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West German Trade Unions and the Policy of *Détente* (1969–1989)

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the contacts of the West German Trade Union Federation (DGB) to the communist state unions of the Warsaw Pact in the period of *détente* (1969 to 1989). How were these contacts embedded into West German foreign policy? It is argued that the DGB voluntarily acted as a state agent and not as a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The initial aim of 1969 was to support the controversial West German *Ostpolitik* in the public and to prevent communist influence on West German society. However, the support of the West German trade unions was not directly linked to the Social Democratic Party (SPD). The DGB's policy continued after the change of Government in 1982. First, the article examines the changing East West trade unions relations from the 1970s to the 1980s; second, it analyses the trade union support of government's foreign policy and its relations to West German state agencies in the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, it discusses the consequences for the conceptualisation of NGOs and for transnational history.

Keywords: trade union, Confederation of German Trade Unions (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund), Détente, Ostpolitik

Introduction

Since its beginning, West German trade unions resolutely advocated Willy Brandt's policy of *détente*. The German Trade Union Federation (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, DGB) and its 16 member organisations supported the so-called New Eastern Policy (*Neue Ostpolitik*) by propagating its merits to its members and the West German public, and by (re-)cultivating contacts with communist unions in the states of the Warsaw Pact. The Federal Republic's aim of peaceful and regulated coexistence with the Eastern bloc, the *Neue Ostpolitik* required public support. During the era of the Berlin Wall it was no wonder that this policy would turn into a major controversy. To be sure, the DGB had always been expected to be Social Democratic in its political orientation and to pursue an internationalist agenda. However, this is called into question in this article, which shows that, in terms of foreign policy, the DGB acted as a committed follower of West German foreign policy in general. The DGB acted

on grounds of general national interests; it acted as a para-governmental agency and not as a non-governmental organisation, regardless of whether the Social Democrats held office or not. Historians so far have considered West German unions merely with regard to domestic policy. Their foreign relations have only been researched within the framework of the free trade union movement.¹ A great amount of research on the effects of the CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) on Eastern Europe and the downfall of state socialism already exists, while research on bilateral nongovernmental East West relations during the period of *détente* is still in its infancy.² In the following chapters the history of West German trade union Eastern policy during the period of *détente* from 1969 to 1989 will be analysed. The article examines both the West German trade union relations to their counterparts in the states of the Warsaw pact as well as the link to West German foreign policy. Because the aim of the article is to challenge the DGB's non-governmental character, the last chapter will also discuss some general problems of NGOs and transnational relations.

Due to the centralised character of trade unions' Eastern policy (and their foreign policy in general), an examination of their umbrella organisation, the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB, Confederation of German Trade Unions), is sufficient for the

- 1 Klaus Schönhoven: Die deutschen Gewerkschaften, Frankfurt a.M. 1987; Michael Schneider: Kleine Geschichte der Gewerkschaften. Ihre Entwicklung in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis heute, 2nd ed., Bonn 2000; Frank Deppe/Georg Fülberth/Jürgen Harrer: Geschichte der deutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung, 2nd ed., Köln 1978; Klaus Tenfelde/Klaus Schönhoven/Michael Schneider/Derlev J. K. Peukert (eds.): Geschichte der deutschen Gewerkschaften: Von den Anfängen bis 1945, Köln 1987; Hans-Otto Hemmer/Kurt T. Schmitz (eds.): Geschichte der Gewerkschaften in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Von den Anfängen bis heute, Köln 1990. An exception is Ernst-Dieter Köpfer: Gewerkschaften und Außenpolitik: Die Stellung der westdeutschen Gewerkschaften zur wirtschaftlichen und militärischen Integration der Bundesrepublik in die Europäische Gemeinschaft und in die NATO, Frankfurt a.M./New York 1982.
- 2 For the norms and the effects of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, see Daniel C. Thomas: The Helsinki effect: International norms, human rights, and the demise of communism, Princeton 2001; for political NGO networks and the Helsinki process, see Sarah C. Snyder: Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network, Cambridge 2011; to mention West German churches, see Katharina Kunther: Die Kirchen im KSZE-Prozess 1968–1978, Stuttgart et al. 2000. A lot of CSCE research has been done at the Munich Institute for Contemporary History (Institut für Zeitgeschichte), especially by Anja Hanisch: Die DDR im KSZE-Prozess 1972–1985: Zwischen Ostabhängigkeit, Westabgrenzung und Ausreisebewegung, München 2012. Regarding East West trade union relations, especially the support of the Polish Solidarnosc, see Idesbald Goddeeris (ed.): Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish crisis, 1980–1982, Lanham 2010. For labour movement relations, see Stefan Berger/Norman LaPorte: Friendly enemies. Britain and the GDR, 1949–1990, New York 2010.

purposes of this article. The DGB's policies have been based upon consensus of their member unions, often resulting only in a minimal programme. However, the member unions did usually not deviate from their common course.

Trade Union Contacts with the East until 1969

Until the mid-1960s trade unions' East West relations were characterised by confrontation, and with regard to the DGB these relations referred only to East Germany and its state conform Free German Trade Union Federation (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, FDGB). Analogue to the political super powers, after 1949 social democratic trade unions and communist trade unions organised themselves in hostile global umbrella organisations.³ Until the beginning of the 1960s the FDGB sought to bring class struggle to West Germany by various means; West German working people and the rank and file were to be canvassed for socialism and the all-German class struggle. However, the attempt to court West German trade union membership was accompanied by the FDGB's accusations that West German union leadership was collaborating with US-imperialism.⁴ In turn, the DGB supported the West German political and economic model and embraced Germany's integration into the European Economic Community (and to a lesser extent into the Western military alliance).⁵ However, though the DGB was convinced it was representing the superior system, it was afraid of becoming politically undermined by the communists. Thus, in 1955 the DGB prohibited political contacts to the East in general for all its officials.

The construction of the Berlin Wall and the Cuban missile crisis in 1961/62 marked a distinctive change in world politics. First, the East German state had become a prolonged reality which could no longer be ignored by statements of reunification and politics of isolation; the Hallstein Doctrine (which meant not establishing diplomatic relations with any state that recognised the German Democratic Republic [GDR]) no longer worked.⁶ Second, both super powers demonstrated their unwillingness to wage a war, neither for Cuba nor for Berlin. As a result of these facts, the West German conservative Government changed to a "policy of flexibility" towards the East (to a

3 For the (Western) International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), see Magaly Rodríguez García: *Liberal workers of the world, unite? The ICFTU and the defence of labour liberalism in Europe and Latin America (1949–1969)*, Oxford et al. 2010.

4 For Germany, see Jens Hildebrandt: *Gewerkschaften im geteilten Deutschland: Die Beziehungen zwischen DGB und FDGB vom Kalten Krieg bis zur neuen Ostpolitik 1955 bis 1969*, St. Ingbert 2010.

5 Cf. Köpper: *Gewerkschaften und Außenpolitik*.

6 For the Hallstein Doctrine, see William Glenn Gray: *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949–1969*, Chapel Hill 2003.

certain extent the predecessor of the *Neue Ostpolitik*).⁷ Parallel to this new flexibility, tensions between East and West unions eased, too. Now, the East German trade unions refrained from accusing the DGB of being imperialist agents and generally avoided over-fierce attacks. More important, at that time, was the fact that young West German trade unionists questioned the anti-contact policy, most notably with their visits to concentration camp memorials in Poland.⁸ From the mid-1960s the public service trade union (*Gewerkschaft Öffentliche Dienste, Transport und Verkehr*, ÖTV) also called for political openness and contacts to communist trade unions.⁹ In 1964 the DGB federal board permitted visiting of places of remembrance in the East and in 1967 it approved so called “fact-finding tours”.¹⁰ Since 1967 one can speak of a wave of delegations to the East. However, the GDR was excluded from this political development, and between the West German and Polish unions the silence was absolute, but for other reasons.¹¹

The Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 provoked a temporary end to these tentative contacts; the DGB responded with the cessation of contacts.¹² Nevertheless, this decision merely interrupted the principal trend since the mid-1960s rather than marking any political shift. In May 1969 the DGB federal congress decided not only to renew its contacts with Eastern Europe, but also agreed in principal to establish contacts with the FDGB; the DGB’s new Eastern policy had thus been set.¹³ Summing up, as early as the 1950s and 1960s the DGB had followed the general trends of West German foreign policy: first it backed the logic of confrontation, and then it gradually opened up to the East. The establishing of ties with Eastern European trade unions in 1966/67 followed temporarily the official intergovernmental relations, that is the DGB contacted the respective unions only after diplomatic relations had

7 Cf. Franz Eibl: *Politik der Bewegung: Gerhard Schröder als Außenminister 1961–1966*, München 2001.

8 Cf. Directives for group tours to Eastern bloc states for visiting concentration camp memorials, 6 May 1964, cited in: Wolther von Kieseritzky (ed.): *Der Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund 1964–1969*, Bonn 2006, pp. 100–101.

9 Cf. Hans O. Hemmer/Hartmut Simon (eds.): *Auf die Wirkung kommt es an: Gespräche mit Heinz Kluncker*, Frankfurt a.M. 2000.

10 Directives for travel to Eastern bloc countries, 10 January 1967, cited in: Kieseritzky (ed.), *DGB 1964–1969*, pp. 397–398.

11 Walter Fritze: *Die Ostpolitik des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes*, in: *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte* 23:10 (1972), pp. 644–649; Hildebrandt: *Gewerkschaften*, p. 543. For the West German trade union delegations to the East since 1967, see the reports in *Archiv der sozialen Demokratie*, Bonn (AdsD), DGB papers (hereafter only by signature beginning with 5/DGA), 5/DGAI001138.

12 Protocol of extraordinary meeting of the DGB federal executive board, 28 August 1968, cited in: Kieseritzky (ed.), *DGB 1964–1969*, pp. 731–732.

13 German Federation of Trade Unions: *Protocol of the 8th regular federal congress*. Munich 18–23 May 1969.

been established (following this logic, contacts to Romania were not interrupted after August 1968 due to Romanian criticism of the invasion of Czechoslovakia).¹⁴ In the months after the federal congress decision (May 1969), for a short period the DGB and its member unions acted comparatively autonomously. The West German Foreign Office was informed about the DGB's activity, the contacts were sanctioned by it, but there were neither general nor specific consultations.¹⁵

The first official top level meeting with Eastern European trade unionists after the federal congress took place in December 1969, when the new head of the DGB, Heinz Oskar Vetter, travelled to Moscow and met with the head of the Soviet trade unions, Alexander Shelepin. The outcome of this meeting, two and a half months after Willy Brandt was elected, was an agreement to exchange several delegations in 1970. Important for the historical conceptualisation of the DGB was the fact that the meeting occurred at the same time as the summit talks between the German ambassador in Moscow, Helmut Allardt, and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, about the mutual renunciation of violence.¹⁶ Shelepin even used a reception for both delegations in the West German embassy in Moscow to announce that the Soviet Union would shortly approve the West German offer for talks beginning on 8 December.¹⁷ This was obviously to integrate the DGB into Soviet foreign policy and heralded the fact that the DGB's Eastern policy had arrived in international politics. From this time onwards the West German Foreign Office, their diplomatic representations, and the Federal Ministry of inner-German Relations were involved in almost every trade union contact with the East and the GDR.

14 Kersten, report on my lecture tour to Romania 29 March to 3 April 1969, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin (hereafter PA AA), B 42 (political division Eastern Europe), vol. 1377; Vermerk zum TO Ostkontakte/BV-Sitzung am 3. September 1971 (1971 (Note to agenda item Eastern bloc contacts/meeting of the national board at 3 September 1971), AdsD, 5/DGAI000471.

15 Cf. Report on talk with Averjanow on 28/29 September 1969 in Düsseldorf and Bonn, PA AA, B 41 (political division Soviet Union), vol. 83, pp. 387–389.

16 Cf. Initiation of German-Soviet talks Allardt-Gromyko about nonviolence in Moscow, 8–11 December 1969, cited in: Heinrich von Siegler (ed.): Dokumentation zur Deutschlandfrage in Verbindung mit der Ostpolitik, Bd. VI: Chronik der Ereignisse von der Regierungserklärung Brandts im Oktober 1969 bis Ende 1970, Bonn/Wien/Zürich 1972, p. 37.

17 Ambassador Allardt, Moscow, to Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Office, hereafter AA), 5 December 1969, cited in: Institut für Zeitgeschichte (ed.): Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1969: Bd. II: 1. Juli bis 31. Dezember 1969, München 2000, pp. 1377–1379, here: 1377.

Beginning of Trade Union-State Cooperation in Foreign Relations

In the 1970s an effective cooperation between the DGB and the West German Ministries had been developed. It started with various basic talks of the DGB with Willy Brandt, Ralf Dahrendorf (Foreign Office's Secretary of State), and Egon Franke (Minister of inner-German Relations) in winter 1969 and spring 1970. Brandt approved the trade union contacts with the East and to East Germany, but he mentioned that the contacts "have to be under control".¹⁸ Since spring 1970 the cooperation with the Ministries had been institutionalised. On the one hand, officials of both sides frequently discussed whether specific contacts and meetings were opportune in view of foreign policy. On the other hand, since then trade union foreign relations, not only to the East, had been funded by the so-called "foreign cultural engagement".¹⁹ The funding amounted to 90,000 DM in 1972, averaged about 70,000 DM in the 1970s, and had been reduced – due to general reductions in this division – to 40,000 DM by the end of the 1980s.²⁰ In May 1970 Foreign Minister Walter Scheel gave a principal directive to the embassies that they were to verify how trade union contacts could be used for contacts and public relations in the respective host country.²¹

- 18 Short protocol on meeting of the union council at the party executive of the SPD, 29 January 1970, , AdsD, 5/DGAI001802. For the other talks, see Kersten, note about phone call with minister Franke on 6 April 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAI001688; Kersten, note about talk with Dahrendorf, 23 February 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAJ000328; German Federation of Trade Unions, state secretary Prof. Dahrendorf talked to DGB executives, DGB-Nachrichten-Dienst (news release), 2 March 1970.
- 19 Dahrendorf assured this to the DGB in February 1970 (Kersten, note about talk with Dahrendorf, 23 February 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAJ000328).
- 20 For 1972, see Vorlage über die Inanspruchnahme von Haushaltsmitteln, 10 September 1973 (Claims to Budgeted Funds), PA AA, ZA (Zwischenarchiv/interim archive), vol. 126726. For the 1970s in general, see PA AA, ZA, vol. 126726, and for the 1980s, see AA an DGB, 6 April 1987; AA an DGB, 26 January 1988, both in PA AA, ZA, vol. 142468.
- 21 Scheel an alle diplomatischen und berufskonsularischen Vertretungen (Scheel to all diplomatic representatives), 14 May 1970, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126457. (Note that, when Willy Brandt was Minister of Foreign Relations from 1966 to 1969, contacts to the DGB were still rare. Advancement of diplomats in the Foreign Office who were sympathetic to the DGB had occurred substantially since 1969). (Cf. Eckart Conze/Norbert Frei/Peter Hayes/Moshe Zimmermann: *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit: Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik*, München 2010, p. 652 ff.; Hans-Jürgen Döscher: *Verschworene Gesellschaft: Das Auswärtige Amt unter Adenauer zwischen Neubeginn und Kontinuität*, Berlin 1995, pp. 302–303). A considerable reorganisation of the Foreign Office took place at that time, starting with a reform commission which the DGB attended (see Bericht der Kommission für die Reform des Auswärtigen Dienstes: Vorgelegt dem Herrn Bundesminister des Auswärtigen, Bonn 1971).

In contrast to relations with Eastern Europe, contact to the GDR and its union, FDGB, had not been categorised as foreign cultural relations, but were called “inner-German relations”. These contacts had affected the core of German history and politics since 1945 and this field was more sensitive than relations to the Soviet Union and its other satellites. Numerous subjects had to be considered: the division of the nation and the desire for reunification, the history of conflicts und human tragedies, the common language as a platform for information as well as propaganda, and the fact that were trade-unions engaged sympathisers with the GDR within West Germany, especially the *Deutsche Kommunistische Partei* (DKP, German Communist Party).²² While the DGB could easily keep contacts to the Soviet Union “under control”, at least through funding, it was afraid of uncontrolled and plentiful union exchanges with East Germany. Additionally, the DGB assumed that the contact with the FDGB would have been more political than those to Eastern Europe and the FDGB would have appeared as “political missionaries”.²³ As in the 1950s, the DGB worried about potential socialist sympathies among its membership which could be strengthened by the mass exchange of individuals and local units. In an attempt to manage this potential problem, the DGB built up a network of organisations engaged in the so called German policy (*Deutschlandpolitik*). Most important, the DGB intensified its connection to the inner-German Ministry to which it already had ties in the 1950s.²⁴ Other organisations were the all-German Institute (*Gesamtdeutsches Institut*, a federal agency belonging to the Ministry, but not renamed after 1969), the social-democratic Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, and the *Kuratorium Unteilbares Deutschland* (Board for an indivisible Germany).²⁵ The main task of the network created was to prepare West

22 However, at the beginning of détente and recently after the recreation of the communist party, its influence in the DGB was marginal. Cf. the intelligence analyses which were submitted to the DGB: On the current politics of German Communist Party (DKP). An evaluation based on material of the 7th conference of the party executives of DKP on 17/18 October 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAI000016; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), report on the 2nd party conference of DKP from 25 to 28 November 1971, 30 November 1971, Bundesarchiv (hereafter BArch), B 137/5985; right-wing and left-wing radicalism [ca. 1970/71], AdsD, 5/DGAI000016.

23 Relations DGB-FDGB, 5 January 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAI000463.

24 In the mid-1950s the DGB discussed its “Manifesto for Reunification” with the then Ministry for all-German Relations (it was renamed in 1969). Cf. Hildebrandt, *Gewerkschaften*, p. 155.; DGB’s statement on the German reunification, 1 May 1957, cited in: Jens Hildebrandt (ed.): *Der Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund 1956–1963*, Bonn 2005, pp. 135–142.

25 For the Kuratorium Unteilbares Deutschland, see Christoph Meyer: *Die deutschlandpolitische Doppelstrategie: Wilhelm Wolfgang Schütz und das Kuratorium Unteilbares Deutschland (1954–1972)*, Landsberg am Lech 1997. For the cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, see Jürgen Eckl/Norbert von Hofmann: *Kooperation mit Gewerkschaften und Förderung von Wirtschafts- und Sozialentwicklung: Zentrale Tätig-*

German trade union officials for their contacts with East German communists. For this purpose, several conferences were organised, and the local trade union officials were obliged to participate in preparatory seminars.²⁶ Topics of these meeting were the treaties and the inner-German talks, but also the introduction to “discussion tactics of communists”.²⁷ Since 1975 the West German Permanent Representative in East Berlin (*Ständige Vertretung*), which had been set up one year earlier, had also been part of the scene.²⁸ In the mid-1970s, the DGB were able to manage and to control its subdivisions, the suspected rank growth did not occur, and the network was replaced by bilateral relations to the respective institutions. The West German government judged the trade union contacts to the East positively for a number of reasons. First, these contacts gave domestic support to the controversial Eastern policy. The DGB advocated *détente* to its some seven million members, and it also gave grassroots support during the controversial ratification process in 1972.²⁹

Second, the DGB was to ward off the Eastern European “double strategy” of setting unacceptable conditions in intergovernmental negotiations and simultaneously courting the unions by “shawms of understanding”.³⁰ Instead of falling into a communist trap, the DGB sustained a “strong and clear position”, in particular towards the West Berlin question.³¹ In addition to this argument, the DGB’s political appearance was apparent evidence for the East that the government’s Eastern policy was well established in West German society. The trade-unions’ “soberness, political discipline and

keitsfelder der internationalen Arbeit der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung seit Beginn der 1960er Jahre, Bonn 2012.

- 26 The first meeting took place in 1970 (Report on collaborative conference of DGB and Gesamtdeutsches Institut from 23 to 26 March 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAI001688). Regarding the seminar program for the local trade union officials, see Gronau, note on talk with Vetter on 23 April 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAI001688; Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund: Geschäftsbericht 1969 bis 1971, Düsseldorf 1971, p. 24; final report about seminars of DGB federal executives at the Politische Akademie Lohmar in 1971, 7 January 1972, AdsD, 5/DGAI001135; from the work programme of Kuratorium Unteilbares Deutschland, late 1972 – beginning of 1973, BArch, B 254/433.
- 27 Gronau, note on talk with Vetter on 23 April 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAI001688.
- 28 The cooperation with the Permanent Representative had developed since autumn 1975, see Gaus to Vetter, 16 October 1975, AdsD, 5/DGAI001949.
- 29 Wolfgang Jäger: Die Innenpolitik der sozial-liberalen Koalition 1969–1974, in: Karl D. Bracher (ed.): Republik im Wandel, 1: Die Ära Brandt: 1969–1974, Stuttgart 1986, pp. 15–160, here: 73.
- 30 Draft [DGB], no date, [end of 1969], AdsD, deposit Egon Bahr, 1/EBAA000247. It is unknown whether this non-dated and non-signed speech manuscript from the end of 1969 was performed or not, but it illustrates the SPD’s political demands.
- 31 Meyer-Landrut to state secretary Frank, 8 January 1973, PA AA, ZA, vol. 112718.

loyalty” had positive effects in the East, and sometimes, as an annotation of the Foreign Office stated, a West German trade unionist’s statement was more valuable than that of a government’s or commercial representative.³²

Third, West German foreign policy benefitted immediately from the DGB’s high ranking contacts to the communist countries. The DGB had to cooperate (the DGB actually avoided the term cooperation for its contacts to the East) with state conform mass organisations whose leaders were high ranking state officials, often even members of their respective politburos. Through dinners and receptions at the embassies (and later by the direct attendance of delegations), West German ambassadors themselves or embassy based social welfare officers could get in touch with these specific officials of the East European upper echelons.³³ This was a secondary but nonetheless positive effect, because these contacts had been contradictory to the regular diplomatic hierarchies for ambassadors and without the DGB the West German diplomatic corps would not have achieved access to these “channels”.³⁴

The motives of the West German government under Willy Brandt to extend its co-operation with the trade unions in the field of foreign affairs were obvious. For the DGB we find a set of motives for its arrangement with the West German Foreign Office and the Ministry of inner-German affairs. First, in their self-conception the trade unions were peace organisations and devoted to international understanding.³⁵ (However, the influence of a non-governmental organisation to prevent the catastrophe of a nuclear war was little). Second, the DGB, like government, wanted to ease everyday life by *détente*.³⁶ To ease movement for West Berlin inhabitants and to facilitate

32 Von Alten (Ref. II A 4), contacts of DGB with Eastern European unions, no date [March 1970], PA AA, B 41, vol. 83, fol. 326–331, here: 326.

33 Sales agency Budapest to AA, 2 August 1971, no. 272, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126492; FRG Embassy Bukarest to AA, 5 August 1971, no. 3512, PA AA, B 42, vol. 1377; Sales agency Sofia to AA, 17 December 1973, no. 806, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126514; FRG Embassy Prague to AA, 11 June 1975, no. 753, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126628; report on the journey of the first official delegation of German Metalworkers’ Union (IG Metall) to the Polish People’s Republic, 21 to 26 September 1973, AdsD, 5/DGAJ000290.

34 Cf. Meyer-Landrut, West German representative in Moscow in the 1980s, who explains the necessity using different channels; however, he does not mention trade unions: Andreas Meyer-Landrut: *Mit Gott und langen Unterhosen: Erlebnisse eines Diplomaten in der Zeit des Kalten Krieges*, Berlin 2003, p. 141. Contrary to the rule, in 1977 Ulrich Sahn reported about his inaugural visit to the new Soviet trade union president Shibaev (FRG Embassy Moscow to AA, 9 February 1977, no. 329, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126610).

35 Cf. Fritze: *Ostpolitik des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes*.

36 Cf. Vetter’s speech at the federal congress in 1972 (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund: *Protokoll 9. Ordentlicher Bundeskongress*. Berlin. 25. bis 30. Juni 1972, Düsseldorf 1972, p. 165), and Heinz Oskar Vetter: *Notizen. Anmerkungen zur internationalen Politik*, Köln 1983, p. 123.

traffic between West Germany and Berlin were political aims but also rooted in an organisation with some seven million members. Third, the DGB shared the political approach of *détente*.

The initial aim of the West German *détente*, the *Neue Ostpolitik*, was to seek relief for the numerous humanitarian problems which had developed due to the Cold War and after the erection of the Wall. To advance a change in Soviet policy on Germany, West Germany and the Soviet Union as well as both blocs had to come closer, the logic of military armament had to be overcome, and a security structure had to be established. However, Egon Bahr's well-known phrase "change through rapprochement" (1963) aimed for more.³⁷ German reunification was still in mind, but since reunification had been further away in 1969 than in 1960, first a regulated coexistence with the GDR had to be established. Then, "change through rapprochement" was also to liberalise Eastern European domestic politics by stabilising international relations, thus the Eastern European communist parties were to assert that domestic reforms would not threaten their power.³⁸

A very unsettling fact is that the trade unions' sources (minutes, correspondence) are almost silent on these motives. Rarely did the DGB refer to "change through rapprochement", and only on rare occasions did it specify its particular aims of East West exchange. The DGB discussed and prepared the contacts, more intensively at the beginning of the *détente* than in the 1980s, but it did not reflect its Eastern policy in general. This fact coincided with the transfer of the discussions, preparations, and decisions about the Eastern contacts from the DGB's federal board to its executive committee in the mid-1970s. It is conspicuous that trade union-related sources of the West German Foreign Office on this topic are generally silent, too. West German embassies characterised trade union delegations as being useful, but beside precise advantages (like getting in contact to members of the respective Politburos) they did not define this use. Closest to a characterisation of the DGB's Eastern contacts was a phrase used by a youth delegation in 1979 and depicted by the embassy. According to that, the trade union exchange was to "overcome prejudices" and to "deepen critique".³⁹ To overcome prejudices meant that the Soviets were to be convinced of the West

37 For Bahr's speech of 1963, see Wandel durch Annäherung: Egon Bahr am 15. Juli 1963 in der Evangelischen Akademie Tutzing, in: Deutschland Archiv 6:8 (1973), pp. 862–865.

38 See Gottfried Niedhart's point that the concept of peaceful change had been revisionist to some extent: Gottfried Niedhart: Revisionistische Elemente und die Initiierung friedlichen Wandels in der neuen Ostpolitik 1967–1974, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 28 (2002), pp. 233–266; see also Gottfried Niedhart/Oliver Bange: Die „Relikte der Nachkriegszeit“ beseitigen. Ostpolitik in der zweiten außenpolitischen Formationsphase der Bundesrepublik Deutschland im Übergang von den Sechziger- zu den Siebzigerjahren, in: Archiv für Sozialgeschichte, 44 (2004), p. 415–448.

39 FRG Embassy Moscow to AA, 11 July 1979, no. 1634, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126608.

German desire for peace and it was to have the West German political system explained to it.⁴⁰ To deepen critique meant that West German trade unionists were to be aware of communist propaganda by experiencing real communists. And in fact, communist speakers, invited to West Germany, had been criticised by the rank and file that the Soviet trade unions merely functioned like insurance companies and slave-drivers rather than fighting organisations of the working class.⁴¹

Interventions During the Period of Negotiations

During the period of governmental negotiations with the Soviet Union, Poland, and finally the GDR from 1969 to 1972, with the exception of questions of armament, the DGB had to tackle the same problems as the West German government: the West Berlin question, the recognition of the Western Polish border, and the legal acceptance of the second German state.⁴² Additionally, and as an original task, the DGB had to repel various Eastern European initiatives which were to undermine the official talks by mobilising West German rank and file. One of these was the Eastern European initiative for an all-European trade union conference on peace and security, a kind of trade union-CSCE. This conference was to politically split the non-communist unions into sympathisers for socialism and strictly anti-communists and it was to canvass for the Soviet disarmament agenda.⁴³ The DGB distrusted this initiative from the beginning and the West German Foreign Office regarded this as an “attempt to socially undermine Western Governments’ policies”.⁴⁴ For some years the DGB had successfully obstructed such a conference, then it succeeded in reshaping it into meet-

40 Bericht über den Programmablauf der Beteiligung einer sowjetischen Gewerkschaftsdelegation an den Auslandskulturtagen der Stadt Dortmund (Report on the program of a Soviet trade union delegation to the city of Dortmund’s days on foreign cultures) 12–25 May 1973, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126726; FRG Embassy Moscow to AA, 28 March 1979, no. 1125, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126610.

41 Eckert, report on the lecture tour of soviet speaker V. Boldyrew and his interpreter A. Remisow from 17 to 24 February 1975, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126728.

42 For the period of negotiations and its results, see Helga Haftendorn: *Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptung: 1945–2000*, Stuttgart 2001, pp. 173–218; Wilfried Loth: *Helsinki, 1. August 1975: Entspannung und Abrüstung*, München 1998, pp. 133–156.

43 This initiative was assigned to the Western unions by the Polish trade unions (Loga-Sowinski to Vetter, 25 August 1969, AdsD, 5/DGAI000463).

44 Meyer-Landrut (213) to state secretary Frank, 8 January 1973, PA AA, ZA, vol. 112718.

ings about less political topics like work safety, which additionally took place in the framework of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and were not considered as multilateral contacts between Western and communist unions.⁴⁵

How the DGB attended the aims of “change through rapprochement” in general and how it performed the challenges mentioned is to be examined in detail using the “border question” and the “West Berlin complex”. The border question was on the agenda from the very beginning. Initially, in December 1969 the Polish trade unions demanded the official recognition of its Western border by the DGB before any meeting could take place.⁴⁶ For Poland and the Poles, recognition was merely the first step on a long way to conciliating with the former occupying force, it was not conciliation itself.⁴⁷ The DGB was appreciative of this political demand, but due to the on-going negotiations it refused to recognise the Oder-Neisse line in a common declaration with the Polish trade unions.⁴⁸ Though the Polish trade union met the DGB halfway and invited a West German delegation in April 1970, the DGB’s refusal to sign such a declaration before intergovernmental talks were completed successfully hampered the next official contact. The next meeting was not until the Warsaw treaty was signed. The DGB-head, Vetter, declared that not the individual position of the trade union was to be decisive, but the “appearance in the public eye”.⁴⁹ This meant that the trade union did not wish to interfere in official government policy.

In summer 1970 the Polish trade unions launched different initiatives to come to an agreement with the DGB, but there was no solution for the core phrase. A declaration which had used the term “recognition” would have increased political pressure on the West German government. At the parallel Moscow negotiations, the Soviet Union strongly demanded recognition as a legal term, but the West German government was not able to do so as it would then have come into conflict with the constitution, whereby the legal regulation of the German borders were not to be negotiated prior to reunification. The treaties with Moscow and Warsaw finally utilised the phrase of non-convertibility of the existing borders.⁵⁰ Through its strict refusal, the DGB avoided potential pressure on Willy Brandt and his staff and thwarted East European

45 A short summary of this complex one finds in Kristoffersen, re. visit of WZSPS delegation lead by Schalajew from 29 to 31 July 1986 to the FRG, AdsD, 5/DGAI001705.

46 Loga-Sowiński to Vetter, 29 December 1969, German translation, AdsD, 5/DGAI000463.

47 Katarzyna Stokłosa: *Polen und die deutsche Ostpolitik 1945–1990*, Göttingen 2011, p. 178.

48 Protocol of talk with the delegation of Polish federation of trade unions on 14/15 January 1970 in Düsseldorf, AdsD, 5/DGAI000464; *Welt der Arbeit: Kernproblem Oder-Neiße*, 17 April 1970.

49 Protocol of the continuation of talks with the representatives of the Central Council of the Polish unions, 17 July 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAJ000203.

50 Cf. Werner Link: *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrages im Lichte neuer Archivalien*, in: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 49:2 (2001), pp. 295–315, here: 306.

efforts to mobilise a West German mass organisation for their political goals. On 7 December 1970, Vetter accompanied Willy Brandt to Warsaw, which has to be seen as additional important public support of the domestically controversial treaty. There he met the Polish trade unionists for the second time.⁵¹

The DGB had a similar approach to the West Berlin question, which was, beside the disarmament talks, the most complicated subject of the treaty period. Until the Four Power Agreement on Berlin in September 1971 (which came into effect in June 1972) the East had tried to isolate West Berlin and to abandon its (real existing) ties to the Federal Republic. Since the first trade union contact with the Soviets in December 1969, the inclusion of West Berlin trade unionists in the appointed exchange program had been controversial. First, in 1969, the Soviets approved the participation of West Berlin based trade unionists, but when the negotiations between West Germany and the Soviet Union were reaching the crucial phase, visas for West Berlin union officials were refused.⁵² Even the West German negotiator Egon Bahr, at that time in Moscow, was informed, but could not resolve this issue.⁵³ In May 1970 the Soviet return visit to West Germany took place, but in line with their foreign policy the Soviet trade unions did not compromise on West Berlin. Because the DGB also insisted on its point that its West Berlin division was an integrated part of the umbrella organisation which could not be cut off, the outcome of the meeting in May 1970 was cessation.⁵⁴ As a result, the trade union exchange was not realised until the Four Power Agreement was signed and ratified.

The denial of West Berlin citizens' attendance at West German delegations by the Soviets prior to the Four Power Agreement was not a specific trade union problem, but also hampered relations in the field of economy and sport.⁵⁵ Thus, the DGB's hard line was the result of its organisational self-interest as well as its support for the *Ostpolitik*. Finally, since the beginning of 1972 the Soviets had accepted West Berlin trade unionists as part of federal delegations to the East, but the legal validity of the Berlin agreement in summer 1971 led to higher international mobility for West Berlin citizens generally. Since the West Berlin question was a topic on how to come

51 Two days later Willy Brandt thanked Vetter that he supported him "so effectively" (Brandt to Vetter, 9 December 1970, AdsD, Willy-Brandt-Archive [WBA], A 11.1, vol. 9, fol. 59–60, here: 59).

52 Blumenfeld, Ref. II A 4, note regarding visa for Erich Frister, 5 February 1970, PA AA, B 41, vol. 83, fol. 357–358.

53 AA to FRG Embassy Moscow, for state secretary Bahr, 6 February 1970, no. 112, PA AA, B 41, vol. 83, fol. 359.

54 See the DGB's statement on the visit, *Welt der Arbeit: Ohne Frage: Der Berliner DGB gehört zu uns!* 12 June 1970.

55 Cf. Marc Catudal: *A Balance Sheet of the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin: Evaluation and Documentation*, Berlin 1978.

to terms with the consequences of the Second World War, its symbolic significance remained after 1972, and to some extent it became more and more emblematic; both sides argued for the prerogative of interpretation. As late as 1981, Pjotr A. Abrissmow, former Soviet ambassador in the GDR, described “Westberlin (one word) as an “independent entity in the middle of the GDR”.⁵⁶ However ideological this statement was, the symbolic conflict showed consequences: The Soviets had accepted the West Berlin trade union as part of the umbrella organisation solely in travelling from Berlin to Moscow, but they vehemently refused to visit West Berlin when they were solely invited by the West German DGB.

For the first time this problem emerged in October 1973 when a Soviet delegation rejected a four-day-visit to West Berlin as part of a twelve-day-seminar on education issues. After manifold home calls to Moscow the delegation finally departed.⁵⁷ Following their general line in foreign policy, the Soviets would have accepted such excursions if the DGB had given two separate letters of invitations: one by the federal organisation and another by its West Berlin division. West German diplomats accepted this procedure for other fields in autumn 1973, but the DGB insisted on its organisational integrity and refused.⁵⁸ The difficulty with the “travel direction” existed by the end of the bloc confrontation.⁵⁹

Anyhow, it should be emphasised that the DGB experienced some privileges by from Soviet leadership which were to woo the West German trade unionists. In East West sport relations it took longer for West Berlin citizens to be accepted and also the participation of West Berlin companies at trade fairs in Moscow were still contested after the agreement.⁶⁰ An example of Soviet concessions to the DGB was their attendance at the DGB federal congress in West Berlin in June 1972. Thereby the Soviets explicitly accepted a conference of a West German organisation in West Berlin and West Berlin’s organisational ties (of the trade unions) to the West.⁶¹

56 Pjotr Abrissimow: *Westberlin: gestern und heute*, Berlin (DDR) 1981, p. 103.

57 FRG Embassy Moscow to AA, 25 October 1973, no. 3636, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126608.

58 Urbanek, Ref. 640, to Embassy Moscow, 29 October 1973, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126608; Gespräche des Bundesministers Scheel mit dem sowjetischen Außenminister Gromyko in Moskau, 1.-3. November 1973, in: Institut für Zeitgeschichte (ed.): *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1973: Bd. III: 1. Oktober bis 31. Dezember 1973*, München 2004, pp. 1709–1714, here: 1713, note 10.

59 Cf. FRG Embassy Moscow to AA, 7 April 1987, no. 1058, PA AA, ZA, vol. 143618.

60 Cf. Gehard Wettig: *Das Vier-Mächte-Abkommen in der Bewährungsprobe: Berlin im Spannungsfeld von Ost und West*, Berlin 1981, p. 186 ff.; Catudal, *A Balance Sheet*, p. 110. The problems in the field of sports were raised by the DGB during their delegation to the Soviet Union in 1973 (Otto, report on travel of DGB delegation to the USSR from 21 to 29 September 1973, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126726).

61 Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund: *9. Bundeskongreß 1972*.

For inner-German relations, the West Berlin question was not only crucial, but the trade union relations even developed equivalent to the intergovernmental relations. Parallel to the inner-German talks of Willy Brandt and the GDR Prime Minister Willi Stoph in 1970, both unions quickly agreed to meet. The DGB accepted the East German invitation to East Berlin for the first top level meeting, but neither could agree about the route from Düsseldorf to Berlin. The DGB insisted on flying directly to West Berlin and then transferring to the East, that is by passing the Wall, whereas the East Germans wanted to pick up the delegation at the national border and drive to East Berlin by car or train.⁶² Then, the FDGB tried to copy Brandt and Stoph, who were originally supposed to meet in East Berlin, but who could neither agree on the modalities of the route (from West to East Berlin or by circumnavigating the Western sectors). As a result, the first inner-German governmental talks took place in Erfurt.⁶³ Sequentially, the FDGB invited the DGB to the small Baltic Sea town of Boltenhagen (later Magdeburg was also suggested as an alternative). The DGB refused this proposal and insisted on meetings in East Berlin and Düsseldorf (seat of the DGB federal board) regardless of which order the meetings were to take place, and it insisted on a freely chosen route to the East.⁶⁴ The conflicting political aims and positions could be not solved until the Basic Treaty between the two German states was close to being signed.

In October 1972, two months before the Basic Treaty was signed, but in particular four weeks before the West German general elections, the DGB travelled to East Berlin. At that time, the DGB was allowed to pass the Wall, and additionally a West Berlin trade unionist participated who could even pass a check point which had actually been reserved for West German citizens only – an occurrence that aroused strong public attention.⁶⁵ The fact that a high ranking trade union secretary was uncovered as an East German State Security official about four weeks prior to the meeting did not cause a diplomatic furore.⁶⁶ The DGB did not scupper the meeting, because it clearly wanted to support the social democratic election campaign and to highlight the success of *Ostpolitik* at that time. By means of social *détente*, the DGB assisted the “plebiscite for Brandt and the Eastern policy”, as the elections have been characterised.⁶⁷

62 Report on talks with FDGB committee on 18 March 1970 in Düsseldorf, AdsD, 5/ DGAI001692.

63 Heinrich Potthoff: *Im Schatten der Mauer: Deutschlandpolitik 1961 bis 1990*, Berlin 1999, p. 86.

64 Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund: *DGB wünscht Treffen in Ostberlin oder Düsseldorf*, DGB-Informations-Dienst (news release), 11 May 1970.

65 Cf. *Der Spiegel*: *Warm und freundlich*, 23 October 1972.

66 For the State Security official Wilhelm Gronau, see Helmut Müller-Enbergs (ed.): *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit: Teil 2: Anleitungen für die Arbeit mit Agenten, Kundschaftern und Spionen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 2nd ed., Berlin 1998, p. 69.

67 Jäger: *Innenpolitik*, p. 86.

The West Berlin question and the problem of recognising post-war realities officially were top of the agenda in the bilateral and multilateral negotiations between 1969 and 1972. In all these subjects the DGB supported the West German government's position and acted as loyal partner. The DGB not only blocked Eastern attacks on its own organisation, but warded off initiatives designed to undermine West German foreign policy. As a side note, the Warsaw Pact trade unions were not completely in line with the Soviets. The Hungarian and Bulgarian unions were not unduly concerned about the subject of Berlin and had welcomed West Berlin trade unionists as early as 1971;⁶⁸ and the Romanian unions were anyway a special case since Romanian foreign policy had always pursued its own independent path. Beside the Soviets and the East Germans, the Czechoslovakians and Bulgarians were hard-liners; in turn, the Hungarians were characterised by the DGB as one of the most open-minded East European communists.⁶⁹

Stabilisation of East-West Trade Union Relations

After the treaties were successfully ratified, the East West trade union exchange, not only started, but in a few months it accelerated to a degree not comparable in the period before 1969. Entering a new period, the DGB also changed its tactic towards the East. Since 1972 the DGB had been trying to leave behind world politics at delegations and had looked for more intensive discussions on trade union and workplace related subjects.⁷⁰ One hope of the DGB was that in particular Soviet trade unions would become interested in Western models of employee participation and that the DGB could influence the other side by discussions. This hope had been accompanied by West German curiousness in the East. Many West German delegations reported that they had been enthusiastic about the East European desire for peace, they reported positively on the results of industrial developments in the Soviet Union, and DGB delegates were also amazed about the restructuring of the Polish cities and the standard of living in Hungary.⁷¹ But contrary to initial optimism and "euphoria", there was not

68 FRG Embassy Bucharest to AA, 5 August 1971, no. 3512, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126492.

69 Kristoffersen, note for Vetter about unionist east-west relations, 19 May 1980, AdsD, 5/DGAI002005.

70 Cf. the international union politics of the DGB in the European context, part 1, no date [January 1974], AdsD, 5/DGAI000483; see also FRG Embassy Moscow to AA, 16 August 1973, no. 3146, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126726; FRG Embassy Moscow to AA, no. 3232, 23 August 1973, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126610.

71 Report on the visitation programme of the Hessian DGB delegation to the USSR (oblast Rostow) from 20 27 September 1975, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126728; Otto, report on travel of high level DGB delegation to the USSR from 21 to 29 September 1973, PA AA, ZA,

enough common ground for talks on trade union topics. West German trade unionists became disappointed by the Eastern European trade unions' lack of capability to reform and social *détente* lost ground to realism.⁷²

In 1976 the metalworkers union already expressed that delegations are merely “a demonstration of good will”.⁷³ By the end of the 1970s this was a common opinion among West German trade union officials. In 1980, some weeks before the Gdansk strikes, the head of the DGB's international division summed up that ten years of new Eastern policy are too short a period for sustainable changes and that much more time was needed; the then modified aim was provoking “thought-processes” in the “direction” of “a gradual liberalisation, also in humanitarian subjects”.⁷⁴ The DGB no longer aimed for liberalisation in itself, but merely for intellectual conceivability of it. Thus, the relaxations of the 1970s neither led to an extension of contacts at the lower ranks of the organisations nor to the inclusion of a larger part of the DGB membership; on the contrary, one outcome of the 1970s was the decline of contacts in total figures. Between summer 1972 and summer 1973, 72 out of 188 bilateral contacts of the DGB (and its branches) were with trade unions of the Warsaw Pact; in 1985, another year with exact figures, it was 46 out of 210.⁷⁵

Despite this negative evaluation by the end of the 1970s, most of the East West trade union contacts had been classified as “stable” since 1976/77, even these to Poland, and the GDR became “resilient” (one of the standard phrases used by the DGB).⁷⁶ The conflicts which had to be solved by the last third of the 1970s were specifically linked to German history. Regarding the GDR, until 1976 many symbolic conflicts had arisen from the term “inner German talks”. The DGB regarded the relations to the FDGB as “inner German”, and the East Germans insisted on categorising the DGB connections as “international relations” like those with all other trade unions of the world. For example, these came at the agenda when the DGB was referring to East German guests

vol. 126726; report on the journey of the first official delegation of German Metalworkers' Union (IG Metall) to the Polish People's Republic, 21 to 26 Sep. 1973, AdsD, 5/DGAJ000290; sidelight of a DGB delegation's journey to Hungary from 11 to 16 October 1976, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126729.

72 Cf. Vetter: Notizen (in particular p. 124); Kristoffersen, note for Vetter about unionist east-west relations, 19 May 1980, AdsD, 5/DGAI002005.

73 FRG Embassy Moscow to AA, 2 September 1976, no. 4354, PA AA, ZA, vol. 112803.

74 Kristoffersen, note for Vetter about unionist east-west relations, 19 May 1980, AdsD, 5/DGAI002005.

75 International trade union contacts, 1 July to 31 December 1972, AdsD, 5/DGAI000478; international trade union contacts, 1 January to 30 June 1973, AdsD, 5/DGAJ000202. International trade union relations 1st half year 1985; international trade union relations 2nd half year 1985, both in: AdsD, 5/DGAJ000040.

76 Here used for the FDGB: Report on FDGB high level delegation 's visit from 27 September to 1 October 1977 to the Federal Republic, AdsD, 5/DGAI001143.

at the DGB congress as “domestic guests” and not as “international guests”.⁷⁷ The DGB reproduced, and this is one of the most remarkable parallels to governmental politics, the official structures. The chancellor and the Federal Chancellery had been responsible for inner-German relations, but for international relations and Eastern Europe, the Minister for Foreign Relations had been responsible. On the trade unions side, the DGB head (and the related division) had been responsible for the contacts to East Germany and all other connections were organised by the international division.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, since 1977 both sides had come to terms and contacts had not been charged with ideology as before.

The Polish case was somewhat different to the general East West *détente* as well as to the inner-German relations. From the West German point of view these relations had been less burdened by the system antagonism than by history, the difficulties to be solved between both countries based not upon different political and economic systems, but on the fascist aggression in 1939.⁷⁹ Generally, the DGB characterised Poland and the Polish trade unions as semi-socialist, not at least due to some self-critical debates, and conciliation ranked first among political topics. According to the West German “political class”, the DGB considered conciliation with Poland only comparable to Franco-German relations.⁸⁰ The break-through with the Poles was finally achieved when the Federal Republic and the People’s Republic signed and ratified various treaties and protocols about compensation and legal departure of ethnic German emigrants from Poland to the West in 1975/76.⁸¹ The particularity of German-Polish relations illuminates when looking at the DGB’s tactical change in 1972. In Poland the DGB encountered a remarkable openness of the Polish trade unions, but did not make use of it.⁸² In the 1970s the Polish unions asked on several occasions for contacts between specialists on workplace security, job evaluation systems, and social housing, and they even tried to integrate the DGB in the economic relations between both countries.⁸³ Actually the Polish unionists’ wishes complied with the DGB’s approach on specialist

77 Fritze, note on GDR contacts, 4 June 1975, AdsD, 5/DGAI001692.

78 Kaltenborn to Milert, 25 March 1983, AdsD, 5/DGAI001703.

79 Regarding the DGB’s analysis of the German Polish relations, see note for members of DGB high level delegation’s travel to Poland from 22 to 29 July 1974, AdsD, 5/DGAJ000289.

80 For the political mainstream, see Dieter Bingen: *Die Polenpolitik der Bonner Republik von Adenauer bis Kohl: 1949–1991*, Baden-Baden 1998, p. 165.

81 On the conflicts and results about the treaties cf. Bingen: *Polenpolitik*, p. 156 ff.

82 Regarding the comparable openness, see Erwin Kristoffersen: *Begegnungen des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes mit Gewerkschaften in Polen*, in: Werner Plum (ed.): *Ungewöhnliche Normalisierung: Beziehungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zu Polen*, Bonn 1984, pp. 75–80, here: 77; *Sachstand deutsch-polnische Gewerkschaftsbeziehungen*, 23 November 1979, PA AA, ZA, vol. 132816.

83 Cf. Bericht über den Besuch einer Spitzendelegation des Zentralrates der Gewerkschaften der VR Polen vom 22.-28. Juli 1973 in der Bundesrepublik, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126726;

exchange. Nevertheless, despite this obvious possibility to provoke a “change through rapprochement” by developing closer contacts, the DGB linked its contact policy even closer to official politics, for example trade union meetings were parallelised to the 1976 established semi-state German-Polish Forum, while in other social fields of West German-Polish relations more independent connections had been possible and occurred.⁸⁴

Stabilisation of East West trade union relations mentioned that these contacts were less and less influenced by world politics. No doubt the most complicated phase was around the years 1979 to 1983 when several local and international conflicts occurred. On the one hand, regarding inner-German relations the increase in the compulsory exchange for West Germans by the East German Socialist Unity Party in 1980 caused cancellations or postponements of delegations.⁸⁵ On the other hand, and more precarious for individuals and humanity in general, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the NATO-double-track decision in 1979 as well as the declaration of martial law in Poland in December 1981 caused crises in East West trade union relations. The Polish crisis finally led the DGB to cut off its contacts to the official Polish unions. But with the exception of Poland, world political tensions affected trade union relations in a mainly atmospheric sense and did not consistently disturb social *détente*. The DGB postponed meetings with consideration to the West German government and its international politics, but to postpone or cancel a delegation did not lead to deep frictions. Thus, one can say that crises in trade union relations between 1979 and about 1983 were exogenous and did not root in bilateral disputes.

Bericht über die DGB-Spitzendelegation in Polen vom 22.-27. Juli 1974, PA AA, ZA, vol. 126727.

84 Cf. Rolf Gawrich: Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund und polnische Gewerkschaftsbewegung. Der DGB als transnationaler Akteur und seine Beziehungen zur „offiziellen“ und „oppositionellen“ Gewerkschaftsbewegung in der Volksrepublik Polen (1970–1989), Köln 1996, p. 281. For Polish-German non-governmental relations, see Dominik Pick: Die gesellschaftliche Dimension der westdeutsch-polnischen Beziehungen in der Zeit der Neuen Ostpolitik, in: Friedhelm Boll/Krzysztof Ruchniewicz (eds.): Nie mehr eine Politik über Polen hinweg: Willy Brandt und Polen, Bonn 2010, pp. 183–219.

85 Vetter an Tisch, 9 December 1980, AdsD, 5/DGAI001702; Kaltenborn an Milert, 25 March 1983, AdsD, 5/DGAI001703.

Trade Union-State Cooperation under Helmut Kohl's Government

Despite all domestic conflicts with the trade unions after change in office in 1982, the institutionalised form of trade union-governmental cooperation outlived the conservative *Wende* and proceeded in an unobstructed way in the 1980s. At one stage the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, expressed his expectation that despite the very deep dispute over constraints to the freedom to strike in the mid-1980s “in regard to foreign policy the accordance between government and trade unions will be preserved”.⁸⁶ And Genscher was not disappointed. The DGB were in accord and assured the government about its extensive agreement considering “German and Eastern Europe policy”. This was evident when in meetings with communist trade unionists the DGB criticised Kohl's government only cautiously; instead it endeavoured to “explain” the Conservatives' domestic politics.⁸⁷ The DGB did not want domestic differences to become a gateway for communist propaganda and agitation. The explanation of Kohl's domestic policy even concerned the controversial deployment of nuclear weapons in 1983. Since 1983 the DGB had criticised the NATO-strategy and participated in the West German peace movement which was eased, of course, by the change of government (before that time the DGB-leadership approved the NATO-double-track decision of 1979). But domestic conflicts were not on the agenda for discussion with the Eastern European communists.

For its part, in the 1980s the West German Foreign Office also stated that the DGB “had loyally supported the Federal Government's foreign policy, Eastern policy as well as German policy all the time since the era of Konrad Adenauer”.⁸⁸ The one and only change in this report to the 1970s was that the beginning of the DGB's support for the Government's foreign policy did not date back to 1969, but to the 1950s. While relations to the Foreign Office had been stable in the 1980s, those to the inner-German Ministry appeared to be even better than in the 1970s.⁸⁹ This was mainly a result of

86 Gesprächsnotiz über Unterredung BM mit DGB-Vorsitzenden Breit am 3. Sep. 1986, PA AA, ZA, vol. 142485. See also Vermerk betr. Gespräch BM mit DGB-Vorsitzenden Breit am 1. März 1985, PA AA, ZA, vol. 142271; BMB an Milert, 23 October 1986, BArch, 137/15304.

87 This also mentioned Milert (personal referent of DGB president in the 1980s) in an interview with the author, 4 July 2011 in Berlin.

88 Schlingensiepen an BM betr. Besuch von Breit in der UdSSR vom 12.-16. März 1985, PA AA, ZA, vol. 142271.

89 Vermerk über Telefongespräch am 15. Aug. 1983 mit dem DGB, BArch, B 137/15304; Vermerk über innerdeutsche Begegnungen der GEW, 12 October 1987, BArch, B 137/12656.

improvements in trade union internal working processes and was not an expression of closer political relations to the conservatives. Nevertheless, the fact refers to the stability and reliability of the DGBs' orientation in foreign policy, regardless of which government was in power. This cooperation and accordance was eased by the fact that Helmut Kohl did not break new ground in his dealing with Eastern Europe. The Conservatives showed a stronger moral attitude, but despite ideological differences they maintained the contacts to the East and continued the social democratic policy of *détente*.⁹⁰ Thus, such continuation precluded conflicts on principles between the DGB and the conservative-liberal coalition government.

An example that the DGB's Eastern policy had not been linked to the SPD was the conflict over Poland. After 1982 the then-oppositional SPD attempted to link up with their former successful policy of *détente*. This *Nebenaußenpolitik* (oppositional foreign policy), as it was called by critiques, was to assure that *détente* continued, but it was also an effort to oppose Helmut Kohl in the field of foreign affairs.⁹¹ For this purpose, to continue *détente* and to oppose government, the social democrats intensified their contacts to the communist parties in Eastern Europe. Regular exchanges were part of this concept and finally it even led to the common policy paper with the East German communists "Conflicting Ideologies and Common Security" in 1987.⁹²

This oppositional foreign policy did not affect the DGB's engagement in general, but it clashed with the trade unions when the SPD expressed the hope that the newly established Polish trade unions (after the end of martial law) would politically open up and become an independent factor in Polish political life. In 1984, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, an institution close to the SPD, internally analysed that the new Polish unions "consciously aspired to an independent role towards the party".⁹³ The DGB did not share this position, which led to the "displeasure" of leading Social Democrats, which rather required that the DGB should "act in concert" with them as in the

90 Timothy G. Ash: *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent*, London 1993; Stefan Creuzberger: *Westintegration und Neue Ostpolitik: Die Außenpolitik der Bonner Republik*, Berlin 2009. For Poland, see Stokłosa: *Polen*.

91 Cf. Rolf Reißig: *Dialog durch die Mauer: Die umstrittene Annäherung von SPD und SED*, Frankfurt a.M./New York 2002; Egon Bahr: *Die Deutschlandpolitik der SPD nach dem Kriege*, in: Dieter Dowe (ed.): *Die Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik der SPD in der Opposition 1982–1989. Papiere eines Kongresses der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung am 14. und 15. September 1993 in Bonn*, Bonn 1993, pp. 11–40.

92 Politik Informationsdienst der SPD: *Grundwertekommission der SPD und Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED: Der Streit der Ideologien und die gemeinsame Sicherheit 3*, 1987..

93 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *Polen* April 1984, 25 May 1984 (chapter on trade unions), AdsD, deposit Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski, HWAK000689.

1970s.⁹⁴ Instead of establishing official contacts to the new Polish unions, the DGB maintained only informal contacts to them in order to assure a gateway to Poland and keep links to the semi-legal members of *Solidarnosc*.⁹⁵ Due to their continuous support for *Solidarnosc*, the DGB was even reproached by Social Democrats for “interfering in inner-Polish affairs”.⁹⁶

Inner-German Contacts in the 1980s

In the 1980s, the trade union relations towards Eastern Europe remained, more or less, at the level of the decade before. The second Cold War after 1979 had affected trade union *détente* for about three years, but since about 1983 relations normalised with no advance, but also no regress. Since West German trade unionists have lost euphoria, contacts were maintained but not developed. However, a fundamental change took place in relations to the GDR. First and on the surface, relations to the East German FGDB were more intensive in the 1980s than in the decade before; bilateral meetings rose from thirteen in 1983 to sixteen in 1985, to twenty-four in 1988, and finally there had already been thirty meetings up to September 1989.⁹⁷

Since the end of the 1970s a hidden normalisation had occurred. West German unionists developed something like an intercultural view on the GDR, where East Germany appeared as a foreign country with even a foreign language which had to be translated.⁹⁸ In result, the disappointment about Eastern European trade unions, the threat of war, which resulted in the specific German-German “coalition of ration-

94 Kristoffersen, Bericht von einem deutsch-polnischen Seminar, 20.-22. September 1985, an der Evangelischen Akademie Loccum, AdsD, 5/DGAI000525–526.

95 See the correspondence between Erwin Kristoffersen and Andreas Körting (West German embassy in Warsaw) in the 1980s in AdsD 5/DGAJ000292 as well as Kristoffersen, Gewerkschaften im Prozeß des Wandels. Berichte aus Osteuropa, 16 June 1989, AdsD, 5/DGAI000552.

96 Kristoffersen, Bericht von einem deutsch-polnischen Seminar, 20.-22. September 1985, an der Evangelischen Akademie Loccum, AdsD, 5/DGAI000525–526.

97 Milert an Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (hereafter BMB), 6 December 1983, BArch, B 137/15304; Milert an BMB, 24 January 1986; Milert an BMB, 10 February 1988, all in BArch, B 137/15304; Kontakte zum FDGB im Jahr 1988, 12 January 1989, AdsD, 5/DGAI002205; Breit, Statement bei der DGB-Presskonferenz am 15. September 1989 in Stuttgart, AdsD, 5/DGAI002022.

98 In particular this process had been reflected by the educational institution Arbeit und Leben, which has been close to trade unions (cf. Bundesarbeitskreis Arbeit und Leben, Empfehlungen für die Planung und Durchführung von Studienseminaren in der DDR, verabschiedet am 18. September 1979, AdsD, 5/DGAI001702).

ality”,⁹⁹ and the subcutaneous rapprochement led to a change. When in the 1970s the West German trade union focus was on the Soviet Union, in the 1980s it was on the GDR; in other words, former Eastern policy metamorphosed to German policy. Ideological disputes and conflicts about international politics became less important and the participating trade unionists even developed friendships. Finally, in the mid-1980s the DGB even had been poised to comment on West German domestic politics together with its East German partner.¹⁰⁰

A very specific development took place between the two German teachers’ unions. The West German *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* (GEW) arranged two “talks on peace education” with its East German partner organisation in 1985 and 1987.¹⁰¹ The GEW president Dieter Wunder regarded these talks explicitly in the context of German reunification. In his words, the trade unions were bound “to contribute to the coherence of the German nation”.¹⁰² The continuation of a German nation which the GEW president assumed, should not be left to the political right, but had to be made “a constituent part of our own policy”.¹⁰³ His insistence on the continuation of a German nation was not a secret and *Wunder* did not only communicate it internally but face to face with the East Germans at these talks on peace education. In 1987 the GEW even achieved to write a paper on peace education with the East German teachers’ union which went far beyond the SPD-SED (Socialist Unity Party, that is the governing party of the GDR) paper of 1987, for example in human rights issues or the principal aim to dissolve the military blocs. However, the disintegration of the GDR precluded signing the paper (the East Germans cancelled the paper in October 1989).¹⁰⁴ These talks and the paper can be seen as a particular path of *détente*, where a West German organisation was able to force the East into concessions towards liberalisation. And it was an exception. In no other West German trade union nor in the DGB itself reunification or the “one nation” approach was on the agenda in the 1980s.

99 Cf. Heinrich Potthoff: Die „Koalition der Vernunft“. Deutschlandpolitik in den 80er Jahren, München 1995, p. 21 ff.

100 For example the press release in 1985 regarding the West German revanchist expelled associations (Gemeinsame Presseerklärung über den Aufenthalt einer FDGB-Bundesvorstandsdelegation in der Bundesrepublik vom 28.-31. Mai 1985, press release, 31 May 1985).

101 Documentation of the first peace talk in Obersuhl (GDR), 27 to 31 October 1985 is located at the AdsD, 5/DGAI001704, the documentation of the second talk in Kassel (West Germany), 27 September to 1 October 1987, in AdsD, 5/DGAI002174.

102 Wunder an Breit, 20 December 1983, AdsD, 5/DGAI001704.

103 Wunder, Thesen betreffend das Verhältnis der GEW zur Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Unterricht (Ergänzung zum Nachbereitungstreffen in Frankfurt-Hoechst am 5. Dezember 1987), AdsD, 5/DGAI002174.

104 After cancellation of the paper it was published by the GEW-Korrespondenz: GEW: Friedenserziehung in beiden deutschen Staaten (Wortlaut), 2 November 1989.

At the end of the 1980s German-German trade union relations cannot be characterised definitely. On the one hand there was an obvious rapprochement with common declarations on politics or even policy papers, on the other hand, formalism and the underlying antagonism between both states had never been overcome. In particular one of the last steps in extending common relations characterises the stiffness of the contacts. In summer 1988 the DGB and the FDGB carried out a so called “exchange of holidaymakers”: Ten families (that meant couples without children) from each side should spend two weeks holidays in a recreation facility of the partner organisation. But due to little interest of Western trade unionists about spending their holidays in the GDR, for the year 1989 the DGB conferred this program to its member organisations (on the assumption it would fail). And indeed, the branch unions also had little interest and another exchange in summer 1989 fell through.¹⁰⁵ The agreement about the “exchange of holidaymakers” as well as its implementation is suggestive of inner-German relations similar to the 1960s, when the German border was almost impassable, and not of the 1980s with their millions of Germans travelling within Germany.

Resume – Transnationalism and Non-Governmental Action during the Period of *Détente*

The DGB policy towards the East in the 1970s and 1980s was based upon its self-conception as a national protagonist. In the 1970s the DGB appeared to be not much more than an extension of social democratic foreign policy. Each step towards the East was adjusted to governmental positions and to the official negotiations, and the DGB coordinated its actions with the respective Ministries. The common core values with the Social Democrats eased and increased the degree of cooperation during the social democratic Chancellorships from 1969 to 1982, and in particular the first government of Willy Brandt caused a significant political and institutional integration of trade unions in the field of foreign affairs. However, the DGB’s motives went beyond assisting the SPD, the DGB was anxious to promote West Germany’s foreign policy in principal. Then, the trade unions did not want to act autonomously or in opposition to government, and they did not aim for political barter, for example to support foreign policy for the extension of co-determination or, more generally, for more participation

105 Vereinbarung zwischen DGB und FDGB über den Besuch der gewerkschaftlichen Freizeit- und Erholungseinrichtungen, 9 March 1988, AdsD, 5/DGAI002031; Milert, Zum Verhältnis DGB/FDGB, 25 August 1989, AdsD, 5/DGAI002022.

in domestic politics.¹⁰⁶ Instead, it can be stated that the motive of integration into the West German foreign policy „elite arena“, the intention to be accepted as a protagonist in foreign policy.¹⁰⁷ Especially the trade unions’ para-state attitude proves this. Even though the DGB acted independently and not as subordinate to the government, the boundary between non-governmental commitment to the policy of *détente* and governmental foreign policy became indistinct. Due to the unison of steps as well as the intense work relations with the West German Foreign Office and the Ministry for inner-German Relations, one can hardly regard the DGB as a non-governmental organisation.

To be more precise, the West German trade unions acted as para-governmental or even state agencies on the social level. Its Eastern policy in general proves this, but also the diplomatic-like delegation culture and the lack of inner-organisational motives for the DGB’ commitment are evidence of this thesis. First, the contacts had been very much formalised, delegation exchanges had been coordinated centrally, the exchanges had to be authorised by the trade union boards and the participants were almost high ranking officials.¹⁰⁸ Not least the number of participants expressed the limits of trade union relations. Compared to the fields of sports, youth tourism, or the inner-German church meetings, the total amount was marginal. In 1985, for example, about 70 out of 220 bilateral meetings (delegations, exchange of speakers, working groups, and attending congresses) of the West German trade unions fall upon Eastern Europe and the GDR, but there were no more than around 400 trade unionists attending these 70 East West contacts.¹⁰⁹

In contrast, in the same year alone, about 68.000 pupils, students and young people took part in the officially funded youth exchange with the GDR; thus, the trade union exchange rather can be compared with the field of sports with its 71 inner-German

106 For the repercussion of transboundary politics of civil or social organisations on domestic issues, see Holger Nehring: *Transnationale soziale Bewegungen*, in: Jost Dülffer/Wilfried Loth (eds.): *Dimensionen internationaler Geschichte*, München 2012, pp. 129–149.

107 The concept of elite arenas is extracted from the historical research on the middle classes (Bürgertumsforschung), see Karsten Holste/Dietlind Hüchtker/Michael G. Müller: *Aufsteigen und Obenbleiben in europäischen Gesellschaften des 19. Jahrhunderts. Akteure – Arenen – Aushandlungsprozesse*, in: Karsten Holste/Dietlind Hüchtker/Michael G. Müller (eds.): *Aufsteigen und Obenbleiben in europäischen Gesellschaften des 19. Jahrhunderts. Akteure – Arenen – Aushandlungsprozesse*, Berlin 2009, pp. 9–19.

108 The DGB had already agreed in 1969 that the contacts should be coordinated centrally (Abt. Ausland, Arbeitsunterlage betreffend Kontakte zu osteuropäischen Staaten und zum FDGB, 6 August 1969, AdsD, 5/DGAI000464; Vetter an Richter, 23 February 1970, AdsD, 5/DGAI001684).

109 *Internationale Gewerkschaftsbeziehungen im 2. Halbjahr 1985; Internationale Gewerkschaftsbeziehungen 1. Halbjahr 1985*, both in AdsD, 5/DGAJ000040; Milert an BMB, 24 January 1986, BArch, B 137/15304.

meetings in 1985 than with societal exchange.¹¹⁰ Second, although the trade union newspapers accompanied the process of *détente* in the 1970s and the 1980s intensively, they did it with the contemporary prevalent arguments like peacekeeping or organising a peaceful coexistence. But looking at the DGB records, one perceives little particular trade union aims in respect to the process of *détente* generally. As one stable motive, which had a certain political basis in the DGB membership, one can identify the reduction “of obstacles for relations between people in both parts of Germany”.¹¹¹ Postulations to ease private movement, especially to the GDR and West Berlin, were understandable for a mass organisation which had hundreds of thousands of members who had relatives in the GDR. Similarly, it was also attempting to increase freedom of action for its Berlin member organisation. However, considering the political context, such a political point of view was not unique, since all mass organisations were concerned with these problems. Then, the DGB’s continuous diplomacy towards the East after the change in government in 1982 as well as its refusal to follow the SPD’s oppositional foreign policy towards Poland indicates that the unions did not merely support its traditional political partner.

Without doubt, in the broad academic sense, West German trade unions were non-governmental organisations, but these social scientific definitions of NGOs contribute little to our understanding of the DGB’s role towards *détente*. Rather the presented research makes clear that social science definition has to be critically discussed by historical research. Sometimes social science is quite unconcerned when it refers to a NGO’s dependence on state funding but does not question its non-governmental character. For example, in their introductory remarks of its edition on international NGOs in post-soviet spaces, Mendelson und Glenn express that the Clinton “administration and the NGOs tended to talk only about success stories, because they feared losing funding from a hostile Congress if they openly discussed the difficulties of democratisation and the limited role that assistance often plays in the process”.¹¹² At the same time, Mendelsohn and Glenn state that government’s success requires appropriate NGO politics, when this success, here the expansion of NATO and European Union, “depend at least as much on the degree to which organisations outside the government

110 Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (ed.): Die Entwicklung der Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik 1980–1986: Bericht und Dokumentation, Bonn 1986, p. 13 ff.

111 Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund: DGB-Brief an FDGB, DGB-Nachrichten-Dienst (news release), 4 February 1970.

112 Sarah E. Mendelson/John K. Glenn: Introduction: Transnational Networks and NGOs in Postcommunist Societies, in: Sarah E. Mendelson/John K. Glenn (eds.): The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe and Asia, New York 2002, pp. 1–28, here: 4

embrace norm, rules, and practices common in Western democracies”.¹¹³ Furthermore, the “soup of acronyms” surrounding the non-governmental field, where also GONGOS exists (government-organised NGOs), as well as that even the Mafia or Al-Qaeda are added to NGOs, proof the need for critical discussion of the term.¹¹⁴ Historical research should take this critique on social science research on NGOs as a challenge for discussion about which options NGOs had during the East West confrontation to act as transnational organisations and far from official foreign policies. Regarding the emergence of NGOs and transnational protagonists, the 1970s were the “distinctive phase”,¹¹⁵ thus the DGB as an emerging transnational player could be indexed in this period (even though not as a transnational “movement”).¹¹⁶ However, to some extent, research has merely considered asymmetric non-governmental East West relations, that is to say relations between Western organisations, which showed little opposition to their own bloc, to Eastern organisations, groups or networks, which operated more or less in fundamental opposition to their systems. In the case of trade union relations, it was contrary; here we find two organisations belonging to their respective blocs.

Challenging the DGB Eastern policy from the point of transnational history is more fruitful. Similar to the concept of NGO it is less the term itself which gives insight. As a matter of course, since the DGB has been independent of governments rule (contrary to the East European “transmission belts”), in the broad sense of Nye and Keohane the DGB’ relations to the East can be characterised as transnational relations.¹¹⁷ Rather the transnational approach helps us „to consider the process by which

113 Mendelson/Glenn: Introduction, p. 4.

114 Karen A. Mingst/Ivan M. Arreguin-Toft: *Essentials of International Relations*, 5th ed., New York/London 2011, pp. 210–214, quotation on p. 210. See also the polemic note of Norbert Götz, who adds the MONGOS (my own NGOs) to the soup: Norbert Götz: *Civil Society and NGO: Far from Unproblematic Concepts*, in: Bob Reinalda (ed.): *The Ashgate Research Companion to Non-State Actors*, Farnham/Burlington 2011, pp. 185–196, here: 192.

115 Akira Iriye: *Transnational History*, in: *Contemporary European History*, 13:2 (2004), pp. 211–222, here: 219.

116 Transnational history is not free from conceptual plays, either. Regarding definitions, see Wolfram Kaiser: *Transnationale Geschichte im Zeichen der Globalisierung*, in: Eckart Conze/Ulrich Lappenküper/Guido Müller (eds.): *Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen. Erneuerung und Erweiterung einer historischen Disziplin*, Köln u.a. 2004, pp. 65–92; Nehring: *Transnationale soziale Bewegungen*.

117 Robert O. Keohane/Joseph S. Nye: *Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction*, in: *International Organization* 25:3 (1971), pp. 329–349. For an analysis of trade union politics under transnationalism approach, see Rolf Gawrich: *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund und polnische Gewerkschaftsbewegung: Der DGB als transnationaler Akteur und seine Beziehungen zur „offiziellen“ und „oppositionellen“ Gewerkschaftsbewegung in der Volksrepublik Polen (1970–1989)*, Bonn 1996.

change is facilitated on a different timescale” (Clavin);¹¹⁸ in other words, transnational history provides an alienated perspective on (well-known) national histories.¹¹⁹ Insofar, writing Cold War history and trade union *détente* from a transnational perspective leads to two extraordinary results. First, contrary to world political tensions of the “second” Cold War (from about 1979 to 1987), inner-German trade union relations relaxed during these years.¹²⁰ Although contacts were restricted for a short time, relations had subcutaneously changed to an extent that both sides intensely approached in the mid-1980s. Second, and interesting for conceptual debates, just the inner-German trade union relations became transnational in the specific meaning of exchange of ideas and the emergence of an epistemic community – both are explicit objects of research for transnational history.

Then, the transnational history of trade union *détente* does not only show the conceptual limits of NGOs, but also bear witness to the fact that a sharp confrontation of the so called “old” diplomatic history with the “new” international history is artificial. Both approaches.¹²¹ Thus, considering the various definitions, the trade union *détente* could also be defined as a civil part of international relations or the civil department of state politics. There are many arguments for reflecting the links between state or state organisations and civil society respectively NGOs as dialectic entanglements. Since most NGOs are not completely independent from state or government organisations, neither civil society can be divided sharply from the state.¹²² Regarding domestic politics, the reciprocal relationship is obvious. On the one hand, trade unions have enforced the right to strike and the freedom of association, thus they formed the state; on the other hand, legislative power regulates the mode of bargaining conflicts by law. As the article has discussed, such a relationship also exists in foreign policy.

118 Patricia Clavin: Defining Transnationalism, in: *Contemporary European History* 14:4 (2005), pp. 421–439, here: 428.

119 See also Kiran Klaus Patel: Überlegungen zu einer transnationalen Geschichte, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 52:7 (2004), pp. 626–645.

120 There are different approaches about when the second Cold War began, but it is agreed that it ended with the treaty on Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) in 1987 (see, Philipp Gassert/Tim Geiger/Hermann Wentker: *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung: Einleitende Überlegungen zum historischen Ort des NATO-Doppelbeschlusses von 1979*, in: Philipp Gassert/Tim Geiger/Hermann Wentker (eds.): *Zweiter Kalter Krieg und Friedensbewegung. Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in deutsch-deutscher und internationaler Perspektive*, München 2011, pp. 7–29).

121 Cf. Phillip Gassert: *Transnationale Geschichte, Version 2.0*, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 29.10.2012, URL: <http://docupedia.de/zg> (accessed 10 October 2014); Jost Dülffer/Wilfried Loth: *Einleitung*, in: Jost Dülffer/Wilfried Loth (eds.): *Dimensionen internationaler Geschichte*, München 2012, p. 1–8. Regarding the definitions, see Patricia Clavin: *Time, Manner, Place: Writing Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts*, in: *European History Quarterly* 40:4 (2010), p. 624–640.

122 Cf. Götz: *Civil Society and NGO*.

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