

Expellee Politics and the Change in West German *Ostpolitik*

The Adaption from a Favourable Hallstein Doctrine to Willy Brandt's Rapprochement Policy

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Introduction

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Cold War tensions between the East and the West began to loosen. Western powers started to seek rapprochement with the Soviet Union, and vice versa, and other Eastern Bloc states. This era was characterized by efforts from both the West, mainly the United States, and the Soviet Union, to ease the strained relations. Both sides had their own goals and own strategies to achieve them.

Among these Western powers is the Federal Republic of Germany. The Federal Republic was even one of the first to reach apparent results. This rapprochement started carefully with the Kiesinger Administration in 1966 and reached its zenith during the Chancellery of Willy Brandt. Willy Brandt urged for treaties with Eastern Europe on the renunciation of violence, abandonment of territorial claims, and diplomatic relations. This policy towards the East was not well received by one group particularly. This group would be the expellees and their umbrella organization, the *Bund der Vertriebenen*.

The expellees were Germans that were expelled from Eastern Europe at the end and after World War II. Millions of Germans were expelled westwards, and the majority of them ended up in the Allied-Occupied Zones that would later form the Federal Republic of Germany. These expellees organized themselves rather quickly in interest groups, in order to smoothen their integration in the West German population. These interest groups also had political goals. Foreign policy, and in particular towards Eastern Europe, their former homeland, was most important to them. Eventually, the expellee organizations formed the umbrella group, the *Bund der Vertriebenen*, or Federation of Expellees. This organization became the main advocate for the expellee issues, and in particular, their interest in the foreign policy towards the East.

The number of expellees mounted up to over 10 million in the Federal Republic. This meant that the expellees constituted 15 percent of the West German population, and thus a big chunk of the electorate. Because of this, their organization was well-listened to by the major political parties.

During the late 1960s, as mentioned above, the West German government made a turn in its *Ostpolitik*. The *Ostpolitik* was the major issue for the expellees. They successfully lobbied for inclusion and strict policy towards the East in the 1950s and early 1960s. This policy changed to the rapprochement policy of Willy Brandt. How did the expellees react to this change in foreign policy? And what did they try to do about it?

The question that this research paper will try to answer, is the following: How did the influence of the expellees in the Federal Republic's *Ostpolitik* develop? And how did the

expellee organization try to influence the *Ostpolitik* of Willy Brandt, in particular? The significance interest for Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* can be justified by the fact, that, initially, this policy is at odds with the expellee organization's view on the *Ostpolitik*.

To answer this question, first, the development of the expellees and their organization will be explained. Also, the development of the West German *Ostpolitik*, from the 1950s onwards, will be elaborated upon. The position of the Federation of Expellees during the late 1960s, at the beginning of Willy Brandt's government, will be elaborated. Next, this research paper looks at the *Neue Ostpolitik* of Willy Brandt. Then, the efforts of the *BdV* will be set forth and examined.

For this research, a lot of secondary sources have been used. Primarily, the books by Pertti Ahonen and Hans Schoenberg are of the utmost importance for this research.¹ They give an extensive overview of the history of the expellees and their organizations. Many other secondary sources are used as well. Besides that, articles and interviews from the Spiegel Magazine and speeches of *BdV* members gave clear insides in the positions of the expellee organizations.

Research in the direction of the expellees and its influence in West German foreign politics often simply denies the influence of the expellees during the Brandt Administration. This research paper will try to comprehend whether this simple rejection is justified. Furthermore, the research on this topic is important, because it can be seen in the larger framework of the populations influence in government policy. Not just the normal population, but, as in this case, the influence of migrants. And not just governments policy, but foreign policy.

Heimatvertriebenen:

From Expulsion to the *Bund der Vertriebenen (BdV)*

Before the War, that devastated the world, and Europe in particular, ethnic Germans lived all over the continent, mainly in its eastern part. From the Dutch border to the Soviet Union and from the Baltic States to Yugoslavia, German-speaking peoples were to be found all over

¹ Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe 1945-1990*, (Oxford 2003); Hans Schoenberg, *Germans from the East: A Study of their Migration, Resettlement, and Subsequent Group History Since 1945*, (The Hague 1970).

Europe. Numbers of the German population of 1939 can elucidate the situation. The main portion of Germans outside of Germany's post-1945 borders lived in the former *Reichsgebiete* as East Prussia, Silesia, East Pomerania, and East Brandenburg. Despite the fact that these regions had a German majority, they were transferred to Poland after the War. The number of Germans living there was a little shy of 10 million, over 4.5 million of them in Silesia alone. The second biggest group of Germans outside its post-1945 border in 1939, are the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia. Almost 3.5 million Germans were living in the Czech region Sudetenland. Another 1.5 million ethnic Germans can be found in the former *Kaiserreichgebiete* of 1914, much of which became part of Poland after the First World War. *Freie Stadt Danzig* had a German population of 380.000. This constituted over 95 percent of its total population. Other regions had a significant German minority. The Baltic States, and Memelland in particular, these regions had a German population of 250.000, Hungary and Yugoslavia both had a German population of around 600.000 and Rumania had little less than 800.000 Germans within its borders. In total, the German population in 1939, that lived outside of the German post-1945 borders, amounts up to around 17 million.² To put this in perspective, this is comparable to the current population of The Netherlands.

With the Nazi German capitulation of 1945, there came a halt to the death and destruction that was spread through Europe by the National Socialists. The Allied Powers had won the War, but the next problems arose. What now? How to draw the new borders? What to do with the millions of displaced peoples? The German territory was considerably reduced to the area between its western border with The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Northern France, and the Oder-Neisse Line in the east. Former German provinces east of the Oder-Neisse Line, East Prussia, Silesia, East Pomerania, and East Brandenburg, were ceded to Poland, and the northern part of East Prussia was ceded to the Soviet Union. With the Poles and Czechs at the forefront, the Allies agreed that the German population had to be expelled to within these newly established German borders, rather sooner, than later.³ The first, though unorganized, expulsions of the German people happened already during the last years of the War. The Red Army advanced rather easily westwards. Many Germans living in Yugoslavia, Hungary, Rumania and the Baltic States were the first victims of retributive actions by the Russians and local resistance, such as the Yugoslav partisans. Over half a million Germans either fled, got

² "Tafel 4", in *Tatsachen zum Problem der deutschen Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge*, Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, (Bonn 1967).

³ Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, p. 25.

deported to workcamps in the Soviet Union, or were imprisoned awaiting their expulsion.⁴ Organized and systematic expulsions started immediately at the end of the War but were planned months before, primarily by Poles and Czechs.⁵ At the Potsdam Conference, the Allies agreed on the German territory, “the area between ‘the Oder-Neisse Line and the current western borders’”, and on the ‘orderly transfer of the German populations’. The latter has been written down in Article XII of the Potsdam Agreement: “[The Allies] agree that the transfer to Germany of the German populations, or elements thereof, remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, will *have to be* undertaken” (my emphasis).⁶ This article was a mere reaction to the current events. It tried to regulate the expulsions, as the already ongoing expulsions were characterized by brutality and retribution.⁷ Almost half of the number of Germans had been expelled by late 1946. The organized expulsion slowed down after this but went on until the early 1950s.⁸ The number of expellees differs per source. Some sources claim 12 million,⁹ others claim numbers up to 18 million, including the expellees that ended up in the German Democratic Republic.¹⁰ According to the *Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte* (or Federal Ministry of Expellees, Refugees and War Victims), the number of expellees that ended up in the Federal Republic of Germany by September 13, 1950 is 8 million.¹¹ At that time, almost 20 percent of the total population of the Federal Republic were *Vertriebenen*.

These ‘new’ Germans were not received heartily. Comparable to the reception of refugees in modern-day Europe. The population was distant and repellent towards the expellees, rather than hospitable. Albrecht Lehmann uses the example of the cemetery. Sometimes, aliens, in this case expellees, were buried outside cemetery walls, as happened in the Middle Ages.¹² The population in small villages and rural areas were more hostile to the expellees than the people from the city. Rural communities were always more exclusive towards outsiders, this became more apparent in how they treated the expellees.¹³ Expellees

⁴ Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, pp. 18-19; Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 16.

⁵ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

⁸ Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, p. 26.

⁹ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 19; Albrecht Lehmann, *Im Fremden ungewollt zuhaus: Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in Westdeutschland 1945-1990*, (München, 1993), p. 22.

¹⁰ Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, p. 29.

¹¹ “Tafel 12”, in *Tatsachen zum Problem der deutschen Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge*, Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, (Bonn 1967).

¹² Lehmann, *Im Fremden ungewollt zuhaus*, p. 30.

¹³ Lehmann, *Im Fremden ungewollt zuhaus*, pp. 48-49; *Fremde Heimat – Das Schicksal der Vertriebenen nach 1945*, (Berlin: ARD 2015).

that arrived in the Federal Republic and in the Democratic Republic were received differently. In the West, it was all about integrating in German and Western society. But in the East, the expellees were never regarded as expellees and immediately incorporated in the socialist plans of the GDR government. When lucky, the expellees even received land to cultivate.¹⁴ Besides facing the hostile attitude of the German populations, they faced other issues, such as poverty, housing problems, scarce resources, unemployment, and the traumatic memories of their recent expulsion.¹⁵

Logically, the not-so-warm-welcomed expellees looked at each other for support and refuge, especially with the struggles they were facing. They came together and formed interest groups for expellees. The first groups were already founded in the years immediately after the War. The most prominent ones in these early years were, first, the Emergency Association of the East Germans, founded in June 1945, in the interest of all German expellees, and, second, the Sudeten German Relief Office, founded in July 1945, in the interest of expellees from Czechoslovakia, the *Sudetendeutschen*.¹⁶ The British and the Americans, whose occupation zones took in nearly all expellees, were opposed to the early expellee organizations. The occupiers wanted the expellees to integrate in German society, and forming expellee organizations, would not help to do this. The organizations got banned, but this did not take long, as the occupying powers noticed that it was only counterproductive. Expellee organizations that focused on social, cultural, and economic issues were allowed, but expellee political parties remained forbidden in the years of Allied-occupied Germany.¹⁷

After the ban was lifted, expellee organizations sprung up like mushrooms. The organizations developed in three ways. First, the ones based on residence before the expulsion, second, on residence after the expulsion, and last, based on vocation or profession.¹⁸ The first two, organizations on the basis of place of origin or former residence and the regional organizations, are the most important and persistent categories. These two would eventually become the corporate members of the *Bund der Vertriebenen*.¹⁹ Organizations based on origin are called Homeland Provincial Societies, or in German *Landsmannschaften*. Hans Schoenberg takes an extreme stance on these organizations, by claiming that these organizations are a continuation of irredentist, and sometimes paramilitary, groups that were active in Germany

¹⁴ *Fremde Heimat* (ARD)

¹⁵ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 24; *Fremde Heimat* (ARD); Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, pp. 38-40.

¹⁶ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

¹⁸ Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, p. 71.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

throughout the first half of the twentieth century.²⁰ It cannot be disregarded that these *Landsmannschaften* had clear irredentist elements, but the spokesmen of the organizations denounced all revenge and retaliation with the signing of the *Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen* in 1950.²¹ Anyhow, the basis for these expellee organizations is found in pre-expulsion Germany. Earlier westward migrants of German ethnicity from Eastern Europe, already formed social and cultural groups.²² The *Landmannschaften* sought to unite the expellees from their pre-expulsion regions and primarily focused on *Heimatpolitik*, a foreign and cultural policy regarding their former homelands.²³ By 1949, twenty *Landsmannschaften* were active in the Federal Republic. By that year, they organized themselves on a national level and formed the United East German Homeland Societies (*Vereinigte Ostdeutsche Landsmannschaften*), which was to be renamed Association of Homeland Societies (*Verband der Landsmannschaften*).²⁴ The second type of organizations was also spread throughout Germany. These organizations based their membership and activities on current residence in the Federal Republic and were called Regional State Association, or *Landesverbände*. By founding the Central Association of Expelled Germans (*Zentralverband vertriebener Deutschen*), later renamed League of Expelled Germans (*Bund der vertriebenen Deutschen*), the eleven *Landesverbände* united, also, in 1949.²⁵ Both of these umbrella organizations claimed to represent the interest of all expellees and often were in conflict with each other. This ended with an accord of the division of labor between the two. The *ZvD/BvD*, the regional umbrella, would focus on social issues and the *VOL/VdL*, the umbrella organization of the *Landsmannschaften*, would focus on cultural issues and foreign affairs.²⁶ Ten years after their founding, the by then named *Bund der vertriebenen Deutschen* and *Verband der Landsmannschaften* merged in July 1959 to form the new national organization, the Federation of Expellees, or *Bund der Vertriebenen (BdV)*. The twenty *Landsmannschaften* and eleven *Landesverbände* became the corporate members of this newly established organization.²⁷ The *BdV* has been the main force of expellee lobbying from the 1960s onwards. Thus, this organization is of major importance to this research paper.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 80-85.

²¹ *Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen*, 1950, Bund der Vertriebenen, accessed on May 20, 2019, <https://www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/charta-der-deutschen-heimatvertriebenen/charta-in-deutsch.html>

²² Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, p. 85.

²³ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, pp. 29-30.

²⁴ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 30.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 29-30.

²⁷ Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, p. 112.

In various speeches, in the early years of the *BdV*, the Presidents emphasize the importance of the organization. In a speech from 1959, the President claims to represent more than 10 million expellees and to have over 2.5 million active members. In this same speech, a comparison is made between the *BdV* and the German Trade Union Confederation. Not merely a comparison, but a claim that the *BdV* surpasses the trade union in importance and membership. In a 1961 speech, the political strength of the organization is emphasized: “[An organization] that cannot be neglected in domestic and foreign politics any more”.²⁸ So, the organization claims to be of the utmost importance in the German political spectrum. This will be further examined in this paper.

Ostpolitik before Brandt:

From Konrad Adenauer to the Great Coalition

During the first two decades of West German political autonomy, the governing coalitions were led by the CDU/CSU. For most of these years, Konrad Adenauer was the Chancellor of the Federal Republic, namely from 1949 until 1963. The leading political party of this time, the CDU/CSU, could count on support from a big portion of the expellee community. This was a reciprocal relationship. The expellees influenced the party agenda, in the sense of conservatism and their view on foreign relations with eastern European countries.²⁹ Expellee organizations emphasized the latter, as many expellee activists claimed, even in the early years of their arrival, that their organizations should be actively included in matters concerning West German foreign policies towards the East. Their opinion is beautifully put by Pertti Ahonen: “... no *Ostpolitik* decision should be made ‘without first hearing those directly interested in and co-responsible for the Eastern territories’ ...”.³⁰

In 1955, the Federal Republic of Germany obtained full political autonomy and full sovereignty, with the Paris Agreement. This agreement ended the occupation and from this point onwards, the West German republic could freely form its own foreign policy. Konrad Adenauer’s first course of action in the arena of foreign affairs, the first step of West German

²⁸ Anna Jakubowska, *Der Bund der Vertriebenen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Polen (1957-2004): Selbst- und Fremddarstellung eines Vertriebenenverbandes*, (Marburg 2012), p. 38.

²⁹ Clay Clemens, *Reluctant Realists: The Christian Democrats and West German Ostpolitik*, (London 1989), p. 16.

³⁰ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, pp. 132-133.

Ostpolitik, was a meeting in Moscow in 1955. With this meeting, the Federal Republic entered into diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. At first sight, this seems intolerable for the expellee community. At first, the expellee elites did, indeed, not agree with this course of action. But the organizations were persuaded when an affiliate of the *Verband der Landsmannschaften* was made part of the official delegation, as an observer, and the results of this meeting were pleasing to the expellee community. Because next to establishing official relations, the Bonn government presented a separate statement in which it reiterated its rejection of the Oder-Neisse Line and its claim to be the sole representative of the German people.³¹ This was in line with the expellee organization's own foreign policy objectives. Although this seemed like an opening for relations with satellite members of the Eastern Bloc, the expellee organizations still firmly rejected any diplomatic relations with countries of Eastern Europe.³²

In the same year, 1955, Bonn came with a strict policy towards the German Democratic Republic, in order to isolate their Eastern counterpart. A policy that was received well within the expellee community.³³ The policy was coined by Wilhelm G. Grewe and named after Secretary of State Walter Hallstein. The Hallstein Doctrine characterizes the West German *Ostpolitik* of the following decade. The doctrine suggests that the Federal Republic would break any diplomatic relations with any third state, besides the Soviet Union, that recognized or otherwise entered into diplomatic relations with the GDR.³⁴ This indirectly meant that it would not establish any relations with states from the Eastern Bloc. So, the Federal Republic now espoused "an apparently doctrinaire rejection of official relations with the Eastern Bloc satellites."³⁵ There is no official text of the Hallstein Doctrine and apparently, it was not as straightforward as mentioned above. Ministerial Director Wilhelm G. Grewe, the architect behind the doctrine, mentions this in a radio interview with the Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunk. The engagement into relations with the GDR by a third state will be seen as an 'unfriendly act' and there are many measures that can be taken before the Federal Republic breaks off any diplomatic relations.³⁶ But in fact, this still indirectly meant that the Federal Republic would not enter into any diplomatic relations with states from the Eastern Bloc, at least officially.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 119-120.

³² Ibid., p. 120.

³³ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, pp. 122-123.

³⁴ Clemens, *Reluctant Realists*, p. 35.

³⁵ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 122.

³⁶ Hans Wendt, Interview with Wilhelm G. Grewe, Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunk, December 11, 1955.

During these early years of political autonomy, opposition parties, with the SPD as a frontrunner, called for normalization in relations with the East. It was mentioned in public statements and even in their party agendas. But they kept their statements vague and avoided specifics on how to normalize relations, on purpose, not to anger the expellee community.³⁷ Eventually, the CDU/CSU also toyed with these ideas but did not manifest them. Many reasons for this have been given in historiography, but according to Ahonen, the main reason has been downplayed or simply neglected by most historians. Namely, “the largest and most influential constituency with a vested interest in the issue,” the expellees.³⁸

The above-mentioned tendencies have been the state of affairs up to 1966. In this year, the Christian Democrat Chancellor Ludwig Erhard and his government sent out a universal note, also to the Eastern Bloc, on ‘German peace politics’, the *Friedensnote*. This seemed like a desperate move and clearly did not have the desired results.³⁹ But, it can be seen as the first step of the Federal Republic towards a *détente* policy to the East.

After the 1966 elections, the CDU/CSU remained the major political party but now entered into a coalition with its rival, the SPD. In the *Regierungserklärung der Grossen Koalition* (government statement of the Great Coalition) of December 13, 1966, Kurt George Kiesinger, the new Chancellor, stresses the following. The federal government offers the possibility to engage in friendly relations with the Eastern European countries, as it did before with the Soviet Union. “That’s why we care ... to improve relations in the economic, cultural, and political spheres, and wherever the circumstances allow it, even to engage in diplomatic relations.” Kiesinger, then, specifically mentions Poland and Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, he underlines the governments *Obhutspflicht* (custodian duty) towards the Sudetendeutschen and other expellees and stresses the bitter suffering and injustice they had to endure, during the expulsions.⁴⁰ The influence of the SPD in this foreign policy approach is clearly visible, in the government’s position towards the East, as the SPD, already at the beginning of the 1960s changed their foreign policy approach, as mentioned above. This Great Coalition marks the transition of strict Christian Democratic Eastern policies to the Social Democratic ‘*Wandel durch Annäherung*’, or ‘Change through rapprochement’. This coalition slightly opened the

³⁷ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 127.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³⁹ Peter Bender, *Die 'Neue Ostpolitik' und ihre Folgen: Vom Mauerbau bis zur Wiedervereinigung*, (München 1995), pp. 112-114.

⁴⁰ Kurt Georg Kiesinger, *Regierungserklärung*, December 13, 1966.

door for Willy Brandt's *Neue Ostpolitik*. Not so bizarre, with Willy Brandt as Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁴¹

Introduction to the *Neue Ostpolitik* and the *Zeitgeist* of the 1960s

In the government declaration of October 1969, Chancellor Willy Brandt stresses the necessity of normalizing relations with Eastern European states. Two of his main foreign policy points are about conversations with Poland and the Soviet Union.⁴² With hindsight, we know that these conversations will lead to the *Ostverträge*, the Moscow and Warsaw treaties, of 1970 and 1971. Willy Brandt introduces this policy as a continuation of the *Friedensnote* of Erhard and the government declaration of Kiesinger, both from 1966. He emphasizes the fact that these policies were supported by all Bundestag factions. Thus, he states, “this federal government will continue this policy, that I [Willy Brandt], as Foreign Minister, ... have developed”, as he expects a continuation of support from the Bundestag.⁴³

In his government declaration, Willy Brandt, in comparison to Kiesinger's government declaration, fails to mention the *Vertriebenen* by name. One thing he does mention a lot is the right of self-determination. Not specifically for the *Heimatvertriebenen*, but for all Germans, “just like all other peoples”.⁴⁴ It is hard to determine if he aims to satisfy the expellee community with these references, or if his aim is at the German people of the German Democratic Republic. His intentions are hard to define, but it is understandable, that such a vague reference to self-determination, is never satisfying to the expellee community and its organization.

The détente policy has been dubbed ‘*Wandel durch Annäherung*’. An idea that has already been introduced in 1963 during a speech by Egon Bahr at the *Evangelische Akademie Tutzing*, also called the *Tutzinger Rede*, or the Tutzinger Speech. Egon Bahr, an elite SPD-politician, can be seen as the architect behind the *Neue Ostpolitik*. The goal of German reunification is key in Bahr's *Wandel durch Annäherung*, as it is often in West German politics. “Reunification is a foreign policy problem.”, states Bahr, “It contradicts many resolutions, but is represent the de facto situation.”⁴⁵ The German Democratic Republic should be reformed

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Willy Brandt, *Regierungserklärung*, October 28, 1969.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Willy Brandt, *Regierungserklärung*, October 28, 1969.

⁴⁵ Egon Bahr, *Tutzinger Rede*, July 15, 1963.

with the Soviets consent, otherwise, it would not be sustainable and it could endanger peace in Europe. This is why, in his speech, Egon Bahr stresses the importance of normal relations with Eastern European states, and primarily the Soviet Union. He calls this ‘change through rapprochement’. In the *Tutzinger Rede*, he also criticizes the Hallstein Doctrine, as it can never have the effect it is supposed to have. The Hallstein Doctrine is in itself a way of recognizing the German Democratic Republic but in a negative form.⁴⁶

The dismissal of the strict CDU/CSU policies towards the East of the 1950s falls in the broader context of political change in the West of the 1960s. In the United States, John F. Kennedy became President in 1961. He was the first Western head of government to pursue a détente policy towards the East and especially the Soviet Union.⁴⁷ The same urge for détente already existed in the East, with Nikita Khrushchev as a frontrunner.⁴⁸ The idea of détente slowly set foot on the ground in Europe, primarily within the more progressive Social Democratic parties of Europe. The rise of Kennedy, coincided with a rise of the Social Democrats, with the same idea of détente, throughout Europe.⁴⁹ As we have seen, with the *Friedensnote* and the Kiesinger government, even conservative parties could not dismiss this trend. But these parties, in the Federal Republic, the CDU/CSU, were still reluctant with easing relations towards the East, which eventually caused the success of the Social Democrats in Europe, in the Federal Republic, the SPD, of the 1960s. This success would lead to an SPD reign of about 13 years.⁵⁰ Enough time to explore more amicable relations with the Soviet Union and its satellites.

Political Points of the *Heimatvertriebenen* up to the *Neue Ostpolitik*

Expellees are often accused of revanchism and revisionism, especially during the early years of the expulsion. Polish and Czech officials were sincerely afraid of this, as this could “favor the rebirth of militant pan-Germanism and constitute a lasting danger to the peace-loving neighbors of Germany.”⁵¹ The development of expellee organizations in the early post-World War II era was closely watched by Czechoslovakia and Poland. Officials voiced their concern

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Bender, *Die 'Neue Ostpolitik' und ihre Folgen*, p. 82.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

⁴⁹ Donald Sassoon, “The Radical 1960s”, in *Europe Since 1945*, ed. Mary Fulbrook, (Oxford 2000), pp. 36-37.

⁵⁰ Sassoon, “The Radical 1960s”, p. 35.

⁵¹ Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, p. 159.

in official reports and publications.⁵² The claims of expellees in combination with the German aggression that ended only a few years before, the concerns of the Germans' Eastern neighbors are somewhat understandable.

Expellees contradicted their alleged-revanchist and revisionist claims with the proclamation of the Charter of the German Expellees. On August 5, 1950, at a large rally in Stuttgart, in the presence of, among others, Federal Government officials, spokesmen of various *Landmannschaften* and the chairman of the *Zentralverbandes der vertriebenen Deutschen* (predecessor to the *BdV*) signed the *Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen*. The renunciation of revenge and retaliation can be found on the very top of the Charter, in the first article: "1. We, the expellees, renounce all thought of revenge and retaliation. Our resolution is a solemn and sacred one, in memory of the infinite suffering brought upon mankind, particularly during the past decade." At the very end of the *Charta*, the expellee leaders state that the fate of the German expellees is a world problem, "just as that of all refugees". Thus, they call upon all nations in finding a way out of guilt, misfortune, suffering, poverty and misery, which will lead them all to a better future.⁵³

Be that as it may, the expellees still strongly supported a strict policy towards Eastern Europe. The Eastern politics of the first twenty years after the war could suggest that the *Heimatvertriebenen* had the CDU/CSU in their pocket. This is, of course, an over-exaggeration. But the Union's strict foreign policy, especially towards the East, was closely in line with the expellees' objectives. The foreign policy ambitions of the expellees during these years were simple. The Potsdam Conference, which resulted in the Oder-Neisse Line and the current status quo, was not final. Thus, the German borders should be defined later at a Great Power conference, as it is decided in the Potsdam Conference of 1945. These eventual German borders should stretch from Königsberg to the current western border: the 1937 German territory should be reinstated. Some expellees, especially *sudetendeutschen* and their supporters, go a little bit further and extend the claim to the 1938 German territory, which includes Sudetenland. This was annexed by Nazi Germany with the Munich Agreement of 1938. The expellee movement often uses the document to strengthen their legal argument in favor of the 1938 borders, even though this agreement is seen as unjust and illegal, even by most Germans. The expellees legitimized their claims on the basis of their, self-introduced, right to a homeland (*Heimatrecht*) and right of self-determination. In the Charter, *Heimatrecht*

⁵² Ibid., pp. 159-160.

⁵³ *Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen*, 1950, Bund der Vertriebenen, accessed on May 20, 2019, <https://www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/charta-der-deutschen-heimatvertriebenen/charta-in-deutsch.html>

is set forth: “Almighty God himself placed men in their native land. To separate a man from his native land by force, means to kill his soul.”, the Charter continues, “We, therefore, feel competent to demand that the right to our native land be recognized and be realized, as one of the basic rights of man, granted to him by the grace of God.”⁵⁴ The right of self-determination is expressed in the Charter of the United Nations of 1945. Already in the first article: “To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples”.⁵⁵ The principle has already been accepted in the Atlantic Charter during the War. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Social and Cultural Rights, reiterated the fact that “All peoples have the right of self-determination.”, in the 1960s.⁵⁶ In order to achieve their objectives, the expellees supported a strict policy towards the East, that consisted of absolute rejection of the Oder-Neisse line, and the status quo.

A series of speeches by Reinhold Rehs gives a clear image of the political stances of the *Heimatvertriebenen*, and specifically, their umbrella organization, the *Bund der Vertriebenen* of the last years of the 1960s. Reinhold Rehs was elected President of the *Bund der Vertriebenen* in 1967 and was the last President before Willy Brandt became Chancellor of the Federal Republic. In his speeches, he makes remarks on communism and Eastern European leaders. The territorial claims and the rights of the expellees are reiterated, but also the importance of inclusion of expellees in the decision-making of West German Eastern policies, and their self-proclaimed quest for peace, for the expellees and for Europe.

The position against communism and especially the regimes in Moscow and Warsaw really stands out in the speeches of Reinhold Rehs. The numbers of expellee victims at the hand of Russian troops and Polish patriots, for example, is mentioned regularly: “... 2 ½ million expellee deaths, 800 000 forcibly deported civilians, with three million violently retained German peoples with no human rights.”⁵⁷ The violence of the expulsions does not stop there, according to Rehs. He calls Moscow, Warsaw and East-Berlin, the real ‘Cold Warriors’. While the West, and primarily the Federal Republic, is supposedly attempting a détente policy,

⁵⁴ *Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen*, 1950, Bund der Vertriebenen, accessed on May 20, 2019, <https://www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/charta-der-deutschen-heimatvertriebenen/charta-in-deutsch.html>

⁵⁵ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, United Nations, accessed on May 26, 2019, <https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/>.

⁵⁶ *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, UN General Assembly, 1966, accessed on May 26, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>; *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, UN General Assembly, 1966, accessed on May 26, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>.

⁵⁷ Reinhold Rehs, *Acht Reden zum politischen Standort der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen*, (Hamburg 1967), p. 32.

the East counters this with hostile propaganda and, according to Rehs, a policy of violence.⁵⁸ The Communist rulers in Moscow and Warsaw use the alleged, in Rehs' words, non-existing, revanchism of the *vertriebenen*, to cover up and even justify their own violent policies.⁵⁹ Another allegation made by Reinhold Rehs. He furthermore accuses the Communist dictators of rabble-rousing and claims that their violent attitude is the major hurdle in overcoming the German *Ostprobleme*.⁶⁰

“We do not think about it, to give in on the question of the Oder-Neisse border.” This is an excerpt from Kiesinger's government declaration, that Rehs uses in one of his speeches. The President of the *BdV* strongly agrees. In the same excerpt used by Rehs, Kiesinger states that his government does not see why the *Münchener Abkommen* should be seen as void ab initio, but altogether agreed that it could not be recognized as a valid legal document anymore. The Munich Agreement incorporated Sudetenland, and thus the *sudetendeutschen*, into Nazi Germany in 1938. This part of the government declaration is not completely in line with the position of the expellees. But in this speech, Rehs makes no further comment on this particular statement by Kiesinger.⁶¹ The expellees refuse to give in on these issues. Their arguments are mainly legal. Concerning the Oder-Neisse line, for example, for them, it is only temporary, as it is agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference. In their territorial claims, the expellees are quite rigid and meticulous. Their goal is the reunification of all German lands. So, not only a reunification with the German Democratic Republic but with all lost Eastern provinces. This is well-formulated in the applicably-named speech, *Deutschland – Das ist auch Königsberg!*: “Germany, that is still not only the Federal Republic, that is not just Central Germany [i.e. the German Democratic Republic] – for us Germany is still East Germany [i.e. the ‘lost’ provinces east of the Oder-Neisse line] [...] and for us Germany is still Königsberg, and also Stettin, and also Breslau”, Rehs argues, “because there is no other legally binding arrangement in international law than this [He means the temporary situation that is mentioned in the Potsdam Agreement].”⁶² Although it sounds quite irredentist, it clearly spells out the expellees position on the German territory. In another speech, the President refutes the *Stufentheorien*, “I consider all *Stufentheorien* nonsense.”⁶³ The *Stufentheorien* means that, for example, first the Federal Republic is reunified with the GDR, then Silesia, then Sudetenland et cetera. The *BdV* wants

⁵⁸ Rehs, *Acht Reden zum politischen Standort der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen*, pp. 23-24, 34.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 40, 50.

⁶¹ Rehs, *Acht Reden zum politischen Standort der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen*, p. 26.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

the German question either to be handled at a great international conference all in total, or not resolved at all.⁶⁴ According to the expellees, this German question, also the question of the lost eastern provinces, is fully within the German national interest.⁶⁵

One major issue that the expellees have stressed from the beginning is inclusion in the Federal Republics foreign policies towards the East. In a special pamphlet, published by the *BdV* in 1961, just before the federal elections, the *BdV* set some demands. Among economic and social demands, the organization demanded that the government would consult the expellees in all matters concerning foreign policies towards the East, particularly on questions relating to the Eastern borders.⁶⁶ Ahonen describes the expellees as “self-proclaimed ‘mandate holders’ for the lost eastern provinces”. With this self-proclaimed title, they demanded an active role in the implementation and formulation of foreign Eastern policies.⁶⁷ Reinhold Rehs continues to stress this point of view. He calls for the need of good partnership with the Federal Government and timely informative conversations. The expellee motto in this is *‘Nichts hinter dem Rücken der Vertriebenen’*, which means as much as ‘nothing behind the backs of the expellees’. Which would be, according to Rehs, unthinkable to do anyway. The expellees are so numerous, namely over 10 million, that it would seem impossible to deal with German *Ostprobleme*, without consulting the Germans from the East.⁶⁸ Then-Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Willy Brandt confirmed this view at a speech before expellee representatives: “This Federal Government is no government of national abandonment; nothing will be done behind the backs of the expellees.”⁶⁹

Expellees would not preach hate towards anyone, they abhor hate and find it inhumane, claims Reinhold Rehs.⁷⁰ As they were the victims of violence and revenge themselves, they wish this upon no one.⁷¹ In a speech in September 1967, Rehs calls for ‘a new way’. A way in which the division between East and West is overcome and a new path in which a mutual, secure, and peaceful future can be found.⁷² In some instances, the expellees even recognize the necessity of talks with Soviet Russia, in order to solve their and Germany’s problems. Without these peaceful talks, the goals of the expellees would be harder, or even impossible to reach.⁷³

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

⁶⁶ Schoenberg, *Germans from the East*, p. 165.

⁶⁷ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 52.

⁶⁸ Rehs, *Acht Reden zum politischen Standort der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen*, pp. 8-9.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 46.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 49.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 38.

It is hard to comprehend this, with what is written above. One speech sounds aggressive and irredentist, another piteous, yet another more hopeful for peace and the future. Some of them are even contradictory. Audiences vary, and it is logical, that speeches are adjusted to their audience. That is why these speeches need to be read with some reservations.

Willy Brandt's foreign policy:

Outcomes of the *Ostverträge*

As announced in Willy Brandt's government declaration, the Federal Republic entered in negotiation with Moscow and Warsaw, subsequently with Prague and East Berlin as well. In January 1970, talks about a treaty between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union commenced. These talks took about eight months and resulted in the Moscow Treaty. Most important outcomes of this treaty are the following. The Brandt government declared to accept the status quo of two German states and to treat the German Democratic Republic on a basis of equality and refute the FRG's claim on representing all Germans.⁷⁴ This is not the only status quo accepted by this treaty. Even more crucial, the Federal Republic accepted the Oder-Neisse Line as the border between the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic.⁷⁵ Still, it was a mere temporary recognition of the border, as the Bonn still awaited a Four Power Conference that would permanently define East Europe's borders. The Federal government also promised to conclude, or at least to take an effort in concluding, similar agreements with other Eastern European states, including the German Democratic Republic, Poland and Czechoslovakia.⁷⁶

In the *Warschauer Vertrag*, signed in December 1970, the Federal Republic went one step further concerning the Oder-Neisse border. In this treaty, the border has been unconditionally accepted and all territorial claims towards one another are dropped.⁷⁷ In the following years, treaties with the German Democratic Republic, the Basic Treaty, and with Czechoslovakia, the Prague Treaty, are signed. In the latter, the German government officially

⁷⁴ Peter H. Merkl, *German Foreign Policies, West & East: On the Threshold of a New European Era*, (Santa Barbara 1974), p. 135.

⁷⁵ Bender, *Die 'Neue Ostpolitik' und ihre Folgen*, p. 238.

⁷⁶ Merkl, *German Foreign Policies, West & East*, pp. 134-135.

⁷⁷ Bender, *Die 'Neue Ostpolitik' und ihre Folgen*, pp. 240-241.

considers the Munich Agreement as invalid.⁷⁸ The Basic Treaty between the two Germanies was the beginning of easing policy towards each other.

Clearly, these outcomes are worlds apart from what the expellees would have wished for. Although, the treaties are signed and well, they still need to be ratified in the German *Bundestag*. Here the expellees could still try to get their way. The debates concerning the ratification continue until 1972, the course and development, and possible expellee influence, will be discussed below.

Expellee leaders and their Efforts against the Eastern Treaties

According to Ahonen, who puts it bluntly, “the election of 1969 marked the end of an era” for the expellee lobby.⁷⁹ After this election, the SPD and FDP formed a coalition and the expellees main political ally, the CDU/CSU, was forced to the opposition benches. This decline in political significance was echoed by other scholars.⁸⁰ Although expellees were found throughout the ranks of all major parties in the Bundestag, even during the Brandt Administration, the ambition of the umbrella group *BdV* regarding the Ostpolitik could, from the late-1960s, only concur with the CDU/CSU’s position. With the CDU/CSU being out of government, for the first time in West German history, the expellee organization lost its direct ties to the governing body of the Federal Republic. During the first months of the new government, the expellees tried to tighten relations with the new coalition partners.⁸¹ This effort was in vain, as the relation with the government only deteriorated. This was confirmed by public statements of Willy Brandt himself, and the symbolic abolishment of the Expellee Ministry.⁸² So, as the government distanced themselves from the expellee cause, the expellees drew closer to the CDU/CSU, who continued to support the expellees.⁸³

Within the SPD Bundestag fraction, were still some expellees during the time of the new government. A whopping 12.5 percent at the beginning of the governing period. Not all of them were closely connected to the expellee organization or expellee cause in general. But

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 250-251.

⁷⁹ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 242.

⁸⁰ Clemens, *Reluctant Realists*, p. 62; Jakubowska, *Der Bund der Vertriebenen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Polen*, pp. 97-98.

⁸¹ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 245.

⁸² Ibid., p. 243.

⁸³ Pertti Ahonen, “German Expellee Organization: Between Revisionism and Reconciliation”, in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 45, 2005.

some were, many of those defected to the CDU/CSU anytime soon, most notably Reinhold Rehs, *BdV* President until 1970, and Herbert Hupka, Vice President of the *BdV*. Reinhold Rehs already defected to the CDU/CSU in 1969, unable to influence government policies.⁸⁴ Herbert Hupka only left the SPD in 1972.⁸⁵ During the early years of the government, he tried to influence the government's *Neue Ostpolitik* from within the party. Hupka warned the party that the course of action they were about to take would increase the gap between the Social Democratic Party and the expellees, who still formed an important part of the constituency. He warned that these political stances would only benefit the far-right NDP.⁸⁶ As a reaction to these remarks, Willy Brandt himself, stated that the Federal government would not reach an agreement that would not include the German right of self-determination.⁸⁷ Together with another Silesia-originating SPD-member of the Bundestag, Willy Bartsch, Hupka demanded a closer and more understanding relationship between the SPD and the *BdV*, by organizing direct talks between the two. These talks did not seem fruitful.⁸⁸ Due to the government's *Ostpolitik*, many more Bundestag representatives, not only expellees, left the governing parties and joined the CDU/CSU, because of their rejection of the *Ostverträge*.

The influence of the expellee lobby, regarding the *Ostpolitik*, from within the SPD, was minor, or simply neglectable. But the fact that some of them defected to the opposition, strengthened their position in the CDU/CSU. The most important advocate of the expellee cause in the CDU/CSU fraction of the Bundestag was Herbert Czaja, since 1970 President of the *Bund der Vertriebenen*. In an interview with the *Spiegel*, Czaja emphasizes the fact that international treaties require ratification from the Bundestag. "We hope that [such treaties] will not simply receive a majority vote in the Bundestag".⁸⁹ He is ready to do whatever it takes, to avert this, from within the parliament, but also from without. First, Czaja tries to convince his party to make a clear statement in objection to the treaties with Moscow and Warsaw. Already one month after the federal elections, Czaja demands that his party obtains a clear stance against the government's *Ostpolitik*, also in order to prevent division within the party.⁹⁰ From within the party, the expellees found the resilience of their leader Rainer Barzel. Barzel found himself stuck between the strict expellee demands of rejection and the reformist members of

⁸⁴ Wolfgang Fischer, *Heimat Politiker?: Selbstverständnis und politischen Handeln von Vertriebenen als Abgeordnete im Deutschen Bundestag 1949 bis 1974*, (Düsseldorf 2010), p. 357.

⁸⁵ Fischer, *Heimat Politiker?*, p. 365.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁸⁹ "Organisierten Widerstand Leisten: SPIEGEL-Interview mit dem Präsidenten des Bundes der Vertriebenen Dr. Herbert Czaja", in *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 19/1970.

⁹⁰ Fischer, *Heimat Politiker?*, p. 370.

his party. He failed to ally with either one of them, thus failed to construe a common stance on the issue of *Ostpolitik*.⁹¹ The CSU-leader Franz Josef Strauss, on the other hand, firmly chose the side of the expellees.⁹² Czaja also regularly called for the examination of the treaties and border question. He argued that these treaties were not in line with the German constitutional aim for a unified Germany, not in line with international public law, and also disregarded human rights in general.⁹³ As a member of the parliamentary Committee of Foreign Affairs, he was closely involved in debates concerning the Eastern treaties. This kept him informed on the course of the negotiations, which allowed him to influence the parliamentary decision progress from the beginning.⁹⁴ His arguments in the Bundestag mainly concerned the constitutional aim of a unified Germany. These treaties would make this unlikely in the near future.⁹⁵ Another expellee activist in the CDU/CSU Bundestag fraction, Walter Becher, had some more extreme views, which were characterized by strong anti-communist ideas. The West German *Ostpolitik* was high treason, and nothing more than Soviet *Westpolitik* and Soviet expansionism. He uses the Karlsbad Communist declaration, secret talks between SPD, SED and Italian Communists, and the Bahr Papers, concerning the Moscow Treaty, to substantiate his view, that the Eastern treaties are part of Soviet conspiracy to get a communist foot on the ground in the Federal Republic of Germany.⁹⁶ Because of this extreme views, he was rarely named Speaker during Plenary Meetings in the Bundestag.⁹⁷

As President of the *Bund der Vertriebenen*, Herbert Czaja, did not leave it at his efforts within the parliament. In his interview with the Spiegel, which is dubbed *Organisiert Widerstand leisten*, Czaja sets forth what efforts he and his organization will take to influence the Bundestag votes on the ratification of the Eastern treaties. Czaja underscores the fact that the governing coalition rests on only 48.5 percent of the eligible votes, which means that the coalition does not have a *carte blanche* for a complete turn in foreign policy. The expellee President announces several rallies throughout the Federal Republic.⁹⁸ During one of these rallies, at the Bonner Marktplatz, around 30.000 expellees attended.⁹⁹ These rallies were supposed to influence parliamentary opinion. Besides these rallies, Czaja announces that the

⁹¹ "Gott behüte", in *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 19/1970.

⁹² "'Fegt ihn weg, den roten Dreck!': Vertriebenenbund ruft zum Kampf gegen Bonn auf", in *DER ZEIT*, Nr. 23/1970; "Im Eigenen Saft", in *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 35/1970.

⁹³ Fischer, *Heimat Politiker?*, p. 370; "Organisierten Widerstand Leisten", in *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 19/1970.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

⁹⁶ Fischer, *Heimat Politiker?*, pp. 373-375

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

⁹⁸ "Organisierten Widerstand Leisten", in *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 19/1970.

⁹⁹ "Starke Gruppe", in *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 24/1970.

organization would be ready to use all legal remedies, “that exist in our Federal Republic”, necessary for their cause. He mentions all possibilities given by all international bodies, for example, the European Human Rights Committee in Strasbourg, but also the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations.¹⁰⁰ But also a claim at the Federal Constitutional Court of the Federal Republic seems not unthinkable. This is an idea that is shared in his CDU/CSU fraction.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, these efforts did not generate the aspired results. Despite the rather small majority of the governing coalition, the expelled politicians and the *Bund der Vertriebenen*, were not able to stop the ratification of the Eastern treaties. Primarily because they failed to secure the full support of the CDU/CSU. CDU/CSU chairman Rainer Barzel could not hold his negative stance on the treaties, because of external and internal pressures. During the early 1970s, it seemed clear that the majority of the German population was in favor of the treaties, and also from within the party, more and more people expressed themselves positively about the treaties. By the beginning of March of 1972, Barzel made the decision, his party would vote ‘yes’ on the ratification of the Moscow and Warsaw Treaties. The firm bloc of expellees within the fraction decided stubbornly not to obey and declared that they would still vote against the treaties. To prevent the loss of face, Barzel decided then, to mask the division within the party, that they should abstain from voting.¹⁰² Something, yet again, the expellees firmly refused.¹⁰³ With the abstention of the majority of the CDU/CSU votes, the treaties were ratified in 1972. Even after ratification, elite expellees kept asking for a revision of the treaties.¹⁰⁴ This demand was unfortunately rather unsuccessful.

So, the expellees and her organization could not stop the ratification or alter the treaties significantly. Although, Egon Bahr, the architect of the *Ostpolitik*, and Willy Brandt, stressed several times that the right of self-determination and the strive for a unified Germany were never neglected during the negotiations. Nevertheless, there can be found one minor victory in the larger defeat for the expellees. This is mainly the result of CDU/CSU efforts.¹⁰⁵ The Warsaw Treaty allows ethnic Germans, that still lived east of the Oder-Neisse Line, in Poland, to move to the Federal Republic, as a part of family reunification. This is just a minor victory though, as it only allowed direct relatives to join their families, namely parents, grandparents,

¹⁰⁰ “Organisierten Widerstand Leisten”, in *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 19/1970.

¹⁰¹ “So oder anders” in *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 5/1971.

¹⁰² Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 252.

¹⁰³ Fischer, *Heimat Politiker?*, p. 379.

¹⁰⁴ Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, p. 253.

¹⁰⁵ ““Eine Grenze unter der Perspektive der Raumfahrt”: SPIEGEL-Gespräch mit dem Vorsitzenden der CDU/CSU-Fraktion im Bundestag Rainer Barzel”, in *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 19/1970.

not for example, cousins or nephews.¹⁰⁶ But Barzel also stressed the possibility for expellees in West Germany, to show their sons and daughters, what their *Heimat* is.¹⁰⁷ These objectives in the Warsaw Treaty, among other factors, drew the CDU/CSU to support the treaties, as rejecting the treaties, would mean rejecting thousands of Germans the right of self-determination.¹⁰⁸

Although Czaja failed to prevent ratification, he surely influenced the debate in the Bundestag. According to Anna Jakubowska, the protests of the expellees influenced the West German debates on the Eastern treaties and caused for a strong division with the political decision-makers.¹⁰⁹ But this surely is not the result Czaja, and his fellow expellee leaders, would have wished for.

Reasons for its Failure

After their unsuccessful strive against the ratifications, the question arises, why did the expellee organizations fail in their effort, while their influence in West German politics during the 1950s and early 1960s was quite significant? This mainly had to do with the apparent importance that the *Bund der Vertriebenen* attributes to itself. The *BdV* claim to represent all expellees in the Federal Republic and abroad. As a matter of fact, already in 1965, just one percent of the expellees living in the Federal Republic were members of one of the *BdV*-affiliated *Landsmannschaften*.¹¹⁰ This does not mean that the other 99 percent of the expellees does not feel any connection to the expellee cause, but it does take away some of the organization's importance. Besides that, the clash between the SPD and *Vertriebenen* has to be nuanced. Although some expellee SPD-Bundestag members defected from the party, the majority of the expellees of the SPD did not. The percentage of expellees that were in the SPD fraction at the end of the legislative period of the Brandt government is a surprising 11.5 percent. The percentage within the CDU/CSU fraction, 'the major expellee party', is only 10.9 percent.¹¹¹ The high-ranking members of the *Bund der Vertriebenen*, such as Reinhold Rehs, Herbert Czaja, and Herbert Hupka, were the ones, who preached this strict opposition against the *Neue*

¹⁰⁶ Bender, *Die 'Neue Ostpolitik' und ihre Folgen*, p. 220.

¹⁰⁷ "Eine Grenze unter der Perspektive der Raumfahrt", in *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 19/1970.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Jakubowska, *Der Bund der Vertriebenen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Polen*, p. 102.

¹¹⁰ Helga Hirsch, "Flucht und Vertreibung: Kollektive Erinnerung im Wandel", in *Aus Politik- und Zeitgeschichte*, (Frankfurt am Main 2003), p. 21.

¹¹¹ Fischer, *Heimat Politiker?*, pp. 366-367.

Ostpolitik, can be denounced as just a few more dedicated and maybe even extreme expellee activists. At first, during the 1950s and early 1960s, the expellee organization had the public opinion on their side, this changed drastically in the late 1960s and 1970s. Although closely connected to the West German policymakers, over time, their popular support was declining. Then, as a logical consequence, their political power declined as well.

Conclusion

The *Bund der Vertriebenen* was an influential force in West German politics and an important advocate for expellee interests. The organization had the zenith of its influence during the early years of West German political autonomy. The conservative character of the organization mainly drew them to the CDU/CSU, but the expellees were also represented in the ranks of other major parties, the SPD and FDP. This connection between the *BdV* and the CDU/CSU grew stronger when Willy Brandt announced his plans for the *Neue Ostpolitik*. For the organization, the support within the parliamentary opposition was their last resort, as the SPD and FDP had already distanced themselves from the organization and its revisionist ideas. Unfortunately, for the *BdV*, even the support from the CDU/CSU was eventually not as strong as the organization had hoped. Eventually, the expellee elites could do nothing to stop the ratification of the Eastern Treaties.

The umbrella organization did their best to influence or even stop the *Ostpolitik* of the Brandt Administration. Their major efforts against it took about three years, from the onset of the policies to the ratification of the Moscow and Warsaw Treaties. Their efforts were in vain, as they did not succeed in influencing or stopping the treaties. Some minor additions in the treaties can be seen as a success for the organization. But those additions were based on views that were supported by the majority of the German population or were so insignificant, that they were mainly symbolic to ease the expellees.

Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* can be seen in the larger discourse of East-West détente of the era. It was not just the Federal Republic, that was drawn to ease relations with the Eastern Bloc, but all Western powers eventually made their efforts to do so. Within this larger discourse, the few million German expellees seemed incapable of changing the détente policies in their favor or halting them all together.

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