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Stefan Berger, Norman LaPorte. *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990.* Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010. 364 pp. $95.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84545-697-9.

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With Friends Like These

"I love Germany so dearly," the French novelist Francois Mauriac purportedly wrote, "that I hope there always will be two of them." Indeed, this sentiment resounded throughout the Cold War. Despite vehement and moralistic protestations to the contrary, most Western statesmen were quite comfortable with the idea of a more or less permanent division of Germany. Talk of liberation and adherence to the Hallstein Doctrine notwithstanding, from the 1950s onward, even conservative governments in nations such as Great Britain banked on the continued existence of an East German regime as the best way to stabilize East-West antagonisms, to deescalate Berlin as a Cold War hotspot, and to prevent renascent militaristic nationalism from arising in Germany. At the same time, a small yet determined group of private actors worked with remarkable persistence to build bridges to the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the "other" Germany. They did so often in the teeth of resistance from both West Germans, fearful of being outflanked diplomatically, and East Germans who simply could not countenance criticism, especially from their friends. These are just a few of the conclusions from Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte's 2010 book, *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990.* Berger and LaPorte perform a great service by disentangling the strands of the informal relations between the two countries, as well as clarifying how these connections intersected with official government policies.

Although relations between the GDR and Great Britain were never as robust as those between East Germany and France, they nonetheless served as important barometers of tensions. Tracing the contours of the Cold War, the authors situate their narrative within the shifting relationships between Great Britain, GDR, and West Germany. As the authors note in their highly useful introduction, West Germany was always the "third player" (p. 3), and any British approaches to East Germany had to be done with the expectations of reactions (mostly negative) from the Federal Republic. Before 1973, this was mediated by the Hallstein Doctrine, which rendered Great Britain's costs for recognition of the GDR prohibitive. Moreover, Berger and LaPorte note that this delicate relationship simultaneously intersected with equally complex relations with the two superpowers. Finally, both the GDR and Great Britain pursued their own strategic interests, which until 1973 hindered overt recognition or anything beyond some mild trade and cultural relations. Significantly, this book lays bare some of the espionage that occurred within seemingly innocuous friendship societies, and documents in searing detail the role of the Staatssicherheit (Stasi) and the East German Politburo in exerting control over East Germany's private connections to the West.

In the first two chapters examining British-East German relations during the formative period of the GDR and from the foundation of the GDR to the early 1970s, Berger and LaPorte detail the variety of public and private actors who wove together the skein of relations that composed the majority of interactions between these two countries. These included such left-wing journalists and academics as Gordon Schaffer and Sir Eric Hobsbawm, militant trade unionists, British communists, members of the British peace movements, and in particular the Labor Party Left. These individuals based their argument before 1961 on the fact that the East German regime represented a truly peaceful alternative to any reconstituted militarism in West Germany. Although these feelings never pervaded mainstream British politics, they were ever-present and the authors make a case that, by the late 1950s, many British politicians began to push for some kind of status quo with the Pankow regime. British envy at West Germany's recovery fed fears of a return of a militaristic Germany that could be counterbalanced by the existence of an Eastern alternative. Moreover, en-

thusiasts in Great Britain could point to East Germany's economic development as well as progress in women's issues, equal access to education, low crime rate, and abundant workers' housing as points worthy of emulation. However, at every step of the way, the East Germans never made it easy for their Western friends. First came the ruthless suppression of the 1953 workers' uprising in Berlin. Subsequently, the East German regime helped crush the Hungarian and Czech uprisings, built the Berlin Wall, shot those attempting to flee, harassed official visitors, and treated critical, though sympathetic, Western observers in a heavy-handed manner. Although this reverberated negatively in Great Britain, it is interesting that would-be friends of the GDR persisted, admitting the obvious shortcomings of the East German regime but motoring on nonetheless.

Chapters 3 and 4 chronicle the development of relations from British recognition in 1973 to the collapse of the East German regime in 1990. Formal recognition, participation in the Helsinki Conference, and the commencement of trade relations crystallized the GDR's constant push for legitimacy in the world. Furthermore, the growing Western peace movement, the antinuclear protest wave of the 1980s, the emergence of robust Euro-communism, and sister-city relationships seemed to betoken a breakthrough in Western support for the East German regime. However, nothing much came of this, primarily because of the absolute refusal of GDR officials to countenance any criticism of their continual abridgements of human rights. From attempts to censor the Communist Party of Great Britain's newspaper, to the dismissal of a succession of organizers of the East German friendship society, to the isolation and harassment of exchange teachers, the paranoia and thin-skinned attitude of the East German regime served to chase away many of its would-be Western supporters. Especially interesting was the SED's unease and suspicion towards peace movements, antinuclear activists, and Euro-communists. For instance, the Euro-communist condemnations of Soviet actions such as the invasion of Afghanistan or the suppression of Solidarity in Poland were especially galling for the East German regime. Rather than taking advantage of sympathetic allies abroad, the regime aggressively pushed them away. However, once the GDR had signed on to the Helsinki Accords, the human rights basket helped to shield activists within East Germany and served to foster greater scrutiny of the East German actions. Ultimately, against the wishes of some die-hard friends of the East German regime and even a few conservative foes such as Margaret Thatcher, the GDR went out of existence in 1990.

This book should remain the industry standard on this topic for some time. Berger and LaPorte have based their work on exhaustive research in British and German archives, conducted dozens of interviews, and culled relevant articles from nearly forty periodicals. Furthermore, they have consulted the most recent secondary literature on this subject in both English and German. What is more, the writing is clear and straightforward. Finally, the stories contained in this volume hold a reader's interest. For those interested in the Cold War in Germany, this book is a necessary and worthwhile read.

By focusing on the actions of NGOs, individuals, religious groups, political party members, trade organizations, and teachers, among others, LaPorte and Berger's book deepens our understanding of the Cold War. The Cold War was a military and strategic competition that served for forty-five years as the focus for foreign policy at the highest level. But it was much, much more. A snapshot of the behavior of statesmen does not do the Cold War justice. Rather, these scholars present the Cold War as a mosaic composed of myriad acts of complicity and opposition. Normal people at all levels of societies and governments, in all countries, made daily decisions about whether to collude with the ideological demands of the Cold War, or whether to act against them. The participants of the Cold War were, in fact, all peoples, and there was some room to maneuver (though conspicuously less so in the East). This does not mean that they always chose correctly. Ironically, *Friendly Enemies* also shows that sometimes opposing the logic of the Cold War, in this case British friends of the DDR, could in fact reinforce the divisions that these activists sought so hard to defuse. Vocal support in Great Britain for recognition and friendship with East Germany aided the GDR in its effort to turn the diplomatic flank of West Germany, helping it along on its endless quest for legitimacy. When the time came to choose, however, it is telling that a majority of East German voters rejected the verdict of British supporters of the GDR and allowed a West German takeover that served to usher "real, existing socialism" along to its destiny in the ash heap of history.

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