.

Source selection and methodology

For this research the empirical sources consist of the alternative press output of the radical left milieu of the FRG in the 1970s. As will be discussed in chapter one, the alternative press was a very important medium for the radical left. This had to do with the desire to establish their own ‘alternative’ public sphere, a *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, or ‘anti-public sphere’. This resulted in the publication of many alternative journals and newspapers, amongst which the *Tageszeitung* was one with the largest ‘national’ readership, as well as many socialist literary books written by radical left authors, and published collections of articles of socialist and Marxist intellectuals.⁴⁶ By 1980, there were around 390 left alternative journals in the Federal Republic. Together their monthly print run constituted of ca. 1,6 Million copies. This made their market share more or less eight percent.⁴⁷ From the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties the amount of alternative journal projects increased sharply.⁴⁸ In relation to the *Ausbürgerung* of Wolf Biermann and the imprisonment of Rudolf Bahro, collections of articles and solidarity letters were published. These journals, newspapers, collections and books serve as the empirical basis for this thesis. Sometimes, the published collections also include interviews with either Biermann or Bahro.

⁴⁴ H.G. Haupt and J. Kocka, ‘Comparative history: methods, aims, problems’, in: D. Cohen and Maura O’Connor (eds.), *Comparison and History. Europe in cross-national perspective* (New York and London 2004), pp. 23-39, p.33.

⁴⁵ See for example, Michael Espagne and Michael Wegner (eds.), *Transfert. Les Relations interculturelles dans l’espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe et le XIXe siècle)* (Paris 1998), and Michael Espagne and Matthias Middell (eds.) *Von Elbe bis an die Seine. Kulturtransfer zwischen Sachsen und Frankreich im 18. Und 19. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1993).

⁴⁶ Cf. chapter three of Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft* about the alternative press. More examples of radical left magazines are: *Fizz*, *Agit 83*, *Extra-Dienst*, *Rote Presse Korrespondenz*, *Neue Kritik*, *ça ira* and *langer Marsch*. Towards the end of the 1970s their influence on the radical left scene decreased.

⁴⁷ ArbeitsGruppe AlternativPresse (ed.), *Riesengroßes Verzeichnis aller Alternativzeitungen* (Bonn, 1981), cited in Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p.241.

⁴⁸ In 1986 there were twice as many alternative journals than there had been in 1979. See: H. Rösch-Sondermann, *Bibliographie der lokalen Alternativpresse. Vom Volksblatt zum Stadtmagazin* (Munich and New York, 1988), p.54, cited in: Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p.241.

Media, in the form of journals, newspapers, and books form a valuable source for the methodology of this research. There are assumptions about cultural media when regarding it as intermediary for ‘transferring knowledge’ that deserve some explanation here. Essential is the idea that a newspaper, a journal, or a book document the way that the journalists and authors thought about their own milieu and the world around them. Additionally, it reveals their thoughts on how to organise and present information, *what kind* of information should be represented, how influential categories of thought were established, and how conventional social hierarchies and assumption were enforced or eroded.⁴⁹ They are not objective reflections of the reality in which they were written, but rather they have been actively ‘structured’ and ‘created’. Therefore they are very useful as sources for this research, for they show what was considered important for the radical left milieu in the 1970s, and how the ‘discourse’ employed is informed by the social context of their thought. These sources thus offer significant insights into how the milieu came to understand themselves and the world around them.

Therefore, the fact that stories about East German dissidents are covered in the alternative press does imply more than solely the reality that these people made their appearance in the radical left milieu of the FRG. They were considered important enough to write about, and moreover, the ‘discourse’ deployed in how it was written about them is suitable for an analysis of the dialectical relationship between the discursive event (the arrival of the GDR dissidents) and the social context that frames it. In other words, the way the social structure of the radical left frames the discursive event can reveal the effect that it had on constituting the radical left. This methodology of interpreting the media output of the radical left milieu is called ‘critical discourse analysis’ (CDA). CDA thus sees language as a social practice. Discourse is the language we use in speech and writing. A discursive event is shaped by the institution, situation, and social structure that describes it (in this research the radical left milieu in the FRG), and at the same time it also shapes the institution, situation, and social structure. Because of this dialectic one can thus look at the influence of the discursive event on the institution, situation, and structure that describes it.⁵⁰ This means, when translated into this research, that we can examine the influence of the appearance of the East German dissidents (the discursive event) on the shaping of the radical left milieu (the institution, situation and social structure that describes the discursive event).

This research does not proceed into one specific sub-field of history. Instead, it tries to combine several historical subfields. In essence, this thesis looks at thoughts and ideas, yet it is not a pure history of ideas. While studying thoughts and ideas, it examines the real political implications of ideas, and does so by investigating cultural outputs of a certain social group. While doing this, the international context

⁴⁹ S. Vella, *Newspapers*, in: M. Dobson and B. Ziemann, *Reading primary sources. The interpretation of texts from nineteenth and twentieth century history* (London 2009), pp. 192-208, p.192.

⁵⁰ R. Wodak and M. Meyer, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis: history, agenda, theory’, in: R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (London 2009), pp. 1-33, p.6. Also Hanno Balz uses Critical Discourse Analysis for his book *Von Terroristen, Sympathisanten und dem Starken Staat. Die öffentliche Debatte über die RAF in den 70er Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main 2008). The first chapter of this book explains what critical discourse analysis is, and how it is used for his study into the media discourse about radical left wing terrorism and sympathisers.

of the 1970s has to be taken into account as well. Therefore, I would like to argue that this is a historical research that fuses the history of ideas, with political, and cultural history, while placing it in an international context.

Build-up

Building from this theoretical and methodological framework, this thesis specifically illuminates the influence of two prominent East German dissidents who arrived in the West in respectively 1976 and 1978: Wolf Biermann and Rudolf Bahro. The prerequisite for examining their influence on the radical left scene there, is to examine the broader context of the Federal Republic and the radical left milieu in the late Sixties and early Seventies. Chapter one therefore gives a reasoned context of the relationship of the FRG with the radical left milieu, what context determined this relationship, and who the radical left was. As the analysis of the first chapter reveals, the radical left milieu in West Germany in the 1970s was characterised by three features. Firstly, the milieu was a fragmented one, whereas it consisted of several sub-groups which all focused their own different 'socialist truth'. Instead of cooperating, these groups competed with one another, failing to reach an overarching national platform. Secondly, the milieu could be defined as 'unconstitutional', as they rejected the liberal democratic basic structure of the FRG, adhering instead socialist Marxist ideas about how society should be structured. Thirdly, the radical left in the 1970s was characterised by its isolation from mainstream society, because of a reciprocity between repressive measures of the state authorities and the desire of the milieu itself to be 'alternative' and 'against the system'.

Chapter two and three analyse how respectively the singer- songwriter Wolf Biermann and the philosopher Rudolf Bahro influenced the radical left scene after their expulsion from the GDR. Both dissidents' arrivals in the FRG did not go unnoticed. I argue that their influence can be summarised roughly in three main manifestations of influence they had on the fragmented, unconstitutional, and isolated radical left milieu: 'legitimation', 'unification', and 'pragmatism'. Due to dominating anti-communist sentiments in the FRG and the discredit that the left-wing terrorism of the RAF had brought on the non-violent radical left as well, the radical left in the 1970s contended with a legitimisation problem. Dissidents like Biermann and Bahro helped to improve the legitimisation of the non-violent radical left, as they proved that one could be a Marxist, yet still be critical of the actually existing communism in the East. In other words, these dissidents showed that Marxism and Stalinism did not have to mean the thing. Moreover, the radical left started to appropriate a universal human rights discourse in regard to protesting against the fate of the expulsion of the two dissidents from their own country. Through this human rights discourse they found a common discourse with the FRG authorities, which resulted in an increased legitimisation.

Furthermore, chapters two and three will show that the arrival of dissidents like Biermann and Bahro in the FRG had a unifying effect on the fragmented radical left milieu. The sub-groups of the radical left started to realise that they were fighting a similar fight with both; one another, and with the

dissidents from the East. This fight was framed around the issue of the *Radikalerlaß*, the prohibition of outspoken communists to work in public services of the FRG. A realisation came among the radical left that they had to conduct a ‘two front war’, against capitalism, as well as against the actually existing communism. They felt that in both, the GDR and the FRG, their ideas were repressed, as the *Radikalerlaß* and the East German dissidents’ expulsions were a prove of. Another reason why the arrival of Biermann and Bahro had a unifying effect on the radical left milieu, was because of the symbols they had become. As is often the case with symbols, different groups can appropriate them according to their own fitting. For various sub-groups, using the same symbol had a unifying effect. As chapters two and three will show, it is important to be aware of the distinction between the influence Biermann and Bahro had because of the symbols they had become, and their actual personal merit in exerting influence.

Finally, the two East German dissidents also gave an impulse towards pragmatism to the radical left in the FRG. Due to their own rejection of the FRG’s political system and of hierarchical organisation structures, the radical left milieu was unable to gain a convincing national influence. They lacked an overarching national platform or organisation. Nonetheless, people like Bierman and especially Bahro, inspired the radical left to think about a feasible strategy to gain a socialist national platform. Eventually the several sub-groups found that they were able to organise along a different denominator than socialism; they started to organise themselves more and more along the lines of ecology.

As this research sets out to investigate the connections and mutual influences between people East and West of the iron curtain, it ties in with contemporary debate about whether Europe has a common eastern-western European heritage and history. A common European heritage goes to the core of topical discussions nowadays on European integration. With Brexit and the emergence of populist parties who promote nationalistic sentiments and promise policies accordingly, it is all the more clear that a common European identity and European integration is not self-evident. Within the theoretic field of memory and heritage studies, European heritage and consequently European integration has been studied widely. In line with the French historian Pierre Nora, in Europe, heritage came to mean a merger between heritage and history, with the result that heritage is not a ‘neutral’ old past, but rather a past we glory in, or agonise over – a past through which we construct our present identity, a past that defines us to ourselves and to others.⁵¹ However, in the case of Europe as we know it today, the shared historical experience is one which was for a long time defined by conflict and war. This poses essential discords to the construction of a common positive European heritage. Rob van der Laarse has argued that after the fall of the Berlin Wall, attempts to create a mutual European heritage and common collective memory took on the assumption of the Holocaust as a common experience, creating the ‘occupation

⁵¹ P. Nora, ‘Between memory and history: *Les lieux des mémoires*’, *Representations* 26, special issue: memory and counter-memory (1989), pp.7-24, cited in: D. Lowenthal, ‘Heritage and history. Rivals and partners in Europe’, in: R. van der Laarse (ed.) *Bezeten van vroeger. Erfgoed, identiteit en musealisering* (Amsterdam 2005), pp.29-39.

paradigm'. However, the different experiences in East and West in regard to the Second World War resulted in the divided world of the Cold War, therefore the common heritage of the Holocaust also remains elusive. The study at hand could perhaps add another history to the difficult and complicated history of East West European integration, namely those of the socialist political activists in both parts of Europe. Eventually, the dissident groups in eastern Europe have played an important role in the alternation of the two-ideology world order of post-war Europe. As the history of political activists in East and West Germany become connected, this presents new questions and perhaps new perspectives on European heritage. In turn, this could be meaningful today towards understanding the intrinsic relationship between different member states of the European Union.

Chapter 1 – FRG, GDR and the radical left in the late Sixties and early Seventies

This chapter provides reasoned context to the research question of this thesis. It describes the development of the radical left milieu in relation to the broader context of the FRG. This allows for testing continuities and caesura in the second half of the 1970s in regard to the role played by East German dissidents in the radical left milieu. The first part of the chapter considers how the radical left positioned itself in the FRG and its relationship to the Nazi-Past, and in the relationship between the FRG and the GDR and the Cold War context which determined that relationship. The second part of this chapter deals with the questions: who was the radical left in Germany, and further: why and how did they get isolated, and what was their relationship with the GDR (-dissidents)? As will become clear, the infrastructural scenes through which the radical left milieu existed were mainly the publishing and literary scene, the music festival and *Liedermacher* scene, and universities. This is relevant, as this research will reveal that the radical left of the West got in touch with East German dissidents predominantly through the infrastructures of these scenes.

This chapter roughly covers the time span from 1967 until the German Autumn in 1977.⁵² 1967 is taken as starting point, as it was in this year that the extra-parliamentary opposition reached national recognition and appreciation after the killing of Benno Ohnesorg by a plain clothed police officer during a demonstration against the visit of the Persian Shah in Berlin. The German autumn of 1977 is often regarded as another watershed for the radical left in West Germany. In a period of seven weeks left wing terrorism, and with that paranoia, extreme social polarisation, fear, and hatred reached its peak in the West German society. From then onwards, the non-violent radical left started to dissociate themselves more actively from the terrorists.

Radical left in the broader context of the FRG in the late 60s and 70s

In the 1960s enormous social and cultural changes took place in Germany, of which the emerging protest movements were a part.⁵³ These social and cultural changes were in part a result of the post-war reconstruction of Germany. Post-war reconstruction had brought relative economic prosperity and increased mobility and mass media, which allowed many more people to be in touch with, and get involved in, events happening on a national and international scale. In the 1960s, West Germany had transformed into an affluent society. War damaged towns had been rebuilt, shopping centres and modern buildings were thrown up, transport was improved into a network of modern *Autobahns*, and formerly

⁵² These demarcations are not very rigid, for the sake of explanation of certain contexts, occasionally the periods before 1967, or after 1977, are covered as well.

⁵³ N. Thomas, *Protest movements in 1960s West Germany: a social history of dissent and democracy* (Oxford and New York 2003), p.6

isolated communities were now connected in a modern society. Fewer people worked on the land and in heavy industry, and more people now worked in the service sector or in high-tech industry.⁵⁴

Besides that, West Germany also witnessed political polarisation, especially between ‘comfortable conservatives’⁵⁵ and idealists of the emerging New Left. Fulbrook distinguishes four factors that catalysed the polarisation: a wider trend in the western world of an emerging ‘youth culture’ that questioned the conservative morals and values of the older generation; the expansion of higher education⁵⁶; political issues such as the American involvement in the war in Vietnam; and specifically for the FRG, a lack of parliamentary opposition that seemed to necessitate the development of an extra-parliamentary opposition.⁵⁷

1.1 FRG, radical- left protests and the Nazi dictatorship

One issue that became a central concern in development of the radical left protests in the Sixties was the rather lenient denazification of the FRG in the 1940s and 1950s. Post-war reconstruction in Germany was predominantly occupied with economic construction, rather than with denazification and dealing with the Nazi past. Many former Nazi party members were allowed back into working in government positions, albeit after a re-education programme.⁵⁸ Denazification has been interpreted by some as an absolute disaster that failed to bring Nazi’s to justice. Others view it as an ultimate victory for pragmatism which was believed necessary for the creation of an inclusive new democracy: there was an alleged lack of competent personnel in West German positions of authority, such as government and educational officials, if all former Nazi Party members and fellow travellers were not allowed back into their positions.⁵⁹ It was only after the 1960s protests that denazification was seriously dealt with, brought to the attention by the student protests.⁶⁰

The twelve years of Nazi rule also played another role in the polarisation between the state and the left-wing protesters. In 1969, a coalition government between the SPD and the *Freie Demokratische Partei* (‘Free Democratic Party’, FDP) was established, bringing Willy Brandt, SPD’s ex-mayor of Berlin, to the office of Chancellor. Willy Brandt had an impeccable anti-Nazi record. Nonetheless, the polarisation between the state and the radical leftists, continued under SPD’s passage into government

⁵⁴ M. Fulbrook, *A history of Germany 1918-2008. The divided nation*. Third edition (online 2009), p.290.

⁵⁵ Comfortable conservatives here means the predominantly older generation who had lived through the Third Reich and was mostly represented by the conservative-liberal democrat government coalition of the CDU/CSU and FDP. See: Fulbrook, *A history of Germany 1918-2008*, p.290.

⁵⁶ The 1960s saw a major expansion in higher education. There was no *numerus clausus* to restrict the number of students, causing universities to become overcrowded and unable to respond to the student’s needs. The atmosphere was highly authoritarian and elitist – many elderly professors regained their chairs after only a very brief period of denazification. See Fulbrook, *A history of Germany 1918-2008*, pp.397-398.

⁵⁷ Fulbrook, *A history of Germany 1918-2008*, pp.290-291.

⁵⁸ Thomas, *Protest movements*, p.23.

⁵⁹ Thomas, *Protest movements*, p.23.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p.13 and p.20

leadership from 1969 onwards.⁶¹ Even though Willy Brandt was voted chancellor with no small part of the voters being from the 68-generation, the antiauthoritarian revolt was continuing, and for some groups assuming even more radical forms. Bettina Röhl, the daughter of Ulrike Meinhof and Klaus Rainer Röhl, wrote in her parent's biography that she was surprised by her mother's reaction after the election victory of Brandt. Bettina writes that as a little girl she was happy that Brandt had won, since she had always assumed that he was the good guy in a fairy tale, in contrast to CDU politician Rainer Barzel, whom her mother hated. However, after Brandt's victory, she noticed that her mother was not happy with him being chancellor after all. Ulrike's response to Bettina's 'Mami, das ist ja toll, jetzt wird alles gut', was 'Nein, Tina, das verstehst du noch nicht, Brandt ist genauso schlimm, er ist nur das kleinere Übel, an den Verhältnissen ändert sich nichts, jetzt muss man ihn bekämpfen, so wie wir vorher Kiesinger bekämpft haben'.⁶²

It is therefore essential to understand the clashes between the radical left and the authorities in the light of the fears brought about by Germany's recent past of Nazi dictatorship. All – participants of the radical left protests, as well as the general public and the authorities, claimed to be defending democracy. For example, participants of the left wing protests believed they protested against an authoritarian, conservative, and even quasi fascist state that was in urgent need of reform.⁶³ In contrast, the general public and the authorities perceived the protests as a threat to the democratic order, which reminded them of the instability of the Weimar years, that had eventually plunged Germany into a period of dictatorship.⁶⁴ Thus, terms such as 'democracy' proved to be susceptible to different meanings.⁶⁵

In May 1968 the Emergency Laws (*Notstandsgesetze*) were introduced, which meant that civil liberties could be restricted in times of national crisis.⁶⁶ Emergency Laws were not a specific West German thing – many countries had such laws. In West Germany they were only introduced in 1968 however, because in preceding periods the occupational powers had control over the implementation of a state of emergency in the FRG. The introduction of these laws caused widespread opposition among the radical left. Many perceived the state's authority to restrict citizen's civil rights in a situation of emergency as yet another possibility to plunge back into dictatorship. Furthermore, the SPD's support of the Emergency Laws, was an important incentive for the perceived necessity of an extra-parliamentary opposition amongst the radical left.

⁶¹ The polarisation between the state and the radical left had emerged under the more conservative coalition between the *Christlich-Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union* ('Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union', CDU/CSU) and the FDP (1961-1966), and the 'Grand Coalition' between the CDU/CSU, and the SPD (1966-1969). See: Fulbrook, *A history of Germany 1918-2008*, p.287-289.

⁶² B. Röhl, *So macht Kommunismus Spaß! Ulrike Meinhof, Klaus Rainer Röhl, und die Akte Konkret* (Hamburg 2006), p.446.

⁶³ The term 'fascist' was used widespread and often in an imprecise manner. According to the radical left, 'democracy' of the FRG was merely a meaningless façade for real intolerance. See also, Fulbrook, *A history of Germany 1918-2008*, pp.400-401.

⁶⁴ Thomas, *Protest movements*, p.1-2.

⁶⁵ Thomas, *Protest movements*, p.4.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p.3. For a more detailed discussion about the emergence and the protest against the Emergency laws, see Thomas, *Protest movement*, pp. 187-193.

1.2 The radical left in the context of FRG-GDR relations

Besides the national-specific disagreement from all corners of society as to how the new democracy of West Germany should be designed, executed, and protected, another relevant history that shaped the context of the left-wing protests of the 1960s and early 1970s, was the international context of the recent Cold War division of Germany. Following the defeat of Germany in the second World War, the country was divided as it became occupied by an eastern power and several western powers.⁶⁷ Due to the Cold War, in which the rivalry between the ideologies of the two emerging superpowers US and USSR caused an increasing race for influence in Europe, the two different succeeding states of the Third Reich gained a very different outlook after the war. According to Mary Fulbrook in her insightful monograph of German history from 1918-2008, the period from the foundation of the two German states in 1949 to the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, is one in which the division of Germany was confirmed and the peculiarities of the different states were consolidated.⁶⁸ The two very different political systems; a liberal democracy in West Germany and a ‘democratic centralism’ based on Marxist-Leninism theory in the East, provided divergent patterns of social, cultural, political, and economic development in the two Germanies. The resulting Cold War rivalry between the two German states, as well as a strong cultural and political influence of the US in West Germany, contributed to vehement anti-communism in the FRG. The radical left with their adherence to a theoretical Marxism-Leninism and their strong critique of America – not the least for its role in the Vietnam War⁶⁹ – caused a strong inconvenience for the West German authorities.

The Cold War was by definition a chapter of world history defined by dichotomy. This meant that, ‘if you are not with us, you are against us’, was the logic to which many abided. The radical left in West Germany, however, inhabited an interesting position in this dichotomy, as one of their main thrusts was to break out of the Cold War dichotomy. This desire was already expressed by the *Außerparlamentarische Opposition* (APO, ‘extra-parliamentary opposition’) in 1967.⁷⁰ Anti-communism among the general public in the FRG was amplified by the dominantly right-wing press of Axel Springer’s publishing company.⁷¹ Among the government anti-communism was widespread as well: a tradition that had started with the liberal-conservative government of Konrad Adenauer, and reflected in official publications referring to East Germany as the ‘so-called GDR’, or simply as the

⁶⁷ From 1945 until 1949 Germany was divided amongst the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France.

⁶⁸ Mary Fulbrook, *A history of Germany 1918-2008*, p. 247.

⁶⁹ The superpower that had been venerated as ideological saviour came to be criticised as hypocritical and no longer the hero of freedom, peace, and democracy. In: Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2008*, p.398.

⁷⁰ G. Koenen, ‘Die APO, ihre Erben und die DDR’, in: H.J. Veen, U. Mählert, and P. März (eds.) *Wechselwirkungen Ost-West. Dissidenz, Opposition, und Zivilgesellschaft 1975-1989* (Cologne 2007), pp. 129-138, p.132.

⁷¹ The Axel Springer press controlled 80 percent of the popular daily newspapers. See: M. Fulbrook, *A history of Germany, 1918-2008*, p.400.

Sowjetische Besatzungszone (SBZ, ‘Soviet Occupation Zone’).⁷² For the West German left student generation, this anti-communism was no longer tenable. They acknowledged the defects of the eastern Bloc Communism, especially in from the mid-seventies onwards, however, they pointed out that anti-communism could too easily be utilised to rescind discussion of political alternatives. Therefore, they were careful not to be too critical of the GDR, as that would only feed anti-communist forces.

Another important claim of the radical left protesters was its alliance with the anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggle for liberation in the former colonies. This anti-imperialism connected the radical left in the West and the communist world with the liberation fighters in the Third World.⁷³ For them, in the dichotomous world of the Cold War, the West, and West Germany, came to stand for imperialism. According to the protesters, West Germany’s support for colonial domination was made apparent by the invitation and support of leaders such as Moïse Thsombé and the Persian Shah in 1964 and 1967 respectively. On visits like these the SDS protested in West Berlin, blaming the FRG authorities imperialism and colonial domination.

The radical left scenes, their isolation, and their relationship with the GDR (-dissidents)

1.3 Who was the radical left in FRG

Contemporaries were not the only ones who had difficulties with defining the exact contours and diversification of the radical left. Also for historians, it is difficult to define the radical left milieu, or to present a clear characterisation and demarcation. In the late Sixties and early Seventies the radical left milieu was often referred to as ‘die Linke’ (‘the left’), or ‘die Bewegung’ (‘the movement’). It is helpful to note that terms like these were clear enough to those involved.⁷⁴ The radical left was inspired by the APO’s rejection of liberal democracy, its theoretical Marxism, and its will to establish a separate public sphere (*Gegenöffentlichkeit*). The term *Gegenöffentlichkeit* came into use somewhere around 1966-1967, in the course of the escalation of conflict between the SDS and the Springer Press in West Berlin. The concept relied on the critique of mass-media by Frankfurter Schule thinkers such as Adorno, Marcuse and Horkheimer. These thinkers criticised the role played by mass-media in shaping the conventional opinion – in their regard the manipulation of the popular opinion towards a hatred against

⁷² Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties*, p.34.

⁷³ I am aware that this term is not a neutral term. A clear explanation of the shift towards the use of new terms, such as ‘the Global South’, is: N. Dados and R. Connell, ‘The Global South. Jargon, key concepts in social research’, in: *Sage journals*, 11:1 (February 2012), pp.12-13. I chose to use the term ‘Third World’, as this was the terminology that was used at the time by the actors I am describing. My conviction is that if I would use a more modern term such as ‘the Global South’, this would be anachronistic in this thesis. The term Third World marked a central focus on development or cultural difference between the first, second and third world, for those using it at the time.

⁷⁴ J. Pekelder, ‘From Militancy to Democracy? The radical left in West Germany in the 1970s’, in: J. Gijsenbergh, S. Hollander, T. Houwen, and W. de Jong (eds.) *Creative crises of democracy* (Oxford 2012), pp.325-246, p.326.

the left.⁷⁵ This was heavily connected to the perceived distorted picture that the Springer Press newspapers painted of the student movement.⁷⁶ The radical left believed to establish its own *Gegenöffentlichkeit* by fostering their own alternative lifestyle which was believed to be anti-‘bourgeois’ and revolutionary. This could be done by publishing ‘*unterdrückte Nachrichten*’ (repressed news) of the alternative milieu: ‘[Man muß] Erfahrungen, Lebenszusammenhänge, geschichtliche Gegenwart [...] in einen öffentlichen Diskussionszusammenhang bringen, den die formale Öffentlichkeit hintertreibt’.⁷⁷

The alternative press and Gegenöffentlichkeit

The idea of an alternative *Gegenöffentlichkeit* was able to shape up in the imagination of the radical left milieus thanks to the left publishing scene, establishing an ‘imagined community’ of the radical left in West Germany.⁷⁸ Given the increased polarisation between the ideologies of a capitalist West and a communist East, the radical left tried to get round this bipolar logic of the Cold War and reclaim their own collective imagination. This led to something paradoxically framed as ‘a market for Marx’.⁷⁹ Bigger publishers sympathetic to the radical left, such as Suhrkamp and Rowohlt, as well as independent individuals who were part of the radical left milieu, started to publish books and magazines with critical texts.

Reading books on left theories came to be perceived as social behaviour connected with a certain lifestyle and generation. If you wanted to show that you belonged to – or wanted to belong to – the radical left milieu, you had to have certain books on your bookshelf for visitors to see. To give the ‘right’ kind of book was also a common present that people gave one another. Besides that, the bookshop was a popular place to go for the purpose of meeting like-minded people. Left bookshops were often combined with tearooms and developed into junctions of the left movement, providing information and

⁷⁵ For example, the left milieu blamed the Springer Press for the attempt assassination of Rudi Dutschke, because of the alleged national hatred they had created against Dutschke through media. See also: Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, pp. 224-225.

⁷⁶ Brown, *West Germany in the global sixties*, p.122 and Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, pp. 223-224.

⁷⁷ O. Negt, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung. Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarische Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main 1972), p.151, cited in: Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p.231.

⁷⁸ Indeed, very much like Anderson’s idea of the nation being a socially constructed ‘imagined community’, imagined by the people who perceived themselves to be part of that group. Cf. S. Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*. Reichardt discusses in detail the alternative press, which he also calls ‘*eine Imaginäre Gemeinschaft*’, ‘an imagined community’. He explains how the student movement would not have been possible without media. Both, the conventional media which reported about their actions, and their own alternative media through which they kept their own milieu informed. In the course of the 1970s and into the 1980s, the New Social Movements were increasingly dependent on media coverage of their actions in the conventional press, which led to painful situations for the milieus own belief in their authenticity, independence, and spontaneity.

⁷⁹ A. Von Saldern, ‘Literaturbetrieb und Lesebewegungen in der Bundesrepublik’, in: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Institut für Sozialgeschichte e.V. (eds.) *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 44. Band (2004), pp. 149-180. N.B. Marx in this phrase means the work of Marx as indirect theoretical reservoir used by New Left, rather than Marxism as political-theoretical system.

opportunity for communication.⁸⁰ Also *Buchmessen* ('book-fairs') were an established phenomenon of an conjecture of (international) New Left ideas was found. Adelheid von Saldern points out that the left-publishing scene combined various left-groups ranging from the communist DKP to the liberal-left SPD. In 1968, for example, the *Frankfurter Buchmesse* took place, featuring over 3.000 publishers from fifty-seven countries. This book fair stood symbol for a number of things: the vibrancy of West German publishing, growing internationalisation, and the extent to which New Left ideas started to penetrate mainstream publishing.⁸¹ Prominent exhibitors were for example, the liberal-left publishers of Suhrkamp, Rowohlt and Kiepenheuer & Witsch. However, simultaneously, and not far away in the basement of a student house in Frankfurt on the Jügelstrasse, activists of the alternative-press started an 'anti-book-fair' (*Gegenbuchmesse*). This event was organised as a response to the success of mainstream publishers concerning the revolutionary market, with the underground activist publishers proclaiming: 'don't let yourselves be sold by the Rowohlts, comrades. Organise yourselves!'.⁸²

From what is described above, what is important to note is that within the market for Marx there are some distinctions to be made in the sense of its producers and readers.⁸³ Firstly, there was new critical journalism, which was predominantly comprised of liberal left authors and readers, who took an interest in publishing and reading radical left publications, sometimes for the mere fact of being interested in them but also for valuing their role as counterweight to the conservative right press.⁸⁴ Amongst the early new critical journalism, Klaus Rainer Röhl and Ulrike Meinhof could be included with their magazine *Konkret* – which was until 1964 secretly financed by the GDR.⁸⁵ Secondly, there was the printed output of the student movement, as printed word was the main mode of communication for the SDS to reach its members through placards, flyers, posters and magazines. Finally there was the independent underground press, which was also engaged in bootleg publishing of communist and working class history of an astonishing array of titles from Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, Herbert Marcuse,

⁸⁰ Von Saldern, 'Literaturbetrieb und Lesebewegungen in der Bundesrepublik', p. 167, and Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, pp.236-237.

⁸¹ Brown, West Germany in the global sixties, p.116.

⁸² Thomas Daun, cited in Brown, *West Germany in the Global Sixties*, p. 116.

⁸³ Cf. Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, pp.247-248. Reichardt makes another distinction within the alternative press milieu, he distinguishes between, '*Initiativzeitungen*' (from the beginning of the 1970s), the political outlook of these were more 'generally' left, wanting to publish several grassroots initiatives; '*Sceneblätter*' (from mid-1970s), which was the 'underground press' amongst which Reichardt also counts the output of the SDS; and the '*Stadtmagazine*' (mid-1970s), which were part of urban sub-cultures and were the means of communication within those scenes.

⁸⁴ Von Saldern, 'Literaturbetrieb und Lesebewegungen in der Bundesrepublik', pp. 168-170.

⁸⁵ *Konkret* was already founded in the 1950s. It was established for the purpose of politicising the pacifist movement. *Konkret* was an important stepping stone in Meinhof's career. She became one of the major voices of the APO. From 1955 until 1964, *Konkret* had been financed by the GDR. In 1964 the editors and the SED got into a conflict about censorship (for *Konkret's* failure to fire an author supportive of the communist opposition in Czechoslovakia), which led Klaus Rainer Röhl to continue with *Konkret* independently and repudiate its earlier communism and spur the sales with a pornographic turn, that fitted with the rather similar notion of the sexual revolution. See: J. Pekelder, 'Ulrike Meinhof als stem van de RAF Protest met pen en pistool', forthcoming, draft version of 2 January 2018, p.7 and Röhl, *So macht Kommunismus spass!*, pp.406-409.

Rosa Luxemburg, and Georg Lukács – to name a few.⁸⁶ These three distinct cases were, despite their obvious differences in political orientation and journalistic standards and style, connected through one strong internal continuity: they all challenged the claims of the (cultural) authorities to holding the absolute truth. They all regarded the act of speech as a fundamental right, and each of them aimed to ‘expose secrets and tell hidden truths’.⁸⁷ As Meinhof pointed out in *Konkret*:

Stellen wir fest: Diejenigen, die von politischen Machtpositionen aus Steinwürfe und Brandstiftung hier verurteilen, nicht aber die Hetze des Hauses Springer, nicht die Bomben auf Vietnam, nicht Terror in Persien, nicht Folter in Südafrika, diejenigen die die Enteignung Springers tatsächlich betreiben könnten, stattdessen Große Koalition machen, die in den Massenmedien die Wahrheit über BILD und BZ verbreiten könnten, stattdessen Halbwahrheiten über die Studenten verbreiten, deren Engagement für Gewaltlosigkeit ist heuchlerisch, die messen mit zweierlei Maß, sie wollen genau das, was wir, die wir in diesen Tagen – mit und ohne Steinen in unseren Taschen – auf die Straßen gingen, nicht wollen: Politik als Schicksal, entmündigte Massen, eine ohnmächtigen, nichts und niemand störende Opposition, demokratisch Sandkastenspiele, wenn es ernst wird den Notstand.⁸⁸

Furthermore, these three cases overlapped in the sense of the people involved. For example Karl Dietrich Wolff was the former chairman of the SDS who also founded the *Roter Stern* publishing house in the independent underground press-scene.⁸⁹ Also the unofficial student leader of the SDS, Rudi Dutschke, published with the bigger left liberal publishing house of Rowohlt as well as with the underground press.⁹⁰

The collaboration between radical left writers and liberal left publishing companies was not uncontroversial – as was already exemplified by the organisation of the *Gegenbuchmesse* in Frankfurt. For writers who were able to publish with bigger publishers this brought obvious advantages, such as the promise of money and the possibility of reaching a wider audience. Yet, the wide availability and filled pockets were a double edge sword. For many, involvement with the more mainstream left liberal press was an act of capitalist recuperation that made the left sell back its own ideas and took away their potential of subversive means in this process. Dutschke also had to defend himself against the charges that he had ‘sold out’ this potential along with his ideas by publishing with Rowohlt.⁹¹ The struggle that was at the heart of this discussion, was in fact one that cut right to the heart of the antiauthoritarian revolt: which was the struggle over who had the right to speak for the radical left.⁹² This struggle was

⁸⁶ Brown, *West Germany in the global sixties*, p.128.

⁸⁷ Brown, *West Germany in the Global Sixties*, p.127.

⁸⁸ U. Meinhof, ‘Vom Protest zum Widerstand’, in: Wagenbach Verlag (ed.), *Ulrike Marie Meinhof, Die Würde des Menschen ist antastbar. Aufsätze und Polemiken Aufsätze und Polemiken* (Berlin 1980), p.138-141, p.139.

⁸⁹ Brown, *West Germany in the Global Sixties*, p.127.

⁹⁰ Brown, *West Germany in the Global Sixties*, p.147.

⁹¹ Rudi Dutschke published in the ‘*Rororo aktuell*’ paperback series of Rowohlt, as did student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

⁹² Brown, *West Germany in the global sixties*, p.147.

one that would remain largely unsolved in the coming decade, especially after the disintegration of the SDS and the APO into smaller sub-groups, together forming a radical left milieu. In fact, it would become one of the major complications in the radical left scene in the course of the 1970s. The many smaller sub-groups all believed they held the 'real truth' and therefore the utmost right to speak for the radical left, which made them unable to form a genuine national basis for socialist thinkers.

The disintegration of the APO accelerated attempts to create an independent alternative (underground) public sphere which was connected with the more splintered radical left milieu. Examples of underground left presses were the Voltaire Verlag, the Roter Stern Verlag, Trikont, Linkeck, Ober Baum, Ça Ira, and the Peter Paul Zahl Verlag. What combined these publishers was their conviction that the left should have its own media, rather than depending on the market-based decisions of the big publishers.⁹³ As Ça Ira put it, as early as in 1968:

What is being communicated (our criticism) is more and more determined by the means of communication. We can be 'revolutionary', print, write, talk, whatever we want: the machine (the bourgeois publishers, marketing organisations, printers etc.) absorbs everything, makes it into [mere] decoration, quickly exploits it: our words must mean something in practice! That means, that we must switch over to *self-organization*, if we don't want our critical stance to become just a higher form of nonsense.⁹⁴

Interestingly, dissidence in the GDR in this period was also closely connected with the publishing world, as literature was one of the few ways in which one could still voice some criticism towards the state. GDR writers could publish, for example with the Wagenbach Verlag. The connection between East German dissidents and West German radical leftist was facilitated for a big part through the publication of dissident communists with West German publishers. Chapter three will examine one particular conspicuous case, the case of Rudolf Bahro. Additionally, chapter three devotes some analysis to the link between the intelligentsia literature scene of East and West Germany.

Liedermacher and youth festivals

Another scene where the radical left milieu met and took part in establishing an 'alternative' public sphere emerged from a network of various projects at roots level, especially in folk clubs and at music festivals. The radicalisation of many of the 1968 protagonists had emerged from the folk and *Liedermacher* scene, which had consciously positioned itself left from the SPD.⁹⁵ Curiously, the DKP played a big role in the organisation of music festivals, which seemed to be at odds with the intricate relationship they had with other groups of the radical left milieu. On the one hand this shows that, indeed,

⁹³ Ibidem, p.148-149.

⁹⁴ Ça Ira Presse Berlin, cited in Brown, *West Germany in the global sixties*, p.147. Published in: Ça Ira Presse Berlin to 'Kollegen en Genossen', September 5, 1968, in: Hartmut Sander and Ulrich Christians (eds.), *Subkultur Berlin: Selbstdarstellung, Text-, Ton-Bilddokumente, Esoterik der Kommunen, Rocker, subversiven Gruppen* (Darmstadt, 1969).

⁹⁵ E. Holler, 'The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic of the 1970s and 1980s', in: R. Robb (ed.) *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s* (2007), pp. 133-168, p. 133.

the Liedermacher and music festival scene was truly a place for reconciliation between the several radical left groups. On the other hand, Eckard Holler, who was involved in organising the ‘Tübingen Festivals’,⁹⁶ and who was member of the DKP himself until he quit to escape the Radikalenerlaß, explains that the DKP’s activities in the scene far surpassed the general public relevance of the Party. Moreover, the role of the DKP was not undisputed either. For example, the artist Walter Mossmann was a supporter of the anti-authoritarian wing of the SDS and a supporter of the ‘Third Way’. He was an opponent of the DKP and accordingly, he articulated a widespread feeling in the folk and Liedermacher scene that the Party was dogmatic, conservative and incompatible with the ‘New Left’.⁹⁷

Another group surprisingly influencing the Liedermacher scene were the so-called *K-Gruppen*. The K-Gruppen adhered to Marxist-Leninism (ML), espousing a revolutionary theory aligned to Maoism. They were strongly against the Moscow-line of the DKP, which was revisionist in their eyes. Holler explains that although the K-Gruppen were for many just a transition phase, yet it was not without significance as it led to long-lasting alliances in the radical left milieu. For example, a few of the K-Gruppen joined the Green Party in the late 1970s. Partly, these alliances were forged because of the music festivals. For example, the music publishers Trikont in Munich, and Eigenstein in Cologne had a ML past and promoted groups with a similar background.⁹⁸ Even the SPD played a constitutive role in the music festival scene, despite the negative image it generally had in the scene. For example, Dieter Dehm-Lerryn, who belonged to the more radical left wing part of the party, exercised considerable influence in the scene as a record producer and tour manager. He worked, among others, for Wolf Biermann as well.⁹⁹ This exemplifies the myriad of left radicals who normally could not stand each other because of their political beliefs were, instead, able to somehow work together in the music festival scene.

Furthermore, the folk and Liedermacher scene was closely related to the several solidarity campaigns of the ‘New Social Movements’ of the 1970s. The singers and groups of the alternative scene often originated from the same milieu as the New Social Movements. Consequently, during their performances and in their songs, they dealt with a wide range of issues in solidarity with the new social movements; the Radikalenerlaß, women’s rights, squatters, nuclear energy, traffic, the environment, healthy eating, and the Third World. The singers and groups would perform for free, write songs about the relevant subjects, increase political awareness, and help to raise substantial sums of money for solidarity funds. The artists of the alternative scene also showed solidarity with the trade unions. The

⁹⁶ The Tübingen festivals were amongst the biggest folk and *Liedermacher* festivals in West Germany, and lasted from 1975-1987. Other famous folk and *Liedermacher* festivals were for example the festivals in Ingelheim and Mainz.

⁹⁷ Holler, ‘The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic of the 1970s and 1980s’, p.134.

⁹⁸ Holler, ‘The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic of the 1970s and 1980s’, p.135.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.135.

group Krempetiere sang, for example, at the six-week steel-worker's strike from 28 November 1978 until 11 January 1979.¹⁰⁰

The *Liedermacher* scene was also a scene in which artists from outside the FRG could be seen, such as dissident artists from East Germany. Among them the most famous one, Wolf Biermann. Chapter two is devoted to the case of Wolf Biermann and additionally discusses how the music scene was important in his case. The *Liedermacher* scene was, just as the literary scene, an important hub for the radical left milieu in West Germany to meet leftist people from other particular groups. The festivals corresponded with the utopian ideas of 'a big folk family', an ideal that was frequently lived out in exemplary fashion at the festivals. Holler recalls from his own experience with these festivals: 'Set against this commonly projected utopia [the 'big folk family'], the aforementioned conflicts over the "correct" political line – as ferocious as they were – played a subordinate role at the West German folk festivals'.¹⁰¹

Universities and the radical left sub-culture

Another scene where a so called leftist 'sub-culture' developed, was at universities. Peter Glotz, a member of the SPD and Secretary of Education and Science in Berlin during the late 1970s, argued that two different cultures, had developed in the FRG: existing parallel and separately from one another. This led him to say in *Der Spiegel* in 1977, in the aftermath of the Mescalero affaire:

The differences are so great that I have to speak of two cultures. It is as if Chinese are trying to communicate with Japanese [...] One side lives in a subculture within the university, reading only their own flyers and informational materials [...] And then there exists the totally different culture of the many, who read their mainstream newspaper no matter whether the paper was produced by the Springer media conglomerate or someone else [...] Those who have lived for three years in the subculture speak another language than those of mainstream culture, and even the common assumptions are being destroyed.¹⁰²

Glotz's assessment of universities as the bastion of the radical left sub-culture needs some nuancing, especially since at the time he said this, it was strongly connected to the events of the German autumn and the conviction of many people in the FRG that universities were the breeding ground for terrorism. Although it is thus not fair to say that all universities, all students, and all professors were amongst a radical left sub-culture, it is fair to say that a relatively high number of students and professors adhered to Marxist-socialist ideas and that the climate in itself was at least very tolerable towards the radical left milieu. This is not surprising, as the radical left milieu had developed out of the disintegration of the APO, amongst which the SDS, an organisation made up of predominantly university students, was one of the main organs.

¹⁰⁰ Holler, 'The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic of the 1970s and 1980s', pp.136-137.

¹⁰¹ Holler, 'The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic of the 1970s and 1980s', p. 147.

¹⁰² Peter Glotz quoted in: Dirke, *All power to the imagination!*, p.105.

To be sure, in the late 1960s the relationship between the SDS and the universities was not harmonious. Through sit-ins and teach-ins, protests, and occupations and barricading of university buildings, the SDS students had forced a debate on university reform. Nick Thomas explains that ‘above all, the universities defended themselves against a concerted attempt at their politicisation by the left’.¹⁰³ One of those attempts was the initiative of the *Kritische Universität* (KU, ‘Critical University’), proposed by SDS member Wolfgang Nitsch in June 1967. The founders of KU saw it as an alternative to the existing universities. The structures and events of the KU were highly politicised and conformed entirely to SDS ideas on higher education. The KU initiatives led to vicious conflicts between the newly appointed *Rektor* at the *Freie Universität* Berlin, professor Ewald Harndt, former Nazi Party and SA (*Sturmabteilung*, a commando group of Hitler’s National Socialist Party) member.¹⁰⁴ The protest to reform university government to make it more democratic, resulted in a debate on the role of universities in which academics had to reassess the Nazi past, and had to conclude that reform was essential if academic freedom of thought and expression was to be retained or attained.¹⁰⁵ Universities had successfully resisted the SDS demands of left political encroachment of the university, but the one-sided anti-communist representation of the 1950s was no longer tenable.¹⁰⁶

How did the situation described above develop into one where universities came to be regarded as this radical left sub-cultural place? Especially after the German autumn of 1977, when the alternative milieu was more active and profound in dissociating themselves from the violent strategies of the left-wing terrorist groups, universities became not the sole, but definitely a very important place where people could be recruited for the alternative milieu. It was for this reason that not only the big university cities, but also the medium sized university cities, such as Heidelberg, Freiberg, Marburg, and Göttingen had thriving alternative cultures.¹⁰⁷ Sven Reichardt states that in 1980, 13,5 percent of the West Berlin students could be counted as part of the alternative culture, and in Frankfurt this number reached as high as 20,1 percent. The average of the whole Federal Republic was 11,5 percent.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, the AStA (*Allgemeiner Studentenausschuss*, or ‘General Students Committee’) elections in the mid-1970s reveal that the undogmatic left groups, in the guise of the *Sponti* and Grassroots groups (*Basisgruppen*), in West Berlin, Frankfurt and Heidelberg were gaining popularity at a good pace. For example, in Frankfurt in December 1977, the *Gruppierung Ungomatische Linke* (‘faction of the undogmatic left’) won eleven out of the twenty-two seats in the students parliament, and in Heidelberg the *Wahlbündnis Linke Liste* won 25 percent of the seats in the winter semester of 1975-1976.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Thomas, *Protest movements*, p.144.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas, *Protest Movements*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁵ A description of the reforms can be found in: R.M.O. Pritchard, *The end of elitism? The democratisation of the West German university system* (Oxford, 1990), pp.97-102.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas, *Protest movements*, pp.144-145.

¹⁰⁷ Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

The radical left's more active dissociation from left wing terrorism after 1977 facilitated the recruitment of new people. An important reason why a relatively high number of the radical left was to be found at universities had to do with the theoretical philosophical background of the radical left milieu. This constituted of Marxism-Leninism, which was mainly a pursuit of leftist intellectuals working at universities, or philosophy students writing dissertations about it. Rudi Dutschke is an obvious example here. Interesting to note is that the topic and argument of his thesis was very similar to a chapter of Bahro's book *die Alternative*, in which the relation between Russia and the Asian mode of production is examined.¹¹⁰ Radical left students and professors found themselves unable, however, to connect with the broader layers of society, and especially with the group that was so relevant to their ideology: the workers. A leading socialist intellectual who recognised this problem was a professor of sociology at the University of Hannover, Oskar Negt. In an interview with Negt by Harald Wieser in June 1977 in *Kursbuch*, Wieser and Negt talked with each other about the identity problem of the left in the FRG, and Negt points out this lack of connection between the intellectual elites and the workers' movement.¹¹¹ What this shows is that socialist intellectuals were thinking about socialism and how to mobilise the workers' movement in favour of it. Yet, simultaneously, they failed to join the two as the theoretical realm of socialism in the university climate did not resonate with the workers.

1.4 Isolation of the Radical left

In the course of the Seventies, the radical left milieu became increasingly isolated from the society it was living in. This isolation had to do with three manifestations: the authority's response to the emerging radical left, the radical left wing terrorism and the 'sympathisers discourse', and with the desires and characteristics of the radical left themselves.

FRG's response to the emerging radical left

In the national and international climate described above of post-war West Germany, the authority's response in dealing with extremist left positions was extensive. One of the state responses to the protests was to outlaw any organisation or political party that did not support the liberal-democratic basic structure (*die freiheitlich-demokratische Grundordnung*) of the state. This was enshrined in the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) and allowed the Federal Constitutional Court to ban 'unconstitutional' parties and withdraw the political rights of individuals who did not respect the basic liberal-democratic structure.¹¹² Important to note is, that it was allowed to voice fundamental criticism of the state, but the authorities would scrutinise those who did and most likely prevent them from entering the political domain.¹¹³ The

¹¹⁰ Chapter three of this thesis discusses Rudolf Bahro and his book in more detail.

¹¹¹ H. Wieser, 'Oskar Negt, Interesse gegen Partei. Über Identitätsprobleme der deutschen Linken. Ein Gespräch mit Harald Wieser' in: *Kursbuch* 48 (June 1977), pp. 175-188, p.182.

¹¹² In 1952 the neo-Nazi *Sozialistische Reichspartei* was banned, and in 1956 the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* ('German Communist Party', KPD) followed suit.

¹¹³ Pekelder, 'From militancy to democracy?', p. 327-328.

authorities further responded to the protests with heavy-handed police tactics, such as the use of baton charges and water cannon. The killing of Benno Ohnesorg during the violent 2 June 1967 demonstration is an infamous example of where these police tactics led to an unforeseen fatal ending. The officer who shot him was later acquitted of any criminal wrongdoing, undermining the faith in the national justice system amongst the radical left even more. Other measurements taken after the demonstration in which Ohnesorg was shot, such as the prosecution of many protesters in dubious circumstances and the suspension of constitutional guarantees such as the banning of demonstrations in Berlin, further increased the suspicion towards the state amongst left-wing protesters.

During these events, the public was informed by the predominantly right-wing press, which was dominated by Axel Springer's publishing company.¹¹⁴ Springer's newspapers framed the protesters as either fascists or Soviet-backed communists. When student leader Rudi Dutschke was shot by a right-wing fanatic in Berlin in April 1968, left-wing protesters blamed the Springer press for the attack, as they believed this press had created an atmosphere of hatred against Dutschke. Gretchen Dutschke-Klotz described this atmosphere accurately in a fragmentary autobiography of Rudi: 'Das Telefon klingelte ununterbrochen. Unsere Wohnung wurde mit Scheiße, Hakenkreuzen, und Rauchbomben beschmiert und beschmissen. Gegen uns schien eine nationale Psychose ausgebrochen zu sein'.¹¹⁵ As Thomas points out, 'a situation of action reaction quickly became a vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecies for both sides, in which all parties could claim to be defending democracy from extremism'.¹¹⁶

Another measurement taken was the Decree concerning Radicals (Radikalenerlaß) in 1972. This was the ban on the employment of civil servants who were considered to be (left) radical. In theory, this was a measurement that had to encourage the different *Länder* of the FRG to avoid proscribing a list of organisations, but rather look at each individual case in its own context. The measurement was perceived as a witch-hunt, which put severe restrictions on the freedoms of speech and association for many people with radical left ideas who had, or wanted, a job in the public service sector.¹¹⁷ This decree was pejoratively dubbed *Berufsverbote* (occupational ban) by the radical left, to delegitimise the enactment. In the light of the increasing terrorist attacks of radical left groups, a series of anti-terrorist measures were taken. Terrorists were no longer allowed to share a common defence counsel, neither were they allowed to communicate with each other after imprisonment. It was even possible to break off their contact with their defence lawyers. In prison, they were subjected to particularly harsh conditions, including long periods of isolation. Among the non-violent radical left milieus, people became highly critical of the harsh measurements taken against the terrorists. It was asserted that the state itself was in danger of destroying the democracy that it wanted to protect.

¹¹⁴ The Axel Springer press controlled 80 percent of the popular daily newspapers. See: M. Fulbrook, *A history of Germany, 1918-2008. A divided Nation*, p.400.

¹¹⁵ G. Dutschke-Klotz, 'unser Leben', in: Wolter (ed.), *Rudi Dutschke. Aufrecht gehen*, p.17.

¹¹⁶ Thomas, *Protest movements*, p.3.

¹¹⁷ Fulbrook, *A history of Germany 1918-2008*, p. 403.

Terrorism and sympathisers

However, the above mentioned debate became blurred by the notion of ‘sympathisers’, as the conventional press tried to equate criticism of the treatment of terrorists with the support of terrorism itself.¹¹⁸ As Hanno Balz has examined, the media coverage of left-wing terrorism and anti-terrorist policies in the Federal Republic helped to establish what he calls a ‘mass hysteria’ or ‘moral panic’ amongst the general public.¹¹⁹ This lack of distinction between violent and non-violent radical left milieu – which was in fact not an easy distinction to make – led to further isolation of the radical left in the mid and late seventies. As Pekelder explains, to a certain extent the suspicions of the state and mass-media towards the non-violent radical left and their role in the terrorist campaigns were not unfounded. In order for terrorism to survive, it needs a complicit society. Groups like the RAF were no exception to this. In order for the actual perpetrators to survive, they need a social environment consisting of ‘friends, relatives, comrades, and coreligionists’ to support them.¹²⁰

Gretchen Dutschke-Klotz has also described the thin line between the terrorist and non-terrorist radical left, when she writes that after the decline of the APO, Rudi not only had problems with the sectarian dogmatic communist parties in the FRG which were in his eyes too dependent on the Soviet Union, but also with the radical left terrorist groups. He had known Ulrike Meinhof very well, yet he had been disappointed with her choice to add the pistol to her pen.¹²¹ The same was true for Horst Mahler, who even stayed a good friend of Rudi’s after the former’s turn to terrorism. Rudi visited him in prison, where, according to Gretchen, he also discussed the problems he encountered in the radical left milieu because of terrorism.¹²² Thus, strengthened by mass-media allegations, as well as by a reality in which the radical left terrorist groups could continue to exist because of the support of their non-violent sympathisers – the radical left in the mid and late seventies isolated further.

The events of the German Autumn mark the final separation of the radical left milieus from the terrorists, which had previously seen them as comrades, albeit misguided ones.¹²³ Their own disassociation with the terrorism of the RAF did not mean that the state and media picked up on that. On the contrary, often they were depicted as sympathisers of the left wing terrorists, and the radical left intellectuals in universities even came to be regarded as the ‘spiritual fathers’ of left wing terrorism. As Jacco Pekelder points out, ‘most politicians, law enforcement officers, as well as most established media

¹¹⁸ Fulbrook, *A history of Germany 1918-2008*, p. 404.

¹¹⁹ Pekelder, ‘From militancy to democracy?’, p.325, and H. Balz, *Von Terroristen, Sympathisanten und dem Starken Staat. Die öffentliche Debatte über die RAF in den 70er Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2008), pp.178-197.

¹²⁰ Pekelder, ‘From militancy to democracy?’, p.327.

¹²¹ Pekelder, ‘Ulrike Meinhof als stem van de RAF Protest met pen en pistool’.

¹²² G. Dutschke-Klotz, ‘unser Leben’, p.21.

¹²³ Gehring, ‘Sympathising Subcultures? The Milieus of West German Terrorism’, in: Martin Klimke, Joachim Scharloth, and Jacco Pekelder (eds.), *Between Prague Spring and French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980* (Oxford/New York 2011), pp. 233-250 p.242.

channels considered not only the actual perpetrators responsible for the threats and acts of terrorism, but the entire radical left milieu from which left-wing terrorism sprang'.¹²⁴

The 'alternative' and splintered milieu

It was not only the state and mass-media response and coverage that led to the isolation of the radical left milieu. Two important reasons for this isolation are to be found in the characteristics and nature of the milieu itself. Firstly, with their will to establish their own independent antiauthoritarian grass-roots democracy, they saw themselves as the antidote to the West German state authority and regarded themselves, indeed, as 'the other' – contributing to their own isolation. An identification with the term *alternativ* took place within the culture of the radical left themselves. 'Alternative' became equated with an anti-institutional and leftist-ecological lifestyle. A 'counterculture' was what they themselves also believed to have established, this was not merely how the mass-media portrayed them. Their idea of alternative politics, based on grass-roots democracy (*Basisdemokratie*) correlated with a variety of alternative lifestyles, with the common denominator being a rejection of mainstream society. In a brochure of the 'alternative annual market' in June 1978 in Munich, the atmosphere of this counterculture is captured in exemplary fashion:

Es handelt sich um ein selbstbestimmtes, gleichberechtigtes, dezentralisiertes Zusammenleben und -arbeiten, das sich anti-kapitalistisch versteht, das ein menschliches und naturgemäßes Dasein zu verwirklichen sucht. Diese Lebenshaltung und -praxis muß öffentlich werden, damit sich dem Wort 'Alternativen' verknüpfen.¹²⁵

People from the radical left milieu would proudly refer to themselves as being 'alternative', by which they thus wanted to underline their *otherness* to the system (as they called the mainstream culture).¹²⁶

Secondly, after the decline of the SDS and APO, the radical left had become splintered in many small sub-groups. These sub-groups failed to form an overall radical-left entity, resulting in every group working on their own and being unsuccessful in gaining a national platform. One of the most prominent groups was the antinuclear movement (*Anti-Atomkraft-Bewegung*). The alternative movement also included, for example, the movement of agricultural co-ops (*Landkommunebewegung*);¹²⁷ the psychology movement (*Psycho-Bewegung*) in which people practiced self-assertion and self-actualisation (*Selbstfindung*); the *Sponti*, a group from Frankfurt devoted to 'spontaneous ludicrous

¹²⁴ Gehring, 'Symphatising sub-cultures' p.243 and Pekelder, 'From militancy to democracy?', p.325-326.

¹²⁵ 'Alternative Jahrmarkt, anders leben – überleben. Grünes Wochenende in München, München 1978', cited in: D. Rucht, 'Das alternative Milieu in der Bundesrepublik, Ursprünge, Infrastruktur und Nachwirkungen', in: S. Reichardt and D. Siedgfried (eds.) *Das alternative Milieu. Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa 1968-1983* (Göttingen 2010), pp. 61-86, p.75.

¹²⁶ Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination*, p. 107-108. See also T. Daum, *die 2. Kultur: Alternativliteratur in der Bundesrepublik* (Mainz, 1981), p.115.

¹²⁷ Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, pp. 461 and 466. In the 1970s, *Landkommunen* ('rural communes', or 'agricultural co-ops') were predominantly situated in Bayern, Hessen, Niedersachsen and the Schwarzwald area. In those rural-communes, ecology, living forms in nearby nature, community feeling, spiritual forms of integrated lives, and self-government were considered of paramount importance.

actions' as form of protest; the ecology movement; and women's movements – without being identical to any one of them.¹²⁸ An important split within the radical left milieu was the split between the dogmatic and undogmatic left milieu. Among the dogmatic left were the DKP and the aforementioned K-Gruppen, which adopted a Maoist line of thinking. The K-Gruppen were also strongly against the DKP. The DKP supported (and was supported by) the SED. They adhered to the SED's interpretation of Marxism and thus supported Stalinism as well.

All this disunity among the different groups within the radical left milieu led in the end of the 1970s to a call for an overarching 'national' 'idyllic second culture'. A group that tried to advocate for a more inclusive tolerant socialist doctrine was the *Sozialistisches Büro* (SB). In 1974, Rudi Dutschke got involved with this group, which was for him an attempt to overcome the fragmentation and incapacity of action amongst the radical left milieu.¹²⁹ Gretchen Dutschke-Klotz wrote about Rudi's decision to join the SB: 'Rudi war bereits dem Sozialistischen Büro beigetreten, teils weil er das SB für die einzige akzeptable, nicht-sektiererische Organisation hielt, teils aber auch, weil er in ihm ein potentielles organisatorisches Sprungbrett für die Sammlung aller sympathisierenden linken Kräfte sah'.¹³⁰

Another attempt to create a national radical left platform was the *Tunix* conference, held from 27-29 January 1978 in West Berlin. The *Tunix Treffen* was a gathering in West Berlin of several countercultural groups, organised by the *Sponti* group from Frankfurt. Several thousands of people came to the gathering. The idea of *Tunix* was to give expression to their (non-violent) radical opposition of the hegemonic culture after the escalation of terrorism in the German Autumn. The idea was to fix the identity crisis that the alternative milieu had suffered in the context of anti-communism and the terrorist violence and the government's countermeasures.¹³¹ One of the main themes amongst which the various radical left milieus united was in their criticism of the Radikalenerlaß.¹³²

The creation of an nationwide alternative daily, the *Tageszeitung* in 1979, was another attempt to create a national radical left platform.¹³³ As mentioned above, journals and publications were an important means for the radical left movement to establish their *Gegenöffentlichkeit*. Best known were for example *Emma* and *Courage* in the feminist spectrum; *Der Kompost*, *Humus* and *Löwenzahn* for the ecology movement; and *der Pflasterstand* for the Spontis. In addition there were many more local papers such as the *Göttinger Nachrichten*, the student paper that originally published the (in)famous Buback

¹²⁸ Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!*, p.108. In a three-volume series of the 'Alternative catalogue' (*Alternativkatalog*) all the different groups have been listed, sub-divided into themes, along with their activities. See: 'Alternativkatalog', published by Dezentrale: *Alternativkatalog 1* (1975), *Alternativkatalog 2* (1976), and *Alternativkatalog 3* (1978), cited in: D. Rucht, 'Das alternative Milieu in der Bundesrepublik', p.75.

¹²⁹ G. Dutschke-Klotz, H. Gollwitzer, and J. Miermeister (eds.), *Rudi Dutschke. Mein langer Marsch. Reden, Schriften und Tagebücher aus zwanzig Jahren* (Hamburg 1980), pp.235-236.

¹³⁰ G. Dutschke-Klotz, 'unser Leben', p.23.

¹³¹ Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!* pp. 111-112.

¹³² Pekelder, 'From Militancy to Democracy?', p. 328.

¹³³ Cf. J. Magenau, *Die taz. Eine Zeitung als Lebensform* (München 2007).

Obituary.¹³⁴ The *Tagezeitung* was the first alternative paper that tried to become a genuine national platform for the variety of countercultural groups.¹³⁵

During their quest for forming a national foundation for support of their ideas, the alternative radical left did not only look to what was happening in other western European and northern American radical left groups, but was also involved closely with East German intellectuals. Individuals such as Rudolf Bahro and Wolf Biermann influenced the radical left scene in the second half of the 1970s. These intellectuals had different political baggage and state experience, which shaped their ideas and with which the radical left in West Germany became interwoven. Eventually, one of the tropes of the interaction between activists in East and West was the quest of establishing a ‘socialism with a human face’, or a ‘Third Way’. The radical left in West Germany and the East German critics of the GDR both advocated against capitalism and against the bureaucratic ‘Soviet’ form of communism.

1.5 Radical left and its relationship with the GDR (-dissidents)

The final section of this chapter deals with the relationship of the radical left in the Federal Republic with the GDR and with the dissidents of the GDR. It was mainly through the scenes described above (literary and publishing scene, folk and Liedermacher scene, and universities) that the radical left was in touch with people from the GDR, and especially with dissident intellectuals from the GDR. First off, in reference to before, it is essential to realise that in the late 1960s and early 1970s everyone followed the logic of the Cold War dichotomy. This basically meant ‘if you are not for us, you are against us’. So if the radical left was not pro-FRG and capitalism, they were automatically against it. In this context, radical leftists were often told ‘Geht doch nach drüben!’,¹³⁶ which expressed the frustration of anti-communists with the uncritical defence of the GDR at the hand of the alternative milieu. The idea that one had to be friends with one’s enemies enemy without being critical was clearly demonstrated by the radical left in the FRG when they were visiting the GDR. Biermann explained in an interview the – in his eyes – ridiculous admiration of the GDR by leftists from the FRG when he met them at the Chaussee Strasse in East Berlin:

It was clear to me how they took delight in the GDR and how they became intoxicated in their own delight. They walked with us through the inner part of the city and commented

¹³⁴ On 25 April, 1977, the student newspaper of the University of Göttingen published an ‘obituary’ for the murdered attorney general Siegfried Buback. Buback was one of the leading figures in the West German government’s war against left wing terrorism and had recently been assassinated by the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (Red Army Faction, RAF). The writer of the obituary, who described himself as a Mescalero from Göttingen, described that despite the ‘clandestine joy’ that he had felt with the assassination of the government official, who was a former member of the Nazi Party, it was nevertheless now necessary to question the wisdom of using revolutionary violence as means of struggle against the state. He came to conclude that ‘our way to socialism [...] cannot be paved with corpses’. This so-called ‘Mescalero Affair’ caused an uproar and led many to question how West Germany had come to the point that an anonymous student came to experience ‘joy’ at the assassination of a government official.

¹³⁵ Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!* pp. 110-111.

¹³⁶ Papier der Arbeitsgruppe ‘Theorie und Praxis’ der Taz initiative Freiburg (4-11-1978), Hans Ulrich Dillmann Collection (Tageszeitung), 1975-1986, ARC00474, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

patronisingly: ‘Well, it’s really nice here’, as they looked at those ridiculous concrete boxes. Just wait, our grandchildren will kick us in the ass for building them. Or they said: ‘This Trabant car is rather cute ... and you know, in the West it is very difficult to find parking spaces... and even though the car is made of cardboard, well then it won’t rust...and you know, here you can really relax, everything is so wonderfully peaceful here... and you still have human contact here.’ What a stupid talk! And what a conceited way of making compliments! And this really made the people in the GDR angry, too. [...] The point I want to make: sympathy or solidarity with the GDR, that goes without saying. This is where we must first begin. And, when this is clarified, then we want to know of course: What is the GDR? With whom are we showing solidarity, with the reactionary or progressive forces? This is the way we want to ask the question. And before one shows solidarity with either of those forces, one must first take reality into account and not stick one’s head under a pillow in a childish manner.¹³⁷

So, how did the radical left from the FRG get in touch with the GDR? There was the obvious and important connection between the people FRG and the people of the GDR in terms of a shared past, a shared language, a shared heritage, and family ties. This was not only true for the alternative milieu, of course. The two unofficial leaders of the SDS, Rudi Dutschke and Bernd Rabehl, both grew up in the East. Like them, many other young people had left for the West to study, before the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. When the Berlin Wall was built, this hugely decreased the possibility to visit one’s family, had they stayed in the East. According to Gerd Koenen, *Abhauer* like Dutschke and Rabehl, made up a relatively large group within the SDS, according to Rabehl they constituted one third of the SDS in West Berlin.¹³⁸ For people who did not have direct family in the East, the only way to visit the GDR was to either made up imaginary connections, or set out to visit (alleged) less direct family. Koenen describes two occasions where he visited the GDR, on the first occasion (on 1964) they were visiting an imaginary pen-pal of his brother, and on the second occasion he visited the alleged second cousin of his friend ‘K’ (in 1971), in Dresden.¹³⁹

The evident connections between the radical left in the FRG and the GDR were their adherence to the Marxist ideology, their aversion of capitalism (and of the FRG state), and their dislike of imperialism. Because of Cold-War dichotomy, the GDR was very conscious that they could use the radical left in their favour to undermine the legitimacy of the authorities in the FRG. The similarities between the radical left and the GDR meant that they were both against the FRG authorities, and that thus they were ‘friends’. It is true that the GDR financed certain organs of the radical left in the FRG

¹³⁷ J. Zipes, W. Biermann, and T. Hoernigk, ‘Two interviews with Wolf Biermann’, in: *New German Critique*, no. 10 (Winter, 1977), pp.13-27, p.18.

¹³⁸ Koenen, ‘Die APO, ihre Erben und die DDR’, p.134. The term *Abhauer* was used to describe people who had left the GDR for the FRG were called.

¹³⁹ G. Koenen, *Das rote Jahrzehnt*, p. 213 and p.223.

for this reason, such as the magazine *Konkret*, and the communist party of West Germany, the DKP.¹⁴⁰ In this sense, connections between the GDR and the radical left in the West gained very concrete forms.

What this external financial support of communist groups and organisations in the FRG by the SED reveals, is a belief in the strategy that a regime can be strengthened or weakened by non-national external factors. Hubertus Knabe shows in his study about the West German supporters of East German opposition, that the SED feared that a similar strategy was deployed against them, at the hand of organisations in West Germany. Knabe explains that to combat this, the Stasi had developed a theory called *politisch-ideologisch Diversion* (PID, ‘political-ideological-diversion’). According to PID, the creation of deviant socialist theories that criticised the SED doctrine, was the work of GDR enemies in West Germany.¹⁴¹ More concrete, these enemies were organisations that supported oppositionists in East Germany, such as the *Ostbüros* of the political parties CDU, SPD, and FDP, the *Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit* (KgU, ‘Combat Group Against Inhumanity’), and organisations such as *Vereinigung Opfer des Stalinismus* (VOS, ‘Association of Victims of Stalin’) and *Vereinigung Politischer Ostflüchtlinge* (VPO, ‘Association of Political Refugees from the East’). Measures of the Stasi against these organisations in the West ranged from passive information gathering to kidnapping and attempted assassination.¹⁴² Unfortunately, Knabe does not reveal how the socialist undogmatic left fitted in this picture. An explanation for Knabe’s omission could be that the radical left in the FRG was not associated with the FRG state authorities, in fact it framed itself in opposition of it. Therefore, they do not conform to the theory of wanting to undermine the GDR, as that would play in the hands of the FRG authorities. If they wanted anything, it would be the undermining of *both*, the GDR *and* the FRG. Not either one of them. This last notion of undermining both is in fact what did catch Rudi Dutschke in the sight of the East German, as well as the West German, intelligence services. Gerd Koenen described how Dutschke’s call for an assumption of power after the 2nd of June 1967 demonstration – to proclaim a *Räterepublik Westberlin* (‘soviet-style republic’, in the sense of a council republic) which were to be established through a joint German socialist revolution – put him under intense surveillance the intelligence services of both Germanies.¹⁴³ These possible scenarios do above all, show the peculiar position of the radical left in the FRG during the dichotomous times of the Cold War.

Furthermore, socialist deviant ideas of the East German dissidents gained fertile ground amongst the radical left. Important media through which the radical left got involved with the Marxist dissidents from the East was through the three aforementioned scenes which were important within the milieu: the

¹⁴⁰ About *Konkret* being financed by the SED, see: Pekelder, ‘Ulrike Meinhof als stem van de RAF Protest met pen en pistool’, p.7. About the DKP being financed by the SED, Biermann said in an interview with *New German Critique* in 1977, ‘I know this organisation only too well [the DKP]. Besides, both the Left and the Right know that the DKP is both politically and materially dependent on the leadership of the GDR’. In: J. Zipes, W. Biermann, and T. Hoernigk, ‘Two interviews with Wolf Biermann’, p.21.

¹⁴¹ H. Knabe, ‘Die DDR-Opposition und ihre westdeutschen Unterstützer’, in: H.J. Veen, U. Mählert, and P. März (eds.) *Wechselwirkungen Ost-West. Dissidenz, Opposition, und Zivilgesellschaft 1975-1989* (Cologne, 2007), pp.11-127, p. 116.

¹⁴² Knabe, ‘Die DDR-Opposition und ihre westdeutschen Unterstützer’, pp.118-119.

¹⁴³ Koenen, ‘Die APO, ihre Erben und die DDR’, p.133.

literary marked, the youth and music festivals, and universities. The most important reason for this was that the dissident authors and musicians were not allowed to publish or perform in the GDR, so instead, they had their books published with left publishers in the FRG, and played at music festivals organised by the radical left scene. In the course of these events, personal ties and friendships were forged between East German dissidents and members of the radical left milieu in the FRG. For example, Dutschke and Biermann became friends. When Dutschke died on 24 December 1979, due to lasting aftereffects of the attempted assassination against him, Biermann wrote a song about him, of which the first verse goes as follows:

Mein Freund ist tot, und ich bin zu traurig,
um große Gemälde zu malen
- Sanft war er, sanft, ein bisschen zu sanft,
Wie alle echten radikalen¹⁴⁴

Dissident intellectuals, often philosophers of Marxist theory, were not able to spread their teachings in East German universities. In contrast, at West German universities, especially in the social sciences, their works were part of the curriculum. Rudolf Bahro's revolutionary book *Die Alternative*, is but one example. Towards the end of the 1970s, détente allowed for more criticism of the actually existing socialist states among the radical left in the FRG. The ideas and theories of the dissident communist from the East fell in fertile ground with the alternative milieu of the West, in discussions on how socialism should be achieved. Chapters two and three discuss, with the help of two case-studies, how exactly the relationship between the radical left in the West and the dissident Marxists of the East developed.

1.6 Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that the radical left milieu, throughout the course of its existence, since the disintegration of the SDS, became increasingly associated with 'isolation', 'un-constitutionalism' and 'fragmentation'. These developments had to do with the broader context of the FRG and its relationship with the radical left, as well as with some characteristics of the milieu itself. In terms of the broader context of the FRG in the late 1960s and 1970s, it is important to realise that the adherence of the radical left to Marxism, and their rejection of the liberal-democratic basic structure of the FRG, imposed fears on the state's authorities. It reminded them of the instability of the Weimar years, which had eventually paved the way for the Hitler dictatorship. In addition, the FRG in the 1960s and 1970s was part of the global Cold War. The radical left in the FRG posed an awkward and difficult position in this broader context in which one was either 'with' or 'against' you. Since the alternative milieu was not with the FRG system, they could not be other than against it. Moreover, they could not be other than with the

¹⁴⁴ 'Erinnerungen', in: G. Dutschke-Klotz, H. Gollwitzer, and J. Miermeister (eds.), *Rudi Dutschke. Mein langer Marsch*, pp.243-244.

FRG's most direct enemy: the GDR. Therefore, the broader context of the FRG contributed to the increased isolation and un-constitutionalism of the radical left in relation to the rest of society. Un-constitutionalism here means, the repressive measures of the authorities to mark someone as 'radical', such as the Radikalenerlaß (which also meant that radical was 'unconstitutional'), and the 'sympathisers discourse' propagated through conventional media, where the whole alternative milieu was portrayed as a pool of terrorists and sympathisers.

Finally, it was also the characteristics of the radical left milieu themselves which made them become associated with isolation, un-constitutionalism and fragmentation. Isolation and un-constitutionalism were brought about because of the milieu's own desire to be 'alternative'. The milieu purposely rejected 'the system' (as they called the political system and its institutions) and the conventional society and way of living. Through these attitudes, they brought themselves into societal isolation and declared themselves in opposition to the liberal-democratic basic structure – thus unconstitutional. Then there was the failure of the different groups that constituted the overall alternative milieu to work together and reach a national platform for leftists with socialist ideals. They remained fragmented as they all were occupied with particular issues, and many of those groups rejected big organisational structures, which made it extremely hard to organise beyond a regional level. Nonetheless, the issues that occupied them were far from regional: ecology, women's emancipation, liberation fights in Third World countries, and anti-nuclear weapons are examples of how transnational the concerns of some groups were. Yet they failed to organise already at the national level. Moreover, Marxist intellectuals who engaged with socialist theory could not translate this into a language that gained ground to reach beyond intellectual circles either. Thus, the radical left milieu remained an elusive scene of groups of people adhering to a 'socialist ideal', but without an overarching organisation that could unite them. Chapters two and three will examine how the two dissidents Biermann and Bahro influenced the fragmentation, un-constitutionalism and isolation of the radical left milieu.

Chapter 2 –

Liedermacher Wolf Biermann: ‘the singing Rudi Dutschke’

Wolf Biermann war und ist ein unbequemer Dichter – das hat er mit vielen Dichtern der Vergangenheit gemein. Unser sozialistischer Staat, eingedenk des Wortes aus Marxens ‘18. Brumaire’, demzufolge die proletarische Revolution sich unablässig selbst kritisiert, müßte im Gegensatz zu anachronistischen Gesellschaftsformen eine solche Unbequemlichkeit gelassen nachdenkend ertragen können.¹⁴⁵

- Protest letter by many GDR artists and writers against the expatriation of Biermann from the GDR (17 November 1976)

“Biermann is not only a flea in the ear of Socialism [...] but might soon become a louse in the flesh of West Germany”¹⁴⁶

- Ramesh Jaura, 22 January 1977, Economic and political weekly

Wolf Biermann, a name to conjure with. Biermann is perhaps the best known and most influential political song maker in German history. Born in Hamburg in 1936, but moved to East Berlin in 1953 at the age of 17, at a time when most German people were moving in the other direction, from East to West. Biermann was a convinced communist who believed the communist East Germany to be the ‘better Germany’. Even after he was expatriated from this same country 23 years later, he did not abandon his allegiance to communism, or even the GDR. Even though his criticism of the GDR state leadership was the reason why he was banished, he never wanted anti-communists of his new host-country, the FRG, to support him as a means to discredit either the GDR or socialism. Biermann’s life has been defined by a certain *Zerrissenheit* (‘inner rift’) which found expression in his poems and songs. It is exactly the discord of his exceptional position as a staunch German communist criticising the communist country where he went voluntarily, that opened up a wide range of symbolism around the singer when he was expelled to the FRG. His *Ausbürgerung* of the GDR caused an explosion of media attention, both in West Germany as well as internationally, which was accompanied by a corresponding amount of myriad name-calling, characterising Biermann from *armer Genosse* and *singender Rudi-Dutschke* to *trauriger Clown deutschen Schicksals*.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Text der Protesterkärung und Liste ihre Unterzeichner, in : R. Berbig, e.a. (eds.) *In Sachen Biermann. Protokolle, Berichte und Briefe zu den Folgen einer Ausbürgerung* (Berlin 1994), p. 70.

From November 1976, until January 1977, a number of people were arrested in connection with the Biermann case. These people had publicly supported Biermann by collecting signatures that came with the protest letter. The letter was published in West German newspapers, such as the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, on 23 November 1976. Among those imprisoned were Jürgen Fuchs, Christian Kunert, Gerulf Pennach and Kerstin Graf.

¹⁴⁶ R. Jaura, ‘Who is Afraid of Wolf Biermann?’, in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 12:4 (22 January 1977), pp.85-86, p.86.

¹⁴⁷ P. Roos, ‘Bier-Mann der Metaphern-Mann. Was Biermann alles ist – ein Presse Spiegel’, in: Peter Roos (ed.), *Exil. Die Ausbürgerung Wolf Biermanns aus der DDR. Eine Dokumentation* (1977), pp. 304-306.

This chapter considers the influence of Biermann on the radical left milieu in West Germany, by examining especially the reception of Biermann by this milieu after his *Ausbürgerung* from East Germany in November 1976. Firstly, an introduction to his life up to his expatriation will be given, as well as an insight into why this *Ausbürgerung* was such a watershed event that gained a highly metaphorical and symbolic meaning. Secondly, the main discussion that surfaces in the writings about Biermann, whether to examine him as a political phenomenon or as foremost a political artist, will be briefly outlined and discussed. Coming from the conviction of the author that the political *artist* Biermann is essential in examining his influence on the radical left milieu in West Germany, consequently the Folk and *Liedermarcher* scene in the Federal Republic in the 1970s will be examined to place Biermann in a broader context of music festivals as a hub for radical left. Finally the reception of Biermann by the radical left milieu will be examined, through the analysis of radical left periodicals, such as the ID-Archiv¹⁴⁸, newsletters and published works, in order to better understand the influence of Wolf Biermann on the radical left in West Germany.

2.1 Biermann's Biography

Born during the second world war in the Third Reich, Biermann's early childhood was marked by the persecution of his family at the hand of the Nazis. His father was a communist Jew, who was arrested as a member of the communist resistance in 1939, and killed in Auschwitz.¹⁴⁹ In a conversation with Stuart Hood recorded in 1975, Biermann tells the anecdote that he used to sing every morning from five to seven, when he was lying in his bed home alone. His mother had to leave early to work in a factory, his father was in a concentration camp. At seven his aunt would come and fetch him to spend the day until his mother would come home. In those two hours being home alone, Biermann was frightened, but singing carried him through these lonely hours.¹⁵⁰ Biermann and his mother survived the war. From 1945 to 1953, he went to school in Hamburg and decided to become an East German citizen, due to his commitment to communism. He came to the German Democratic Republic in 1953, to study mathematics, economics, and philosophy at the Humboldt University. Biermann later called his moving to the GDR the decisive step in his life; the first step he really made on his own responsibility, and 'it was the right one'. With the benefit of hindsight, he explains in 1975 that 'in the West I would have been corrupted. Perhaps in a very pleasant way [...] I would have been able to exploit my so-called talent in some way or another; or let it be exploited [...] But corrupted I would have been one way or

¹⁴⁸ The ID Archiv started in the FRG in the early 1970s as the archives of the *Informationsdienst zur Verbreitung unterbliebener Nachrichten*, aimed to gather and spread information which could not be found in the official media. In 1988 the archive was transferred to Amsterdam and continued as the *Informationsdienst-Textarchiv*. It contains a collection of leaflets, clippings, working papers on many subjects, such as labour conditions, politics, action committees, anti-fascist agitation, feminism, justice, armament, ecology and environmental problems.

¹⁴⁹ 'Documentation: Facts about Wolf Biermann', in: *New German Critique*, no.10 (winter 1977), pp 9-11, p. 9.

¹⁵⁰ '*Motifs*, Wolf Biermann in conversation with Stuart Hood', the conversation was recorded by Stuart Hood in 1975, in East Berlin, translated by Stuart Hood, pp.62-67, p.64.

the other'.¹⁵¹ He then continues to explain that he could simply develop better in the GDR, as he was not ready to learn in the West: '[I]n the West, I was in a bad, mechanical confrontation with society. Here [in the GDR] – particularly in the early years – I experienced a downright joyous, fervent unity with society. I was, as the romantic saying goes, at home in my fatherland, in my father's land, in the land for which my father fought and died'.¹⁵²

It was, however, this same political passion, that brought him into conflict with this same land. According to Biermann, these are two sides of the same coin: 'a land one loves, a society in which one is passionately involved, one cannot help criticising'.¹⁵³ And criticising is what he did. Important to note is that at first, upon his arrival in the GDR, Biermann's relationship with the state party SED was harmonious, even so, that he was regarded worthy to become a member: an event of which both Biermann and the SED cherished a reciprocal pride. Biermann expressed his in a poem:

Ich bin ein junger Kommunist
Stolz will ich sein und freundlich
Gegen alle andern, vor allem aber:
Gegen meine Genossen.
In diesen Tagen
Wurde ich
Aufgenommen in die Reihen meiner Partei¹⁵⁴

However, the harmony between Biermann and the SED did not last. Since the 1960s Biermann had built his reputation as a poet and ballad singer. As early as 1962, Biermann started to write verses in which he expressed himself unfavourably on developments in the GDR, sometimes being as explicit as:

Er ist für den Sozialismus
Und für den neuen Staat.
Aber den Staat in Buckow
Den hat er gründlich satt¹⁵⁵

For his critical utterances about the government he was refused permission to perform publicly in East Germany in 1962, but this ban was lifted again in June 1963. That same year he was, however, deprived of his membership of the SED. In 1964 he was allowed to make a tour through West Germany, where he was praised as being *the* leading young poet of the GDR.¹⁵⁶ Upon his return to East Berlin, he continued to perform in East Germany, but his works were not permitted in print (although illegal

¹⁵¹ 'Wolf Biermann in conversation with Stuart Hood', p.65.

¹⁵² 'Wolf Biermann in conversation with Stuart Hood', p.65.

¹⁵³ Ibidem, p.65.

¹⁵⁴ W. Biermann, cited in O. Böni, 'Wolf Biermann zwischen Hoffnung und Resignation', in: *Profil, sozialdemokratische Zeitschrift für Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur*, 52: 2 (1973), pp. 108-112, p.108.

¹⁵⁵ W. Biermann, cited in O. Böni, 'Wolf Biermann zwischen Hoffnung und Resignation', p.109. N.B. Biermann writes about himself in third person here, this was something he did more often.

¹⁵⁶ 'Documentation: facts about Wolf Biermann' p. 9.

mimeographed copies did circulate). He did publish his works in the West, for example with the Wagenbach Verlag, for which he got heavily criticised by the Party. In 1965 this led to another ban to perform publicly in East Germany or make tours outside of the GDR, on the grounds that Biermann had violated the SED's cultural policy. The official reasons for the SED's campaign against Biermann were his 'bestial and frivolous' attacks on the SED. His poems were said to express 'anarchistic' and 'petty bourgeois attitudes' that were antagonistic to socialism.¹⁵⁷ In the SED's newspaper *Neues Deutschland* Klaus Höpke wrote:

Es entspricht Biermanns anarchistischer Grundhaltung, wenn er ausgerechnet in unser sozialistischen Gesellschaftsordnung alte Parolen der Demagogen der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft feilbietet [...] Dass er in der Sammlung bei Wagenbach seine früheren Lieder auf die guten Sozialisten nicht drucken liess, können wir nur als genauso symptomatisch für seine Entwicklung wie die massierten Angriffe gegen unsere Gesellschaft empfinden, mit denen er Verse wie die auf Grimau verrät.¹⁵⁸

The media round-up that had been started against him did not stop Biermann from voicing critique of the GDR. He continued to have a small circle of friends to whom he read and sang his poems and ballads. Additionally, his songs and poems were widely available in West Germany. To be sure, Biermann did not lose his faith in socialism, but his controversy with the GDR state got increasingly rough:

Verjagt sind die Ausbeuter
In den Fabriken schuftet das Volk
Dem Volk gehören die Fabriken, aber
Wem gehört das Volk.¹⁵⁹

After several 'illegal' attempts to perform in the GDR, and legal applications to make a tour outside of the GDR, in November 1976, Biermann was finally granted permission by the SED to make a concert tour in West Germany. After this the first concert of this tour on November 13 however, he was notified by the government that his GDR citizenship was revoked, and that he would no longer be able to return to his country.¹⁶⁰

Biermann's Ausbürgerung

On 16 of November 1976, Honecker took away Biermann's citizenship of the GDR. In *Neues Deutschland* one could read that the reason for this was that Biermann had expressed 'Haß, Verleumdung und Beleidigungen gegen unseren sozialistischen Staat'.¹⁶¹ However, Honecker had

¹⁵⁷ 'Documentation: facts about Wolf Biermann' p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ Klaus Höpke cited in O. Böni, 'Wolf Biermann zwischen Hoffnung und Resignation', pp.109-110. Julián Grimau was a Spanish communist and resistance fighter against the Franco dictatorship in Spain. It is believed he was betrayed by fellow communist party members when he was arrested.

¹⁵⁹ Biermann, cited in O. Böni, 'Wolf Biermann zwischen Hoffnung und Resignation', p.111.

¹⁶⁰ 'Documentation: facts about Wolf Biermann' p. 9.

¹⁶¹ Published in *Neues Deutschland* 17 November 1976, cited in: Melching, *Van het Socialisme*, p.191.

gravely underestimated the reaction to Biermann's *Ausbürgerung*. A protest letter was written and signed by many artists, most of them communists, and some even SED members. Among them were the well-known writers Robert Havemann, Christa Wolf, Stephan Hermlin, and Stefan Heym. The letter was published in West German newspapers and other western media. Many signatories now also left the GDR for the FRG, amongst them Thomas Brasch, Reiner Kunze, Hans Joachim Schädlich, Jürgen Fuchs, Günter Kunert, Gerulf Pennach, Jurek Becker, Erich Loest, Rolf Schneider, Joachim Seyppel, Nina Hagen, Armin Müller-Stahl, Manfred Krug, Klaus Renft, A.R. Penck, and Bettina Wegner. According to Willem Melching, 1976 initiated a new phase for East-German culture, in which the relationship between artists and the state had been fundamentally disrupted and in which young generations started to lose interest in the utopic socialism.¹⁶²

The news of Biermann's *Ausbürgerung* brought him a surge of media attention. West German mass-media were vying with each other for interviews, and two of the largest, *Stern* and *Der Spiegel*, immediately featured a cover story. Publications about Biermann even reached far beyond the borders of the two German states: as far as the United States and India.¹⁶³ The West German liberal weekly *Die Zeit* called him 'a flea in the ear of Socialism', and Ramesh Jaura added in an Indian weekly that Biermann 'might soon become a louse in the flesh of West German society' as well.¹⁶⁴ This louse in the flesh of West German society was the expectation that Biermann would, as a perfect showman, an imposing singer, and a sensitive poet, if he decided to do, be able to 'spearhead a powerful Left movement endangering complacency and stability of West Germany'.¹⁶⁵

Biermann's response to the western world mass-media utterances about him was twofold. Firstly, he dreaded to become munition for anti-communist and anti-GDR sentiments of the FRG. He blamed this on the failure of anti-communists to make a distinction between opposition from within communism, and opposition to communism in itself. Biermann said in multiple interviews that he represents an 'inner socialist' opposition, and he even goes as far as to say that the only opposition in a communist society can ever be inner-communist opposition. His reasoning behind this is Marx's saying – which was also cited in the protest letter to his *Ausbürgerung* by fellow GDR-artists – 'that proletarian revolutions are distinguished from the bourgeoisie revolution, among other things, by the fact that they criticise their own failings and shortcomings without pity'.¹⁶⁶ Important to note, is that not all conservatives expressed solidarity with Biermann, as a means to discredit the GDR. Some were critical of Biermann coming to live in the FRG, exactly for the fact that he was a communist. An example of a

¹⁶² Melching, *van het Socialisme*, p.194. N.B. Biermann did not want the younger generation to lose hope in utopic socialism, he just wanted to reform the existing socialism.

¹⁶³ For example, the Indian Economic and Political Weekly 12:4 published a story on Biermann and his *Ausbürgerung* on January 22, 1977, as well as the New German Critique of the Duke University Press, no.10, published an article 'facts about Wolf Biermann' and two interviews with Biermann in the winter of 1977.

¹⁶⁴ Jaura, 'Who is Afraid of Wolf Biermann?', p.86.

¹⁶⁵ Jaura, 'Who is Afraid of Wolf Biermann?', p.86.

¹⁶⁶ 'Biermann in conversation with Stuart Hood', p.67.

more radical reaction is the letter to the editor written by Johannes Dill in *Der Spiegel* on 29 November 1976, in which Dill argues that it would have been to the FRG's credit had they repressed anarchists and 'fellows without a homeland' just as the GDR administration had done.¹⁶⁷

Secondly, Biermann's response to the West German media's attention had to do with the fear of some in the FRG that Biermann would unify his friends of the splintered radical Left milieu. However, Biermann did not believe that he, as an individual, could affect the historical path of the radical left in West Germany: 'one thing we do agree about, and that is that a single human being, especially someone who is a so-called artist, cannot make historical processes or even decisively influence them'.¹⁶⁸ The position he takes here is not surprising, following the logic of communist thought, in which an individual cannot influence historical processes, but rather history is defined by dialectical materialism, which means that the driving force of history is class-conflict. However, Biermann did add to this, that he arrived at a time in the FRG when the Left was finally realising that they were 'only playing the game of the bourgeoisie if they chop each other up'.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, he thought his songs and his political position could nonetheless have an integrating effect on the Left, countering the sectarianism by which the Left milieu was defined at that time.¹⁷⁰

Besides the mass-media surge of reactions, multiple 'solidarity with Biermann' movements erupted in East and West Germany, as well as in other countries. The signs of hope expressed by the most leftist solidarity campaigns were often compared with the hopes that had surrounded the Prague Spring in 1968.¹⁷¹ Even Biermann himself compared the protest that erupted in reaction to his *Ausbürgerung* with those that erupted in the wake of the Prague Spring: 'Obwohl die *Ausbürgerung* eines Menschen natürlich unvergleichlich weniger bedeutet als der Einmarsch in die CSSR am 21 August 1968, war die Protestbewegung gegen meine *Ausbürgerung* doch breiter und tiefer'.¹⁷² The more radical left groups in the FRG had seen in Biermann a new hope for a more democratic and less dogmatic socialist Germany. This hope was crushed and turned out to be in vain with Biermann's expatriation.

Interestingly, the solidarity campaigns somehow brought a renewed realisation of the link between East and West Germany, as Biermann's *Ausbürgerung* had become the embodiment of the German-German reality. Solidarity with Biermann meant a plea for freedom of speech in the GDR, improved democratic freedom, and the freedom to travel – not only for Biermann, but for 'all Germans'.

¹⁶⁷ Johannes Dill, cited in J. Shreve, *Nur wer sich ändert bleibt sich treu. Wolf Biermann im Westen* (Frankfurt am Main 1989) p. 34.

¹⁶⁸ Jack Zipes, Wolf Biermann, and Thomas Hoernigk, 'Two Interviews with Wolf Biermann', *New German Critique*, 10 (1977), pp.13-27, p.15

¹⁶⁹ Zipes, Biermann, and Hoernigk, 'Two Interviews with Wolf Biermann', p.15.

¹⁷⁰ Zipes, Biermann, and Hoernigk, 'Two Interviews with Wolf Biermann', p.15.

¹⁷¹ For example Carcla Boulboulé makes this comparison in: C. Boulboulé, 'Solidaritätsbewegung mit Wolf Biermann in Ost- und West-Deutschland', in: Roos (ed.), *Exil*, pp.81-146, p. 82.

¹⁷² Wolf Biermann in *Der Spiegel* 42 (1992), cited in R. Berbig and H.J. Karlson, "'Leute haben sich als gruppe erwiesen". Zur Gruppenbildung bei Wolf Biermanns *Ausbürgerung*', in R. Berbig, e.a. (eds.) *In Sache Biermann*, pp.11-28, p.11.

Oftentimes solidarity with Biermann was used as a renewed critique of the Radikalenerlaß in the FRG as well – being an outspoken communist, Biermann was not allowed to work in public service occupations in West Germany. Of course, Biermann did not wish to become a teacher or have a job in public services, yet the fact that he could not, had he wanted it, was an important rhetorical device for the radical left, implying as much as that the FRG-regime was just as repressive as its GDR counterpart. Perhaps the hopes and statements of the many different solidarity campaigns with Biermann are best summarised in a letter written by the *Bochumer Initiative*, a campaign to support Biermann's and all German people's right to travel freely in all of Germany, stating the hope that 'der Kampf aller Sozialisten, Gewerkschafter und konsequenten Demokraten in Ost- und Westdeutschland für die Verteidigung der demokratischen Rechte und Freiheiten gemeinsam geführt wird'.¹⁷³ Protests against Biermann's Ausbürgerung came from different directions; the SPD, the Jusos,¹⁷⁴ DGB trade unions,¹⁷⁵ the undogmatic radical left, some DKP members,¹⁷⁶ artists and writers in the GDR and the FRG, international artists, several West European communist parties, and independent West German organisations, such as the *Deutschen Bundesjugendring* ('German Federal Youth Union') and the CISNU, a group for Iranian students in West Germany.¹⁷⁷

Biermann's Ausbürgerung became a watershed event exactly because it was characterised by the intense discord of a communist being expelled from the communist Germany that he had chosen to live. In other words, it became an important event in both Germanies due to the inherent tension it showed: by the controversy of the relationship that Biermann, as a German communist, had with the GDR as well as with the FRG. His controversy with the GDR rested in his criticism of how 'socialism' was executed there, which he once compared to the discords between Catholicism and Protestantism being worse than the discord between Christianity and other religions. Protestants and Catholics believed in the same god, but in a different way, whereas people of other religions were 'mere misled fools' believing in a different god.¹⁷⁸ The other religion in this metaphor is of course capitalism that the FRG 'believed' in – this also being his controversy with the FRG: believing in a different ideological system of society.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, it was because of his role as political artist, mainly operating for his work in the public sphere, that it

¹⁷³ Bochumer Initiative, cited in: C. Boulboulé, 'Solidaritätsbewegung mit Wolf Biermann in Ost- und West-Deutschland', In: Roos (ed.), *Exil*, p. 82.

¹⁷⁴ The Jusos was the youth-department of the SPD.

¹⁷⁵ It was the DGB (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, the 'German trade union') of IG Metal, who had invited Biermann for his concert tour in West Germany in November.

¹⁷⁶ The DKP officially defended the SED's position to expatriate Biermann, however, some people within the DKP did express solidarity with Biermann and protested the decision to expatriate him. In fact, Biermann's Ausbürgerung led to rift within the party, and led to a further isolation of the DKP from other left movements.

¹⁷⁷ For an overview and collection of the many reactions in media and letters of all the solidarity groups, see: C. Boulboulé, 'Solidaritätsbewegung mit Wolf Biermann in Ost- und West-Deutschland', pp.81-146.

¹⁷⁸ Zipes, Biermann, and Hoernigk, 'Two Interviews with Wolf Biermann', p.25.

¹⁷⁹ Zipes, Biermann, and Hoernigk, 'Two Interviews with Wolf Biermann' pp. 19-20.

was possible for him to become a symbol for many parties for whatever suited them: for the SED he became the traitor of the GDR and socialism, for the FRG anti-communists he became the symbol of inhumane and illiberal GDR state repression of its citizens rights, and for ‘undogmatic’ radical left he became an advocate of ‘the alternative’ to dogmatic socialism of the GDR.

*Biermann: political phenomenon or political song singer?*¹⁸⁰

Seit gestern ist Biermann in ein Verbannter, ein Dichter im Exil. Das aber hat es so in der deutschen Geschichte noch nicht gegeben. Hölderlin war in Bordeaux, Heine war in Paris, Marx in London, Tucholsky in Schweden, Brecht in Dänemark, Finnland und Amerika. – Aber Exil von Deutschland nach Deutschland ist eine neue historische Absurdität.¹⁸¹

– Hans-Geert Falkenburg (17 November 1976)

So wird und ist Biermann nicht nur politisch und geografisch seine Heimat los – Böll hat das ähnlich formuliert; was, um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen, den Jargon und Begrifflichkeit der Linken hier angeht, wird er auch sprachlos.¹⁸²

– Peter Roos (1977)

Biermann is perhaps the most-discussed German singer and writer in German history, especially around the time of his *Ausbürgerung* from the GDR. The biggest controversy between the writings about him is to be found in the question whether the importance of Biermann for German history should be his role as a political singer, or as the political phenomenon that he seemed to represent.¹⁸³ The two quotes above each represent an aspect of these two ways to analyse Biermann. In the first citation he is the political phenomenon of the historical absurdity being a German in exile in Germany. The second quote stresses Biermann as East-German political singer who was giving inner communist critiques on the state he lived in, but who had to adopt a ‘new language’ for the country in which he was forced to live. A country with literally the same language, but figuratively a very different one. Expressions in German that would have made East Germans laugh, would not have had the same effect on a West German audience.

Considering Biermann as a *Politikum* (‘political phenomenon’) tends to prioritise what has been said about Biermann rather than the role of his artistic output itself. In the work at hand, the artistic

¹⁸⁰ Interesting to note is that Biermann himself did not like the term ‘political song’, Biermann: ‘Protest songs? I think ‘protest songs’ is a trendy expression. Admittedly I have not thought about it much, but if I turn it over in my mind, then I feel that I am not a ‘protest’ singer [...] I do not consider myself to be someone who hands out bad marks on social condition: a kind of poetical headmaster. But I do consider myself to be man who stands in the midst of the political battles of his age [...] The harshness of the tone in my songs reflects nothing more or less than the harshness of the political confrontation between progress and reaction in our society [here: GDR]’, in: ‘Wolf Biermann in conversation with Stuart Hood’, pp.63-63.

¹⁸¹ Hans-Geert Falkenburg cited in P. Roos, ‘Nachwort. Über dem totberichteten Biermann in Exil’, in: Roos (ed.), *Exil*, p. 315.

¹⁸² P. Roos, ‘Nachwort. Über dem totberichteten Biermann in Exil’, p.317.

¹⁸³ Roos, ‘Nachwort. Über dem totberichteten Biermann in Exil’, p.312.

output of Biermann is not the object of analysis, nonetheless the analysis will keep in mind that Biermann was not only a political phenomenon, but that he was a subversive singer in the GDR context as well. In other words, regarding Biermann as political singer is essential to understanding his political significance. Being a critical political singer in the GDR, indeed becoming a representative of the German-German situation because of the political expressions in his songs and poems, his expulsion to West Germany posed a certain problem for him. As Biermann said, ‘music is a political weapon in itself’,¹⁸⁴ only in a new society with new social structures, Biermann had to fight a different battle with the same gun. He could not use his songs as a political weapon for inner communist opposition, he had to use it as a political weapon against capitalist structures. Who was Biermann the artist now that he had to live in the West, in a society whose structures he did not understand? He said in an interview in 1977 with Günter Wallraff that he believed that his life in West Germany would mean the end of his career as a writer. He stated that it was worse for him having to live in the FRG, than it would have been in the Soviet Union; even though he would not have been able speak the language there, at least he would have understood the social structures.¹⁸⁵ A lion’s share of his identity as political artist was his potential to be subversive and disruptive with his poems and songs, however, in the FRG this would less be the case, as he had more freedom to sing whatever he wanted to sing – and if it were critical of the GDR, it would even suit the West German authorities. The question was now, which role could Biermann play in the West, which position could he defend or represent through his songs? And also, what was his relationship towards the splintered radical left milieu in West Germany? These questions that occupied contemporaries of Biermann, as well as Biermann himself, will be examined in the final part of this chapter which deals with the question of how Biermann influenced the radical left milieu in the FRG after his *Ausbürgerung*.

2.2 *Liedermacher scene and festivals*

[O]ne cannot move the world with songs. But when the world itself moves, songs can be born, and when songs are born which give political and poetic expression to passions and hopes and feelings, then a song can have an extraordinary reinforcing effect. It confirms. It brings individuals together. They say: ‘Oh, he feels like that too, he thinks like that too’. People encourage each other by singing a song with the political content of which they agree.¹⁸⁶

- Wolf Biermann (1975)

Biermann was not the only socialist political singer West Germany in the late 1970s. Other groups and singers of the radical left scene in the Federal Republic were for example Kattong, Frank Baier,

¹⁸⁴ Biermann ‘Und die Musik selbst ist eine politische Waffe’, in: Günter Wallraff: ‘Vorbemerkung und Interview’, in: Roos (ed.), *Exil*, pp.9-19, p.14.

¹⁸⁵ Günter Wallraff: ‘Vorbemerkung und Interview’, pp.15-16.

¹⁸⁶ ‘Wolf Biermann in conversation with Stuart Hood’, pp.62-63.

Krempeltiere, Hannes Wader, and Fasia Jansen.¹⁸⁷ Most of these musicians originated from the radical left milieu, and they supported this milieu with solidarity songs written for prisoners, the strikers of IG Metall, squatters, and anti-Nuclear protests, for example. Biermann's *Ausbürgerung* made him a particular interesting case, as it gave him a unequalled symbolic status in the German-German reality.

As said before, the importance of this symbolic status cannot be detached from his role as political artist. It is therefore essential to place him into the *Liedermacher* scene of East and West Germany in the 1970s, and the relationship this scene had with the radical left milieu of the Federal Republic. Eckard Holler, former leader of Club Voltaire e.V. in Tübingen which played a main role in organising the Tübingen Festivals, wrote that after his expatriation from the GDR, Biermann had quickly established contact with the folk and Liedermacher scene of West Germany, becoming a leading, yet controversial political figure. In many towns, his concerts were gatherings for alternatives, greens, and left people. One of the high points was his 'es grünt so grün' concert at the Tübingen festival in 1980.¹⁸⁸ Happiness with Biermann's presence at the Tübingen festival, and exemplary for the importance attached to having Biermann perform there, was expressed by Holler his opening speech of the sixth Tübingen festival in 1980:

Ich freue mich, daß ich den Sänger des Eröffnungskonzertes Wolf Biermann begrüßen darf. Wir haben zu ihm gesagt: wenn Du nicht kommst, machen wir das Festival nicht, darauf hat er seinen Terminplan geändert, daß er heute hier singen kann; so ist das Festival auch mit sein Verdienst.¹⁸⁹

As explained in chapter one, the Folk and Liedermacher scene underwent some changes as the 1970s proceeded. Most significantly the music festivals in the seventies played a role in the integration of the splintered left milieu – from the DKP, to the New Social Movements, to the SPD – with each other, as well as with society, as they appealed to a larger (partly also non-political) public.¹⁹⁰ The open atmosphere – often the festivals were literally held in the open air – informal communication, joyous atmosphere, and songs connected people. With the development from the 'intimate folk family', towards a mass audience for the folk and Liedermacher songs, the folk and Liedermacher music festivals became more commercialised and needed public funding which they would not receive if they remained independent and isolated from society. The difficult question that arose with this was how left-wing political ideas, which organisations as Club Voltaire in Tübingen claimed to represent, could be aligned with the reality of the commercial music business. According to Holler, this was dealt with at the Tübingen Festivals by addressing this contradiction on the festivals itself, in addition to offering

¹⁸⁷ These singers and groups, and their particular songs written for the radical left scene, are all mentioned in Holler, 'The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic in the 1970s and 1980s', pp. 133-139.

¹⁸⁸ Holler, 'The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic in the 1970s and 1980s', pp.134-135.

¹⁸⁹ Eckard Holler, cited in *Presse zum 6. Tübinger Festival* (1980), Bro 559/17 fol., International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁹⁰ Holler, 'The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic in the 1970s and 1980s', pp. 147 and 160-162, also Holler explains that not all followers of folk music were politicised, for many it was much more a matter of cultural identity and lifestyle than of politics, p. 147.

workshops, debates, and solidarity actions, to discuss radical left-wing issues which concerned the different New Social Movements.¹⁹¹ For example, one of the themes of discussion on the sixth Tübingen festival in 1980, was ‘how can the alternative culture – such as the Liedermacher scene – change the political landscape?’.¹⁹²

Important here is to realise that Biermann, as a political thinker and singer was part of this scene and inevitable with the changes of this scene as well. Concerning the close relationship that Biermann had with Club Voltaire,¹⁹³ he was also involved with on the one hand showcasing the role folk and Liedermacher festivals had in presenting a pluralistic left, while on the other, increasing sympathy for the left scene in West Germany.

2.3 Reception of Biermann in the West German radical left milieu: the singing Rudi Dutschke?

From November 1976 onwards, Wolf Biermann was forced to live in exile in West Germany. Already before his Ausbürgerung, Biermann’s work was known in West Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, England, France, Italy Greece, Japan, the Netherlands, Austria and the USA. The communist singer was particularly known among socialist students of New Left in the West, and they were fascinated by Biermann’s mix of social engagement and expressive subjectivity. Thomas Rothschild writes how he remembers first listening to Biermann as a left-wing student in Vienna, and how his mother told him, after he repeatedly listened to the records; ‘muß das sein? Stell’s wenigstens leiser!’, to which Rothschild thought: ‘ich stellte es nicht leiser: ich wollte jedes Wort verstehen, ich interpolierte einige kaum vernehmbare Stellen, ich war fasziniert. Diese Mischung von gesellschaftlichem Engagement und subjektiver Expressivität – die war neu für uns’.¹⁹⁴ Rothschild’s fascination with Biermann lasted, at the time of the Ausbürgerung Rothschild was working in West Germany as assistant in literature theory and publisher in Stuttgart, when he edited and published the book *Wolf Biermann, Liedermacher und Sozialist* in solidarity with the singer.

This book is one of the many examples of socialist publications on Biermann in West Germany, of which many appeared after his expatriation. It is publications like this one, published by and for the radical left milieu in West Germany in magazines, newspapers, and books, that serve as the basis to examine the question how Biermann influenced the West German radical left milieu by analysing how he was received in this milieu after his exile.

¹⁹¹ Holler, ‘The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic in the 1970s and 1980s’, p.155.

¹⁹² Bau, ‘Muß Biermann dem Wetter weichen?’, article published in *Presse zum 6. Tübinger Festival*, p.10.

¹⁹³ From 1978 to 1987 the Tübingen concerts of Wolf Biermann were promoted exclusively by Club Voltaire, Biermann effectively becoming a political and artistic advertisement for the club, according to Holler. Holler, ‘The Folk and *Liedermacher* scene in the Federal Republic in the 1970s and 1980s’, p. 154.

¹⁹⁴ T. Rothschild, *Wolf Biermann. Liedermacher und Sozialist* (Hamburg 1976), p.8.

Almost all radical left-wing movements in West Germany expressed support for Biermann and set up solidarity campaigns, or published letters and flyers to promote Biermann's 'free return' to the GDR and the 'abolition of his expatriation'.¹⁹⁵ The only radical left group which seemed to defend and support the SED's decision for Biermann's *Ausbürgerung* was the DKP. Amongst the radical left milieu the alleged reason for this was the assumption that the DKP was in fact merely a pawn of the GDR bureaucracy, being politically and materially depended on the GDR. The DKP supported the SED's position on the grounds that he had discredited the GDR administration and published in bourgeoisie press of the FRG. However, as Biermann stated in an interview with Thomas Hoernigk in February 1977, even within the DKP a communist opposition had started to develop after the *Ausbürgerung*; 'A large number of members have demonstrated solidarity with me, have spoken out against the expatriation and have consequently drawn the ire of the Party, which has taken measures against them'.¹⁹⁶ These measures meant in most cases being expelled from the party.

Apart from the DKP-members supporting the SED's position, Biermann thus enjoyed great solidarity amongst socialist left in the FRG. One of the reasons for this solidarity was expressed around the issue of the *Radikalenerlaß* – or the *Berufsverbote*, as the radical left pejoratively called the decree that did not allow them to work in public services jobs. On the one hand this brought solidarity because Biermann had experienced a 'Berufsverbote' in the GDR – as he had not been allowed to perform or publish – on the other hand, he would be affected by the West German decree as well, as he was an outspoken communist. Not only felt many of the radical left felt that they could identify with Biermann on this issue, more importantly, it made many realise that they were in a similar situation, fighting for a similar socialism as Biermann – which had a unifying potential, fighting for a *common cause*: 'denn kämpfen für die gemeinsame Sache (einen Sozialismus, der uns schmeckt und der uns schon heute scharf macht) kann man (muß man!) da wie dort'¹⁹⁷.

The empirical evidence shows that the expatriation of Biermann and the wave of solidarity that followed this, paved the way for many of the radical left in West Germany to be convinced that they were in a similar situation as the dissidents the East, such as Biermann and the like. They were propagating a similar political ideology and system, only they had to defend this against the backdrop of oppositional state-systems: liberal democracy in the West and communism in the East. In many ways, the issue of 'Berufsverbote' offered a *common language* to fight for 'socialism with a human face' in both German states. In an open letter from Rudi Dutschke to Biermann, Dutschke reveals the similarities in the fights of radical left in the FRG and Biermann in the GDR; both states have an 'inner state-

¹⁹⁵ Sozialistisches Büro Hamburg, Flyer in solidarity with Wolf Biermann (27 November 1976), in: 'Informationsrundbrief, Ausgabe Nr. 27 - sensbachtal in Odenwald, 15 Dezember 1976', *Informationsdienst des Sozialistischen Büros (1973-1981)*, pp.10-18, p.12, ZK 45357, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁹⁶ Zipes, Biermann, and Hoernigk, 'Two Interviews with Wolf Biermann', p.20.

¹⁹⁷ Sozialistisches Büro Hamburg, Flyer in solidarity with Wolf Biermann (27 November 1976), in: 'Informationsrundbrief, Ausgabe Nr. 27 - sensbachtal in Odenwald, 15 Dezember 1976', *Informationsdienst des Sozialistischen Büros (1973-1981)*, p.12.

machine' that is directed at curbing 'potential class struggles that would enable socialism'. He comes to conclude that the 'empty character of democracy in the FRG' discloses the statement of Rosa Luxemburg in which she asserts 'without democracy no socialism, without socialism no democracy' and therefore, the 'real socialism' of the GDR and the 'real democracy' of the FRG are both repressive phrases that shut the door on the socialist democracy Dutschke and Biermann both desired.¹⁹⁸

The common cause that the radical Left in the Federal Republic and Biermann (formerly) in the East were fighting for, and which made them prey of the radicals' decree, also brought a renewed focus on the idea of the '*heimatlose Linke*'. For some, like Rudi Dutschke, this even led to the support of the idea of a 'unified socialist Germany': an utopian socialist Heimat in the eyes of Biermann. Yet, this was a tricky business. Among the radical left, many saw talk of a unified Germany as dangerous and nationalistic – inevitably connected to Nazism. Even though the radical left of West Germany, as well as the 'inner socialist' opposition of the East, could agree to the feeling that they were left without a Heimat, the concept 'Heimat' was highly controversial in post-war Germany. Heimat means 'homeland', but this seemingly neutral concept had been appropriated by the political radical right. In Nazi-terminology the term was charged with certain subjective, exclusive, desires expressing German 'beauty' and 'purity', just as notions such as *Volk*, nation, and soil had been. Biermann's notion of Heimat was a different one. His idea of Heimat was inspired by Ernst Bloch's interpretation of the term; in this interpretation 'Heimat' is an utopian place that everyone knows from their childhood, but where nobody has ever been yet. This place must be created by a restructuring of the world.¹⁹⁹ Biermann, in the wake of Bloch, believed that if Nazism had appropriated notions such as Heimat, this meant that they could also be 'expropriated'. Bloch argued that all genuine critical art and philosophy should develop 'strategies of reconsideration' that facilitate de-Nazification.²⁰⁰ Biermann's artistic output was often defined by his never-ending search for a Heimat. He explicitly alludes to this in his song 'Deutsches Miserere (Das Bloch Lied)' of 1977, in which he asks if he is now a '*heimatloser Gesell*'.²⁰¹

For Biermann being *heimatlos* was inherently linked to reunification of Germany, which in turn could only happen if the different radical left groups in West Germany would reunify with one another. In the above mentioned 'Bloch-Lied' he also lays this issue bare:

Und die Linken hassen einander

¹⁹⁸ R. Dutschke, 'Open Brief für Wolf: Kritik und Selbstkritik', in: Rothschild (ed.) *Wolf Biermann. Liedermacher und Sozialist*, pp. 67-85, pp. 67-71.

¹⁹⁹ The Blochian notion of Heimat can be found in E. Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Band 2 (Frankfurt am Main 1959) p.1628, this translation and interpretation of Bloch here is cited from: Holler, 'The Folk and Liedermacher scene in the Federal Republic', p. 157.

²⁰⁰ W.B.J. Goossens, *Verloren Zonsondergangen. Hans Jurgen-Syberberg en het linkse denken over rechts in Duitsland* (Doctoral thesis, Maastricht University 2004), p.290. Chapter three of Goossens' dissertation deals extensively with how Hans Jürgen Sybenberg, in the wake of Bloch, thought that de-Nazification through critical art and philosophy, by reconsideration of Nazism-laden terms, was possible.

²⁰¹ W. Biermann, 'Deutsches Miserere (Das Bloch-Lied)', in: *Wolf Biermann preußischer Ikarus. Lieder/Balladen/Gedichte/Prosa* (Cologne 1978), pp. 199-202, p. 202.

Mehr als den Klassenfeind!
Eh wir uns nicht selber einen
Wird Deutschland auch nicht geeint
Und ein Linker nennt den anderen
Verräter! Und recht! Und schlecht!
Sie schlagen sich in die Fressen
Mit MAO und MARX und BRECHT²⁰²

A call for unification and cooperation between the various radical left groups was evident among the milieu in the aftermath of Biermann's expatriation. This clearly comes to fore in a position paper drawn up by the Sozialistisches Büro (SB) Aachen, where they argued: 'Es liegt nahe [...] die politischen Folgen dieses nach rückwärts gewandten Beschlusses [SED's decision to expatriate Biermann] umzukehren, hin zur Stärkung der positiven inhaltlichen Gemeinsamkeiten und der Kooperationsfähigkeit der sozialistischen und kommunistischen Kräfte'.²⁰³ Even though the call for a unified Germany was neither explicitly mentioned nor supported by the radical left milieu in West Germany, the unification and cooperation of the radical left was sometimes agitated for in a way that hinted towards an idea of reunification of Germany. For example, the 'Komitees zur Verteidigung und Verwirklichung der demokratischen Rechte und Freiheiten in Ost und West - in ganz Deutschland' who agitated against the radicals' decree in West Germany, and the prohibition of many artists in the East to either perform or publish, mentioned in a document expressing their position that 'der Kampf für die demokratischen Rechte und Freiheiten ist eins und unteilbar und kann nicht vor der Teilung Deutschlands haltmachen'.²⁰⁴ Already the name of the committee, including the phrase '- in ganz Deutschland' (in all of Germany), implicitly indicates the idea of 'one' Germany. In the statement they again repeat the portrayal of the fight for democratic rights and freedoms as 'one' and 'indivisible' – one that cannot take into account the division of Germany. Thus, the narrative here speaks of one and the same fight, fought together, in all of Germany. This does not explicitly show that this committee was propagating a unified Germany, but it does show that the mental landscape was opening up to the idea of an 'all of Germany', and with that the inherent possibility of a 'single Germany'.

A more concrete focus, or even strategy, towards unifying the radical left milieu after the Ausbürgerung of Biermann, came from Biermann's enthusiasm for Eurocommunism – which constituted predominantly of the Communist parties in Italy, France and Spain. Biermann strongly

²⁰² Biermann, 'Deutsches Miserere (Das Bloch-Lied)', p. 201.

²⁰³ SB-Gruppe Aachen, position paper in the wake of a discussion forum about Biermann's Ausbürgerung, in: 'Informationsrundbrief, Ausgabe Nr. 27 - sensbachtal in Odenwald, 15 Dezember 1976', *Informationsdienst des Sozialistischen Büros (1973-1981)*, pp.10-18, p.15, ZK 45357, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

²⁰⁴ 'Für die Gründung eines "Komitees zur Verteidigung und Verwirklichung der demokratischen Rechte und Freiheiten in Ost und West - in ganz Deutschland"' in: 'Informationsrundbrief, Ausgabe Nr. 27 - sensbachtal in Odenwald, 15 Dezember 1976', *Informationsdienst des Sozialistischen Büros (1973-1981)*, pp.10-18, p.16, ZK 45357, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

believed that a communist party in West Germany in imitation of the Communist Party Italy, would help unify the radical left milieu. Of course, the FRG already had a communist party, the DKP. However, this party was considered unsuitable for the task of unifying the left, as it was regarded too much as a SED spin-off. Moreover, Biermann was convinced that the DKP was not allowing heterogeneous interpretations of socialism and communism in the way that the Italian communist party did. In a letter he wrote to his friend Robert Havemann after his trip to Italy, he explained how the man who came to pick him up from the airport was in the Italian communist party, a Stalinist, yet still in solidarity with Biermann:

Unser Freund zog mich aus dieser Schußlinie [the Italian press at the airport] und redete vertraulich: *Compagno* Biermann, ich weiß, was sie mit dir gemacht haben, ich bin ganz auf deiner Seite, aber ich bin ein alter Stalinist. Ich hab Sorge, daß wir mit dem *compromesso storico*²⁰⁵ reinfallen und unseren revolutionären Ziele verraten. Aber Berlinguer ist ein guter Genosse, und Breshnjew ist kein guter Genosse, und du paß bloß auf, daß sie aus dir keinen Solschenizyn machen! Und ich dachte, wie bunt! Wie anders als unsere schmalbrüstigen Dogmatiker! Wie gut, wenn all diese Widersprüche in einer Menschenbrust Platz haben und haben dürfen. Was für ein Glück für diesen Mann, daß seine Partei in ihren Reihen Kommunisten mit verschiedene Positionen erträgt.²⁰⁶

In this same letter, Biermann also tells how he sang the new version of his ‘So soll es sein’ for the Italian comrades, in which he sings that the FRG needs a CP (Communist Party), just as he saw it blossoming under the Italian sun;

Die BRD braucht eine KP [*Kommunistische Partei*]
Wie ich sie wachsen und reifen seh
Unter Italiens Sonnenschein
- So soll es sein²⁰⁷

In addition, Biermann contended that the problem in the radical left milieu was not the mere existence of the different ‘sects’ (as he called them), but the refusal to of these sects to work together and appeal for a common front and solidarity – which could for example happen if a new a West German communist party would be founded. According to Biermann, all the different leftist groups could bring something valuable toward the union of the left, the plunder of the splinter groups was that they all claimed to possess the absolute ‘socialist’ truth.²⁰⁸ This is expressed in his ‘Lied vom Roten Stein der Weisen’, in

²⁰⁵ ‘The historic compromise’ was an Italian historical political alliance between Christian Democrats and the Italian Communist Party in the 1970s. the term ‘historic compromise’ was coined by the Communist leader Enrico Berlinguer in 1973, to first indicate the possible governing coalition between the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party.

²⁰⁶ W. Biermann, ‘Brief an Robert Havemann’, in: Kiepenheuer & Witsch (publishers) *Wolf Biermann. Nachlaß 1*, pp. 7-20, p.8.

²⁰⁷ W. Biermann, ‘So soll es sein – so wird es sein’ in: Kiepenheuer & Witsch (publishers) *Wolf Biermann. Nachlaß 1*, pp. 7-20, p.9. NB: this version of the song did already exist before his visit to Italy, as he also sang it as the opening song of his concert in Cologne on 13 November 1976.

²⁰⁸ ‘Zipes, Biermann, and Hoernigk, ‘Two Interviews with Wolf Biermann’’, p. 22.

which he compares the desire of the different splintered groups to possess the absolute truth, and with that their wish to be ‘the most left’ of the country. Biermann likens this with the fairy tale of Snow White where the evil stepmother wants to be the most beautiful of the country and asks a bewitched mirror: ‘mirror mirror on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?’:

Genossen! Fragt nicht penetrant
Wie in dem Märchen hirnverbrannt:
Wer ist der Linkste im ganzen Land?
- Das kann kein Spiegel sagen²⁰⁹

In its ability to unify several socialist and communist positions, Biermann saw Eurocommunism as the only force that posed an actual danger to the western capitalist states as well as to eastern Stalinist bureaucracies. In other words, according to Biermann, Eurocommunism would be the only option for socialist democracy in West Germany, as it agitated against capitalism, against Stalinist bureaucracies, and was yet in favour of democratic socialism.

Finally, Biermann was important for the radical left milieu for the fact that he showed how one could be communist, yet criticise the ‘actually existing socialism’ of East Germany. And by expressing this ‘inner communist’ critique, he positively influenced the decrease of the legitimisation problem of the radical left in West Germany. The radical left in West Germany contended with a legitimisation problem, as for many workers in the FRG, for example, the radical left’s adherence to socialism meant that they were defending the horrors of Stalinism and the repressive communist regimes on the eastern half of the iron curtain. Now Biermann’s case had shown that a communist critique was possible, without immediately also being anticommunist. Exemplary for this is what was stated on a flyer of the Sozialistisches Büro Hamburg after Biermann’s expatriation:

Der weitverbreitete Antikommunismus in Westdeutschland hat auch seine Ursache im für viele abschreckende Beispiel der DDR. Nur ein Sozialist oder Kommunist, der vor den negativen Erscheinungen in der DDR nicht den Kopf in den Sand steckt, kann letztlich überzeugend für einen Sozialismus eintreten, der Anziehungskraft ausübt. Aber jetzt fängt die Schwierigkeit erst richtig an: wie kritisiert man die DDR, ohne ins antikommunistische Klischee zu verfallen? – Biermann zeigt es.²¹⁰

Thus; in the late 1970s, appearances of people like Biermann, but also events such as Charta ’77 and the end of the Vietnam war, opened up a space among the radical left milieu in the West to express criticism of communism, yet not being anti-communist and not disavowing their adherence to socialism. Exemplary for this were also the seminars organised by the Sozialistisches Büro, about ‘problems in eastern Europe’ (which they formerly called ‘Biermann-Seminars’). One of the main goals of these

²⁰⁹ W. Biermann, ‘Lied vom Roten Stein der Westen’, in: *Wolf Biermann preußischer Ikarus*, p.99.

²¹⁰ Sozialistisches Büro Hamburg, Flyer in solidarity with Wolf Biermann (27 November 1976), in: ‘Informationsrundbrief, Ausgabe Nr. 27 - sensbachtal in Odenwald, 15 Dezember 1976’, *Informationsdienst des Sozialistischen Büros (1973-1981)*, p.12.

seminars was develop a ‘critical solidarity’ position towards the communist countries. The theme of one of the closing discussions is telling: ‘Ist/war das ‘Duo Biermann/Havemann’ Ausdruck nach einer Alternative in der DDR?’,²¹¹ where Biermann and Havemann are mentioned as two individuals whom the SB wants to be involved with to try and shape up a socialist alternative in the GDR. The role played by Havemann and other intellectuals, in shaping up this alternative will be examined in chapter three.

2.4 Conclusion

All in all it can be said that Wolf Biermann did have a unifying and legitimising influence on the radical left milieu in West Germany. Of course, the influence of one man on a whole milieu should not be overstated, but it is evident that Biermann, for the political phenomenon he represented, as well as for the political singer-songwriter that he was, did affect the radical left milieu. The surge in publications of the radical left in West Germany after his Ausbürgerung, and the popularity of his political songs on the Liedermacher festivals point to this conclusion. His role as a political singer is important, because – as Biermann himself said – songs can unite people, and he did so himself to a considerable extent through his singing charisma. He united the left on the one hand by means of his lyrics that propagated a unification of the splintered radical left milieu and a call for the acceptance of heterogeneity within the milieu. On the other hand, because his Ausbürgerung offered a common language between socialists in West Germany and inner communist opposition of mostly artists and writers in East Germany. This common language was to be found in the prohibition to practice an occupation because of someone’s political conviction. The realisation of the radical left that they were fighting a similar fight (with each other as well as with the East German dissidents): one against capitalism and against Stalinism, lead to initiatives to work together for their socialist cause. The splintered sub-groups started to realise that, in order to get out of their societal isolation, they had to work together. In the late 70s, this did lead to initiatives to establish a nation-wide radical left newspaper, the *Tageszeitung* (1979), and to organise nationwide gatherings for radical left, such as *Tunix* (1979). Perhaps even the establishment of the Greens Party (1980), in which Biermann was also involved, can be seen as a result of the unifying tendencies amongst the left that had started in the late 1970s, and a realisation that they had to find a common appeal and a common left front of solidarity. Tendencies which did exist not because of Biermann, but which did surface and gained an impulse because of his expatriation to the West.

²¹¹ ‘Seminar über aktuelle Probleme der osteuropäischen Länder’, in: ‘Informationsrundbrief, Ausgabe Nr. 30 - Offenbach , 15 Februar 1977’, *Informationsdienst des Sozialistischen Büros (1973-1981)*, pp.21-22, p.21, ZK 45357, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

Chapter 3 – Critical solidarity with Bahro's Alternative

1976 zirkulierte der Bahro-Text schon in bestimmten Kreisen in Ost-Berlin, ohne allerdings den Namen des Autors aufzuweisen [...] Niemand konnte und wollte den Namen des Autors sagen. Unter DDR-Verhältnissen auf ein solches Buch zu stoßen, erzeugt bei mir den Verdacht, ein Stasi-Dokument in die Hand bekommen zu haben.²¹²

- Rudi Dutschke (1977-1978)

As it turned out, Dutschke did not hold a Stasi-document when he had laid his hands on an early clandestine copy of Rudolf Bahro's manuscript of *Die Alternative* in 1976. Instead, he had seen a document that would one year later be published by Europäische Verlagsanstalt in West Germany,²¹³ and would gain world-wide fame, becoming a reference work for communist opposition in the GDR and far beyond. Its author, Rudolf Bahro, was arrested by the GDR authorities after the announcement of its publication on 23 August 1977, on a charge of 'espionage', allegedly for the West German intelligence service. Campaigns of protest against his imprisonment erupted in the FRG (as well as in other West European countries such as England, France, and Italy), which eventually led to Bahro's deportation from an East German prison to West Germany. And thus it happened that in 1979 another dissident of the German Democratic Republic had involuntary entered the stage of West Germany. His most famous book *Die Alternative, Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus* strongly criticises the 'actually existing socialism' of eastern Europe, by exposing the gap between Marxist theory and actually existing socialism.

This chapter examines the influence of Rudolf Bahro on the radical left milieu of West Germany in the second half of the 1970s. First of all, the biography of the East German dissident will be discussed, including the question of why and how he became important for the left in West Germany. The second part of this chapter places Bahro in the context of the intellectual and literary scene of the GDR, which was linked to the radical left in West Germany. The final part of this chapter traces the influence of Bahro on the radical left scene in West Germany, by analysing how he was received. The many published letters, magazines and books by the radical left milieu form the source-base from which to examine this.

²¹² R. Dutschke, *Aufrecht gehen, eine fragmentarische Autobiographie*, pp. 107-108.

²¹³ The Europäische Verlagsanstalt is the publishing house owned by the West German trade union federation, DGB.

3.1 Alternative Biography

On 18 November 1935, Rudolf Bahro was born in Bad Flinsberg (Niederschlesien). In 1942 his father was called to fight as part of the ‘*Volkssturm*’,²¹⁴ and Bahro was evacuated together with his mother (Irmgard Conrad), aunt (Else), and younger brother and sister (Dieter and Gerda). What followed was a long odyssey, which brought him through different places in Czechoslovakia, several other places through Vienna and Kärnten, and all the way back to Hessen in West Germany. The wander paid a heavy toll on Bahro’s family; upon arriving in Gerlachsheim in January 1946 his mother, brother and sister died of typhoid. After this, Bahro travelled further with his aunt Else. In the summer of 1946 she found out that her husband was released from prison and was now in Erfurt. Upon her reunification with her husband, she arranged for Bahro to travel to his father’s brother in Treppeln. In Treppeln Bahro also found his father again, who had survived the *Volkssturm* and had been released from a short imprisonment. His father, Max Bahro, remarried to a widow in 1951, Frieda Rothe, giving Rudolf Bahro an older stepbrother, Gerhard Reiter. What Gerhard Reiter said about the young Bahro was that he was a ‘bright boy’, a bookworm inside and out, often deep in thought, and also an *Einzelgänger* (‘loner’). The new family moved around a bit, but always remained close to the German east-border.²¹⁵

The notion of Rudolf Bahro being a bright boy did not escape his teachers either. It was at school that he was taught Marxist-Leninist theory. In 1950 he joined the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ, ‘Free Democratic Youth’),²¹⁶ on which he later commented that this was the only time in his life that he had done something because he had been pressured into it. This was because the then principal of his school had made FDJ membership a requirement to be allowed into high school.²¹⁷ Nonetheless, Bahro became a candidate member of the SED in 1952 and a full member in 1954. In an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 1995 he explained how he was inspired into joining the SED because of the sincerity of his teacher: ‘Gewonnen hatte mich ein Lehrer meiner Oberschule, der später da Direktor wurde, und zwar durch seine Aufrichtigkeit. Der war zuvor gerade noch ein HJ-Führer gewesen, aber er war nun echt’²¹⁸.

Already one and a half year before graduating from high school, Bahro had decided that he wanted to pursue a political career. Therefore, in 1954 he went to study philosophy at the *Philosophische Institut* of the Humboldt University in Berlin. It was at this university that the most rigid Marxist teachers of philosophy were seated, in contrast to the free floating Ernst Bloch at the Karl-Marx University of

²¹⁴ A militia of last reserves for the German army, men between the age of 16-60 who were not considered fit for the army before, but who were called to fight now, due to the advancement of the Soviet-army at the East-border.

²¹⁵ G. Herzberg and K. Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare. Eine Biographie* (Berlin 2002), pp.16-20.

²¹⁶ The FDJ was the youth organisation of the SED.

²¹⁷ Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p.21.

²¹⁸ R. Bahro, cited in: Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p. 21.

Leipzig and the ‘bourgeoisie’ philosophes teaching at Jena.²¹⁹ Reflecting back upon his student time, Bahro noticed in 1978:

Zu den wichtigsten Bildungserfahrungen meiner Studienzeit gehören die Persönlichkeiten der alten Kommunisten und Sozialisten, solcher Genossen wie Georg Klaus, Klaus Zweiling, Hermann Scheler, Walter Besenbruch, die inzwischen als Professoren bei uns lehrten und die wir unseren oft sehr stürmischen und trotz mancher Überspitzung sehr eindrucksvollen Parteiversammlungen erlebten²²⁰.

After studying philosophy at Humboldt University, he worked at a tractor machine station during the agricultural collectivisation, and he defended government policy as the editor of an agrarian newspaper. His work as editor of the Party newspaper at Greifswald University and as a labour union official in the early sixties cumulated in the editorship of the journal *Forum*, the ideological forum of the FDJ. It was here that he ran into controversy for the first time, although this controversy had nothing to do with a commitment to the Party or its policy. It was about his decision to initiate a discussion about lyrical poetry with a group of young experimental poets, exactly at a time when the Party had decided to end the period of cultural relaxation during the infamous 11th Plenum of the party in 1965. Bahro’s ‘misstep’ cost him his position at the paper, his job at the labour union, and, according to himself, his naivete. In his self-interview of 1977 he explained:

I lost my political naivete, if initially in a very naive way [...] Then at *Forum* I gradually and consciously pursued a definite course and eventually tried to put forward topics for discussion which were not supposed to have been discussed. ‘Put contradictions on the table instead of in the drawer’ was my motto. I firstly had to undergo the experience that as a small cog in an ideological power machine one cannot move in a straight line.²²¹

After being employed by the Scientist’s Union in Berlin until 1967, Bahro started to work as engineer in the industrial sector.²²² About this involuntary switch of careers Bahro said: ‘I must emphasise it was a soft landing. On the whole I was always very lucky to have been treated so well, even after my dismissal from *Forum*.’²²³

It was not until the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops in 1968 that Bahro first began to question the premises of the communist system as a whole. He explained, ‘In the first hours and days after the intervention something changed in me forever. From that point on I wanted to

²¹⁹ Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p. 28-29. Wolfgang Harich was the only exception to the rule as he taught at Humboldt, and, as will be explained later in this chapter, was not so rigid in his Marxist reading. However, in 1954 he left voluntarily.

²²⁰ Bahro, cited in: Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p. 29.

²²¹ R. Bahro, ‘self-interview’, in: G. Minnerup ‘Rudolf Bahro – an introduction’, in: *The Socialist Register 1978* (1978), pp.1-20, p.11. Translation of the interview from German by Paul Edmunson and Günter Minnerup.

²²² D. Bathrick, ‘The politics of culture: Rudolf Bahro and opposition in the GDR’, in: *New German Critique*, no.15 (Autumn 1978), pp.2-24, pp.3-4.

²²³ Bahro, ‘self-interview’, p. 12.

deliver them a reply against which they would be as helpless as we had been against their tanks'.²²⁴ His reply came nine years later, in the form of his book, *Die Alternative*, which not only challenged the self-understanding of communism in the eastern European society, but also posed a fundamental immanent critique to the theory of Marxism-Leninism itself, in the sense that Marx's theory fails to examine the non-capitalist road to socialism.²²⁵ Bahro's main critique on Marxism here is that it fails to recognise that alienation can also occur in systems not based on private property. In other words, that potential for alienation, exploitation, and oppression are also inherent to the state. Bahro aimed to reveal the exploitative nature of the state under the 'actually existing socialism'. The reader is left wondering, however, why Bahro conducts his critique within a fundamentally Marxist framework while indicating the limited theoretical value of Marx's work. Bahro claimed himself to be a communist and a Marxist, as he asserted that despite the theoretical flaws, a new historical movement began with Marx.²²⁶ This time his controversy cost him his freedom, as he was arrested in August 1977 after the announcement of his book in West German media. At the time of his arrest in 1977, he was bureau chief in the VEB Gummikombinat in Berlin, responsible for the labour process design and work norms.²²⁷ On 30 June 1978 Bahro was sentenced to eight years of prison. He left for West Germany in 1979, after a deal arranging this.²²⁸

Bahro's Bail

I have always believed in the power of the idea and the word, and that it matters whether one is convinced of oneself and one's cause and doesn't shrink back deep down inside when the decision has to be made.²²⁹

- 'Self-interview', Rudolf Bahro (1977)

I am relying on the long-term effect of every thought which really goes to the very heart of these problems [...] I have staked not only my intellect but also my civic livelihood on it. That is sure to have its effect.²³⁰

- 'Self-interview', Rudolf Bahro (1977)

²²⁴ Bahro, cited in: Bathrick, 'The politics of culture: Rudolf Bahro and opposition in the GDR', p.4.

²²⁵ Bathrick, 'The politics of culture: Rudolf Bahro and opposition in the GDR', pp. 3-4.

²²⁶ J. L. Canfield, 'Marxist revisionism in East Germany: the case of Rudolf Bahro', in: *4 Fletcher Forum* 23 (1980), pp. 23-48, p.32

²²⁷ H. Mosley, 'the New Communist Opposition: Rudolf Bahro's Critique of the 'really existing socialism'', in: *New German Critique*, no.15 (Autumn, 1978), pp.25-36, p.26.

²²⁸ Between 1964 and 1990, The FRG bought the freedom of 34000 GDR-prisoners. This arrangement between the GDR and the FRG was called '*Freikauf*'. The dynamic that enabled this was part of the intrinsic relationship between the two German states. See: J. Pekelder, 'Dilemma's van een verscheurde natie', in: P. Dassen, B. Verheijen, and F. Wielenga (eds.) *Gedeeld verleden. Duitsland sinds 1945* (Amsterdam 1999), pp. 67-92, pp.82-83.

²²⁹ Bahro, 'self-interview', p. 19. Bahro added to this 'Marx himself is unthinkable without this conviction'. The quote here is an elaboration in a reply in his self-interview where Bahro confronts himself with the statement: '[Saying that] the ideological impotence of the GDR is more dangerous than the material one, is not particularly Marxist'. This means that Bahro knew about this inconsistency in his conviction of Marxist theory.

²³⁰ Bahro, 'self-interview', p. 8.

After having decided upon the publication of his book in West Germany, Bahro did indeed the opposite of shrinking deep down inside. Instead, he announced the publication of his work in an interview in the West German journal *Der Spiegel*, on 22 August 1977. Additionally, two interviews taped earlier by the West German television networks ZDF and ARD were broadcast, and viewed by many citizens of the GDR as well. Bahro had been well prepared for his arrest, as he had recorded a self-interview prior to the announcement of his publication in *Der Spiegel*, written a fifty-page summary of his thesis, and distributed a condensed version of his book clandestinely in the GDR. His belief in the power of the idea and word was immediately confirmed as he was arrested – officially on suspicion of ‘intelligence activity’ – for the words he had written and the ideas that were expressed by those words. Although the East German authorities had managed to arrest the author of the book, their fears concerning the impact of it turned out to be justified. One could even argue that the imprisonment of the author helped to make the book a bestseller, as it drew more attention to the book and made it a *cause célèbre*. The imprisonment encouraged every self-respecting intellectual and/or leftist to have a view of the book. Not only did the book reach the top ten of the West German bestselling list for several months and was translated into several major West European languages, but also in the GDR itself, several hundred copies circulated clandestinely, causing it to become a central point of reference for communist opposition.²³¹ Hillel Ticktin even wrote in 1979 that ‘it is possible that for a long time the discussion on eastern Europe will have to be divided between pre-Bahro and post-Bahro’.²³² Whether this is true remains a matter of perspective, but what could definitely be agreed upon is that Bahro’s self-sacrifice (as he knew that repercussions would be inevitable after the publication of his book) gave him a special place in the socialist struggle – at least for those involved in this struggle with him.

After his sentence to eight years of prison, speculation started to fill the West German press, contemplating whether the Federal government was going to purchase Bahro’s release – as it had in fact done with many political prisoners in the past.²³³ On the 3rd of July 1978 the West German government spokesman Klaus Bölling condemned the SED’s reaction to the case of Bahro, characterising his imprisonment as a violation of both the Final Act of the Helsinki Agreements (of which the second conference had started one year earlier in Belgrade, in June 1977) and the 1966 UN Convention, both of which the GDR had signed. The news agency ADR of the GDR responded on the 5th of July 1978 that Bölling should stop crying ‘crocodile tears’, accompanied with the argument that his own country’s policy towards radicals was not any better.²³⁴ On the 18th of July, one could read in the West German media that Bahro had lodged an appeal, and moreover, that he had refused to sign the required documents that would revoke his GDR citizenship and expulsion from the state. Bahro had indicated earlier that his battlefield was the GDR and that therefore he wished to remain in the GDR if at all

²³¹ G. Minnerup, ‘Rudolf Bahro – an introduction’, in: *The Socialist Register* (1978), pp.1-4, p.1.

²³² H. Ticktin, ‘Rudolf Bahro: a socialist without a working class’, in: *Critique* 10:1 (1979), pp.133-139, p. 133.

²³³ This was called *Freikauf*, see footnote 228.

²³⁴ Canfield, ‘Marxist Revisionism in East Germany’, p. 25.

possible. Bahro's appeal was rejected by the Supreme Court of the GDR on the 1st of August 1978. Nothing was heard of him, until *Der Spiegel* published a letter written by Bahro in prison to a fellow inmate (Bautzen II). In the letter Bahro reported that he was doing quite fine, and more importantly, he reaffirmed that he had withstood the examination, without abandoning his position. Bahro was turning into a symbol of refusal to bow for the authorities of the GDR, and did not want to accept living in exile to ease his life and thus remained an inmate of a Saxon prison. Apparently he proved to be a symbol that the GDR authorities did not wish to tolerate for too long. Bahro was released from prison on 11 October 1979, and transported to West Germany six days later. His bail was part of an amnesty for prisoners, announced together with the thirtieth anniversary of the GDR. Bahro was among the first released, even though political prisoners were expected to be excluded from the terms of the amnesty. The amnesty for prisoners should be seen in the context of détente which was defined for example by attempts for an East-West German summit in the autumn of 1979, and the announcement of Brezhnev that the Soviet Union would be willing to reduce the number of troops and tanks stationed in the GDR.²³⁵

The initial media surge in West Germany was an outcry of solidarity with Bahro, and not only by those socialists who believed to be fighting his same fight. For the conventional media his imprisonment was a welcoming reason to immediately call for '*Freiheit!*' ('Freedom') and press charges against the GDR.²³⁶ Jeffrey Lee Canfield wrote in 1980 'the "Bahro case" attained nearly the same intensity as that following the deprivation of Wolf Biermann's GDR citizenship'. Canfield also estimated that well over a hundred news items and editorials about Bahro's case appeared in the West German news press alone during 1978. In fact, the entire western European press responded with coverage of the case, some were the explicit denunciation of Bahro's sentence.²³⁷ For example, the British journal *Critique* published an open letter to Erich Honecker appealing for a quick release of Bahro. Underneath the letter, readers of *Critique* were given the possibility to sign their name, so that their name would be appended to the open letter to Honecker.²³⁸ In the French newspaper *Le Monde*, the communist historian Jean Elleinstein wrote that the sentencing of Bahro was very dangerous, and that it 'repressed the very political and theoretical debate that was necessary in Leninist principles of leadership and the Party'.²³⁹

Appeals for the release of Bahro came from individuals as well as organisations with those not only within the radical left milieus in East and West Germany, as well, internationally. In fact, the more dogmatic communist parties, in the FRG especially, were perhaps the least supportive of Bahro – as was also the case with expatriation of Biermann. The DKP defended the SED's position and remained pro-Stalinist – in other words, they represented a communism that Bahro agitated against. The Maoist KPD

²³⁵ Canfield, 'Marxist Revisionism in East Germany', pp.25-27.

²³⁶ Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p.213.

²³⁷ Canfield, 'Marxist Revisionism in East Germany', p.28.

²³⁸ 'The campaign for the release of Rudolf Bahro', in: *Critique* 9:1 (1978), pp.126-127.

²³⁹ R. Bahro, *Ich werde meinen Weg fortsetzen: eine Dokumentation* (Cologne 1977), p.122.

in West Germany called him an anti-communist and oppressor of East-German workers.²⁴⁰ Among those declaring their sympathy with Bahro were the writers Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, Graham Greene, Arthur Miller, Carola Stern, and Wolf Biermann. But also political leaders such as Willy Brandt, Philip Whitehead, and Eric Heffer expressed their solidarity. Likewise prominent communist intellectuals like Robert Havemann, Herbert Marcuse, and Lucio Lambardo-Radice threw themselves into the breach for Bahro's case.²⁴¹ Apart from Havemann, hardly any of prominent intellectuals of the GDR who had contacts with the West German media expressed their solidarity with Bahro. This was most probably a result of the repressive measurements that had been taken against them after their protest against Biermann-Ausbürgerung.²⁴² In an interview with *Der Spiegel* conducted in 1979 it is also explained how Havemann made an attempt to make Bahro stay in East Germany after his release from prison, but by this time Bahro had made up his mind that he had to go to the FRG. He stated that he thought his influence on the GDR would be the greatest if he could announce his message via West German television to the people in the GDR.²⁴³

Organisations involved in calling attention to Bahro's fate were the international PEN club,²⁴⁴ Amnesty International, the International League for Human Rights, and several 'Bahro Committees' in Berlin, Paris, London, Florence and elsewhere. In the universities of Bremen, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Osnabrück, scholars protested against the imprisonment of Bahro.²⁴⁵ Also the Russel Peace Foundation dedicated itself to Bahro's cause. At 10 November 1978 a solidarity concert was organised in the *Deutschlandhalle* in Berlin, where Wolf Biermann participated as well. The concert was a prelude to the 'Bahro Congress' that was to be held a few days later. On 11 November 1978, Charta '77 expressed their solidarity with Bahro in a letter to the organisation of the Bahro Congress.

The 'International Congress For and About Bahro', took place from 16-19 November 1978 at the Technical University of Berlin, and was the most significant declaration of solidarity with Bahro.²⁴⁶ About three thousand people participated at the congress. Each of the three discussions was led by prominent West German leftists.²⁴⁷ Besides the main goal of the conference to express support for

²⁴⁰ E.g. in: J. Moneta, 'Eine "Alternative" – nicht nur für die DDR', in: U. Wolter (ed.) *Antworten auf Bahros Herausforderung des 'realen Sozialismus'* (Berlin 1978), pp. 11-19, p. 13. Also: Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p.218 and p271.

²⁴¹ Canfield, 'Marxist Revisionism in East Germany', p.28.

²⁴² Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p.275.

²⁴³ "Ich weiß, ich kann völlig abrutschen" der SED-Dissident Rudolf-Bahro über seinen Prozeß, seine Haft und seine Zukunft in der Bundesrepublik', *Der Spiegel* 43 (1979), pp.20-33, interview with Romain Leick and Ulrich Schwartz. Published in: Guntolf Herzberg (ed.), *Rudolf Bahro: Denker, Reformator, Homo Politicus. Nachlasswerk : das Buch von der Befreiung, Vorlesung, Aufsätze, Reden* (2008), pp. 398-414, pp. 402.

²⁴⁴ PEN is an international worldwide organization of writers, founded in 1921 in London to promote friendship and intellectual cooperation among writers and propagates freedom of speech for writers all over the world. The Swedish PEN made Bahro a member of their organization on 3 November 1978.

²⁴⁵ Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p.215.

²⁴⁶ Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p.272.

²⁴⁷ The three podium discussions were; (1) 'Die Oktoberrevolution und ihre Bedeutung für die heutige Linke', led by Elmar Altvater, (2) 'Der Prager Frühling – Strukturbedingungen und Formen einer Systemkrise in Osteuropa', led by Renate

Rudolf Bahro, the congress was an important attempt for the western Left to reunite through a discussion of Bahro's theoretical contribution to Marxist theory.²⁴⁸ According to Canfield, the various leftist and communist party members present all boded well to realise this latter goal: 'and predictions abounded that at last the Left would rise, phoenix-like, from its own ashes'.²⁴⁹ Whether this phoenix rose will be discussed in the last part of this chapter, where the influence of Bahro on the splintered radical left milieu in the Federal Republic is examined. For now it is significant to realise that for contemporaries amongst this milieu the hope that Bahro could revitalise the left was strongly felt.

Bahro discussed his own expectations about his role in West Germany in an interview with *Der Spiegel* which was conducted shortly after his arrival in the FRG. In this interview, Bahro asserts that he wants to undermine 'the monopoly of capital' in the Federal Republic. He wants to establish that by finding a consensus among the majority. When the reporters ask him why, then, he would not join the SPD – who argue for a similar cause – Bahro argues that the problem of the SPD is that they have to govern the system, which restrains them. He thinks it would be a grave mistake to join the SPD: 'Es wäre ein horrender Fehler, in die SPD zu gehen. Das würde ja alles enttäuschen, total enttäuschen, was jetzt hier auf mich hofft'.²⁵⁰ After some pressure by the interviewer, he admitted that he wants to take part in organising a new socialist party in the FRG (upon which 'the Greens' is already cautiously mentioned), which has to be a socialist alternative to, and possible partner of the SPD. For this party he envisioned finding a common theoretical and political denominator for the splintered radical left milieu. He realised that earlier attempts to unite the left had stranded on the splintered nature and orientation of small groups within the radical left milieu. But still he felt that in the FRG, people expect him to at least try - 'auch auf die Gefahr hin, am Ende politisch ein toter Mann zu sein'²⁵¹.

3.2 *Intelligentsia and the literary scene in East and West Germany*

Bahro was not the only communist intellectual criticising the GDR, who inevitably became well-known in West Germany. One cannot talk about intellectual opposition in the GDR without mentioning figures such as Robert Havemann and Jürgen Fuchs. In fact, Bahro could be seen as but an example of communist intellectuals and writers who criticised the GDR practice of communism and ended up in West Germany, getting involved in the radical left milieu there.

Important to note, however, is that Bahro was received by contemporaries as someone who did not come from the dissident intelligentsia milieu of the GDR, but rather he came from within the state-

Damus, and (3) 'Produktionsziel: reich entwickelte Persönlichkeit', led by Oskar Negt. See: 'Internationaler Kongress für und über Rudolf Bahro, Umbruch in Osteuropa – die sozialistische Alternative. Materialien', BRO 1894/4, ID 415, ID 83, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

²⁴⁸ Canfield, 'Marxist Revisionism in East Germany', pp.28-29.

²⁴⁹ Canfield, 'Marxist Revisionism in East Germany', pp.28-29.

²⁵⁰ "'Ich weiß, ich kann völlig abrutschen" der SED-Dissident Rudolf-Bahro über seinen Prozeß, seine Haft und seine Zukunft in der Bundesrepublik', *Der Spiegel* 43 (1979), p. 410.

²⁵¹ "'Ich weiß, ich kann völlig abrutschen" der SED-Dissident Rudolf-Bahro über seinen Prozeß, seine Haft und seine Zukunft in der Bundesrepublik', *Der Spiegel* 43 (1979), p.413.

apparatus itself. As David Batherick wrote: ‘For the first time a major voice of opposition comes not from the artistic or scientific-academic communities, but directly out of the ranks of the party apparatus. Whereas the poet Wolf Biermann or the professor Robert Havemann speak for the sectors of an intelligentsia which have traditionally found occasion to oppose the structures of government policy’.²⁵² Nonetheless, this makes it all the more relevant to say some words about this dissident literary intelligentsia milieu of the GDR, as his individual history of growing up within the SED state-apparatus and then becoming a heretic adds to the reason why Bahro’s case was so peculiar and aggravating at the time. Moreover, it is evident that Bahro did ultimately step into the history of doctrinal heresy on the part of individual Marxist theoreticians in Germany.²⁵³

As mentioned in chapter one, the literary scene was very important for the radical left in West Germany in the late seventies. Because the East German dissidents could not publish in East Germany, many of them ended up publishing with West German publishers, consequently entering the realm of the radical left milieu there as well. It is therefore telling that articles about Bahro and his thesis featured in many of the radical left press of West Germany; *Links*, *Neue Linke*, *Langer Marsch*, *die Taz*, *Spartacus*, *Beiträge zum wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus*, *Theorie und Praxis*, *Was Tun* and *Kommunistische Volkzeitung*.²⁵⁴ Not to forget the publication of *Eine Dokumentation* with the publisher the Europäische Verlagsanstalt (which had also published *die Alternative*) in which Bahro published his six lectures explaining his book, the interviews held with the West German mass-media, as well as his self-interview; all released around the same time as the publication of his book and his consequent arrest. The *Taz* even reported in 1978 ‘die Taz muß ein Sprachrohr der west-deutschen Unterstützerguppen für *Bahro etc* werden!!’²⁵⁵ [own italics]. This shows that amongst the radical left milieu in the FRG, many identified with the communist opposition of the GDR, and additionally, that Bahro was perceived as a symbol of representing them. Communist dissidents indeed received a visible place in their milieu and public sphere as they were frequently discussed in the alternative press.

It was especially in the left intellectual circles that Bahro and his book received generous attention.²⁵⁶ In the end, his book was a scholarly theoretical work. Universities in West Germany organised Bahro-seminars and Bahro-sit-ins.²⁵⁷ In studies of social sciences, *die Alternative* got an established place on the reading list. The Bahro-Kongreß is an example that shows how Bahro was widely discussed among a radical leftists intelligentsia in the West on the one hand, and how a clear

²⁵² D. Batherick, ‘The Politics of Culture: Rudolf Bahro and Opposition in the GDR’, in: *New German Critique*, no. 15 (1978), pp.3-24, p.3.

²⁵³ Canfield, ‘Marxist Revisionism in East Germany’, p.46.

²⁵⁴ ‘Bahros Echo in der Linke Presse’, Bro 597/14 fol., AStA der Carl von Ossietzky Universität (Oldenburg), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

²⁵⁵ Papier der Arbeitsgruppe ‘Theorie und Praxis’ der Taz initiative Freiburg (4-11-1978), Hans Ulrich Dillmann Collection (Tageszeitung), 1975-1986, ARC00474, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

²⁵⁶ Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p.215

²⁵⁷ Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, pp.223-224.

rupture between new left and the trade unions in West Germany remained on the other.²⁵⁸ In their reflection on the course of the congress, Steinke, Süß, and Wolter underline the attempt of the congress, and in fact the attempt of the radical left milieu, to connect with the labour movement through the West German labour unions. The political dilemma that new left faced according to themselves, was one where no socialist policy could be pursued with the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB, 'German Labour Union'), but that at the same time they could not do without them either, because: 'the struggles of an intelligentsia isolated from their labour movement do not bear within them the seeds for a shift to a socialist policy [...] at most it can provide the impulse and motive for it'.²⁵⁹ A number of trade unions did participate in the congress nonetheless, 'but these were no world-shaking events, and one should guard against overestimating their importance'²⁶⁰, thus Steinke, Süß, and Wolter.

With 'Bahro etc' the *Taz* (see quote above) meant left radicals of eastern communist countries who criticised the 'actually existing socialism'. Bahro's heretic Marxist critique on the eastern European communist systems did place him in the tradition of communist opposition in East Germany, which was not superabundant, but definitely present. Because other 'heretics', such as Biermann, Robert Havemann, Wolfgang Harich, and Jürgen Fuchs, went before him, Bahro's book found an even greater resonance in the West.

Already in 1956, a faction of GDR intellectuals led by Wolfgang Harich (amongst which Ernst Bloch), responded to the spirit of the denunciation of Stalinism at the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU²⁶¹ with a call for theoretical creativity within the SED.²⁶² Harich had elaborated an authoritarian vision of a 'utopia of an ascetic police state'.²⁶³ His views emphasised discipline, sacrifice, regimentation, and a puritanical society concerned more with ecology than with economic growth. He also argued for an extension of democracy. All in all, his ideas were rather inconsistent and in a way reflected the hurried thinking that took place in 1956 after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU took the world by surprise.²⁶⁴ In the GDR, the wave of anti-Stalinism after this event was, however, short-lived. Harich was sentenced to ten years imprisonment and Bloch was expelled from the SED.

²⁵⁸ Interesting to note is that the publisher who published the *Alternative*, EVA (*Europäische Verlagsanstalt*), was owned by the DGB, however they were considered not important for trade-union practice, and were considered a bit as a court jester, for the books it had published. See: R. Steinke, W. Süß, and U. Wolter, 'His refrain is heard around the world: an initial assessment of the Bahro congress', in U. Wolter (ed.) *Rudolf Bahro. Critical Responses* (New York 1980), pp.213-233, p.222.

²⁵⁹ Steinke, Süß, and Wolter, 'His refrain is heard around the world: an initial assessment of the Bahro congress', p.222.

²⁶⁰ Steinke, Süß, and Wolter, 'His refrain is heard around the world: an initial assessment of the Bahro congress', p.223.

²⁶¹ This congress took place in the period from 14-25 February 1956, and is famous for the 'secret speech' held by Nikita Khrushchev, in which he denounced the personality cult and the dictatorship of Stalin.

²⁶² Canfield, 'Marxist Revisionism in East Germany', pp.46-47.

²⁶³ K. Reyman, 'Preface' to section on East Germany in: F. Silnitsky (ed.), *Communism and eastern Europe* (Brighton, 1979), p.167.

²⁶⁴ M. Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, p.381.

Another attempt to reform communism came from Robert Havemann. Havemann had also been a long standing member of the SED, and a professor of physical chemistry at the Humboldt University, before he faced repressions. David Batherick wrote in 1978, ‘there is no figure living in the GDR today with a more persistent record of resistance to state authority than the physicist Robert Havemann’.²⁶⁵ During the Second World War, he was imprisoned for anti-Nazi activities as a member of the communist resistance. As he survived the war,²⁶⁶ he was one of the first SED intelligentsia to go to the streets to in 1953 to defend the Party’s cause, in the face of the GDR workers’ uprising. However, Havemann eventually ended up in opposition to the SED dialectic as well. So it happened that, following the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU in 1956, he stood alone before his colleagues at Humboldt University and in the presence of Ulbricht, to pronounce his call for de-Stalinisation in the GDR and a world revolution abroad. In 1964 he published his book *Dialectics without Dogma* in West Germany, which was an attack on dogmatism of the GDR. Havemann called for open criticism to the regime’s deformed kind of communism. He viewed contemporary communism as only a half-completed revolution, in which the state, rather than the people had replaced the capitalists and landowners. He envisioned a combination of economic democracy and democratic socialism, which went hand in hand in his view.²⁶⁷ This book, together with the lectures he held on dialectics, brought him ostracism, censure, expulsion from the party and the academy of science and eventually house arrest. Nonetheless he always defended the GDR as a communist country and the only real alternative on German soil.²⁶⁸

Besides intellectuals and academics, several writers of the GDR also had problematic relationships to the SED, which in many cases brought them publication bans, being exiled to the West or imprisonment in the GDR. Among them Jürgen Fuchs (1950-1999). He got in trouble with the GDR regime because of his support for the Prague Spring and expression of deviant communist ideas. According to his friend György Dalos, Fuchs’ ‘dissidence stemmed not from ideological opposition to the GDR system, but in the moral conflict between the free individual with the forced collectivism’.²⁶⁹ Fuchs had become a member of the SED in 1973. However, after a co-performance with Bettina Wegner and Gerulf Pannach, he was expelled from the Party already two years later. Repression measurements were taken against him because of the prose and poems he wrote, he was forced to stop his study of psychology at the University of Jena and was not allowed to enrol at any university or other advanced higher educational institution in the GDR. On 19 November 1976 he was imprisoned, after signing the

²⁶⁵ Batherick, ‘The Politics of culture: Rudolf Bahro and ppposition in the GDR’, p.10.

²⁶⁶ Havemann had been sentenced to death, but he survived in the prison of Brandenburg, where he had been imprisoned along with Erich Honecker. It has been suggested that later, he received a relatively lenient treatment for his opposition to the SED as a result of Honecker’s sympathy for a former anti-Nazi prison comrade. See: M. Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, p.381.

²⁶⁷ See for example, R. Havemann, *Fragen, Antworten, Fragen* (München 1970), and R. Havemann, ‘The socialism of tomorrow’, in F. Silnitsky (ed.) *Communism and eastern Europe* (Brighton 1979).

²⁶⁸ Batherick, ‘The Politics of Culture: Rudolf Bahro and Opposition in the GDR’, p.10.

²⁶⁹ G. Dalos, ‘Jürgen Fuchs: der moralische Rebell’ (version 19 May 2014), <https://www.boell.de/de/2014/05/19/der-moralische-rebell> (16 July 2018).

protest letter against Biermann's expatriation. In 1977 he was released together with Pannach and Christian Kunert and under the threat of longer imprisonment forced to leave for the FRG.²⁷⁰

Bahro can thus be placed in this tradition of intellectual individuals who were communist, yet criticised the GDR and eventually ended up in the West. In the West, their ideas seemed to gain ground among the socialist left milieu. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the radical left milieu in the West was functioning to a great extent through the infrastructure of the alternative press and leftist literature sold in leftist bookshops. Secondly, especially the work of intellectuals, such as Harich, Havemann, and Bahro, was very theoretical and spoke more to an elitist left intelligentsia than to workers. The radical left milieu consisted for a great extent of the more elitist left intelligentsia and students. How to connect with the workers and trade unions was in fact one of the main concerns among this milieu. Thirdly, as more and more became known in the West about atrocities that happened under Stalinism, the dissident Marxist theories seemed to open up room for discussing a 'Third Way' and an alternative socialism to the real life example of the GDR. Because these theories came from those who actually lived in the communist East, they seemed even more credible and justified.

3.3 *Bahro reception in the West German radical left milieu: critical solidarity*

Das Echo, das die Veröffentlichung der Bahroschen Alternative in der politischen Szenerie der BDR hervorgerufen hat, ist unverkennbar. Das Buch ist in aller Munde; Bahro geistert durch nahezu alle Debatten. Es muß in der Tat über dieses Buch diskutiert werden. Es muß vor allem die politisch-theoretische Stoßrichtung, der wirkliche soziale Gehalt der dort entwickelten Thesen, offengelegt und – rücksichtsloser Kritik unterworfen werden.²⁷¹

– *Beiträge zum wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus* (February 1978)

When assessing the reception of Bahro in the West German radical left milieu of the late 1970s, an important distinction in how he was received has to be made clear. There was the reception of the 'Fall Bahro' ('case' Bahro), and there was the reception of the actual contents of his book. Taken together, his reception by the radical left milieu of these two aspects can be summarised as 'critical solidarity'. The *Fall Bahro* was his prison sentence of eight years after writing a book critical of the actually existing socialism in East European regimes. The actual contents of his book caused a stir amongst radical left intellectuals, resulting in many book reviews and theoretical discussions of Bahro's thesis in the alternative press of West Germany. Simultaneously, however, just the mere fact of discussing Bahro's book and thesis was already perceived as an act of solidarity with the *Fall Bahro*.

²⁷⁰ E. Dischereit, 'Seine erste Leserin und DiskutantIn' (version 4 September 2014), <https://www.boell.de/de/2014/09/04/lilo-fuchs> (16 July 2018).

²⁷¹ 'Bahro – eine Alternative?' in: *Beiträge zum wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus* 15 (Hamburg 1978), pp. 21-36, p. 21, in: 'Bahro Alternative?: Bahros Echo in der Linke Presse', Bro 597/14 folder, AStA der Carl von Ossietzky Universität (Oldenburg), International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

It is telling how widespread the solidarity with the case Bahro was among the (radical) left in West Germany. What is evident from the empirical sources, is that solidarity with the case Bahro was inherently a critique on the SED and even on the GDR more generally. This is significant, as the radical left in West Germany had traditionally been very cautious with expressing critique about their communist brother country, as they would automatically inspire anti-communism in the FRG, were they to express criticism of the communist Germany. Critique of the GDR in this sense was the denunciation of the compatibility between Stalinism and Marxism. In the GDR these two -isms did still go hand in hand, being the underpinnings of the ‘actually existing socialism’ there. Based on this key notion of alignment of Marxism and Stalinism, came a rigid dogmatism that did not allow deviant communist theories or ideals – in fact, deviant communist ideas were considered as an even bigger threat to the Party than anti-communism. It will not come as a surprise anymore by now, that a deviant socialist theory was exactly that which Bahro had written. His deviant theory was an expression of the contrast between what had to be and what is. An East German Marxist pointing out this contrast provided a push for those who had apologised for the societies in eastern Europe for a long time: the radical left in West Germany which had tended for too long to be hamstrung by the idea that you have to be the friend of your enemy’s enemy.²⁷²

Through solidarity with Bahro, the radical left thus gave expression to their otherness from the ‘actually existing socialism’. The aim to distance themselves from the communism of the GDR, and in fact from the communism of other eastern European countries as well, becomes evident in discussions about the foundation of the *Taz*. In a document of the *Taz* initiative in Freiburg from November 1978, they set forth their ideas about the relationship between the *Taz* and the actually existing socialism. According to the authors of the document, the negative image of FRG politicians and masses about communism was founded on their experience with communism as it exists in the GDR. The GDR was the so-called ‘display window’ of what a communist Germany was like, were it to be realised. As a result, every ‘revolutionary/revolutionary-Marxist/communist’ in the FRG was equated with a Stalinist caricature. The aim for the *Taz* was, therefore, to show the incompatibility between Stalinism and Marxism, and to make ‘democratic communism/socialism’ the trump card ‘against the more and more conservative political landscape FRG’.²⁷³ The founders explicitly stated that their strategy to reach this end, would be through a continuing (news) coverage of opposition movements and dissidents in communist states, about their spontaneous actions, and about their ideas of society. They considered reporting about Bahro as particular importance, and coverage of the Bahro Congress is mentioned as a concrete way to realise this.²⁷⁴ The Bahro case and expressing solidarity with him was thus regarded as

²⁷² H. Ticktin, ‘Rudolf Bahro: a socialist without a working class’, p.133.

²⁷³ Papier der Arbeitsgruppe ‘Theorie und Praxis’ der Taz initiative Freiburg (4-11-1978), Hans Ulrich Dillmann Collection (Tageszeitung), 1975-1986, ARC00474, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

²⁷⁴ Papier der Arbeitsgruppe ‘Theorie und Praxis’ der Taz initiative Freiburg (4-11-1978), Hans Ulrich Dillmann Collection (Tageszeitung), 1975-1986, ARC00474, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

important for the radical left in the FRG to distance themselves from the actually existing socialism. This shows that they were less afraid to contribute to anti-communism than at the beginning of the decade. The fact that dissidents like Bahro were outspoken communists was essential for this, as it legitimised – or in fact proved – the notion that one could be communist, while at the same time not defend Stalinism or the repression of undogmatic communist ideas.

Moreover, Bahro's case not only proved that one could be communist while at the same time criticising the GDR, his case also alluded to the non-radical left in the FRG, as his imprisonment was regarded as a violation of his basic individual human right – his freedom of speech. Since the GDR and the FRG had both signed the Helsinki Final Act on 1 August 1975²⁷⁵, the FRG felt they could give the GDR a rap over the knuckles for violating the freedom of speech of Bahro by imprisoning him for what he had written.²⁷⁶ Significantly, also the radical left in the FRG also started to use this narrative, repeatedly referring to the Helsinki Final Act when expressing their solidarity with Bahro and arguing for his release from prison.²⁷⁷ The radical left and the non-radical left in the FRG thus found a common discourse here, which could contribute to the desired increased legitimisation of the radical left – especially in the autumn of 1978, the time of Bahro's imprisonment, a year after the German autumn of 1977 discredited the radical left for many in the FRG. The radical left started to realise that when using the new language of 'universal human rights', scrubbed clean of references to rich and poor, it could help them retreat from their imagined political ghetto in the FRG. Within the Cold War dialectic, there was a certain discord in criticising a *communist* regime, while being *communist* yourself, and for imprisoning another *communist* with deviant ideas. Now the human rights language made it possible to denunciate the SED for violating the freedom of thought and speech of Bahro, which were protected under articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is very much like what happened in other parts of the world as well. Naomi Klein argues that in Chile, for example, left opposition politicians, lawyers, and Church leaders adapted the universal language of human rights in order to protest against the terrors happening in their country, but to avoid becoming the regime's next victim themselves. Klein explains 'for those living under dictatorship the new language was essentially a code; just as musicians hid the political messages in their lyrics in sly metaphors, they were disguising their leftism in legalese – a way of engaging in politics without mentioning politics'.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ The Helsinki Final Act was signed on the 1st of August 1975. This was the concluding document of the first Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, a multilateral platform of discussion between 33 European countries (among them the GDR and the FRG), Canada and the United States. Several follow-up conferences followed between 1975-1994. One of the revolutionary results of the conference was that all the signatories agreed to safeguard individual human rights in their country, and indirectly, that other countries could thus hold them accountable for complying with these agreements. Around the time of Bahro's case, in 1977 and 1978, the first follow-up conference took place in Belgrade. During Belgrade it became clear that many countries had not kept themselves to the Helsinki Agreements of 1975.

²⁷⁶ Canfield, 'Marxist Revisionism in East Germany', p. 25.

²⁷⁷ For example in: W. Schlauch, 'Dissident in eastern Europe: Rudolf Bahro's criticism of easy European communism', in: *Nationalities papers* 9:1, pp. 105-116, p.113. Also: Batherick, 'The Politics of Culture: Rudolf Bahro and Opposition in the GDR', p.24, and: Canfield, 'Marxist Revisionism in East Germany', p.46.

²⁷⁸ N. Klein, *The Shock Doctrine. The rise of disaster capitalism* (New York 2007), p.150.

Individual human rights were a new topic for socialist left in the FRG, as traditionally socialism is more concerned with collective human rights than with individual human rights, due to the nature and key notions of socialist ideology. Talking of ‘rights’, ‘freedoms’, ‘liberty’ and other abstractions associated with ‘the man in general’, was considered ‘petty bourgeoisie’ among the radical left. It is therefore all the more interesting that they expressed their solidarity with Bahro (and other dissidents from the east) also in terms of individual human rights. For example, Dutschke wrote in a letter to Nico Hübner, another dissident from the GDR, who was released together with Bahro during the amnesty campaign in 1979, ‘Wie lange hat es gedauert, bis ein nicht unwesentlicher Teil der Linken sich nicht mehr schämte, von Menschenrechten zu sprechen?’²⁷⁹, assuming that now this essential part of the left was not afraid to speak of human rights anymore. Splinters within the many sub-groups of the radical left scene, and not least, the rifts between the ‘undogmatic’ radical left, the DKP, and the K-Gruppen, proved that communism could not serve as a common denominator anymore. According to Tony Judt, it was from the mid-seventies onwards increasingly common to find speeches and writings from the radical left invoking ‘human rights’ and ‘personal liberties’.²⁸⁰ It was in this spirit that human rights seemed to become more and more a theme along which the radical left could align themselves. This becomes visible in the surge of renewed talk on the Prague Spring (1968), the Polish and Hungarian uprisings (1956), and even the 17 July 1953 workers’ strike in the GDR, in association with Bahro’s case. These events all came to be associated with anti-Stalinism and the violation of human rights, as they had been crushed by Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops.²⁸¹ A realisation had now come among the radical left in West Germany, that the ‘fight for socialism had to be fought as a two-front war’,²⁸² meaning not only against capitalism, but against the actually existing socialism as well. An explicit expression of this ‘two-front war’ against violation of human rights was found around the issue of the Radikalenerlaß in the FRG, which was equated with the way Bahro had been treated by the SED (similarly to what happened in the Biermann-case). A Dutch newspaper, *Het Parool*, wrote for example about a solidarity with Bahro concert, ‘de liedjeszangers [...] [schoren] de vervolging van “systeemcritici” in de DDR en het weren van mensen met extreme politieke standpunten uit de overheidsdienst in Westduitsland over één kam. En al spoedig zaten niet meer de staatsveiligheidsdienst van de DDR en de mensen die Bahro gevangenhouden in de verdachtenbank, maar de Westduitse “politiestaat”’.²⁸³ Thus, as is exemplified by the Bahro case, the new openness to the vocabulary on

²⁷⁹ R. Dutschke, cited in ‘Zu diesem Buch’, in: H. Schwenger (ed.) *Solidarität mit Rudolf Bahro. Briefe in die DDR* (Hamburg 1978).

²⁸⁰ T. Judt, *Postwar Europe. A history of Europe since 1945* (London 2005), p. 566.

²⁸¹ For example in: Canfield, ‘Marxist Revisionism in East Germany’, p. 46.

²⁸² R. Dutschke, cited in J. Schmitz, ‘Oostduitse criticus. Berlijns congres wil vrijlating Bahro’, *De Volkskrant*, 20 November 1978, p.3.

²⁸³ C. Krämer, ‘Showman Biermann?’, *Het Parool*, 3 November 1978, p. 4.

rights and liberties did give the left intellectuals access to the language of opposition in *eastern* Europe as well, and served as a way to communicate across the divide.²⁸⁴

Another, more direct attempt to revitalise and unify the radical left in the West was the international congress for and about Rudolf Bahro. Besides the aim of the congress to support Bahro, the organisation also hoped that the congress would provide an opportunity for the western left to reunite through a discussion of Bahro's theoretical concept.²⁸⁵ As it turned out, however, consensus for support of a political prisoner proved much easier than doctrinal consensus (which also reflects the shift towards human rights as common denominator among the left, rather than communism or socialism). Contemporary media coverage spread a two-sided picture of the Congress; on the one hand it stated that it was successful as political manifestation, but on the other hand it was not successful as theoretical discussion for the reunification left.²⁸⁶ This led Jeffrey Lee Canfield to report 'While the Congress achieved impressive publicity for the "Bahro case", the attempt to use Bahro a symbol for a revitalised Left failed miserably'.²⁸⁷ A left oriented Dutch newspaper, *De Volkskrant*, reported in a similar fashion, stating 'Na afloop van het congres uitten enkele organisatoren en buitenlandse gasten hun teleurstelling over de geringe resultaten van de discussies. De Westberlijnse professor Elmar Altvater weet dat vooral aan de plenaire discussievorm en de tegenstellingen onder de Duitse deelnemers die elkaar politieke groepen soms fel aanvielen'.²⁸⁸

Instead of calling the Congress a failure due to its lack of theoretical consensus, I would rather argue for a different assessment of the Bahro Congress and how it influenced the radical left in West Germany. It is true that theoretical consensus was not reached among the different left groups that were present (and there were many: it ranged from social democrats, to socialists, to Eurocommunists, to Trotskyists). However, it was exactly the divergent dynamic and disagreement, yet unification over the case Bahro – which indirectly meant unification over the agreement that disagreement on forms of socialism should be allowed – which can be pointed out as the exact value of the congress for the radical left. This could even be called a forebode for how the radical left would thus try to organise and unite itself over other issues than the specific interpretation of Marxism from the late 1970s onwards. Additionally, the congress had provided a platform where the different groups could not just talk about other groups, but speak with each other as well. It thus quite literally enabled a discussion about deviant forms of socialism.

Consequently, those groups who could not reconcile with 'agree to disagree' – the more dogmatic K-parties of West Germany (in contrast to the Eurocommunist PCI and PCE) – did not participate in the solidarity demonstration that the congress was. Especially the Moscow-loyal DKP and

²⁸⁴ See also: Judt, *Postwar Europe*, pp.564-566.

²⁸⁵ Canfield, 'Marxist revisionism in East Germany', p.28.

²⁸⁶ Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p.279.

²⁸⁷ Canfield, 'Marxist revisionism in East Germany', p.29.

²⁸⁸ J. Schmitz, 'Oostduitse criticus. Berlijns congres wil vrijlating Bahro', *De Volkskrant*, 20 November 1978, p.3.

Maoist KPD were not prepared to discuss Bahro's theory. As becomes evident in radical left journals, this position resulted in a tendency where the K-Gruppen and the DKP became more and more isolated from the rest of the radical left milieu. In nearly all radical left publications about Bahro, the DKP's position towards his imprisonment is strongly criticised, until the point where the party is completely discredited. Also Bahro himself thought his analysis discredited the DKP to the core, he said in an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 1979 'Ich glaube, daß die DKP mit meiner Analyse des real existierenden Sozialismus nun wirklich theoretisch tot ist'.²⁸⁹ The DKP was still defending the SED in the case of Bahro, whereas for many among the radical left the imprisonment of Bahro had shown that there was an ultimate necessity for an alternative socialism. The congress had shown that at least this was something the undogmatic left could agree on. Also in the papers discussing the aim of the *Taz*, one of the main means to reach their goal of showing the incompatibility between Marxism and Stalinism was to be critical about the news coverage of *Unsere Zeit* (UZ, the journal of the DKP) on, for example, the issues of prison sentences and the declarations (and corresponding treatments) of insanity ('*Psychiatisierung*') of dissidents. Also, the *Taz* wanted to show the contrast between the DKP and the Eurocommunist parties.²⁹⁰ As we have seen in the previous chapter, Eurocommunism was celebrated among the radical left in West Germany, as it was perceived to be more tolerable of deviant socialist ideas than the DKP.

For those who were open to discuss socialism, Bahro was an important influence. Solidarity with Bahro led to a discussion about his thesis, which inspired the intensification of the debate on what kind of socialism would be ideal among the radical left in West Germany:

'Das Zustandekommen dieses Bandes [...] sind ein Zeichen dafür, daß Bahros Aufforderung zur Diskussion auf fruchtbaren Boden gefallen ist [...] Die Weiterführung der Sozialismusdebatte der westlichen Linken ist der langfristig wirkungsvollste Beitrag der Solidarität mit Rudolf Bahro, Robert Havemann und allen anderen linken Dissidenten'²⁹¹.

Thus, even though Bahro wrote his book about eastern European societies, still his thesis was broadly discussed among the left socialist milieu in the West, as the key aspects of the book pointed towards the main controversies prevalent among the radical left in the West as well. Those controversies were about core questions such as 'which role does the working class of today play as revolutionary subject?', 'did intellectuals take over the revolutionary functions?', 'to what extent is social class still relevant in general?', 'what is the function of a communist party?', 'is nationalisation of the means of production the decisive step on the road to socialism?', 'is the Soviet Union's road to socialism into despotism historically defined, or could it have been prevented?', 'should the future be in hands of a parliamentary

²⁸⁹ R. Bahro, "'Ich weiß, ich kann völlig abrutschen", der SED-Dissident Rudolf Bahro über seine Prozeß, seine Haft und seine Zukunft in der Bundesrepublik', *Der Spiegel* 43 (1979), pp.20-33, in: Herzberg (ed.), *Rudolf Bahro: Denker, Reformator, Homo Politicus*, pp. 398-414, p. 410.

²⁹⁰ Papier der Arbeitsgruppe 'Theorie und Praxis' der *Taz* initiative Freiburg (4-11-1978), Hans Ulrich Dillmann Collection (Tageszeitung), 1975-1986, ARC00474, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

²⁹¹ Wolter (ed.), *Antworten auf Bahros Herausforderung des 'realen Sozialismus'*, p.9.

system, a councils democracy, or in a dictatorship of the proletariat?’ and ‘will the state remain the reform object, will it die out, or should it be crushed?’.²⁹² Jakob Moneta goes even as far in linking the usage of *die Alternative* thesis in East- and West Germany to a possible reunification of the two:

Ein solches Modell einer sozialistischen klassenlosen Gesellschaft, für das Bahro die “Sehnsucht nach sozialer Gerechtigkeit” mobilisieren will, ist nicht nur für die Herrschenden in der DDR gefährlich, sondern offensichtlich auch für die der Bundesrepublik. Es könnte gar die Grundlage für den Kampf um die Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands in der DDR und in der Bundesrepublik sein.²⁹³

Although an analysis like Moneta’s was quite unique among the radical left milieu in the West, it does show to what extent it was received as a revolutionary thesis for socialists in West Germany, regardless of the fact that the theory was written for and about eastern communist regimes. Simultaneously it shows how much the radical left in the West was struggling to find doctrinal consensus and clarity on what kind of society they envisioned ideally for themselves in West Germany.

Moreover, the radical left milieu appreciated Bahro’s thesis so much because it seemed to present a real potential for an alternative socialism, in contrast to just utopian ideas. This validation of the more pragmatic side of the thesis reflects the increased appreciation of pragmatism among the radical left milieu in the late 1970s, and early 1980s. A significant part of the radical left started to realise that Dutschke’s ‘long march through the institutions’ would be inevitable if they did not want to become obsolete and sink in oblivion. The search for a new common denominator was part of this tendency as well. Another theme that started to gain ground as something to identify with as being radical left and with a potential to be institutionalised was ecology. It is not unimportant that Bahro, along with people like Rudi Dutschke, were developing its own institutional form of politics by founding a leftist ‘Green’ party in the FRG, that was supposed to be a socialist alternative to the SPD. The new party, ‘die Grünen’, was highly critical of capitalism, but other than the DKP did not look to Moscow either.²⁹⁴ This is not to say that socialism disappeared as the identifier for the radical left, but it does mean that the radical left found new themes upon which to reunite. They started to realise that ecology was a theme upon which they could politically organise people. The radical left had traditionally been concerned with ecology issues, for example the anti-nuclear movement of the early 1970s was already relatively large. Bahro explains in the importance of ecology for the radical left in an interview with *Der Spiegel* upon his arrival in the FRG as well. After the interviewers confront him with the fact that the writer and

²⁹² E. Elitz sums up these questions in a report of the Bahro Congress in *Vorwärts* (the journal of the Swiss worker’s Party) cited in: Herzberg and Seifert, *Rudolf Bahro. Glaube an das Veränderbare*, p.280.

²⁹³ J. Moneta, ‘Eine Alternative – nicht nur für die DDR’, p.19.

²⁹⁴ English-language accounts of the Greens Party are: E. G. Frankland and D. Schoonmaker, *Between protest and power: the Green Party in Germany* (Boulder 1992), E. Kolinsky (ed.) *The Greens in West Germany: Organisation and policy making* (Oxford 1989), and G. Langruth, *The green factor in German politics* (Boulder 1984). Comprehensive German-language books about the Greens are: J. Raschke, *Die Grünen: Wie sie wurden, was sie sind* (Cologne 1993), J. R. Mettke (ed.) *Die Grünen. Regierungspartner von morgen?* (Hamburg 1982), and M. Weinberger, *Aufbruch zu neuen Ufern: Grün-Alternative zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (Bonn 1984).

ecologist Carl Amery has called Bahro a ‘heimlichen Grünen’, Bahro replies that Amery is correct: ‘Da hat er sich nicht geirrt. Das bedeutet aber nicht, daß ich nicht Marxist wäre. Doch erst mal muß gesichert werden, daß unsere Zivilisation nicht krachen geht. Dann kann sie vielleicht meinen gesellschaftlichen Idealen zugeführt werden’²⁹⁵. Bahro clearly does not replace ‘Marxism’ with ‘ecology’, but rather ecology becomes framed as a prerequisite for Marxism to prevail.

3.4 Conclusion

As mentioned before, the reception of Bahro and his thesis among the radical left milieu of the FRG can be summarised as ‘critical solidarity’. Although the radical left used this expression to exemplify their own reaction to the Bahro case, it is useful to indicate how Bahro was received on a more analytical level as well, for several reasons. The reception of Bahro led to critical discussions about his synthesis of socialism, and moreover, it brought the radical left to the core notions and contentions of their ideas on how to establish socialism in the FRG. The prefix ‘critical’ here thus alludes to the actual contents of Bahro’s theory. Bahro was received with solidarity as the undogmatic radical left critically engaged with his thesis while rallying and campaigning for his freedom. Not discussing Bahro’s thesis would mean the denial of expressing deviant theories of socialism. ‘Solidarity’ thus indicates a solidarity with the ‘case Bahro’ and what he came to represent.

To conclude, it can be said that Rudolf Bahro’s influence on the radical left scene of the FRG in the late 1970s was unifying, legitimising, and pragmatizing. For the symbol he represented, he unified the radical left in their realisation that they were fighting the same fight, which each other as well as with East German dissidents. This fight was often framed around the radical’s decree which provided a common language. Moreover, the radical left started to frame their fight in the universal language of human rights, which improved the legitimisation of the radical left in the FRG. Bahro also legitimised the idea that the socialist left of the West wanted another socialist state than those existing in the East, and in addition, that a more pragmatic strategy had to be developed in order to establish their own radical left ideal. More pragmatic meant that the radical left had to find its own way into the institutions (through establishing their own party, for example) and that it had to find a different common denominator for the splintered milieu, rather than merely ‘socialism’. The denominator ‘socialism’ had proven to be too hard to reunify the radical left, which Bahro’s thesis could not do either. But what was improved was a realisation that doctrinal consensus might be too hard, and that the radical left had to organise along the line of other issues, such as ecology.

²⁹⁵ R. Bahro, “Ich weiß, ich kann völlig abrutschen”, der SED-Dissident Rudolf Bahro über seine Prozeß, seine Haft und seine Zukunft in der Bundesrepublik, *Der Spiegel* 43 (1979), pp.20-33, in: Herzberg (ed.), *Rudolf Bahro: Denker, Reformator, Homo Politicus*, pp. 398-414, p. 410.

Conclusion

Oder sind die wirklichen Alliierten der Linken die Kommunisten und Sozialisten in der Opposition, wie Biermann und Havemann in der DDR? [...] Das sind die Fragen die schon länger existieren, aber jetzt im Zusammenhang mit der Ausbürgerung von Wolf Biermann noch dringender seriöse, nicht emotionelle Antworten erfordern.²⁹⁶

- Jiri Pelikan, *Das da* (1977)

Based on the theoretical framework of *Transfergeschichte*, this thesis examined the influence of the East German dissidents Wolf Biermann and Rudolf Bahro on the West German radical left milieu in the late 1970s. The key notion of transfer history, that social milieus are cross-nationally influenced by cultural facets of society such as education, music, and literature, served as a starting point from which the influence of the two prominent East German dissidents has been examined. In line with the role that transfer history attaches to intermediaries such as publishers, universities and other cultural media to aid the transfer of ‘knowledge’, this research has examined the literary output and radical left journals to distil how Biermann and Bahro influenced the radical left of the FRG. The radical left in the Federal Republic was not an easily definable social milieu. Several names have been attached to them, ranging from ‘the alternatives’, to ‘New Social Movements’, to ‘the Left’ or ‘the Movement’. ‘The alternatives’ was often used at the time itself, by the milieu itself as well as by the mainstream society. The term ‘New Social Movements’ is one that came to be placed upon them much later, mainly by sociology scholars. ‘The Left’ and ‘the Movement’ were used at the time, predominantly by people who were not involved in themselves. In contrast to what some of these names suggest, it was a rather elusive conglomeration of groups and people, each organised around a particular issue. Important to realise is that they all found themselves on the radical left of the political spectrum, and that for contemporaries it was clear enough who belonged to this radical left milieu and who did not.

In order to critically analyse how the East German dissidents influenced the West German radicals, it is crucial to first gain an understanding of the key characteristics of the radical left in West Germany of the second half of the 1970s. Therefore, chapter one expounded three main features that became increasingly associated with the radical left in relation to the FRG: ‘fragmentation’, ‘un-constitutionalism’, and ‘isolation’. ‘Fragmentation’ because, with the disintegration of the SDS in the late 1960s, the radical left failed to organise themselves along a common line. The many splintered sub-groups were all devoted to a particular sub-theme, such as ecology, anti-nuclear weapons, and feminism, which, according to each group, held the solution to the absolute ‘socialist’ truth. With their adherence to the idea of grassroots democracy, they failed to organise themselves on a national level, as big organisational (and consequently hierarchical) structures did not suit their ideology. Therefore, most groups remained regional. ‘Un-constitutionalism’, because their adherence to Marxism did not accept

²⁹⁶ J. Pelikan, in: *Das da* (Hamburg 1977), published: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, *Exil*, pp.102-103.

the liberal democratic basic structure of the political system of the FRG, as it was enshrined in the Basic Law. The radical left were communists and socialists, they felt that the liberal democratic basic structure of the state was a mere façade for authoritarianism and intolerance, not the least because many former Nazi members still held high functions in the public domain. In the Sixties and Seventies, moreover, the Cold War was waged and Germany itself was divided among the two camps. Being communist in the capitalist part of Germany could not bode any good. 'Isolation', because of a reciprocity between the authority's repressive measures against the radical left, and the desire of the radical left themselves to be 'alternative', and anti- 'the system'. The repressive measures against the radical left at the hand of the authorities had to do with two context-specific dynamics in the FRG. Firstly, the still recent Nazi past brought a fear for instability which was seen as a threat to the democratic order, because it reminded the authorities of the Weimar years just before Germany plunged into dictatorship. Secondly, there was a general perceived sense that all of the radical left milieu sympathised with the radical left terrorists of the RAF, and that therefore they were dangerous. The conventional media, notably the Springer Press, gratefully fed these sentiments to the public, resulting in a general aversion of the radical left among the masses.

This intricate atmosphere defined the relationship in West Germany between radical left people and the society in the 1970s. In East Germany, dissident Marxist intellectuals and the SED were not hand and gloves either. Rather the opposite. Deviant thinking from the official Party was heretical. An important reason for this was that by 1968 the SED defined East Germany solely in communist terms, and rejected the notion of any 'national' foundation. In 1974, the regime even made an amendment in the East German constitution, in which the whole notion of a 'German nation' was obliterated and replaced by the description of the GDR as 'a socialist state of workers and peasants'.²⁹⁷ This was partly the result of its necessity for a state foundation legitimisation theory. The GDR asserted that after the Third Reich, they were the righteous Germany – in contrast to the Nazi successor state of West Germany. Communist Germany disguised itself by fencing themselves off from West Germany (quite literally in 1961 by building the Berlin Wall), even alluding to a kind of victimhood because of Hitler's repressions against communists. Therefore, if one opposed the regime doctrine, one automatically questioned the East German independent statehood. Critical thinkers in the GDR were thus not against communism – to the contrary – but they were in favour of a 'transformation' of the communist doctrine from within. In the case of most dissidents, this meant that they were in favour of a less dogmatic reading of Marxism, and against the amalgamation of Marxism and Stalinism.

This was the case for the singer Wolf Biermann and the philosopher Rudolf Bahro as well. Both ended up moving to West Germany, even though they were convinced communists and preferred East Germany. Their critique on the SED meant that they were forced to leave, Biermann because he was *ausgebürgert* during his concert tour in West Germany in 1976, and Bahro because he was threatened

²⁹⁷ Ross, *East German dictatorships*, p. 11.

with longer imprisonment if he did not leave East Germany after his release from prison which was part of an amnesty campaign in 1979. Both men's relocation to West Germany did not go unnoticed. Besides that it caused a media surge in the conventional media, the alternative press of the radical left immediately picked up on them as well. Biermann was quick to establish contacts with the Liedermacher scene of West Germany, and featured on many of the festivals organised by the radical left. Rudolf Bahro's theory was extensively discussed among radical left intellectuals in the West, leading to new discussions about socialism there. His book was obtainable on offer in left bookshops, and even a Congress was organised for and about him. Moreover, in both cases the 'case' they represented gained a highly symbolic function for the radical left. They both represented the case of a communist from East Germany, forced to move to the West because of provoking utterances about communism as it was in the GDR.

The two men both became active in a scene within the radical left milieu of the FRG which played an important role that scene. For Biermann this was the Liedermacher and festival scene, for Bahro the intellectual literary scene. These scenes offered them an infrastructure from which they could communicate with the radical left, and because of which they were able to have a considerable influence on the alternative milieu. The structure of the answer to the question how these East German dissidents influenced the West German radical milieu in the late 1970s, is organised around the three manifestations of influence they had on the left scene: 'legitimisation', 'unification', and 'pragmatism'. What follows is a detailed explanation of their influence, based on the empirical evidence and theoretical analysis of chapters two and three

Legitimisation

The radical left in West Germany contended with legitimisation problems. The Cold War context of a divided Germany discredited being communist or socialist in the FRG, and the additional terrorism in the name of radical leftists at the hand of the RAF did not help in making radical leftist critique on the FRG more acceptable. Moreover, towards the second half of the 1970s, atrocities taking place under communist regimes entered the public imagination of the West through media. Stalinist purges were a publicly known fact by then, and boat refugees from north to south Vietnam after the end of the Vietnam war made their appearance on the news in West Germany. All this made it increasingly awkward for the radical left to justify their Marxism. As this thesis showed, this is where the East German *Marxist* dissidents were of ultimate value. They were living proof of the fact that one could be *both*, communist *and* critical of the existing communist societies. The radical left started to actively work on showing this discrepancy between Marxism and Stalinism, and their strategy was to refer to dissidents from the East. One example is where the *Taz* describes that their goal is to act as a sounding board for dissidents from

the East, 'such as Bahro'.²⁹⁸ Dissidents such as Biermann and Bahro made the radical left realise that they did not have to befriend their enemy's friend any longer. The less they were defending the GDR, the more acceptance the radical left could expect in the FRG.

The part of being 'critical of existing communist societies' thus had a legitimising function for the radical left in West Germany. Both Biermann and Bahro were predominantly known among the masses of the FRG for the fact that they were critical of the GDR, because this was something that the FRG media and authorities were gratefully embracing, as it fit their own anti-communist outlook. It was only some of the most conservative voices that did not express solidarity with the GDR dissidents, as they pointed out the fact that with the entering of Biermann and Bahro, the FRG had gained two prominent communists. Biermann and Bahro nonetheless made the radical left a bit more acceptable, as they epitomised the idea of being communist and wanting something different than the GDR reality.

Moreover, by the time of Bahro got his sentence of eight years prison in 1978, the radical left in West Germany had started to pick up on the universal human rights discourse (along with tendencies of the left across the globe). The language of human rights was also understood by the FRG authorities, and the radical left apprehended that when using this new language – thus referring to Bahro as a 'prisoner of conscience' rather than a 'comrade in prison' – could help them out of the imaginary societal ghetto they were in. Having a common discourse with the FRG authorities, meant increased legitimisation, as they spoke now a language that many more people understood – in fact, a language that was universal.

Finally, it was not only legitimisation in the sense of getting out of their isolated gully at the fringes of society. Instead, the East German dissidents also gave an important confirmation for the milieu itself. It was now acceptable to say if you wanted another socialism than the actually existing socialism in the GDR. It opened up space to criticise the GDR within the milieu that had not been there before.

Unification

Human rights also worked as a rhetorical device to criticise an issue prominent among the radical left: the Radikalenerlaß. As this thesis showed, the Radikalenerlaß and the human rights discourse had a unifying effect on the radical left, because it provided a *common language*. This made them realise that they were fighting a similar fight. On the one hand with one another, and on the other hand with the communist dissidents of eastern Europe. And, that this fight was thus a two-front-war: against Stalinism in the East, and against capitalism in the West. This is exemplified by the quote at the start of the conclusion; a realisation came that the communist dissidents from the East – 'such as Biermann and Havemann' – were the 'real allies' of the Left.

²⁹⁸ Papier der Arbeitsgruppe 'Theorie und Praxis' der Taz initiative Freiburg (4-11-1978), Hans Ulrich Dillmann Collection (Tageszeitung), 1975-1986, ARC00474, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

In his songs, Biermann also actively propagated the idea that the splintered left groups should reunite. He pointed out that as long as the many splintered sub-groups kept fighting among themselves, they would only be favourable for the anti-communist forces in the FRG. Music festivals were some of the rare occasions that many different groups of the radical left would actually meet and celebrate together, it is not unimportant that Biermann was able to function in the FRG exactly through this kind of infrastructure. Another event where the many left groups with different outlooks actually spoke with one another, instead of about one another, was the International Congress for and about Rudolf Bahro. This congress did not result in a doctrinal consensus (which might have been an impossible aim regarding the heterogeneity of the radical left representatives present). It did however bring the important realisation that it was allowed to disagree, and that at least they all had, very broadly speaking, the desire for an alternative socialism in Germany in common.

Unification, which allowed heterogeneous socialist ideas, was also something that the radical left in the FRG specifically started to associate with the need for a Eurocommunist Party in West Germany. The communist parties of Italy, Spain and France enjoyed a heroic esteem among the radical left of the Federal Republic. They were praised for their ability to unify the radical left in their respective countries, even though not everyone agreed in a doctrinal sense. Biermann often referred to these parties in interviews and songs, as an example for the sectarian radical left in the FRG.

The Communist Party of West Germany, the DKP, held a very uncomfortable position in relation to the East German dissidents and the unifying sentiments of the radical left. The main reason for this was that the DKP was to a considerable extent a puppet of the SED. In both the cases of Biermann and Bahro the DKP officially supported the SED's decision. The cases of these East German dissidents thus led to further isolation of the DKP from the rest of the radical left milieu. On the one hand, because they defended the SED's decisions, and on the other hand, because they opposed the 'agree to disagree' undogmatic tendencies of the radical left scene in West Germany. They did not allow for multiple socialist interpretations, and besides, they claimed to adhere to the only 'true' socialism; the already existing socialism.

Moreover, Biermann and Bahro did not only intentionally or consciously influence the radical left milieu in the FRG. Their influence also had to do with the way they were perceived and especially the symbolism that came attached to their cases. As with any symbolism, theirs was also multi-interpretable, and therefore spoke to more people and groups among the milieu than to just one particular splintered group – contributing to a unifying dynamic. On the other hand, they did have some agency in exerting influence. Interviews with the West German media, held upon their arrival in the FRG, did illuminate that the FRG, and the radical left groups in particular, expected something from the dissidents. Because of who they were and what they did, they were immediately and inevitably prominent among the radical left milieu in the West. Both men knew this, and acted upon it as well. Biermann by writing songs about his new situation and through publicly performing these songs, and Bahro through giving seminars, publishing works, and getting involved in the establishment of the Greens Party (*die Grünen*).

Both also knew about the splintered situation of the radical left in the West, and promoted the idea that the different groups within the milieu should cooperate, rather than compete with one another.

There is one more issue to do with unification that I want to mention briefly, although it refers to a different unification. This is the issue of a reunification of Germany at the hand of the radical leftists. This idea was propagated by Biermann (less by Bahro), and consisted of the notion that Germany should be reunited as a socialist democracy. In this line of thought, the radical left in the West, and the communist dissidents of the East considered themselves to be a people without a homeland (*Heimat*). The possibility of a unified socialist Germany was sometimes mentioned in the alternative press, which connected to the idea of the ‘two-front-war’ against capitalism in the west and communism in the east. However, this was one of the very controversial issues among the radical left milieu themselves as well, as for some, any reference to reunification of Germany or terms such as ‘homeland’, was an invocation of Nazi discourse. On this issue, the East German dissidents did thus not necessarily unify the radical left scene, although indirectly it alludes to similar sentiments as the ‘two-front-war’ discourse which, as said before, did unify the radical left.

Pragmatism

Especially towards the end of the 1970s, there was more initiative among the radical left scene in the West to be pragmatic, if they were to save themselves from oblivion. This sentiment obtained concrete forms in the early and mid 1980s, especially with the establishment of *die Grünen*. It was not the least for influences of people like Bahro that the radical left in West Germany had started to realise this. Eurocommunism, hailed by Biermann in his songs, had proven that a radical left party within the liberal democratic structure of a capitalist state, like the FRG, would be possible. The discussions in West Germany about what kind of socialism the radical left envisioned for themselves were initiated by the book of Bahro. Even though his book was about eastern Europe, it did inspire people in the West to think more concretely about an alternative socialism there. The Bahro Congress had shown that consensus on some issues other than the exact interpretation of socialism was possible. The left gradually found a new denominator amongst which to line up: ecology. Already in the late 1970s Bahro was involved with talks and initiatives about the foundation of a new political party in the FRG that should offer a socialist alternative to the SPD. Out of these initiatives, *die Grünen* was founded in January 1980.

Finale

This research has placed itself in the historiographical debate of the Cold War and adds to the history of protest movements in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. Historiography of protest movements in the 1960s and 1970s traditionally abides to cross-national research within the ideological camps of the Cold War, instead of investigating the exchanges between East and West. In addition, the historiography on social protest movements during the Cold War predominantly focuses on the 1960s,

leaving out the 1970s. The empirical data used for this thesis, revealed that in the case of East and West Germany, the Seventies was not the overshadowed decade that merely presents a transformation from the progressive Sixties towards conservative Eighties as it is often dismissed. Moreover, it has shown that the iron curtain was not always as impenetrable as it has been depicted by historians, and that there was considerable *reciprocal* influence between East and West Europe. The assumption that the West only influenced the East is a teleological one, as we know now that the state-systems of eastern Europe did eventually collapse. Yet, the collapse of these state systems does not mean that there was no influence from the East on the West. As this thesis has shown, this is most certainly true for Germany. In the introduction of this research, it was stated that the aim was to reveal the benefits of the juxtaposition of the reciprocal influences of East German dissidents and West German radical left activists for the study of protest movements. This study shows that these benefits are the historiographical conclusions that, (1) the iron curtain (and the Berlin Wall) was more penetrable than previously assumed, (2) there was already an exchange and a common language between some people of East and West Germany prior to the reunification, and (3) East Germany also influenced people of West Germany and not only the other way around.

It would be illuminating for our understanding of the Cold War, if further research could be done on the relations between the populations of East and West Europe, and how they influenced one another. Additionally, cross-national research would benefit from more research into the two German states as a case study for cross-national history, given the particularities of the relationship between those states. What does transfer history gain from a case study of two countries that share one history as a country? In other words, the weight and importance of *history*, *culture*, and *heritage* in relation to transfer history, can be further defined, as the two German states represented a unique case in twentieth century Europe in that regard. Another, more specific, interesting research would be to research the influence of East German dissidents on discussions among the radical left in the FRG in relation to the reunification of Germany based on socialist democracy. This is a topic that I came across while writing this thesis, where I believe there is much more to be discovered. Especially since the two German states had a peculiar relationship. Both were successor states of the Third Reich, yet they developed a very different historical narrative regarding their relationship to this recent past. It would be fascinating to discover how this narrative shaped different ideas on how to deal with terms like '*Heimat*', '*Volk*' and '*Nation*'. That research would add to the research at hand, as it would illuminate a contention between the newly established 'allies' in the fight against capitalism and the actually existing socialism. Finally, it would also be fascinating to see if any of these discourses and discussions transformed into the discussions and protests on national level (in both Germanies) around the reunification in 1989.

It is inevitable that this conclusion includes some generalisations, to a great extent because both men represented a similar 'case'. Of course, there were also differences on how, or to what extent, these two men influenced the radical left milieu. These differences had to do with the different media and

infrastructure through which they exerted influence. Biermann was able to unite more than Bahro, for example, because songs more easily unite more people than a critical dense theoretical work does. The theoretical work mostly spoke to an intellectual elite, and furthermore possibly led to more disagreement on what exactly an alternative socialism should look like. Nonetheless, both ‘cases’ had a similar unifying effect because of the high symbolism attached to them. On the other hand, Bahro added more to pragmatism than Biermann, as the disagreement on the perfect alternative also led to a pragmatism of ‘agree to disagree’ and find consensus among other issues. Biermann’s songs did not go this far in probing for pragmatism and compromise, which, admittedly, would not have made up very exciting songs. Nonetheless, also Biermann sang about how the FRG needed a Communist Party, with which he meant a more deviant Marxist tolerant Party.

Finally, I do not want to claim that the changes happening in the radical left milieu of the 1970s which had been influenced by dissidents from the East, did happen *because of* the dissidents from the East. Were that to be the case, this thesis would have dealt with the question of how did the radical left scene of the FRG in the late 1970s change because of East German dissidents. Rather, here their influence on the historical and temporal course of the history of the radical left milieu was examined, and not how, or whether, they changed the course in itself. Admittedly, it is a small nuanced difference. I nonetheless want to make it clear, since it implies a quite big theoretical difference. This difference rests in the nuance between how someone, or an event, only influences the object under influence, and how someone or an event can influence the object under influence because of a dialectical relationship between the influencer and the object of influence. This ‘reciprocity of influencing’ and transferring of ‘knowledge’ abides by the logic that it is unlikely that actors themselves can bring ideas or inspiration across borders, if the receivers are not in some way open to these gifts already. This is also the underlying assumption of the relationship between a discursive event and a social structure in critical discourse analysis. Translated into the influence that Biermann and Bahro had on the radical left milieu of the FRG in the 1970s, this means that they did have a legitimising, unifying and pragmatising effect on the radical left milieu not because they ‘*caused*’ it, but because there was a dialectical social context that was both constitutive of and conditioned by these influences.

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