

Psychological warfare against the East

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on how to deal with the threat from the East. Anti-communism was

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very raison d’être of the infant West German state was to act as a bulwark

against Soviet expansionism”, and the portrayal of the Federal Republic as

a vital Western rampart against the Soviet threat is constantly repeated in

official documents from that time.13 The trigger for these first moves came

in 1951, due to concerns within German industry about the threat posed

by communist-inspired agitation among the workforce.14 By late 1952, in

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March, the first steps were taken towards a comprehensive psychological

warfare strategy for the Federal Republic.15

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to combat Bolshevism, from which followed opportunities for the Federal

Republic to utilize this strategy for its own national interests. First and

foremost, the West German mission was to secure Soviet withdrawal from

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Eastern borders “beyond the Oder–Neisse”. To be successful, the US–West

German strategy had to be “tuned” (abgestimmt) to Soviet methods: the use

of “fifth column” supporters in non-communist organizations, the coordinated

manoeuvring of communist parties, the development of a “war

economy”, and the constant dissemination of propaganda. In response,

Bonn’s specific goals towards the Soviet Zone involved the undermining

of its administrative and economic infrastructure, monitoring the level of

resistance of the populace, and carrying out acts of sabotage to reduce the

credibility of the regime. Within the Federal Republic itself it was vital to

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need to coordinate the many already-existing private organizations that 18 Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network

were active in anti-communist agitation, and to redirect counter-propaganda

towards “a comprehensive banishment of the communist movement” (eine

allgemeine Ächtung der kommunistischen Bewegung) from public consciousness.

For this, print media and radio were insufficient: mass organization was

required.

In late 1952 it was proposed to set up a German–American committee

to coordinate the mobilization of civilian resistance, with representatives

from the US High Commission and, under the leadership of the Ministry for

All-German Affairs (BMG: Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen),

representatives from the German Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of the Interior,

the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt

für Verfassungsschutz), and the Chancellery. This committee, which had to

ensure a complete separation from existing military activities in this field,

would define the overall strategy, the potential of each organization in that

strategy, and the financial means required to carry it out. This also involved

ensuring that selected private organizations would be “necessarily subordinated

under official German supervision”, including where appropriate a

change of leadership and tasks. A list of 43 anti-communist organizations

was assembled, 15 of which were located in Berlin. Responsibilities were

now being shared out between the Germans and the Americans, and official

liaison channels established. The BMG, with its mission to “maintain a

national consciousness” and promote democratic principles as an essential

part of the process of reunification, took on a leading role.16

The implications of this document for German government involvement

in the Cold War were considerable, not least in terms of expanding official

responsibilities and defining who was to lead this mobilization and how it

would be carried out. Over the next few years a running discussion was held,

involving the Ministry for All-German Affairs, the Chancellery (particularly

State Secretary Hans Globke), and the Ministry of the Interior (particularly

Dr Toyka), on how best to run this extensive state–private network,

whereby organizations became a sort of extended government department

or remained private but received all or part of their finances from Bonn.17

The necessary expertise on how to run this was still lacking. The sensitivity of

these developments meant there was a great need to keep those involved to a

minimum, even though participation was spread across several departments.

In October 1953 a proposal was put forward for a committee of experts

to fill this gap. The author, Rudolf Grüner, remarked how the openness of

democratic society left it vulnerable to the kinds of subversion practised by

communist parties and their fellow-travellers. There was a great need for an

organization, “on the basis of mass psychology”, to intervene in German

society at an earlier stage than the security service and the courts. Grüner

emphasized that the communist threat was changing from a simplistic “on

the barricades” radicalism led by the Communist Party to a sophisticated

network of front organizations. This required nothing less than a broad “vaccination” (Schutzimpfung) of the people to help them understand and

withstand the threat. A counter-network, directed from a central bureau, was

required to supervise this. While the communist infiltration of Western civil

society was expanding into all areas of social activity (“from film production

to pigeon-breeding associations”), Grüner remarked that the response

up till then had been simplistic, ineffective, or, due to scandal, badly

discredited.18

The scandal Grüner was referring to concerned the Bund Deutscher Jugend

(BDJ), an anti-communist youth movement established in June 1950 (just

prior to the outbreak of the Korean War) by World War II veterans. The BDJ,

which received financial support from the Ministry for All-German Affairs

and Chancellor Adenauer’s office, ran operations to confront and disrupt

the activities of the East German Freie Deutsche Jugend and related procommunist

or neutral front organizations. Yet the activities of the BDJ were

wound up in October 1952 when it was discovered that it also maintained a

paramilitary wing known as the Technischer Dienst (TD), a stay-behind network

that would run reconnaissance and guerrilla operations in the event of

a Soviet invasion. While the BDJ was a German affair, the TD was largely a

creation of US Army Counter-Intelligence and the Office of Policy Coordination

(the US government’s covert action unit that was absorbed by the

CIA in 1952), who provided funds, training, and weapons. What turned

this into a serious scandal was the fact that members of the TD assembled

a “Proscription list” of potential enemies to the nation, and this included

not only suspected communists but also members of the SPD. While the

TD’s actual intentions with this list were never clarified, the fact that the

TD was operating under the orders of the US, an occupying power, meant

that its members could not be prosecuted under German law. The US security

establishment, in the interest of strengthening anti-communist forces,

was therefore backing a ramshackle network of former Nazis and nationalists

who, despite involvement in criminal activity, were immune from

prosecution. This caused serious outrage from the SPD, and the ramifications

for German sovereignty and democratic stability were obviously

immense. It also seriously undermined the credibility of American intentions

to promote a democratic Germany, and the arrogant manner with

which US authorities responded to the German investigation further damaged

relations.19 In short, the affair demonstrated the need for the German

authorities to develop their own approach to deal with the communist

threat. Allowing the CIA to run its own programmes without German control

was no longer acceptable. It also showed the necessity for centralized

coordination to ensure a clear strategy, clear goals, and reliable personnel.

The German roots of what would later become Interdoc lie in the response

to the BDJ–TD fiasco.

Through 1953–54, as the Federal Republic headed towards full sovereignty,

discussions with the US authorities on the sharing of responsibilities 20 Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network

in psychological warfare continued. The US position was clarified in a

“Statement of Intentions vis-.-vis Resistance Groups” passed to State Secretary

Ewert von Dellingshausen, the BMG official now responsible for

this dossier, in October 1954.20 The document, which updated a previous

Statement of Intent from October 1952 (following the BDJ–TD affair),

described six organizations which received US support “as instruments of

psychological warfare”. Two of them, the Investigating Committee of Free

Jurists (Untersuchungsausschuss Freiheitlicher Juristen) and the Fighting

Group against Inhumanity (Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit), were

in terms of finance and direction more or less direct extensions of US covert

action aimed at exposing injustice and undermining the functioning of East

German authorities. The others – the Association of Political Refugees from

the East, the Marbach Group of writers (under Karl-Heinz Marbach), the

satirical magazine Tarantel, and the People’s League for Peace and Freedom

(Volksbund für Frieden und Freiheit) – received to varying degrees US funding

and supervision. The Statement emphasized that it was the intention to

ensure these activities “recognize a valid official German interest”, that there

would be sufficient liaison and exchange of information, and that “the coordination

of policy guidance for such operations” would continue, “looking

forward to the time when the Federal Government will be in a position to

play a more direct role in the management of the organizations mentioned

herein”. But much ground still had to be covered.21 Who was going to be

responsible for coordination, both on a national and on an international

level? And how would it be carried out?

International liaison: NATO and Bilderberg

The entry of West Germany into NATO in May 1955 took these discussions

on to a higher plane. The Soviet shift to peaceful coexistence and the renewal

of diplomacy with the Geneva Conference in 1955 presented dangers for an

Alliance that could not coordinate a response. As Canadian Foreign Minister

Lester Pearson put it, the Soviet leaders “hope NATO will fall apart in

d.tente”.22 Thinking ahead to Germany’s involvement, in October 1954 von

Dellingshausen, who saw the Soviet propaganda threat as a common problem

requiring greater coordination at the international level, was writing of

the need for a “General Staff” within NATO to define the goals, methods,

and means required to run a collective psychological warfare campaign.23

The development of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic and

the Soviet Union, exemplified by Chancellor Adenauer’s visit to Moscow in

1955, only emphasized this further. The new coordination apparatus must

be civilian, not military – a separation of tasks was necessary. A new kind of

war demanded new kinds of organization. Working through NATO would

also allay the fears of others that the Federal Republic was getting too keen

on upgrading its propaganda capabilities. Propaganda and counter-propaganda had been a live issue within

NATO since its beginning. While Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty highlighted

the need for the signatories to strengthen “their free institutions,

by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which

these institutions are founded”, there was disagreement on whether NATO’s

public information activities should also involve anti-communist counterpropaganda.

24 Two issues were contentious. One was the suggestion that

NATO project its anti-Soviet activities to the East. General Kruls, until 1951

Chief of the Dutch General Staff, wrote of the need for a collective psychological

warfare strategy to project the West’s message of support for

“liberation” to the oppressed peoples of the Eastern bloc. Despite support

from Field Marshal Montgomery, who became the Deputy Supreme Allied

Commander Europe in 1951, this was a step too far because it did not fit

with the Alliance’s posture as a defensive organization.25 The second issue

was to what extent NATO should actually function as a centre to coordinate

psychological warfare activities. Among the supporters were the French, who

proposed exploring the practice of “ideological warfare” at the NATO level

in early 1951.26 In November 1951 a more moderate American proposal was

put forward for a high-level Information Advisory Committee to advise the

North Atlantic Council on strengthening morale. The committee, made up

of “individuals of the highest standing [. . .] from science, education, business

or labour groups” should “consider the psychological problems of public

opinion in the free nations of the West.”27 This initiative was an extension

of the newly formed Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) in the US, which was

meant to coordinate all anti-communist psychological operations abroad.28

But even this was not widely accepted, precisely because it threatened to

override national prerogatives. For the moment any effort in this field would

have to be undertaken either through private initiatives or at the national

level, with NATO acting as no more than a supportive institution.

It was during this period that French politician Jean-Paul David, with the

backing of the French government, attempted to fill the gap. His organization,

Paix et Libert., made its appearance in France in September 1950.

Prime Minister Ren. Pleven had called a meeting of like-minded political

leaders to propose the formation of a new organization to confront communist

“fifth column” infiltration in French society. David, at 37 the leader

of the Rassemblement des gauches r.publicaines (RGR), deputy for Seine et

Oise, and mayor of Mantes-la-Jolie, “was not an intellectual but an organizing

genius, a courageous man endowed with some straightforward ideas,

notably an urgent need to combat Marxist influence”. Finance in the region

of two to three million francs a year was assembled from French industry and

banks, and a high-profile campaign was begun utilizing posters, brochures

explaining the communist threat and the reality of concentration camps,

radio transmissions, and even a film, Crève-Coeur, about the French battalion

fighting in the Korean War.29 Links were also made with like-minded groups 22 Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network

acrossWestern Europe. A key role in this was played by Eberhard Taubert, the

former Reichsministerium für Volksaufkl.rung und Propaganda official and

the inspiration behind the Antikomintern, who had already proposed the

blueprint for the Volksbund für Frieden und Freiheit (VFF) to US occupation

authorities in Germany in 1947.30 By August 1951 a European coordination

committee had been formed with representatives from France, Belgium,

Italy, the Netherlands, andWest Germany, with meetings held in Paris every

two months. All national affiliations were equal and acted separately according

to local circumstances, but the intention was certainly to respond to

communist propaganda strategy in unison across the West, thereby rebuffing

Soviet-bloc efforts to cause divisions inside NATO by playing member

states off against each other. By January 1955 there were 20 affiliates, ranging

across Europe and beyond.31

In the international context Paix et Libert. was therefore decentralized,

the goal being to maintain regular contacts between its affiliates. Nevertheless

David, who gained notoriety as the network’s spokesman, became the

point man for a determined attempt in 1952–53 to take it a step further

by establishing a psychological warfare section within NATO itself. With

the backing of French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault, David carried out

an intensive rolling tour of NATO countries during this period in order to

raise governmental understanding and support for psychological warfare

activities.32 Always received at the highest levels, David’s visit to the US

in February 1952 was recorded in the New York Times and was intended to

link up with like-minded American organizations and send a strong message

that Europe was rearming not only militarily but also psychologically in the

struggle against communism.33 But responses were mixed. While the Greeks

and the Turks were enthusiastic, a report of David’s visit to the Netherlands

in mid-1953 suggested that his goal was to combine “psychological defence”

(sustaining morale within NATO countries) and “psychological warfare”

(behind the Iron Curtain) within a single centralized coordinating body, a

proposal the Dutch were not prepared to accept. The report also confirms

that David’s efforts were carried out without holding any contact with the

NATO Information Service (NATIS) itself, so much so that NATIS officials

were afraid he was actually doing more harm than good. Neither was there

official recognition from the North Atlantic Council.34

David’s second trip to the US in September 1953 involved meetings with

Allen Dulles, Walter Bedell Smith, and members of the Operations Coordinating

Board (the successor to the PSB), but the Americans were also

unwilling to back Paix et Libert. as a NATO venture. The US wanted to

maintain its own strategy of psychological warfare and maintain it as primus

inter pares; it did not want to officially democratize Western strategy via

NATO meetings, which would only limit its freedom of action.35 There

has always been strong suspicion of American covert funding for David’s

network, but this link has never been categorically proven.36 Also, the Anti-Communism and PsyWar in the 1950s 23

actual links between the national committees remained obscure. In France

Paix et Libert. did function with the aid of a “brains trust” consisting

of high-up figures within the French state, including members of the

Service de Documentation Ext.rieure et de Contre-Espionnage (SDECE),

France’s external intelligence agency, but David has flatly denied that

there were ever any representatives from other NATO countries involved

in those twice-monthly meetings. Each national committee went its

own way.

David’s ambitions were never fully realized. The organization’s message

remained simple: communism was evil, and the Soviet Union, through its

proxy organizations in politics, the trade unions, and across society at large,

propagated lies to cover this up by presenting itself as promoting peace and

freedom. Whereas this had a function in the tense days of 1950–51 when the

Korean War broke out, by the mid-1950s the complexities of peaceful coexistence

had undermined Paix et Libert.’s usefulness. Reacting to the Geneva

Conference of 1955, the international committee could only announce that

the Soviet leaders continued with “their slanderous accusations, resulting in

the creation of an atmosphere of distrust and hatred among the people in a

political war with the aim to expand the rule of the USSR over the world”.37

The BVD came to the conclusion much sooner that such an outfit as Vrede

en Vrijheid (VV) – the Dutch wing of Paix et Libert. – had a limited reach

and shelf-life. VV had been established in August 1951 to “publicize and

defend the sentiments of peace and freedom” by means of various media

outlets: a newspaper (De Echte Waarheid), pamphlets, posters, exhibitions,

TV and radio spots, and lectures.38 The movement was initially fully supported

by the BVD, since Einthoven knew its secretary, E.W.P. van Dam van

Isselt, from his days as Rotterdam police chief in the 1930s.39 Cooperation

and financial support came from major Dutch companies, the trade union

leadership, and politicians, but the message was too basic. An intelligence

assessment from June 1953 of a VV press conference in Eindhoven concluded

that the event “had a quite hopeless organization” and made “a very

poor impression”. It also managed to stimulate negative media interest in

where funding for such an event could possibly come from.40 Nevertheless

De EchteWaarheid still continued until 1966, and Vrede en Vrijheid itself – at

least on paper – only closed its doors in 1986.41

In 1956 the French government ceased its support and the organization

was renamed, the Paris bureau continuing as the Office National

d’Information pour la D.mocratie Fran.aise and the international committee

as the Comit. International d’Information et d’Action Sociale (CIAS).

The remnants of this network would provide one of the foundations

for the development of Interdoc in a few years’ time. Paix et Libert.’s

national committees functioned as “a sort of vigilance, of conscience” in

the war of ideas, but the changing East–West environment demanded a new

approach.42 This would ultimately involve not only a network separate from 24 Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network

NATO and – significantly – US direction, but also an outlook more profound

than the negative propaganda of David and his associates, which offered no

alternative beyond the need for Western anti-communist solidarity.

The discussions within NATO did not proceed very far. At the request of

the Danes and the Greeks, a Special Committee on Information (AC/46)

was formed in June 1952 for “the exchange of information” between intelligence

and counter-intelligence services “on experiences in their efforts

to counteract subversive activities”.43 In September the British, looking to

break the deadlock on the NATO role, proposed a new committee to concentrate

on both “positive information work designed to find ways and

means of convincing the peoples of NATO countries of the value of NATO”

(such as television and radio interviews with government officials, newsreels,

exchange of journalists and students, and youth camps) and a direct use of

counter-propaganda. This involved focusing on “indirect Communist propaganda”

from front organizations such as the World Peace Movement by

unmasking their communist origin. To be effective, the organs for achieving

this would not be in the government but “non-official persons and

organizations”.44 These two positive–negative, offensive–defensive strands

fed into the formation of the permanent Committee on Information and

Cultural Relations (AC/52) in June 1953. It was a neat compromise, but differences

of opinion prevented anything further than this. The Committee

on Non-Military Cooperation, assembled in 1956 to assess how to improve

cooperation and a sense of unity, would soon recommend that “coordinated

policy [in the information field] should cover also replies to anti-NATO propaganda

and the analysis of Communist moves and statements which affect

NATO”.45 Disagreements between member states prevented any progress.

Lord Ismay, NATO’s first Secretary General, had this to say on the matter

in 1955:

On the one hand, there is a feeling in some quarters that member countries

should examine in NATO the methods of combating the massive

anti-NATO propaganda made by the Communists and others hostile to

the Alliance. On the other hand, it is argued that this is a matter which

must remain the prerogative of each government. Between the two points

of view a compromise has been reached whereby NATO can act as a forum

for consultation about psychological warfare. Such consultation is, however,

restricted to matters affecting member countries only: NATO, as an

international organization, has never envisaged carrying on propaganda

to the peoples of the Soviet Union or of the satellite countries.46

A further site of discussion on international cooperation in anti-communism

and counter-propaganda were the Bilderberg conferences, begun in

Oosterbeek, Netherlands, in May 1954 as a meeting place for European

and American political, business, and media elites to discuss matters of Anti-Communism and PsyWar in the 1950s 25

mutual concern. In particular the second conference, held in Barbizon in

March 1955, devoted time to the communist challenge. Since Stalin’s death

peaceful coexistence had improved the image of the communist world

by highlighting its cultural prowess and apparent willingness to negotiate

with the West. Resonant terms such as “peace” and “disarmament” had

been appropriated by communist information programmes and forced the

Western nations on to the defensive. Three options were put forward to

regain the initiative: treat communism as a security threat to the state;

improve coordination in counter-propaganda; approach communism as a

political and economic challenge to democratic capitalism. While the first

option was considered too repressive and (with McCarthy fresh in everyone’s

mind) controversial, the second drew mixed responses. Paul Rijkens,

former chair of Unilever, proposed forming a joint organization – a sort

of “democintern” – but others disliked its implications. NATO was already

doing enough to expose front organizations, a standardized operation would

not fit into national contexts, and, according to Denis Healey, “a single

Western organization would be perceived as an operation run by the

Americans, which would destroy its credibility in many European countries”.

Instead, it was more important to consider the message that theWest needed

to convey. The real differences between communism and democracy had

to be spelled out. As the Norwegian Justice Minister Jens Christian Hauge

said, many doubters could be swayed if they were presented with “objective

information as to the degree to which the communist system really

denies the very basis of their existence, namely free science, free art, free

literature”.47 This was a significant comment. The propaganda war had to

be shifted on to terrain that would expose the weaknesses of the communist

bloc. It had to be done in a way that ensured maximum credibility –

not based on obvious propaganda, but on objective, factual research. This

was to be the way forward. Following Barbizon, Bilderberg chairman Prince

Bernhard of the Netherlands forwarded the transcripts of the discussion to

BVD chief Louis Einthoven for consideration: “We shall certainly be glad to

have a series of propositions which we can recommend to relevant countries

for a genuinely effective response to this propaganda.”48 While the

Bilderberg meetings would not play a further role in this story, the Prince

certainly would.

The colloques and the Studienbüro

The 1956 was a key year on the road to Interdoc at both national and international

levels. In West Germany proposals were put forward to establish an

institute for the scientific study of Marxist ideology. With the usefulness of

the VFF in question following the outlawing of the Kommunistische Partei

Deutschlands (the controversial Taubert was more or less forced out of his

leadership position), and the Kampfgruppe likewise undergoing an audit by 26 Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network

the BMG and the CIA, it was time for a new direction. While institutes such

as the Osteuropa-Institut in Munich and the Büro für heimatvertriebene

Ausl.nder in Düsseldorf studied the history, economics, culture, and political

developments of the Eastern bloc, a site was required to examine the

practice of dialectical materialism and its actual effects in the region.49 As a

German official remarked, “this is why we need a research institute working

on a philosophical level”.50 Inter-departmental discussions on this issue had

begun already in late 1955, and in May 1956 a proposal was sent to Chancellor

Adenauer for “the foundation of an institute for scientific discussion with

dialectical materialism”, a kind of Western counterpart to the Marx–Engels

Institute in Moscow. This was to be coupled with an increased mobilization

of civil society groups against communist propaganda, and the creation of

an “elite school” to educate key sections of society (Multiplikatoren) in both

the theoretical and practical workings of communism and “the worth of our

ideology of freedom and the powerful potential of the free world”.51 The

plan was well received in the Chancellery, particularly by Dr Hans Globke, a

state secretary and trusted adviser on government organization to Adenauer

who had played a key role in introducing Gehlen to the Chancellor. Gehlen

worked hard to secure a favourable audience in Bonn, particularly within the

opposition Social Democratic party.52 An Inter-Ministerial Working Group

(Arbeitskreis) was duly established in June to assess the next steps, but the

move triggered something of a contest between the Ministry of Defence,

the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry for All-German Affairs over

who would take the lead in terms of jurisdiction, personnel, and funding.

By October 1957 von Dellingshausen had to admit that the hoped-for “General

Staff for the ColdWar” to coordinate the private anti-communist groups

active in German society (he used the Operations Coordinating Board as

an example) was still a long way off: “in my opinion the entire coordination

effort has got stuck”.53 Instead, separate initiatives from different

parts of the government were confusing things.54 In July 1958 the Foreign

Ministry, concerned about the dangers of peaceful coexistence, created the

inter-ministerial, public–private Arbeitskreis für Ost-West Fragen, a “Political

Advisory Board” modelled on the US State Department’s Policy Planning

Staff.55 Meanwhile, under the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior,

the secret Arbeitsgruppe für geistig-politische Auseinandersetzung mit dem

Kommunismus was assembled in January 1959. The BND, seen by the other

departments as a provider of information but not yet a full partner, would

pursue its own plans.

In April 1956, less than a year after the occupation of the Federal Republic

was ended by the Bonn–Paris conventions, Gehlen’s BND was officially

invested as the federal government’s intelligence service. One of Gehlen’s

key partners in laying out the future BND had been Hermann Foertsch, formerly

the chief of staff of the German army in the Balkans. Foertsch, “among

the most intellectual of the German generals”, was closely involved (with Anti-Communism and PsyWar in the 1950s 27

Globke and others) with plans for German remilitarization, and it was he

who began a monthly publication, Orientierung, to circulate news and analysis

within the military and the Gehlen Organization and foster an esprit

de corps and allegiance to the new German state.56 After 1956, with remilitarization

secured, Foertsch shifted his attention to psychological warfare

and played a key role in the preparations for Interdoc. In his sombre assessment

of October 1957 von Dellingshausen had also remarked that “a closer

connection with military and civilian intelligence services” would lead to a

more comprehensive understanding of communist strategies and methods.

The BND was becoming an accepted partner to the political discussions,

although before 1960 they were still excluded from the Inter-Ministerial

Abeitskreis.

The first meeting on the road to what would become Interdoc took place

in Paris in April 1956 – the same month that the BND officially came into

existence – between the French and the Dutch. One of the participants was

journalist Jerome Heldring, asked to attend by Louis Einthoven. Fifty-five

years later Heldring remembered that it involved a series of meetings with

the French and a group of Czech military defectors about communism and

the situation in the Soviet bloc.57 In the previous year Einthoven had met

Colonel Antoine Bonnemaison, chief of the Guerre/Action Psychologique

section of the Service de Documentation Ext.rieure et de Contre-Espionnage.

An expert on Soviet tactics, Bonnemaison was closely involved in developing

psychological warfare capabilities in the French military during the

Algerian War.58 His role in SDECE was as coordinator of a network of psychological

warfare organizations – the Cinqui.me Bureau – via a public front,

the Centre de Recherche du Bien Politique, run out of Bonnemaison’s residence,

14 rue de la P.pini.re in Paris.59 A return visit by the French to the

Netherlands was hindered by the Hungarian uprising in November 1956

(and presumably by Suez as well).60 Einthoven then went to Nigel Clive,

then head of MI6’s Special Political Action section, to assess his interest in

the following question: “To what extent can an intelligence service assist in

the conduct of psychological warfare?” Van den Heuvel went to Paris to discuss

the same question. In May 1958, following the accession to power of

de Gaulle, Bonnemaison finally replied that a meeting to discuss the matter

would be held later that year. General Jean Oli., de Gaulle’s Chief of the

General Staff, would lead the French delegation, but Bonnemaison was the

brains behind it.61

The SDECE did have intelligence-sharing arrangements with other services

(CIA, BND, MI6, Italy, Belgium) under an agreement system known

as TOTEM but, as Bonnemaison’s chief remarked later, “these remained

too informal and limited in scope”.62 Bonnemaison’s venture was to be

more far-reaching. He had already sought out contact with the Germans,

initiating in early 1957 a series of discussions or colloques as a forum

for Franco-German intelligence cooperation. This was a significant extra 28 Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network

step in the gathering rapprochement between the two countries, aided by

the processes of European integration, German rearmament within NATO,

and the French focus post-Suez on finding European solutions to common

strategic problems. The Suez crisis “created the impression that the

United States was willing to sacrifice Western European interests” in the

context of its overarching global contest with the Soviet Union in the

Third World, and suggestions that the US military commitment to Western

Europe was fragile caused doubts among the Germans as well.63 For Reinhard

Gehlen, who had nurtured contacts with French intelligence for several

years, the Franco-German meetings represented a further step towards legitimacy

and prestige for the BND.64 However, the Franco-German relationship

was severely complicated by the Algerian War and the determination of

the French secret service to eliminate support from German businesses

for the Algerian nationalists. Long-running suspicions would not so easily

be overcome.65 Nevertheless in late 1958 the French, Germans, and

Dutch came together for the first time at Jouy-en-Josas, to the south-west

of Paris.

In summer 1958 events took a new turn when Minister of Defence Franz-

Josef Strauss announced plans for a “psychological defence department”

under Lieutenant Colonel Mittelstaedt, an entity that, according to the

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, “carried a strong American accent” although

Strauss openly compared it to the French Cinqui.me Bureau and “similar

institutions in Switzerland and Sweden”.66 This openness notwithstanding,

the paper predicted “a whirlwind of objections”, and it was right – the SPD’s

press service was soon sending out an article that accused Strauss’s initiative

of potentially bringing McCarthyism to Germany in order to silence

opposition to the CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union)–CSU (Christlich-

Soziale Union) government.67 The timing was significant, because the stakes

in the contest between East and West Germany were rising. In October 1957

Tito’s Yugoslavia became the first country outside the Sino-Soviet bloc to

officially recognize East Germany. In November 1958 Nikita Khrushchev

issued his first ultimatum on Berlin, threatening to end Soviet responsibilities

as an occupying power and hand them to the GDR authorities, thereby

forcing Western recognition. Emboldened by these moves, during 1958–59

the GDR carried out a major diplomatic campaign across Asia and Africa

to obtain greater recognition.68 The Hallstein doctrine was under pressure.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Strauss’s move re-energized discussions within

the federal government on the coordination of anti-communist measures.

By September 1958 a unit had been set up in the Chancellery to oversee

the Inter-Ministerial Working Group, and one month later the Ministry

of the Interior, via the Verband für Wirtschaftsf.rderer in Deutschland,

established an “Information Centre” to work closely with German industry

on psychological warfare, with an annual budget of DM (Deutsche Mark

(deutschmark)) 300,000. Strauss’s new department also became the reference

point for planning similar national bureaux with the same concerns. Anti-Communism and PsyWar in the 1950s 29

Throughout the 1950s there was much talk of the necessity of “immunizing”

the West German citizenry against communist influence, but that was

easier said than done. Clarifying the organizational structure of this emerging

network of anti-communist activity kept all of the participants busy in

meeting after meeting.69 Meanwhile the BND kept the colloques as a separate

affair, and revealed neither their purpose nor their very existence to its

governmental “partners”.

A network – or, better said, networks – were beginning to form. Alongside

the French initiative – or “right through the middle of it”, as

Einthoven put it with some indignation – came the Studienbüro Berlin,

established by the Ministry for All-German Affairs in late 1956 as a means

to bypass bureaucratic obstacles. This was part of the Ministry’s network

of “outreach institutes” involved in research, information, and liaison

activities, which by the early 1960s included the Haus der Zukunft and

the Europahaus in West Berlin, the Büro für politische Studien and the

Verein zur F.rderung derWiedervereinigung Deutschlands in Bonn, and the

Gesellschaft für Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik at Haus Rissen in Hamburg.

Von Dellingshausen described the Studienbüro as a meeting point for

“politically interested individuals in West Germany and West Berlin” to

facilitate the trans-European study of communist strategy and tactics. Van

den Heuvel first attended in autumn 1957, and other invitees came from

France, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Austria, and the US.70

Von Dellingshausen noted that the special place of the Federal Republic in

this scenario meant that the Berlin Büro would maintain leadership of the

group, although locations outside of West Germany were used – such as in

Denmark in early 1963.71 Also, “cooperation with American institutions is

guaranteed”. While NATO still offered the most logical location for developing

a Western response to communist propaganda, the preferable way

forward was exactly via a private initiative such as the Studienbüro, as this

offered a solution that was not only less bureaucratic but also – crucially –

open to participation from neutral states (Switzerland and Sweden being of

special importance in this regard).72

The sixth Büro meeting, held in September 1961, which discussed the

activities of communist parties and the various responses to them, indicates

that its clientele consisted mainly of officials working for government

or government-assisted public information bureaux, giving it more of a

strict policy orientation that the broader themes dealt with by the original

colloques.73 From the beginning, therefore, the colloques and the Studienbüro

were overlapping – if not parallel – informal arrangements with similar international

goals initiated around the same time, the former by the French and

the latter by the Germans. Both were initiated as responses to the lack of

such a meeting point within NATO. Both represented attempts by different

wings of the German government – the Ministry for All-German Affairs

and the BND – to fill this gap. But the Büro was meant as a fully German

initiative, with a central theme being the mapping of Soviet initiatives to 30 Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network

influence West German public opinion through “devious routes” via other

Western countries.74 In contrast the colloques began as a common Franco-

German operation and were intended to be a multinational endeavour. This,

from day one, was the view of the Dutch, although German dominance

later caused them to compromise. There was undoubtedly some competition

over who would lead these trans-European ventures into intelligence

and psychological warfare cooperation.

Fact-finding missions 1958–59

European cooperation had of course begun much earlier. The British Foreign

Office’s Information Research Department (IRD), making use of the

multinational platforms provided by the Brussels Treaty and NATO, took

on a leading role in disseminating information on communist front organizations

and manipulation in the public sphere. However, this was largely

limited to the sharing of information and definitely did not extend into the

realm of coordinated responses, as this would undermine national control

over sensitive anti-communist activities.75 Through the 1950s the Dutch, in

contrast, began to search out ways in which coordination in anti-communist

activities could be achieved as a common enterprise. In February 1953 a BVD

delegation had attended a seminar in London on intelligence-gathering on

communist parties and the ways and means of undermining their popular

support. One method discussed was the possibility of spreading dissent

within the party by creating opposition to the leadership. In November 1953

Einthoven took up these ideas with his governmental superior, Minister of

the Interior Louis Beel, and was able to convince him that the BVD should

be able to go on the offensive in this manner, even if it was not strictly covered

by its official mandate. Beel reluctantly agreed, and Dutch psychological

warfare was given the green light.

Van den Heuvel became the coordinator of these efforts to undermine the

Dutch Communist Party (CPN: Communistische Partij Nederland). Alongside

acting as BVD liaison with Vrede en Vrijheid (the Dutch wing of Paix

et Libert.), Van den Heuvel regularly fed selected journalists useful information

and was directly involved in “Project Toekomst” (Future), a sustained

and surreptitious plan to cause division within the communist movement

in 1956–58. The success of this last venture prompted further interest in

the internationalization of offensive anti-communist activities. Already in

1954 Van den Heuvel had been directed by contacts in business circles to

visit one of the annual meetings of Moral Rearmament, held in Caux, in

Switzerland. He returned impressed and convinced that “the only effective

response to communism is to oppose it with a superior ideology”.76 In April

1958, with both the colloques and the Studienbüro in mind, Einthoven was

able to secure the support of Interior Minister Teun Struycken for continuing

these efforts, now termed Phoenix, in a European setting.77 While BVD