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A Cold War Diplomacy of Frustration Among Ideologically Divided States

The Cold War's ideological confrontation produced a strange and unique kind of diplomacy. World War II left the legacy of a divided Germany and Korea (and a temporarily divided Austria), and the rigidly ideological contest of the Cold War produced two Chinas, and two Vietnams. The two halves of these divided states both competed with each other, to be the "better" representatives of their respective populace, and vied for international recognition as the "true" representative of their (the German, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese) people. The superpowers furthered the efforts of their respective client states, and thus acted as the top watchdogs in maintaining this Cold War system of divided states. This conflict undermined simultaneous efforts on the part of those who supported (re)unification.

William Glenn Gray's fine Yale dissertation, now published as *Germany's Cold War* in John Lewis Gaddis' University of North Carolina Press "New Cold War History" series, is the first study to look at the two Germany's intricate struggle for

international recognition in great detail. This study is based on the analysis of a massive amount of materials from the Foreign Ministry Archives' of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), now housed in the Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes and the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde respectively, as well as the relevant files of Germany's former Western occupation powers. Gray admirably has chased down every possible source in Western archives to tell this remarkable story (he did not, however, consult Soviet or Third World archival holdings).

West Germany's global campaign to isolate Communist East Germany is essentially the story of the strange career of the "Hallstein Doctrine." As the two German states were handed successively more sovereignty by their respective occupation powers in the years 1950 to 1955 (following their creation in 1949), the issue of international recognition and representation in international organizations came to the fore. Walter Hallstein, a professor of law, who directed the activities of Bonn's fledgling Foreign Office, his succes-

sor Heinrich von Brentano, and the Foreign Office shrewd international lawyer, Wilhelm Grewe, together headed a fierce campaign to isolate the GDR. From day one, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Bonn's political elite refused to recognize the GDR as a state and dismissed it as a "product of Soviet fiat" (p. 11). Since only his government had been elected freely and democratically, Adenauer insisted, it was the sole legitimate representative of the German people. Adenauer refused to have any dealings with the SED regime—in Gray's words, he "was behaving as if the GDR did not exist" (p. 12). Since the GDR was illegitimate it was referred to as the "'so-called' GDR," or simply "Pankow", named after the district of East Berlin where many of the government offices were housed.

Truman's Doctrine complemented Hallstein's emerging doctrinaire stance. West Germany's "containment" of Communist East Germany came at the same time as President Harry Truman accepted the construction that Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists on Taiwan were the legal representatives of China. "Containment" of Communist regimes offered a "consistent rationale for disputing the legitimacy of communist gains around the globe" (p. 13). With the North Korean attack of South Korea, the West speeded up its project of elevating the FRG to alliance status and adamantly promoting West German independence. And, one might add, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's policy later on to support Ngo Dinh Diem's containment and isolation of Communist North Vietnam fit this trend as well.

With Washington's blessing, then, the Adenauer government set out to construct its comprehensive global diplomatic blockade of the GDR. This meant that not only diplomatic relations were out of the question, but so were consular relations and even official agreements by cabinet-level ministers of the Western powers and the SED regime. Only informal trade arrangements between nongovernmental bodies such as cham-

bers of commerce would be tolerated. In the early years of the diplomatic blockade of the GDR, the Western powers had to inform countries outside of the Western alliance system about the diplomatic fine points of the isolation campaign. Given that most of the veteran German diplomats had fled to the West in 1945 and thereafter, the GDR was left with an inexperienced diplomatic corps, often operating in chaotic makeshift conditions, which did not help their case of breaking through the Western diplomatic crusade of isolating their regime.

Adenauer took the moral high ground when he noted that the "Pankow regime" had been "foisted on 18 million Germans," adding that no self-respecting democratic nation "will be able to recognize this communist regime of the German Soviet Zone as a sovereign state" (p. 24). When in March 1954, Moscow issued a declaration that appeared to bestow sovereignty on the GDR, Hallstein lashed back with his first diplomatic offensive and demanded of some four dozen countries that had entered into diplomatic relations with Bonn to make "a solemn commitment" not to recognize the GDR (p. 25). This came also in response to the fact that the European neutrals Finland, Switzerland and Sweden were probing trading contacts with the GDR, while Nasser's Egypt had allowed the East Germans to open their first trade mission outside Europe in late 1953. Led by Egypt, post-colonial regimes in Syria, India and Indonesia also began a transparent game of playing the two German states off against each other as a means to increase foreign aid from Germany. From Bonn's perspective, "Pankow" clearly was trying to target "trade deals as a springboard for realizing the SED's political goals" (p. 28). The question increasingly became would nations be prepared to alienate Bonn in return for deeper economic relations with the GDR?

1955 came as the turning point in the tightening of the diplomatic blockade of East Germany. In East Asia "Bonn's *cordon sanitaire* was in danger

of slipping" (p. 33) with new states like Burma pursuing more trade with East Germany. More dramatically, Adenauer went on a state visit to Moscow in early September and bartered away the re-establishment of diplomatic ties with Moscow for the return of 10,000 German prisoners of war still remaining in the Soviet Union since World War II. His delegation was shocked over the deal, particularly as it would undermine the isolation campaign, but Adenauer papered over the deal by insisting that the FRG still remained the sole representative of the German people. Would two German ambassadors in Moscow mean a break in the dam of isolation and other countries follow suit and accredit two German diplomatic representatives? The legal minds in Bonn's Foreign Office quickly had to design a fallback position, insisting that relations with Moscow were a "singular situation" (p. 38) because of its occupation power status and that Bonn would continue to follow its strictures of maintaining diplomatic relations only with states that had no diplomatic relations with the GDR. In the fall of 1955 the Foreign Office intensified its effort to improve the deterrent against recognition of the GDR by calling a major ambassadors' conference, instituting the "Bonn Group" as an inter-Allied coordinating body, and appointing Grewe as a sort of unification-czar to oversee the isolation campaign and obstruct the GDR's vigorous offensive for recognition in the newly forming post-Bandung non-aligned world.

A combination of personal diplomacy (vis-à-vis India), cash (Yugoslavia) and threats of breaking relations (Egypt) were needed to make sure that new nations like Syria, Sudan, and Lebanon would not follow suit (as Arab nations became increasingly upset with Bonn over its generous restitution payments to Israel). Clearly, fears of "falling dominoes" haunted Bonn too. When Yugoslavia, prodded by the Soviet Union, crossed the line and Tito established diplomatic relations with the GDR in October 1957, Bonn came down hard and punished Belgrade by breaking relations and

stopping reparations payments. Only by the end of 1957, then, Bonn's rigid diplomatic blockade of the SED regime came to be seen as guided by the "Hallstein-Grewe Doctrine" (p. 84); the press and the liberal FDP began to attack it as being counter-productive. Critics came to see the "Hallstein Doctrine" as negative and preventing the building of diplomatic relations with communist Eastern Europe, the Soviet satellites having established relations with the GDR. Gray insists, however, that this doctrinaire isolation campaign did wonders in boosting the deterrent effect in the Third World that now became the center of Bonn's crusader diplomats, where a host of new states emerged as a result of Western decolonization.

For the remainder of the book Gray presents an absorbing case study of what Cold War historians have termed "the leverage of the week"[1] and political scientists analyzed as a "pericentric framework".[2]

As champions of "self determination", the East Germans became highly active in these newly independent states, vying for diplomatic recognition, opening information and trading offices. The deeply-held anti-imperialist sentiment in these new states bolstered the cause of the GDR, which put the West on the defensive. In one of the most memorable--and bizarre--episodes of this book, the wooing of Ahmed Sékou Touré in the chase for recognition by the new West African nation of Guinea shows the dilemmas the "Hallstein Doctrine" was facing. Bonn's diplomats had find Sékou Touré in the most remote corner of the country and buy him off with a healthy economic aid package to make sure that he would not recognize the GDR and thus possibly unleash an avalanche of GDR recognition among the new African nations. By the end of 1959 the Bonn Foreign Office worked out an aggressive new strategy of "getting there first [sic]" (p. 104) in the African transitions from colony to independence. The geopolitically weak used their new leverage of bargaining for more aid from Bonn in return for

non-recognition of the GDR. Pushing the aid levers became the central element of the developing World's response to Bonn's isolation campaign. Egypt and India were most successful in gaining hundreds of millions of financial and technical aid from Bonn and set the model for the demands of the non-aligned world. Aid, then, became the principal "lever in the defense of the Hallstein doctrine" (p. 134). Yet also regimes like Abdul Karim Qassem's in Iraq deeply resented the West German demand for non-recognition interference in their internal affairs. West German "hush money" became increasingly counterproductive to buy off "rogue regimes" (yes, the term was in usage in the early 1960s!) like Iraq and Indonesia (p. 137).

Cuba unexpectedly recognized the GDR in January 1963 and unleashed a new wave of West German vigilance in defense of the "Hallstein Doctrine." It came further under siege when American détente policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union put increasing pressure on Bonn to improve its non-relations with Eastern Europe. The waning Adenauer administration felt to be "victims of America's policy of détente" (p. 143) when the anti-German Test Ban Treaty was signed and the GDR was "upgraded" by Washington, being permitted to be signatory to the treaty. Adenauer felt betrayed and deliberately procrastinated with Bonn's ratification. With the coming of Chancellor Ludwig Erhard, the diplomatic blockade of the GDR became even more difficult and costly, as Erhard was more pragmatic and less committed to unification than Adenauer.[3] Bonn, now past the economic miracle years, could no longer afford the huge aid packages to the Third World, while an economically resurgent GDR was prepared to bribe Third World regimes even more generously for recognition. In cases like the island nations of Ceylon and Zanzibar, Bonn found that its economic leverage was waning while the GDR's "anti-imperialist" ideological appeal began waxing. In 1965 Julius Nyerere's Tanzania even announced foregoing military aid from Bonn because of the political strings

attached. Foreign aid, with its "endemic problem of blackmail" (p. 187), had become "overpoliticized" and was losing weight as an effective diplomatic tool.

By 1965 the "Hallstein Doctrine" was dying a slow death as West German military support of Israel became known in the Arab world and produced a furious backlash. Bonn stopped the tanks from going to Israel but sent its first ambassadors to Tel Aviv in May 1965, in spite of repeated professions to the Arab world to the contrary. In a sort of "reverse Hallstein Doctrine" (p. 181) Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Kuwait, Sudan and Egypt immediately broke diplomatic with Bonn (just as Iraq and other Arab states broke diplomatic relations with Washington in the wake of Israel's victorious 1967 "Six-Day-War"). Generous aid packages to Israel did not allow for a quick unfreezing of the Arabs' diplomatic blockade of Bonn. This political fiasco in the Middle East had left Hallstein's doctrine obsolete as a tool of German diplomacy in this vital area, so important for oil-thirsty German consumers. Yet strangely enough, the GDR did not manage to capitalize from this situation in the Arab countries and failed to produce a string of new recognitions; the SED regime even lost ground in Africa and Asia. Egypt, Syria and Yemen only upgraded relations by opening consulates in East Berlin, in return for credits (seventy-five million alone to Cairo). Walter Ulbricht's regime, too, now recognized the "unfortunate dynamic of development aid: once it was available in large quantities, non-aligned countries began demanding ever more for the price of cooperation" (p. 188). This sentence may well stand as the iron rule of Western aid to the underdeveloped world.

Erhard's failing doctrinaire diplomacy produced a deep anxiety in West Germany as unification seemed ever less likely. Erhard's fall in October 1966 produced an election which led to a CDU/CSU grand coalition with the Socialist SPD under Willy Brandt. Embracing détente, the Hallstein

Doctrine, by now obsolete in the Third world, served as a mere bargaining chip with the hated Ulbricht regime. In January 1967 the new coalition under Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger exchanged ambassadors with the maverick Ceausescu regime of Rumania, launching it "new Eastern policy" (p. 200); a year later Bonn re-established relations with Yugoslavia. During 1968 Moscow kept pressing for recognition of the status quo (i.e. the GDR). When Iraq, now ruled by the revolutionary Ba'ath Party, at last recognized the GDR in late April 1969 and Cambodia followed a few days later, Bonn did not react with an automatic breaking of relations with Phnom Penh. The "Hallstein Doctrine" had died a quiet death after a highly frustrating, often back pedaling 20-year campaign of furious diplomatic isolation of communist East Germany. The road was open for the new Brandt government coming into office in late 1969 to design its innovative *Ostpolitik*, launching long overdue relations and reconciliation with Poland and the rest of the communist states of Eastern Europe and eventual normalizing German-German relations. This allowed for a landslide of recognitions of the GDR, including Washington's in 1974. Gray conclusion: Bonn's isolation policy had been successful as the "East German regime remained on the fringes of international life precisely as long as West Germans wanted to" (p. 219). But at what cost?

Germany's Cold War, as this longish summary tries to convey, is document-steeped diplomatic history at its best, mapping a very complex picture of both West Germany's rigid yet sophisticated diplomatic crusade to keep their Communist brethren in the East internationally isolated, and the East German pariah regime's dogged campaign to vie for recognition in the international arena. Gray's book is also diplomatic history at its most tedious, as the reader has to slog through the endless tergiversation's of the fine points of diplomacy, whether Egyptian relations with the GDR were only informal or formal trade missions, or consular (with or without an *exequatur*), let alone

full diplomatic relations at any given point. Those who savor such fine points from the rule books of diplomatic etiquette will cherish this book; those who argue that relations between nations are much richer than the old-fashioned game of intercourse among diplomats will find it tough going.

Notes

[1]. Günter Bischof, *Austria in the First Cold War, 1945-55: The Leverage of the Weak* (Cold War History Series, ed. Saki Dockrill) (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

[2]. Tony Smith, "New Bottle for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* vol. 24., No. 4 (Fall 2000): 567-91.

[3]. Gray might have pointed out that Adenauer's "unification" policy was largely a rhetorical tool directed towards the diehard nationalist conservative German public. Already by the mid-1950s the Western allies paid "lip service" to it, no longer pursuing German unification as a serious policy, while Adenauer himself indicated in candid behind-the-scenes conversations with Allied diplomat that it was of "no serious concern" to him. See Rolf Steininger, *The German Questions: The Stalin Notes of 1952 and the Problem of Reunification*, transl. by Jane T. Hedges and ed. by Mark Cioc (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 115, 118.

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