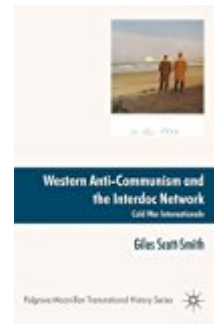


Giles Scott-Smith. *Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network: Cold War Internationale*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 356 S. ISBN 978-0-230-22126-0.

Reviewed by Eva Neumann

Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (May, 2013)



G. Scott-Smith: Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network

The setting for this in-depth study on a little-known joint European-American operation called Interdoc reads rather conventional. Giles Scott-Smith draws a classic Cold War panorama of Europe and the United States entering the post-war two-block world order, as it was described exhaustively before by Western historians. In that he stresses Germany's exclusive role on the front-line between ideologies and the Psy Wars during the 1950s that led towards a decided anti-communist movement are depicted correctly and reproducibly, but strictly Western-biased. With a Marxian twist, but lacking the irony, Scott-Smith could also have captioned his monograph's introduction: a spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism. All the powers of 'old' Europe have entered into a holy alliance of intelligence to exorcise this spectre: Dutch BVD and German BND, French SDECE and British MI6, even US agencies join the mission. This mission was the Interdoc network, an international alliance dedicated to promoting Western values and a counter offer to communism.

But Giles Scott-Smith explains his angle later on: the founding fathers and protagonists of Interdoc – mainly intelligence officers assigned to psychological warfare and counter espionage – perceived the Cold War first and foremost as an ideological struggle. See also: Scott-Smith, Giles, *Interdoc: Dutch-German cooperation in psychological warfare, 1962-1973*, in: De Graaf, Beatrice; de Jong, Ben and Platje, Wies (Ed.): *Battleground Western Europe: Intelligence Operations in Germany and the Netherlands in the twentieth century*, Amsterdam 2007, p. 170. Especially the concept of peaceful coexistence

posed a somehow new soft threat in the battle of ideas – and Eastern ideology appeared more and more attractive and persuasive to certain intellectual groups in the West. Fighting and challenging communism on a mere theoretical and ethical level was at the core of an innovative enterprise which was initiated by an illustrious group of 'Cold Warriors'. This introduction as well as the first chapter on Anti-Communism and Psy Wars give a comprehensive overview, but seem to renarrate stereotyped eurocentric Cold War history.

The first main research area discusses preconditions and preliminaries for building the network. According to Scott-Smith, during the mid to late 1950s, the Dutch Interior Security Service (BVD, Binnenlands Veiligheidsdienst) and the French SDECE (Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionage) joined forces to fight communist activities on an international level – rather than focusing on national approaches to weaken the domestic communist parties. Namely Louis Einthoven (head of BVD), Cees Van den Heuvel (head of BVD's training division) and Antoine Bonnemaïson (head of SDECE psychological warfare department) established regular meetings, the colloques, which had been originally a forum for Franco-German intelligence cooperation since 1957. They addressed not only intelligence personnel but also representatives from academia, business, politics, the media and the military. Reinhard Gehlen, head of the now official German Intelligence Service (BND), also showed significant interest in joint anti-communist operations and a general exchange of information, both within NATO and among the European

neighbors. Scott-Smith analyzes this sometimes rocky road those European colloques (including participants from Switzerland, Italy, Great Britain and Belgium) took until the conviction of the urgent need for a collective and permanent institute against communism resulted in Interdoc's foundation in 1963. The author emphasizes that this network was not an intelligence agency but an organizational approach to gather, analyze, and distribute information on communist activities on an international level in order to „transform a mentality“ (p. 134) towards positive anti-communism.

But soon after signing the statutes the success story of a free Europe, acting in concert to promote a „superior ideology“ (p. 30) began to crumble. This second focus of the book concentrates on the inner-European/international coordination, successes and difficulties as well as Interdoc's day-to-day business. Neither the French nor the British, Swiss, Italians or Belgians remained as highly involved and dedicated as the Dutch and the Germans, Scott-Smith almost bemoans. However, the financial situation developed favorably: companies like Shell, Unilever and Philips invested remarkable amounts of money (adjacent to the allowances the BND provided) and enabled Interdoc to build up a net of sub-institutes. To reach out to a broader audience and to set a distinct tone in the discussion, several journals (e.g. Oost-West) were established and disseminated. Yet, these publications shortly struggled with similar problems as periodicals sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an institution covertly financed by the CIA and exposed as such in the late 1960ies. The abundant contiguousness between intellectual handling of communism and politic propaganda conducted by intelligence and security services discredited Interdoc's aim of influencing opinion among students, businessmen and diplomats etc. See: Hochgeschwender, Michael, *Freiheit in der Offensive? Der Kongress für kulturelle Freiheit und die Deutschen*, München 1998. Although Scott-Smith points out the inaccuracy of this comparison (particularly the great monetary difference), one of his arguments appears not less suspicious: the (financial and ideological) involvement of contributors „who wanted to achieve a level of influence without relying on that world“ (p. 90). The perpetual risk of muddling with right-wing ideas and

organizations alienated many of those intellectuals and cliques that the Interdoc men were aiming at.

Chronologically Scott-Smith in his last four chapters describes Interdoc's assignment to its end in 1986. Attempts to re-internationalize the enterprise by launching the Interdoc Youth, a group consisting of young, hand-picked students and military officers from all over Europe, and a stronger cooperation with the United States via CIA marked a new peak during the late 1960s. Especially the intention of manipulating discourse both in the East and in the West (p. 244) seems to have proven a promising but difficult task. But the emerging German Ostpolitik and the general Détente movement later on resulted in a constant decline of significance and also funding. Besides his indication of Interdoc as a tool to understand the Cold War as a merely philosophical and psychological struggle, Scott-Smith recognizes the network as a part of the overall European cooperation and integration, having and using the encouragement of the United States.

The apparently meticulous work the author invested in his book will certainly be appreciated, but the approach is somewhat underwhelming. On the one hand, Scott-Smith describes exhaustively structures, organizations and networks, including their predecessors and short historical abstracts. But on the other, his analysis and interpretation remain superficial. He leaves out any non-Western perspective, as if there never was one. Digging into the logic of Cold War strategy in the year 2012 could (and should) be more prolific than re-echoing a one-sided, oversimplifying narrative.

Nevertheless, Giles Scott-Smith provides a flawless, well-informed and agreeably written monograph, including a diligently chosen bibliography and a helpful appendix (Interdoc conferences, publications and contacts in Eastern Europe). In terms of transnational historiography he makes an exemplary case of cooperation among diverse agencies, institutions, enterprises and protagonists. For those who are interested and somewhat experienced in the various and complicated ramifications among Western politics, intelligence, economy and intelligentsia during the Cold War this book offers a good case study.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

Citation: Eva Neumann. Review of Scott-Smith, Giles, *Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network: Cold War*

Internationale. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. May, 2013.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=39118>

Copyright © 2013 by H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved. This work may be copied and redistributed for non-commercial, educational purposes, if permission is granted by the author and usage right holders. For permission please contact H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU.