

A Democratic Republic of the Saar?
Borderlands and East German Nationalism, 1945-1957

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Name	Description
Archives		
BArch	Bundesarchiv	German Federal Archive
PA-AA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts	Political Archive of the German Federal Foreign Office
Governments and Governmental Organisations		
BRD/FRG	Bundesrepublik Deutschland/ Federal Republic of Germany	West Germany and today's Germany
DDR/GDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik/ German Democratic Republic	East Germany
DWK	Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission	German Economic Commission, quasi- government of the SBZ from June 1947 to October 1949
MfAA	Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, GDR
SBZ	Sowjetische Besatzungszone	Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany, later the GDR
SMAD	Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland	Soviet Military Administration in Germany, military government of the SBZ
Stasi	Ministerium für Staatssicherheit	Ministry for State Security, GDR secret service
International Organisations		
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance	International economic organisation of the Eastern bloc
ECC	European Economic Community	Organisation for the economic integration of Western Europe, successor of the ECSC
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community	Organisation coordinating the industrial production of six Western European countries
EDC	European Defense Community	Proposed organisation commanding the military forces of Western Europe
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation	Military alliance of the Western bloc
WEU	Western European Union	Military alliance of the European members of NATO
Political Parties, France		
PCF	Parti Communiste Français	French Communist Party
RPF	Rassemblement du Peuple Français	Rally of the French People, Gaullist party

Political Parties, FRG

CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	Christian Democratic Union, centre-right, long-time ruling party of the FRG
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei	Free Democratic Party, classical-liberal, long-time junior coalition partner of the CDU
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	Social Democratic Party, initially Marxist, later center-left, major party of the FRG
SRP	Sozialistische Reichspartei Deutschlands	Openly Neo-Nazi party in the FRG, banned in 1952

Political Parties, GDR

KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands	German Communist Party
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands	Socialist Unity Party, formed from the forced merger between the KPD and the SPD in the SBZ. Ruling party of the GDR

Political Parties, Saar

CVP	Christliche Volkspartei	Christian People's Party, pro-French and pro-autonomy. Ruled the Saar under France until 1956
DPS	Demokratische Partei Saar	Democratic Party of the Saar, pro-FRG conservative party. Banned from 1951 to 1955 for its pro-FRG views
DSP	Deutsche Sozialdemokratische Partei	German Social Democratic Party, a pro-German splinter of the SPS. Closely aligned to, and later merged with, the FRG's SPD
KPS	Kommunistische Partei, Landesverband Saar	Saar Communist Party, affiliate of the SED in the Saar. Banned after the Saar's annexation into the FRG in 1957
SPS	Sozialdemokratische Partei des Saarlandes	Social Democratic Party of the Saar, pro-French and pro-autonomy

INTRODUCTION

Erich Honecker, leader of East Germany (GDR) and its ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) from 1971 until a month before the fall of the Berlin Wall, was born outside its borders – in the Saar, a Franco-German borderland on the west bank of the Rhine. He was born in 1912 in the German Empire, but by the time he joined the Wiebelskirchen communist children’s group at the age of 10, he found himself in the Territory of the Saar Basin, governed by the French military under a League of Nations mandate.¹ As he turned 18, he joined the German Communist Party (KPD), despite technically not living in Germany, and he was sent to the International Lenin School in Moscow for training.² Soon after his return in 1934, his hometown was annexed into Nazi Germany following a plebiscite that he unsuccessfully campaigned against.³ He was imprisoned by the Nazis until his liberation by the Soviet Red Army at the end of World War II.⁴ Upon his liberation, the Saar was once again under French military occupation. He moved to East Berlin and continued his work in the KPD, soon renamed the SED, and was sent away to Moscow once again for further training from 1955 to 1958.⁵ When he left in 1955, his hometown was in the autonomous Saar Protectorate under the control of France; when he returned to East Berlin in 1958, it was in Saarland, the smallest and newest state of West Germany (FRG). Between his birth and his ascent to full membership of the SED politburo in 1958, his home was only “German” for 10 out of 46 years.⁶

This thesis examines the Saar’s history from 1945 to 1957 in relation to the SED’s German nationalism. France occupied the Saar after World War II for its strategic geography and rich coal

¹ Erich Honecker, *From My Life* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1981), 1, 17.

² Honecker, *From My Life*, 37.

³ Honecker, *From My Life*, 84-5.

⁴ Honecker, *From My Life*, 116.

⁵ Honecker, *From My Life*, 195.

⁶ Honecker, *From My Life*, 200.

deposit, with the intention to permanently separate the region from Germany.⁷ The FRG objected to French designs due to its national and territorial interests in the Saar.⁸ The resulting diplomatic conflict was known as the Saar Dispute. Despite the SED's geographical separation from the Saar and France, it also laid a claim. In the end, France and the FRG agreed to transform the Saar into a European territory, administered by the Western European Union (WEU), a precursor of today's European Union.⁹ However, the Saarlanders themselves rejected Europeanisation by referendum in 1955, preferring annexation by the FRG instead.¹⁰ In 1957, the Saar became a state within the FRG with the consent of France. France, the FRG, and the SED all had different ideas about who and which piece of land was German, and who should rule these German people and German land. Their conflicting understanding of German nationhood crystallised in this dispute.

But what is Germany anyway? What makes a nation a nation? As historian Tara Zahra noted, "the creation of nation-states was not a natural, inevitable, organic or peaceful process."¹¹ Although some nationalists argued and believed that nationality was a natural extension of people's shared linguistic, religious, cultural, or racial characteristics, we know that is not true. The artificiality of national belonging is most abundantly clear in the borderlands between nation states, as many historians have explored. The people of Upper Silesia, for example, were pressured to declare a singular loyalty to either the German or Polish nation state.¹² External pressure made them declare a nationality, and their choice of nationality was often motivated by practicalities

⁷ Jacques Freymond, *The Saar Conflict, 1945-1955* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1960), 16.

⁸ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 55.

⁹ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 171-3.

¹⁰ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 195.

¹¹ Tara Zahra, "The 'Minority Problem' and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands," *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 2 (2008), 165.

¹² James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

rather than values or an intrinsic patriotic fervor. Not all people of borderlands were able to choose their own nationality: in interwar French and Czechoslovak borderlands, “many individuals became Germans, French, or Czechoslovaks only through the force of law,” as Zahra has argued.¹³ Similarly, the institution of a strict national border in the Saxon-Bohemian borderland had for a time forced Saxons and Bohemians into supposedly distinct categories of Germans and Czechs.¹⁴ The institution of the FRG-GDR border also created immense political, economic, environmental, and cultural consequences for the people of the resultant borderlands, as demonstrated by Astrid Eckert, Edith Sheffer, and Yuliya Komska, whose recent scholarships examined lives on the German-German border.¹⁵

The continuous process of defining and redefining German nationality, and consequently the German nation state, was perhaps the most violent and destabilising process in modern European history. Conflicting understandings of “who is German” and “where is Germany” underlined the Austro-Prussian War, Franco-Prussian War, and the two World Wars.¹⁶ There is also an extensive historiography on these questions, much of it inspired by James Sheehan’s classic article from 1981, which asked historians to critically examine the definition of “Germany” asserted by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck’s German Empire in 1871, and later reasserted by the FRG.¹⁷ Beyond inter-state violence, German nationalism also fueled the violence of ethnic

¹³ Zahra, “The ‘Minority Problem’ and National Classification,” 165.

¹⁴ Caitlin E. Murdock, *Changing Places: Society, Culture, and Territory in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870-1946* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

¹⁵ Astrid M. Eckert, *West Germany and the Iron Curtain: Environment, Economy, and Culture in the Borderlands, West Germany and the Iron Curtain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Yuliya Komska, *The Iron Curtain: The Cold War’s Quiet Border*, *The Iron Curtain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁶ Dirk Verheyen, “A Troubled Identity and a Difficult Fatherland,” in *The German Question: A Cultural, Historical, and Geopolitical Exploration* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 13–42.

¹⁷ James J. Sheehan, “What Is German History? Reflections on the Role of the Nation in German History and Historiography,” *The Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 1 (1981): 2–23.”; For examples of German history that are not constrained within the Bismarkian German border, see Thomas R. Grischan, “Austrians into German Soldiers: The Integrative Impact of Wehrmacht Service on Austrian Soldiers during World War II,” *Austrian History*

cleansings, pogroms, and genocides by the German nation state and other nation states with a German minority population. The Holocaust and the Nazi persecution and mass murder of Jews, Roma, and Sinti are the most obvious examples. Recent scholarships also found precedents for these atrocities in the history of German colonialism, which was tightly intertwined with German nationalism.¹⁸ Germans were also persecuted and expelled from Central and Eastern Europe post-World War II, many of whom had not set foot in today's Germany for generations. In north Bohemia alone, 1.2 million Germans were expelled in 1945 and 1946.¹⁹ These expellees were not welcomed with open arms by their "fellow Germans." Instead, they were viewed suspiciously as "disease carriers" and a political threat.²⁰

The Cold War saw new developments in German nationalism. For the first time, there were two self-proclaimed German nation states vying for German nationhood. The United States, United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union occupied Germany after World War II. The American, British, and French zones became the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to the west, and the Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to the east. They both claimed a desire to reunify Germany but did not for more than half a century, owing to their differing ideology, amongst other reasons. Even more extraordinary was their relatively peaceful co-existence, despite their diametrically opposed ideology and seemingly mutually exclusive

Yearbook 38 (2007): 160–78; Brandon Luedtke, "A Nation on Ice: Germany and the Arctic, 1865–1875," *The Polar Journal* 3, no. 2 (2013): 348–67; Heidi J. S. Tworek, "How Not to Build a World Wireless Network: German–British Rivalry and Visions of Global Communications in the Early Twentieth Century," *History and Technology* 32, no. 2 (2016): 178–200.

¹⁸ Bradley Naranch and Geoff Eley, eds., *German Colonialism in a Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Jürgen Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner: staatlicher Machtanspruch und Wirklichkeit im kolonialen Namibia* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 2002).

¹⁹ Eagle Glassheim, "Ethnic Cleansing, Communism, and Environmental Devastation in Czechoslovakia's Borderlands, 1945–1989," *The Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 1 (2006): 65–92.

²⁰ Eagle Glassheim, *Cleansing the Czechoslovak Borderlands: Migration, Environment, and Health in the Former Sudetenland* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 67–8.

claim on German nationhood. Somehow, they did not devolve into a civil war.²¹ Another remarkable feature of this period of German nationalism was the simultaneous development of transnational ideas. The GDR was constitutionally committed to the “principles of socialist internationalism” and “fraternal ties” to the Soviet Union, while the FRG was a major supporter of the European integration project.²² In sum, Cold War era German nationalism was not the traditional “Germany above all else.” It was “Germanies among or below something else,” be that socialism, European federalism, or the threat of nuclear Armageddon by the Cold War turning hot in Europe.²³

The idiosyncrasy of Cold War era German nationalism has long been recognised in a wealth of academic literature, written both during and after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Scholars generally agreed that the FRG’s understanding of German nationalism was relatively stable and simple: there could be only one legitimate German nation state, that being the democratic and freely elected FRG.²⁴ The expression of this understanding in policies did evolve with time. The FRG at first refused to acknowledge the existence of the GDR, and its diplomats pressured the international community to do the same up until 1969.²⁵ It then negotiated and signed the Basic

²¹ That is not to say German division was a completely bloodless affair. The FRG-GDR border claimed at least 327 lives. These fatalities include civilians fleeing from the GDR to the FRG killed by border guards, landmines, or accidents, and guards, policemen and soldiers killed by border skirmishes and deserters, see Freie Universität Berlin, *Biografisches Handbuch: Todesopfer der Grenzregime am eisernen Vorhang*, October 2, 2020, <https://todesopfer.eiserner-vorhang.de/suche/>.

²² *Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (1968), Art. 6.

²³ “Deutschland über alles” (Germany above all else) was the rallying cry of German nationalists of the 19th century and the well-known refrain of the German national anthem. The “else” originally meant regionalism, religion, and the interests of the many princely states of Germany that stood in the way of a united Germany based on liberal principals. It was later reinterpreted as a cry for aggressive militarism and the triumph of Germany over other nations during the two world wars, see Margarete Myers Feinstein, “Deutschland über alles?: The National Anthem Debate in the Federal Republic of Germany,” *Central European History* 33, no. 4 (2000): 508-9. For a counter example of religious German nationalism of the same era, see Florian Gassner, “Robert Schumanns religiöser Nationalismus um 1848,” *The German Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (2018): 400–414.

²⁴ William Glenn Gray, *Germany’s Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949-1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 11-2.

²⁵ Lawrence L. Whetten, *Germany East and West: Conflicts, Collaboration, and Confrontation* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 34-5.

Treaty with the GDR in 1972, which halted its campaign to isolate the GDR on the international stage and allowed for more inter-German contact. Still, the FRG remained doctrinally committed to the position that the FRG was the one and only legitimate German nation state.²⁶ In fact, the treaty's preamble made clear that its clauses did not affect "the differing views of the FRG and GDR on the fundamental questions, including the national question."²⁷

On the other hand, the SED's doctrine on German nationalism varied considerably, which invited much scholarly attention during and after the regime's lifetime. These examinations generally divide the SED into three periods: ambition for a unified socialist Germany from 1949 to roughly 1956; acceptance of German division and an adherence to the Soviet-proposed Two State Doctrine to 1972; finally, a negotiated inter-German relationship defined by the Basic Treaty of 1972 up to the fall of the Berlin Wall.²⁸

The vast majority of the existing literature ignored the time period before the official establishment of the GDR in 1949.²⁹ Some works did address this time period, but only as context and background preceding the "meat" of the work.³⁰ The few exceptions to this trend focused on how the Soviet Union shaped the German nationalism of the SED, later the ruling party of the GDR, or how the party reconciled its nationalism with its close but unequal relationship with the

²⁶ Whetten, *Germany East and West*, 84-5.

²⁷ *Vertrag über die Grundlagen der Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, (December 21, 1972).

²⁸ Joanna McKay, *The Official Concept of the Nation in the Former GDR: Theory, Pragmatism and the Search for Legitimacy* (London: Ashgate, 1998), 149-52.

²⁹ Hans Buchheim, *Deutschlandpolitik 1949-1972: Der politisch-diplomatische Prozess* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1984); Michael Lemke, *Einheit oder Sozialismus? Die Deutschlandpolitik der SED 1949-1961* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001); McKay, *The Official Concept of the Nation*; Gottfried Zieger, *Die Haltung von SED und DDR zur Einheit Deutschlands 1949-1987* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988).

³⁰ Ronald Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation: Sole Heir or Socialist Sibling?," *International Affairs* 60, no. 3 (1984): 403-18; Whetten, *Germany East and West*.

Soviet Union.³¹ These scholarly works rightly examined the monumental influence of the Soviet Union on the SED, and assume that nationalism functioned more as a slogan than an ideology with intrinsic value for the party. These works portrayed the SED of 1946-1949 as a party with Soviet-imposed doctrines and ideologies that functioned more as a mouthpiece than a political party with actual policies on the question of nationhood. More recent scholarly works tended to focus on collective memory and the grassroots reception of the SED's nationalism.³² The question remains, did the SED only translate Soviet directives and party lines from Russian to German or did they also translate these imposed doctrines and ideologies into actions and policies?

The conflict between the second period of the SED's nationalism, the Two State Doctrine, and the FRG's claim to German nationhood is widely studied. The FRG pursued a campaign to isolate the GDR internationally in order to deny the legitimacy of the SED's state. William Glen Gray examined the isolation campaign and argued that it was successful in isolating the GDR, though the utility of said isolation was dubious. "The [SED] laboured to persuade even one noncommunist government to grant formal recognition. Such a precedent would, it was hoped, generate an avalanche of further recognition" and break its isolation.³³ Till Florian Tömmel and Sebastian Gehrig examined two such efforts: supporting anti-imperialism in decolonised Indonesia and the anti-apartheid African National Congress in South Africa.³⁴ These works assumed that the

³¹ Dietrich Orlow, "The GDR's Failed Search for a National Identity, 1945-1989," *German Studies Review* 29, no. 3 (2006): 537-58; Wolfgang Pfeiler, "Die deutsche Frage in der Sicht von UdSSR und DDR," *German Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (1980): 225-60; Manfred Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall: Critical Stages in the History of Divided Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014); Manfred Wilke and Klaus Schroeder, eds., *Anatomie der Parteizentrale: Die KPD/SED auf dem Weg zur Macht* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998).

³² Jason B. Johnson, *Divided Village: The Cold War in the German Borderlands* (London: Routledge, 2017); Stefan Wolle and David L. Burnett, *The Ideal World of Dictatorship: Daily Life and Party Rule in the GDR 1971-1989* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2019).

³³ Gray, *Germany's Cold War*, 3.

³⁴ Sebastian Gehrig, "Reaching Out to the Third World: East Germany's Anti-Apartheid and Socialist Human Rights Campaign," *German History* 36, no. 4 (2018): 574-97; Till Florian Tömmel, "The German Question in Jakarta Indonesia in West Germany's Foreign Policy, 1955-65," *Cold War History* 19, no. 1 (2019): 119-40.

SED accepted that the Iron Curtain was impenetrable, such that it did not seek recognition in Western Europe. Gehrig wrote that the SED leadership “decided that they would find [recognition] only among newly decolonized countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.”³⁵ Similarly, Gray wrote “[for the SED,] little could be expected from the members of [NATO].”³⁶ Yet, it is well known that the SED ran a propaganda programme to discredit the FRG in front of its allies. The most well-known example was the publication of the *Braunbuch* in 17 languages, exposing the Nazi past of 1,800 men of influence in the FRG.³⁷ Why would the SED run a propaganda campaign against the FRG in its allies’ territory, if it did not believe in the possibility of influencing their opinion and policies? As such, historians could not take SED disinterest and inaction in pursuing recognition in Western Europe as a given.

Another understudied area of the SED’s nationalism is its relation to the European integration project. Prevailing accounts of the history of European integration paid very little attention to the SED’s role in the first decade of the project. The SED was portrayed merely as one part of the Eastern bloc that motivated European integration within the Cold War context.³⁸ It allegedly did nothing more than writing vitriolic op-eds and made no discernable impact on the project.³⁹ However, these works also acknowledged the role that the SED played in European economic integration after the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, through its national connection to the FRG.⁴⁰ Namely, the SED used the FRG’s refusal to

³⁵ Gehrig, “Reaching Out to the Third World,” 575.

³⁶ Gray, *Germany’s Cold War*, 3.

³⁷ Albert Norden, *Braunbuch — Kriegs- und Naziverbrecher in der Bundesrepublik: Staat - Wirtschaft - Verwaltung - Armee - Justiz - Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1965).

³⁸ Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945 - 51* (London: Routledge, 2003); Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Klaus Schwabe, “The Cold War and European Integration, 1947–63,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 4 (2001): 18–34.

³⁹ Patel, *Project Europe*, 53-4.

⁴⁰ Maximilian Graf, “Die DDR und die EWG 1957-1990,” *Revue d’Allemagne et Des Pays de Langue Allemande* 51, no. 1 (2019): 21–35; H.R. Krämer, “‘German Internal Trade’ under EEC-Rules,” *GeoJournal* 9, no. 4 (1984): 434–36; Patel, *Project Europe*, 44.

acknowledge it as “foreign” to reap economic benefits from the EEC as a quasi-member state through preferential trade and financing.⁴¹ This thesis will examine if the SED also leveraged this national connection before 1957. If so, we must acknowledge the role that the SED, and the Eastern bloc at large, has played in shaping European integration. The history of this transnational movement could not be limited to only its member states, but also account for the international context of the EU’s emergence.

In sum, the historiography has isolated the history of the SED’s nationalism within the temporal and territorial limit of the GDR, and its Eastern bloc and non-aligned allies. The history before the establishment of the GDR remains understudied, and its relations with its western neighbours were not accounted for. However, as we shall see in the Saar Dispute, just because the SED and its GDR were politically isolated, it does not mean that they existed in a vacuum. The SED’s nationalism influenced and was influenced by developments in Western Europe. This insight could be applied to other diplomatically isolated states of today, reminding us that the lack of an embassy does not actually entail complete isolation.

The Saar Dispute is uniquely well-placed to be a case study on how the SED expressed its nationalism in the realm of international politics in its early years, and how it interacted with its western neighbours. The eastern and southern borders between Germany and Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria, were not disputable by the SED, since they were set in stone by the victorious Soviet Union and the Western Allies through the Potsdam Agreement.⁴² On the other hand, the Franco-German border to the west was in flux. Thus, the Saar Dispute was an occasion for the SED to illustrate, test, and demonstrate their understanding of German nationhood.

⁴¹ André Steiner, “The Globalisation Process and the Eastern Bloc Countries in the 1970s and 1980s,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’histoire* 21, no. 2 (2014), 170.

⁴² *Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin Conference* (August 1945).

Moreover, the Saar Dispute took place before the FRG and SED gained sovereign powers, an understudied period of the history of German nationalism. The Saar Dispute was also at one time poised to be resolved by Europeanising the territory, making it neither French nor German, but European.⁴³ Therefore, by examining the SED's policy over the Saar Dispute, we can gain insight into how the SED's nationalism functioned before the official division of Germany and in the early years of division on the international stage, and how it interacted with the European integration project. Through the Saar Dispute, we can see that the SED not only altered its nationalism in response to external pressure, be that Soviet policy priorities or FRG diplomatic offensives, as portrayed in the current historiography. In fact, the SED had an active foreign policy that attempted to legitimise and strengthen its claim to nationhood through international means.

A few scholars have highlighted the intersection of nationalism and internationalism of the Saar Dispute, though they have focused on France and the FRG. Jacques Freymond's monograph on the conflict, *The Saar Conflict: 1945-1955*, published just three years after Saar's political integration into the FRG, understood the dispute as a symptom of France's petty nationalism, an impediment to the grand European project.⁴⁴ Almost half a century later, Bronson Long's PhD dissertation analysed the cultural policy of the French administration in the Saar, finding the same expression of French nationalism in Saarbrücken, which was incompatible with internationalism at the Quai d'Orsay.⁴⁵ From the perspective of the FRG, Herbert Elzer recently wrote two volumes telling the story of the Federal Ministry of All-German Affairs, of how the ministry's pursuit of

⁴³ Bronson Wilder Long, "The Saar Dispute in Franco -German Relations and European Integration: French Diplomacy, Cultural Policies and the Construction of European Identity in the Saar, 1944–1957" (Ph.D., Indiana, Indiana University, 2007), 221.

⁴⁴ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*.

⁴⁵ Long, "The Saar Dispute in Franco-German Relations and European Integration."

German national interests was in tension with Chancellor Adenauer's policy priorities for Europeanism during the Saar Dispute.⁴⁶

In many respects, it is unsurprising that the scholarship on the Saar has examined the dispute from the perspectives of France and the FRG rather than the SED. The SED was never a party to the negotiations on the fate of the Saar and had no legal ties to the Saar Communist Party (KPS), as Saar law banned political parties with "foreign" affiliation.⁴⁷ Even at the height of the KPS' popularity in 1952, it had little electoral success, held less than 10 percent of seats in the Saar Landtag, the legislature, and was never in a ruling coalition.⁴⁸ Its labour movement was also overshadowed by the Social Democrats (SPS).⁴⁹ Freymond was well-justified in claiming that the party "scarcely played any part in the struggle" in 1960.⁵⁰ However, with the opening of archives of the GDR and SED post-Cold War, we now know that the SED and KPS' marginal role was not for a lack of trying. While the SED's ambitions did not materialise, the ambitions themselves nevertheless illuminate the nature of the SED's nationalism.

Hans-Christian Herrmann's journal article *die Saar im Visier der SED* is the lone scholarly work on the SED's policy on the Saar Dispute. Published on the 50th anniversary of the Saar's annexation by the FRG, this largely descriptive work examined the actions of the SED and the KPS during the conflict through archival documents unavailable to Freymond and untouched by Long and Elzer. Herrmann found that the SED and GDR pursued an ambitious and active policy. The SED politburo closely monitored the situation and gave detailed directives to the KPS, and

⁴⁶ Herbert Elzer, *Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung an der Saar: das Bundesministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen und das Netzwerk der prodeutschen Opposition 1949-1955* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2007); Herbert Elzer, *Konrad Adenauer, Jakob Kaiser und die "kleine Wiedervereinigung": Die Bundesministerien im außenpolitischen Ringen um die Saar 1949 bis 1955* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2008).

⁴⁷ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 255.

⁴⁸ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 255.

⁴⁹ Hans-Christian Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," *Dialog* 15, no. 15 (2007): 26.

⁵⁰ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 255.

the KPS accordingly organised labour movements, propaganda, and electoral campaigns. The GDR secret service also plotted the assassination of the Saar protectorate prime minister and may have attempted to orchestrate neo-Nazi unrests in the Saar.⁵¹ This thesis will build upon the narrative constructed by Herrmann and interrogate the SED's nationalism, much like Freymond, Long, and Elzer have done with the nationalism of France and the FRG.

Integrating the Saar Dispute into the historiography of SED nationalism leads to two revelations. A fourth period is added to the current chronology of socialist unity, then division with equality, before inter-German relations then became defined by the Basic Treaty. In the period of 1946 to 1949, the SED posited a mild definition of German nationhood that held remarkable continuity with the Bismarckian *kleindeutsches Reich*, not too dissimilar from the FRG's own conception. The break with traditional German nationalism, which was also held by the FRG, was a development, rather than an innate part of the SED's ideology.

The second revelation is the role of foreign policies in legitimising the SED's socialist nationalism. The current historiography emphasised the SED's attempt for diplomatic recognition of its GDR state in the Third World, in order to bolster its claim to German nationhood in response to the Hallstein Doctrine beginning in 1956. The Saar Dispute shows that the SED had in fact sought legitimacy through foreign policies long before the Hallstein Doctrine, in as early as 1947. Together, this thesis shows that the nationalism of the SED has a longer history than currently acknowledged. To fully understand the nature of the SED, one must look before 1956 and 1949, and examine its understudied gestation and birth. While the SED's conception and implementation

⁵¹ Herrmann, "Die Saar Im Visier Der SED," 21–46.

of nationalism was unorthodox, it nevertheless had a continuity to the past and could not be brushed aside offhand as a mere slogan.

Beyond building upon the aforementioned scholarly works, this thesis uses archival materials from the Political Archive of the German Federal Foreign Office (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes) (PA-AA) in Berlin and the Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR) housed in the German Federal Archive (Bundesarchiv) (BArch) in Berlin-Lichterfelde. Of particular interest are the working documents of the SED politburo central committee, GDR Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Post and Transportation, and the German General News Service (Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichtendienst), the GDR state news agency. Correspondence between the SED and the Saar Communist Party (KPS), and various party and government declarations are also examined. The Virtual Centre of Knowledge on Europe (Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe) of the University of Luxembourg also provides a rich archive of digitised primary sources on the European dimension of the Saar Dispute, including French, Saar, and FRG government publications, treaties, and contemporary media coverage excerpts.⁵² The SED's official newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, is also used to supplement the archival sources.⁵³

The main body of this thesis is organised into three chapters, each exploring a different aspect and time period of the SED's nationalism through its policy on the Saar Dispute. The first chapter will examine the formation of a post-war German nationalism by the SED, before the two opposing German nation states were established from 1945 to 1949. It demonstrates that the breakdown of relations between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies gave room for the SED

⁵² Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe, l'Université du Luxembourg, <https://www.cvce.eu/>

⁵³ *Neues Deutschland: Organ des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, <https://www.nd-archiv.de/>

to develop its own understanding of German nationalism, which held remarkable continuity with the nationalism of the pre-war past.

The second and third chapters examine the SED's actions in the Saar from 1949 to 1956. The second chapter illustrates the SED's attempt to establish an independent German Saar state to bolster its own claim of legitimacy and its Two State Doctrine. The SED began its international campaign to legitimise the Two State Doctrine not in the far away Third World, but in the Saar. The third and final chapter examines how the SED understood the European integration project as conflicting with its own German nationalism, and how it attempted to sabotage the project through machinations in the Saar. Together, the two chapters illustrate the interconnectedness of the two Germanies, European integration, nationalism and internationalism, and the Cold War. They remind us that we could not study the SED without accounting for its western neighbours and vice versa, nor could we study the history of Europe without including the Eastern bloc.

In 1981, historian James T. Sheehan wrote that "German history after 1945 [is not] simply the history of the Federal Republic, the 'real' Germany's temporarily truncated extension."⁵⁴ This thesis will heed Sheehan's assertion and examine the SED's nationalism not as an aside to the "real Germany," but to engage it on its own terms. The SED had its own understanding of German nationalism before there was an FRG. It actively pursued its version of German nationalism through the Saar, rather than passively reacting to the FRG's policies. Its policy on European integration goes beyond vitriolic speeches and declarations. The current historiography assumed that the nationalism of the SED was abruptly parachuted in by the Soviet Union.⁵⁵ It also assumed

⁵⁴ Sheehan, "What Is German History?" 23.

⁵⁵ Orlow, "The GDR's Failed Search for a National Identity," 537-8.

that the GDR and the SED did little to support and realise their early nationalism.⁵⁶ These two assumptions in turn justify the believe that nationalism was merely a slogan for the SED, who “[took] advantage of an ideology they claimed to despise.”⁵⁷ This thesis, through the Saar Dispute, traces the gestation and birth of the SED’s nationalism, and how the SED tried to legitimise that nationalism through foreign policies. Acknowledging these facts, the nationalism of the early SED could not so be easily brushed aside as a slogan, revealing that it deserves to be studied in its own terms. Such a study would in turn allow historians to better understand the nationalism of not just the SED, but also of other divided nations and isolated states.

⁵⁶ Michael Lemke, “Nationalismus im Deutschlandkonzept der SED, 1949-1955,” in *Nationalismus in Europa nach 1945*, ed. Heiner Timmermann (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001), 41–58.

⁵⁷ McKay, *The Official Concept of the Nation*, 14.

CHAPTER ONE: THE SAAR DISPUTE AS A GERMAN QUESTION

Introduction

Ilse Ehrlich, an East German woman in Magdeburg, had a number of children with Rudolf Panter.¹ Panter left her and their children, thus owing them child support and alimony. Ehrlich and the GDR government knew that Panter had left for the Saar, but they could not make him pay up, since the GDR had no jurisdiction there. In 1953, the GDR Ministry for Health knew of at least 34 other cases of women and children in the GDR abandoned by husbands and fathers living in the Saar. Alimony and child support were entangled with a hugely political and controversial question: what is Germany? Because the GDR's ruling party, the SED, and the Saar government could not agree on the boundaries of Germany, they also could not agree on who held the authority to issue an order for alimony and child support, and to enforce such an order, paid in which currency, and through which bank. A settlement on any of these technical questions would also mean a *de facto* acknowledgement of one conception of German nationhood over another. The SED would certainly not allow the petty squabble between Ehrlich and Panter to affect the nation's definition of itself. As such, from 1952 to 1957, the GDR Central Bank, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department of Youth Assistance of the Ministry of People's Education, and the Department of Finance played a five-year-long game of hot potato with Ehrlich's complaint letters, while Panter lived in Homborg, Saar, unburdened by child support and alimony payment.

How did the SED and the Saar government answer the German question? The Saar government's position was simple and consistent throughout the Saar Dispute: it did not matter how other governments defined Germany, as long as they did not include the Saar in their

¹ Liste der an das Min. für Gesundheitswesen abgegebenen Vorgänge betr. Unterhaltsforderungen, June 2, 1953, DN 1/1003, SPAMO-Bundesarchiv [henceforth BArch]; The document only states that Ehrlich had children in the plural without specifying the number.

definition. The Saar government was a protectorate under France, and it sought to establish an independent Saarlander identity. The SED's answer was less straightforward or static. Many works of history, political science, and jurisprudence have attempted to understand the SED's conception of German nationhood before and after the fall of the regime.² They generally agreed that the SED and the state it governed, the GDR, had a radically different conception of German nationhood from the German nation states that came before and was a deliberate break from the past. These studies however overwhelmingly focused on the SED after the establishment of the GDR in 1949. By then, the SED was a ruling party in power and had to reckon with the existence of the rival FRG. Yet, the period before 1949 was crucial for us to understand the nature of the party and the GDR, to recognise that there was indeed a continuity between the SED and its predecessors, and to get a fuller understanding of subsequent developments.

This chapter looks at the SED before the establishment of the GDR and FRG. In the chaotic and uncertain days of post-war Germany, how did the SED understand German nationhood and statehood? Rather than focus on the classic loci of such debates, this thesis examines a disputed borderland to understand the SED's nationalism in the immediate aftermath of the war. It analyses the SED's response to the early developments in the Saar Dispute from 1946 to 1949 to explore how it understood German nationhood in a context in which it had an unusually free hand. The Saar was located on the conceptual and literal boundary of Germany after World War II. By examining what the SED declared the Saar ought and ought not to be, we can understand what the SED believed Germany ought and ought not to be.

² Some examples include, Ronald Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation: Sole Heir or Socialist Sibling?," *International Affairs* 60, no. 3 (1984): 403–18; Joanna McKay, *The Official Concept of the Nation in the Former GDR: Theory, Pragmatism and the Search for Legitimacy* (London: Ashgate, 1998); Dietrich Orlow, "The GDR's Failed Search for a National Identity, 1945-1989," *German Studies Review* 29, no. 3 (2006): 537–58.

This chapter will begin with introducing the relevant historical context on the development of German nationalism up to 1945. It will then examine the declarations, statements, and policies of the SED on the Saar Dispute from 1946 to 1949, extrapolating its conception of German nationhood. Analysing the SED's conception in light of concurrent international development, this chapter will explore the genesis of the SED's nationalism. Throughout the early days of the Saar Dispute, the SED began with the assumption that the Allies would resolve the German Question. With the deterioration of East-West relations, the SED began to construct its own understanding of German nationhood. This understanding was remarkably similar to the traditional Bismarckian *kleindeutsches Reich*. It sought to construct one German state for all German people, until this ambition was tempered by the establishment of the FRG. Fitting this discovery into the existing historiography, we see that the SED's understanding of German nationhood was not inherently a radical break from its predecessors. The radical break that perplexed so many historians and political scientists came only after the establishment of the two Germanies. Integrating the pre-GDR history of the SED's nationalism into the historiography pushes historians to appreciate the continuity between the GDR and its predecessors. Traditional German nationalist rhetoric was not, as Orlow suggested, "resurrected [...] in order to persuade the 'little Nazis' that only the Communists represented true German nationalism" in 1948 at the behest of Stalin.³ This rhetoric was within the SED since its establishment in 1946.

The German Question

Simply put, the German Question asks who is German, where is Germany, and how should the Germans and Germany be governed. This "question" framing has its origin in late nineteenth-century parliamentary activities, which implies that the issue is up for discussion and has a

³ Orlow, "The GDR's Failed Search for a National Identity," 542.

corresponding “answer.”⁴ The answer to this question determines, among other things, if Austrians are Germans and Bavaria should be independent. The fight to determine the answer to this question also underlined two World Wars. The establishment of the German Empire in 1871, spearheaded by Prussia and its chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, answered the German Question with the *kleindeutsches Reich* (Lesser German Empire). Though it encompassed much of today’s Poland and Alsace-Lorraine, now a part of France, it was termed “lesser” because it excluded German-speaking Austria. Nazi Germany had its own answer to the German Question, the *großdeutsches Reich* (Greater Germany), which went far beyond the *Bismarckian Reich* by annexing Austria, and much of Czechoslovakia, and Poland. The former conception asserts that German-speakers need not be German, and Germans need not live under a single German nation state.⁵ The latter claims the exact opposite: the Nazi regime was for a time willing to “accept as German someone who is partially or fully of alien stock” in Nazi-annexed Poland.⁶ In other words, non-German speakers with no German ancestors could be German and made to live under the German nation state. As demonstrated in a wealth of borderland studies, nationality and ethnicities are fluid and artificial.⁷ The answer to the German question, like all other national questions, had to be invented, not discovered.

Nazi Germany’s answer to the German Question was violently rejected by the combined military might of the Allies. The United States, United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union drafted a

⁴ Holly Case, *The Age of Questions or, A First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 36-7.

⁵ What exactly is the German language, is a similarly slippery concept. The line between a German dialect and a Germanic foreign language is blurry and political. For a detailed discussion on the subject, see Stefan Dollinger, *The Pluricentricity Debate: On Austrian German and Other Germanic Standard Varieties* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

⁶ Gerhard Wolf, “Volk Trumps Race: The Deutsche Volksliste in Annexed Poland,” in *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany*, ed. Devin O. Pendas, Mark Roseman, and Richard F. Wetzell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 438.

⁷ For a fuller historiography of borderlands, see note 12-5 of the thesis introduction.

temporary answer with the Potsdam Agreement in August 1945. This stop-gap solution was to be in place until a peace treaty could be signed with a reformed German government. Unfortunately, to paraphrase Milton Friedman, nothing is more permanent than a temporary solution.⁸ With the breakdown of relations between the USSR and the Western Allies, many provisions of the agreement remained in place until the fall of the Berlin Wall almost half a century later. During the fifty odd years in between, the “temporary” Potsdam Agreement acted as an unassailable outer bound for what the two Germanies could be. Attempts by the SED to remake a new Germany, just like its western counterpart, had the agreement as its starting point.

The agreement redefined the eastern border of Germany while leaving the western one open. The Oder-Neisse line became Germany’s new eastern border, leaving more than 2 million Germans in “liberated” Poland, among millions more in other parts of Eastern Europe.⁹ The agreement did not define who was German, but people deemed German east of the line were to be “orderly” expelled and resettled in the new Germany.¹⁰ The western border and any other territorial question were to be determined at the final peace settlement. Before such settlement, what was left of Germany was divided into four zones of occupation by the three powers and France. The occupation powers were to temporarily administer Germany independently, except for transportation, communication, and other state machineries that necessitated central administration, which would be jointly administrated at the Allied Control Council. Political power was to be decentralised to the provinces and democratised.

⁸ Originally “Nothing is so permanent as a temporary government program.”

⁹ *Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin Conference* (August 1945); the 2 million figure assumes that whoever was expelled west from Poland was German. In other words, Germans were allowed to be expelled, thus, the expelled must be Germans. For a more detailed and nuanced discussion on the racial and national politics of post-war Poland, see Claudia Kraft, “Who Is a Pole, and Who Is a German? The Province of Olsztyn in 1945,” in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, ed. Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 107–20.

¹⁰ *Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin Conference* (August 1945).

Although the agreement temporarily partitioned Germany into four political entities, the existence of the Allied Control Council to maintain national machineries signalled that the three powers did not intend to permanently divide Germany at the time. It also did not define what political organisation Germany would fall under. The vaguely worded *democratisation* was conceived very differently by the Western Allies and the USSR. Except for the eastern border, the agreement did more to define *what Germany could not be* than *what Germany would become*.

The Potsdam Agreement as a Panacea

While the agreement did not dictate what Germany would concretely become, the Allies all had plans of their own. The Soviet Union hosted a cadre of German communists in exile in Moscow during the war, waiting to remake Germany. Days before Nazi Germany's official surrender, Walter Ulbricht, soon to be the leader of the GDR, and his fellow communist-exiles in Moscow returned to Germany.¹¹ They quickly rebuilt the German Communist Party (KPD) with the support of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD), which governed the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ). In April 1946, the SMAD forced a merger between the KPD and the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) in the SBZ, creating the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), which would rule the GDR until the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹² Although this "party of unity" was geographically located in the SBZ, it monitored and responded to developments in the other occupation zones in Germany. From their responses, we can chart out their answers to the German Question, formulated under the restrictions of the Potsdam Agreement and its Soviet sponsor.

Although the three powers decided to not permanently dismember Germany into hundreds of states like that of the Holy Roman Empire, successive French leaders from Charles de Gaulle

¹¹ Manfred Wilke and Klaus Schroeder, eds., *Anatomie der Parteizentrale: Die KPD/SED auf dem Weg zur Macht* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 252.

¹² Wilke and Schroeder, *Anatomie der Parteizentrale*, 213.

to Georges Bidault felt otherwise.¹³ They felt that France was not bound by the agreement since they were not part of its negotiation, despite being given an occupation zone by the same agreement.¹⁴ Thus, the French government pursued its own policies within its occupation zone. One such policy was to permanently detach the Saar from Germany. Its motivations were military and economic. Coupled with the internationalisation of the Ruhr, Germany would lose control of the entire west bank of the Rhine, making a future German invasion of France much more difficult. Moreover, the Saar had a huge coal deposit and was an important coal and steel producing region.¹⁵ In 1946, France was more concerned with German revanchism and its own reconstruction than the grand game of Cold War geopolitics. Therefore, France made its first move in February 1946, by detaching the Saar from the French occupation zone into a separate territory, thus removing it from the jurisdiction of the Allied Control Council, giving the French military government in the Saar exclusive control. Ten months later, France established a customs union between France and the Saar Protectorate, thus integrating the Saar economy into France.¹⁶

Within this context, the SED made its first known response to the Saar Dispute. The SED central committee issued the Declaration of the Central Committee of the SED on the French Action on the Saar, published in the party newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*.¹⁷ The declaration was reserved in tone and revealed only a vague conception of German nationhood by the SED in 1946. On the question of “where is Germany,” its answer was muted. Although it rightly accused France of separating “the Saar region from Germany,” which implied that the Saar was German, it did not claim that the Saar ought to be in Germany. The SED termed the territory in question the “Saar

¹³ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 115-7.

¹⁴ Jacques Freymond, *The Saar Conflict, 1945-1955* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1960), 5.

¹⁵ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 11.

¹⁶ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 16-20.

¹⁷ Erklärung des Zentralsekretariats der SED zur Saaraktion Frankreichs, December 30, 1946, DY 30/87288, BArch.

region” (Saargebiet) and its inhabitants “the population of the Saar region,” (Bevölkerung des Saargebietes). These two unwieldy terms made no claims on the political identity of the region. In contrast, the Saar government termed itself and its people the “Saarland” and “Saarlanders.” The “-land” suffix and the “Saarlander” demonym could be read as an implicit assertion of the existence of an independent Saar identity, an identity that France used to justify the region’s separation from Germany.

The SED’s reserved attitude was due to its recognition of the Potsdam Agreement, which gave the Allies the exclusive right to define Germany’s boundaries. The SED objected to France’s separation of the Saar because of how the Saar was separated, not separation *per se*. The separation was unilateral rather than by a multilateral treaty. The SED characterised French action as a violation of international law and the rights of the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom, not of Germany nor of the Germans. As such, this violation was supposed to be resolved by the Allies themselves, in the upcoming Moscow Conference. The conference was planned to draft a final peace treaty between the Allies and Germany, which would determine the border of this new Germany. On the border question, the SED, like all defeated Germans, had no say.

On the question of “how should the Germans and Germany be governed,” the declaration was similarly reserved and conciliatory in tone. The SED understood that French actions stemmed from a legitimate desire for security after two disastrous world wars. However, it proposed that security for France should be achieved through “restless elimination of the remnant of fascism, the prevention of the resurrection of chauvinism, and the consequent democratisation of Germany.”¹⁸ In other words, Germany ought to be governed with democracy and without fascism, nor

¹⁸ Erklärung des Zentralsekretariats der SED zur Saaraktion Frankreichs, December 30, 1946, DY 30/87288, BArch.

chauvinism, thus naturally removing Germany as a threat. These principles were not controversial for any parties. What was interesting is that the declaration “expects that the definitive determination of all German borders at the [Moscow Conference] will also provide the German people the possibility of an economically and politically acceptable solution to the Saar question.”¹⁹ By expecting an “acceptable solution,” not a “just” solution, nor a “correct” solution, it recognised room for negotiations and concessions between France and Germany on the question of borders. Moreover, it recognised that borders could be definitively altered by foreign political and economic interests, rather than determined by the intrinsic nationality of land, as traditional nationalism held. In the aftermath of the First World War, the German Weimar Republic accepted French and British occupation of the Saar as a League of Nations mandate for 15 years. Theoretically, the SED was willing to go further and accept a “definitive” and “acceptable solution” that entails the permanent loss of previously German territory.

In sum, the SED posited itself as an interested, albeit passive observer of the Saar Dispute and the broader German Question. The SED accepted that it had neither the rights nor the means to answer the German Question. Rather, it publicly placed its hopes on the Allies, especially its Soviet sponsor, to set forth a tolerable answer. For the SED at the time, there was no single correct answer to the open-ended German Question. That is not to say the SED did not have ideas of its own, but it chose not to publicise them. After all, the SED was merely one political party in one-quarter of a defeated nation; it was in no place to make demands.

¹⁹ Erklärung des Zentralsekretariats der SED zur Saaraktion Frankreichs, December 30, 1946, DY 30/87288, BArch. (Emphasis added.)

East-West Relations Deteriorates

Despite the SED's reverence for the Potsdam Agreement, its expectation of the Allies settling the German Question did not materialise. The relationship between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies rapidly deteriorated, paralysing the Moscow Conference in April 1947. There they again failed to produce a settlement to resolve the German Question.²⁰ The Allies were to try again in November in London. In the meantime, France continued to consolidate the Saar's separation from a future German nation state, such that France would be in a stronger position on the negotiation table to keep the Saar, in case of the negotiation actually producing a final peace treaty. In May 1947, the French administration in the Saar established a constitutional committee to draft a constitution that would make clear and concrete the political status of the Saar.²¹

The preamble of the draft constitution outlined the French vision for the political and economic organisation of the Saar.²² The Saar would be constitutionally mandated to be economically integrated into the French Republic through monetary and custom union. France would conduct foreign affairs and defense on behalf of the Saar. Domestic affairs will be under the purview of a democratically elected Saar government, with a high degree of autonomy subjected only to supervision by a French representative, who would ensure the monetary and economic union are maintained. Politically, the Saar shall be independent from the *German Reich*, the German nation state that has yet to reform.²³

The term *German Reich* deserves our special attention. *Reich* was in the official name of Bismarck's Imperial Germany, the inter-war Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany. Two years

²⁰ Manfred Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall: Critical Stages in the History of Divided Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 37.

²¹ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 31.

²² *Verfassung des Saarlandes* (1947), Präambel.

²³ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 21.

after the drafting of the Saar constitution, both the FRG and GDR abandoned the *Reich* and termed themselves a *Republik* instead. The preamble's use of *Reich* rather than the more general *Deutschland* highlighted that the Saar population at large was not subjected to reparation, deindustrialisation, and other punitive policies that befell the occupation zones, without explicitly commenting on their nationality and ethnicity, as *Reich* implies a polity while *-land* does not. *Deutschland* could also be read as the German-speaking land, a term used in history long before the existence of a German nation state. At any rate, French policy was undoubtedly and widely understood as aiming to separate the Saar from any German polity, regardless of nomenclature.

Part of the French attempt to separate the Saar from Germany was to prohibit political parties in the Saar from maintaining external ties. As a result, the Saar Communist Party (KPS) had to legally separate itself from the SED. Nevertheless, the KPS remained a secret affiliate of the SED. The SED sent instructors and instructions and provided some funding to the KPS clandestinely.²⁴ For example, in May 1948, the SED guaranteed a loan of 3 million francs from the French Communist Party to the KPS.²⁵ Nevertheless, the KPS had a genuine degree of autonomy from the SED. Much of the KPS party leadership were survivors of the Nazi regime who spent the war years imprisoned or in the French resistance, unlike the SED leadership exiled in Moscow.²⁶ The KPS leadership came to their position by virtue of their pre-war party memberships, rather than by appointment from the SED. Internal SED documents reveal that the SED leadership was very displeased with the KPS' inability to carry out SED directives.²⁷ It is

²⁴ Hans-Christian Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," *Dialog* 15, no. 15 (2007), 28.

²⁵ Protokoll Nr. 76(II) der Sitzung des Zentralsekretariats am 13.5.1948, May 13, 1948, DY 30/41905, BArch.

²⁶ Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 24-5.

²⁷ SED Org. Instrukteur Einsätze in der BRD 1952-53, February 28, 1952, DY 30/14828, BArch.

unclear whether the KPS was unable to carry out these directives, or deliberately chose not to do so. Due to the illegal nature of their relationship, little documentation from the KPS survived.²⁸

The French military government called an election for October 5, 1947 to form the Saar Landtag, the legislature, to adopt the draft constitution.²⁹ The election was a contest between the Christian People's Party of Saarland (CVP), Democratic Party of the Saar (DPS), the Socialist Party of Saarland (SPS), and the KPS. Days before the election, the two co-chairmen of the SED, Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, issued another declaration titled, *To the Saar Population! To the Entire German People!*³⁰ It addresses the upcoming Saar Landtag election and the campaigning parties.

This new declaration showed that the SED had grown much more assertive in the intervening ten months on the German Question. This newfound assertiveness was no doubt the result of the deteriorating relationship between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies. The worsening relationship meant it was increasingly unlikely that the Allies would enact an answer to the German Question, thus giving the SED and other German political parties the need to express their own answer. Moreover, since the Allies could not exercise their rights to enforce an answer, the SED was no longer constrained in their expression in fear of infringing its Soviet sponsor's rights. The deadlock of the Moscow Conference gave the SED both the impetus and the space to declare its own vision of the German Question. Its answer was strikingly similar to that of the *Bismarckian Reich*: Germans were those defined by a law enacted by Bismarck's Germany, who should live under a single German state, much like Bismarck's Germany.

²⁸ Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 21-3.

²⁹ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 31.

³⁰ Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, *An die Saarbevölkerung! An das ganze deutsche Volk!*, October 1, 1947, DY 30/87288, BArch.

This declaration demonstrated a clear and forceful position on “where is Germany” and how these German lands should be governed. While the previous declaration implicitly claimed that the Saar is German, the claim was now explicit. Moreover, French “political and economic interests” in the Saar were no longer presented as acceptable or legitimate. French misguided attempts for security became “rape upon the population of the Saar region.” The Germans who worked with France or the French-backed Saar government were “unscrupulous” and have committed “open treason.” It also polemically declares that “no German of the Saar region could [...] vote [for the traitorous parties.]”³¹ An autonomous Saar inhabited by Germans and ruled by Germans in the Saar would be deplorable separatism. By the logic of this declaration, German land and people could not be governed by any polity other than the singular German nation state. The conciliatory tone of the last declaration was no more.

The declaration also defines “who is German.” The parties opposing the KPS were described as “a clique of politicians of German *Staatsangehörigkeit*.”³² Generally translated as nationality, *Staatsangehörigkeit* is a legal term that can also be literally read as “state-belongingness,” describing a person’s legal allegiance to a polity.³³ It does not have the ambiguity of “nationality” in English, which could also describe the ethnicity of a person. Shortly after the war, the Allies abolished the nationality laws enacted by Nazi Germany in 1935 and 1938, which deprived citizenship from Jews and conferred citizenship to Austrians. After their abolition, legal definition of German nationality reverted to the Nationality Law of the German Empire and States (*Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*) of 1913, enacted under the German Empire. The 1913

³¹ Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, An die Saarbevölkerung! An das ganze deutsche Volk!, October 1, 1947, DY 30/87288, BArch.

³² Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, An die Saarbevölkerung! An das ganze deutsche Volk!, October 1, 1947, DY 30/87288, BArch.

³³ Michael Clark and Olaf Thyen, eds., *Compact Oxford German Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 336.

law remained in effect in the GDR until 1967.³⁴ Under it, a German lost their citizenship if they were released by the German government, failed to comply with conscription, married a foreigner, legitimised by a foreigner, or obtained foreign citizenship. Therefore, by calling these politicians “of German *Staatsangehörigkeit*,” the SED was refusing to acknowledge an independent Saar identity. Otherwise, these politicians’ Saar nationality would have displaced their German nationality. Extending this rationale, the SED declared all Saarlanders Germans, except for the recent French immigrants.

The most assertive aspect of this declaration was not its professed vision of the German Question, but its plan to achieve said vision. Whereas the last declaration positioned the SED merely as a passive observer, hoping that the Allies would “do the right thing,” the SED, and the German people, became an active agent in forming the answer to the German Question. The declaration ends with a call to action for the Germans in the Saar to resist France by voting for the KPS.³⁵ Germans and German communists now had the right and duty to forge their own future. Violation of the Potsdam Agreement and international laws remained one of the grounds for protest against French action, but the remedy of the violation is now in the hands of the German people.

Interestingly, the nationalism espoused in this declaration made no references to the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the SED. There was no mention of class and the declaration was addressed to “all German people” rather than the proletariat. The enunciated nationalism of the SED was surprisingly muted. This is consistent with the SED strategy of winning broad support

³⁴ *Gesetz über die Staatsbürgerschaft der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Staatsbürgerschaftsgesetz)* (1967).

³⁵ Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, *An die Saarbevölkerung! An das ganze deutsche Volk!*, October 1, 1947, DY 30/87288, BArch.

as a mass party by tactically avoiding revolutionary rhetoric, despite remaining a Marxist-Leninist party at its core.³⁶

A Thinly Veiled Ruling Party

After the Moscow Conference, the SED believed that it had the right to define German nationhood, since the Allies were not exercising it. The Moscow Conference was followed by the London Conference in November 1947, which again attempted, but failed, to produce a final peace treaty and resolve the German Question. The Soviet Union withdrew from the Allied Control Council and ceased negotiation with the Western Allies for a final peace treaty altogether, ending any lingering hopes that the Allies would resolve the German Question for the Germans, whoever they may be.³⁷ The division between the SBZ and the western occupation zones also seemed increasingly permanent. The British and American zones of occupation already merged into the Bizone in January 1947. Soviet withdrawal from the Allied Control Council ended coordination of national machineries between the occupation zones, entrenching the divide between the SBZ and the rest of Germany.

Concurrent to this development, the SED began to transform itself from a socialist mass party to a Stalinist party, ready to rule and mould the SBZ into a new, socialist Germany.³⁸ The SMAD established the German Economic Commission (Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission, DWK) on February 12, 1948, with the mandate to “take over the reconstruction of the peace industry in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany, as well as the coordination of the German central administration for the individual economic branches” and the power to “determine and issue binding decrees and instructions consistent with the orders set forth by the SMAD to all German

³⁶ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 60.

³⁷ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 70-71.

³⁸ Joachim Scholtyssek, *Die Außenpolitik der DDR* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2003), 69.

institutions within the territory of the SBZ as well as to enforce their implementation.”³⁹ The DWK was in effect the central government of the SBZ, staffed by members of the SED.⁴⁰ In other words, the SED was already the ruling party of East Germany by early 1948, more than a year before East Germany officially became a state.

As a *de facto* ruling party with control of a state apparatus, the SED could respond to French policies in the Saar, and express its conception of German nationhood with action, rather than just words. The DWK had jurisdiction over social and economic policies, but not diplomacy. Trade between the SBZ and the Saar was minuscule, and they were geographically separated by the Western zones. However, the two did have contact through their postal services. Three weeks after the establishment of the DWK, the French government sent a message to the postal service of the SBZ through the Universal Postal Union (UPU), demanding that mail between the SBZ and the Saar to be paid with international postage rate, rather than the inland postage rate, and that the Saar government be treated as a member of the UPU.⁴¹ This amounted to demanding that the SED recognise that the Saar was not German. The SBZ postal service refused to comply and continued to send mail and packages with inland postage, since the SED considered the Saar German. The Saar government, lead by the CVP victorious from the 1947 election, responded by refusing delivery and returning the mail and packages to the SBZ.⁴² In contrast, mail between the occupation zones was paid with inland postage despite their administrative division.

³⁹ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 63.

⁴⁰ Wilke and Schroede, *Anatomie der Parteizentrale*, 359.

⁴¹ Bureau International de l'Union Postale Universelle, France-Renseignements Concernant le Territoire de la Sarre, February 27, 1948, DM 3/28610, BArch.

⁴² The Saar government at the time enjoyed a fair degree of autonomy, on par with the SED operating within the DKW. As per the Saar Constitution, it had a free hand in legal, administrative, and political matters that did not involve defense, diplomacy, and the economic union with France.

This episode of postal dispute meant much more than extracting a few more Francs from the SBZ postal service. Just as the issues of alimony and child support were entangled with questions of nationhood, the postal services were ingrained in state- and nation-building. “The boundaries between national communities [are] defined by ‘relative barriers to communication,’” as historian Zef Segal has put it.⁴³ By demanding international postage, the Saar government was raising the barrier to communication between the Saar and SBZ, establishing a new identity for the Saarlanders independent from the German nation. The postal dispute was in the same vein of the separation of the Saar’s currency and customs territory from the German occupation zones, but it posed a special significance for the SED’s German national struggle. For the first time, the SED was able to enact a policy and provoke a reaction from the Saar and French governments. The SED’s position on German nationhood had not changed significantly since its last declaration on the Saar, but it now had the means to express its position with action.

Conclusion

The assertion that the SED existed within the Cold War context is not a novel one. This chapter went further and demonstrated that the SED began to develop an ideology around German nationhood within the context of the Cold War. The worse the relationships between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, the more well-defined and assertive the SED’s claim on German nationhood could become. As we see in the first three years of the Saar Conflict, the SED went from hoping that the Allies would create a just conception of German nationhood to actively defining and enacting its own vision. Yet, the professed vision of the SED was not revolutionary. Although the SED’s Marxist-Leninist ideology differed radically from Bismarck’s Imperial Germany, their answers to the German Question were remarkably similar. Both regimes defined

⁴³ Zef Segal, “Communication and State Construction: The Postal Service in German States, 1815-1866,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 44, no. 4 (2014), 455.

the same people (though not necessarily the land that they lived on, as was the case for Germans from east of the Oder-Neisse line) as Germans and believed that they ought to live under a single German state.⁴⁴ The social and economic ideology of the SED and Bismarck's Reich could not be more different, yet their understanding of German nationhood was substantially similar. Because the population of the Saar is German, the SED could not accept them living under any polity that is not Germany, the nation state. French annexation was obviously unacceptable, but neither was autonomy.

With the aid of its Soviet sponsor, the SED solidly established itself in the SBZ. However, its ambition was not limited to the East. While the SED was in no position to take power in the West through force, the SED and its affiliated organisations participated in elections on all levels of government in all three western occupation zones and in the Saar. As long as the SED's ambition holds, its conception of nationhood is sustainable. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, the establishment of the rival FRG rendered the SED's all-German ambition ever less likely. In order to reconcile ambition and reality, the SED had to alter its conception of German nationhood and move away from the Bismarckian Reich.

⁴⁴ Jannis Panagiotidis, "What is the German's Fatherland? The GDR and the Resettlement of Ethnic Germans from Socialist Countries (1949–1989)," *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures* 29, no. 1 (2015): 120–46.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SAAR AS A GERMAN-GERMAN QUESTION

Introduction

Referenda and occupations were well-known to the Saarlanders. In the aftermath of the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles allowed France and the United Kingdom to occupy and govern the Saar as a League of Nation mandate for fifteen years.¹ At the end of the mandate in 1935, a plebiscite was held on whether the Saar would stay as a League of Nations mandate, join Nazi Germany, or become part of France.

The Saar communists of 1935 faced a dilemma: as Germans, they objected to foreign occupation of the Saar; As communists, they objected to annexation by a fascist German state. So, they campaigned to extend the League of Nations mandate, until Germany could be rid of the Nazi regime. The communists' campaign had little effect. Ninety percent of the Saarlanders voted to rejoin Germany.² Many communists and other enemies of the Nazi regime in the Saar fled west as refugees to France. Among them was Fritz Bäsel. Bäsel was eventually deported to the Dachau Concentration Camp after the Nazi invasion of France, where he survived for five years until his liberation by the US Army.³ After the war, he became the head of the post-war Saar Communist Party (KPS).

Another Saar refugee was Johannes Hoffmann, an outspokenly anti-Nazi Catholic journalist. Unlike Bäsel, he successfully escaped to Brazil after the fall of France.⁴ Returning to the Saar after the war, he founded the Christian People's Party (CVP). Untainted by German war

¹ *Treaty of Versailles* (Paris, 1919), Section IV, Part III.

² Bronson Wilder Long, "The Saar Dispute in Franco -German Relations and European Integration: French Diplomacy, Cultural Policies and the Construction of European Identity in the Saar, 1944-1957" (Ph.D., Indiana, Indiana University, 2007), 4.

³ Hans-Christian Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," *Dialog* 15, no. 15 (2007), 26.

⁴ Per Fischer, *Die Saar zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich: politische Entwicklung von 1945-1959* (Frankfurt am Main: A. Metzner, 1959), 61.

crimes as an exile, he became the Prime Minister of the Saar Protectorate and a key ally of the French government in the Saar.⁵

Despite their common provenance, Bäsel and Hoffmann, and their parties, were ardent enemies in post-war Saar politics. In 1947, Bäsel's mother party called Hoffmann "unscrupulous" and accused him and his CVP of committing "open treason" for their support of the Saar Protectorate under France.⁶ Yet, nine years later, Bäsel was instructed by the SED to build a coalition with the CVP.⁷ What accounts for this reversal of policy?

The dramatic turn around of policy by the SED stemmed from its new-found desire to build an independent Saar state in 1955, a desire the CVP held to some extent since its own establishment ten year prior.⁸ The SED wanted an independent Saar state because of the SED's adoption of the Two State Doctrine as their official line on German nationhood. The previous chapter of this thesis examined the pre-GDR development of the SED's nationalism, finding its origin in the Bismarckian conception of German nationhood. This chapter seeks to examine its evolution into the Two State Doctrine and its consequences through the lens of the Saar Dispute.

Historians generally argued that the Soviet Union conceived the Two State Doctrine to consolidate the GDR state in response to the dwindling possibility of German reunification.⁹ Manfred Wilke characterised the doctrine as a reaction "to the sovereignty of both German states

⁵ Fischer, *Die Saar zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich*, 63.

⁶ Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, An die Saarbevölkerung! An das ganze deutsche Volk!, October 1, 1947, DY 30/87288, BArch.

⁷ Thesen zur Saarfrage, January 11, 1956, DY 30/80956, BArch.

⁸ Thesen zur Saarfrage, January 11, 1956, DY 30/80956, BArch.

⁹ Ronald Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation: Sole Heir or Socialist Sibling?" *International Affairs* 60, no. 3 (1984): 406; Joanna McKay, *The Official Concept of the Nation in the Former GDR: Theory, Pragmatism and the Search for Legitimacy* (London: Ashgate, 1998), 16; Manfred Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall: Critical Stages in the History of Divided Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 113.

[and] the failure of the Geneva Summit with regard to the German question.”¹⁰ Joanna McKay asserted its goal was to “strengthen and stabilise the GDR, to further integrate it into the Eastern bloc, and to acquire western (particularly West German) recognition of the status quo [Soviet control of Eastern Europe].”¹¹ Rather than pursuing the seemingly impossible goal of socialist reunification, the doctrine asserted only legal equality between the GDR and FRG.¹² Unification remained the long-term goal of the SED, but in lieu of socialist unity, a partly socialist Germany would be preferable to no socialist Germany at all.

The Hallstein Doctrine was the FRG’s response to the Two State Doctrine: Through its diplomatic and economic influence, the FRG pressured the international community (excluding the Soviet Union) to recognise itself as the only legitimate German state.¹³ The resultant diplomatic isolation would undermine the SED’s claim to legitimacy for its GDR. The fight for international recognition between the two Germanies was explored by historians, with an emphasis on their expression in Third World. Justifying his focus on the Third World, William Glen Grey wrote, “[for the SED,] little could be expected from the members of [NATO].”¹⁴ In Sebastian Gehrig’s exploration of the SED’s ties to the anti-apartheid movement, he asserts that “To break the Hallstein Doctrine, [...] the SED leaders needed new allies. They decided that they would find them only among newly decolonised countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.”¹⁵ The historiography presumed that the SED did not attempt to break the Hallstein Doctrine outside of

¹⁰ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 97.

¹¹ McKay, *The Official Concept of the Nation*, 16.

¹² Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 103.

¹³ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 97-98.

¹⁴ William Glenn Gray, *Germany’s Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949-1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 3.

¹⁵ Sebastian Gehrig, “Reaching Out to the Third World: East Germany’s Anti-Apartheid and Socialist Human Rights Campaign,” *German History* 36, no. 4 (2018), 575. (Emphasis added.)

the Third World, because it presumed that the SED believed it would be impossible to do so anywhere else.

The conflict between the SED and FRG's differing doctrine on German nationhood is complicated by integrating the Saar Dispute into the historiography. The history of the SED's attempt to break the Hallstein Doctrine was both longer and wider than currently acknowledged. The SED attempted to foster an independent Saar state in 1955, which would maintain relations with both German states in accordance with the Two State Doctrine.¹⁶ The fight over recognition began not in the Third World, as asserted by Grey and Gehrig, but in the Saar. Moreover, the "Two State Doctrine" was somewhat of a misnomer, for it was actually ready to accommodate three states.

This chapter will begin by sketching out the national and international developments from 1949 to 1956 that drove the SED to adopt the Two State Doctrine, as well as concurrent developments in the Saar Dispute. It will then examine in detail how the Two State Doctrine manifested itself during the Europeanisation referendum and the Saar Landtag election in 1955. Finally, it will analyse the SED's effort in promoting an independent Saar state after the 1955 election, and how this effort challenges our prevailing understanding of the conflict between the Two State and Hallstein Doctrines. In examining the conflict between the two doctrines, Gray illustrated "a surprisingly active West Germany [that was] much more enmeshed in the Near East, South and Southeast Asia, and Africa than is commonly understood."¹⁷ This chapter will build upon his work to demonstrate a surprisingly active East Germany that is much more enmeshed in Western Europe than is commonly understood.

¹⁶ Thesen zur Saarfrage, January 11, 1956, DY 30/80956, BArch.

¹⁷ Gray, *Germany's Cold War*, 4.

The Road to the Two State Doctrine

Through the German Economic Commission (DWK), the SED already functioned as the government of East Germany by 1948. Thus, the SED was in no rush to declare the establishment of the GDR, which would also mark the official start of German division, nor was the Soviet Union eager to allow the SED to do so. Instead, they waited for the West Zones to declare the FRG, placing the onus of division on the West for propaganda reasons.¹⁸ The FRG Bundestag had its first meeting on September 7, 1949; the GDR Volkskammer had its meeting exactly a month later on October 7.¹⁹ With the official establishment of the two Germanies, the SED had to contend not only with the disagreeable albeit unquestionable Western occupational powers, but also a rival German state. Occupation was temporary, but the FRG was less clearly so. The SED's nationalism had to factor in the existence of the FRG, and so did its policy on the Saar.

The SED initially understood the relationship between the GDR and FRG under the Magnet Theory. Under the Bismarckian conception of German nationhood, there should be only one German nation state under which all Germans should live. As such, the GDR and the FRG could not permanently coexist, and they had to compete for legitimacy. This competition was enthusiastically and confidently pursued by the SED in the early days of division, under the assumption that the GDR's future accomplishments would prove the superiority of the socialist model over the FRG's capitalist society. The GDR "would act as a magnet drawing the [FRG] into its orbit, [resulting in] a new, reunited Germany."²⁰

The magnet theory did not work out as well as the SED leadership has hoped. To build socialism, the SED pursued collectivisation and sovietisation of the GDR economy starting in

¹⁸ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 65-66.

¹⁹ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 65.

²⁰ Orlow, "The GDR's Failed Search for a National Identity," 544.

1952.²¹ The result was not a post-scarcity socialist utopia that would attract Germans in the FRG *en masse* leading to reunification. Rather, it brought economic disaster, which eventually crystallised in the 1953 East German Uprising. The Soviet Red Army and the GDR paramilitary were able to suppress the uprising with considerable bloodshed, but one would be hard pressed to imagine a better antithesis to socialist nationalism than using foreign troops to force striking workers to return to work on pain of the death penalty.²² Instead of attracting West Germans, the GDR magnet repelled more than a million East Germans to emigrate to the FRG from 1952 to 1955 through economic deprivation and political oppression.²³

The GDR's magnetism did not extend to the Saar either. The abysmal performance of the KPS in the 1949 Saar Landtag election, where it received a mere 4 percent of the seats, showed that the ideology of the SED had little purchase among the Saarlanders.²⁴ With the establishment of the FRG, the SED and KPS seemingly had to convince the Saarlanders to choose to become an enclave of a distant GDR over their immediate German neighbour. Without convincing the Saarlanders to choose the GDR over the FRG, the SED's German nationalist rhetoric benefitted only the FRG. The SED's instructions to the KPS in 1952 recognised that "solutions such as 'the Saar is German' [...] are inaccurate. In this formulation, they can and does support the actions of [West] German imperialism."²⁵

To address the Saarlanders' attraction to the FRG, the SED attempted to discredit the FRG's pursuit of the Saar Dispute. Initially, the SED accused the FRG of collusion with France.

²¹ Gareth Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany* (London: Routledge, 2006), 17-9.

²² Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany*, 33.

²³ Henrik Bispinck and Damian van Melis, eds., *"Republikflucht": Flucht und Abwanderung aus der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1961* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2006), 137.

²⁴ Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 25.

²⁵ SED Org. Instrukteur Einsätze in der BRD 1952-53, February 28, 1952, DY 30/14828, BArch.

In January 1950, just three months after its establishment, the GDR Ministry for Foreign Affairs declared in a meeting of the Volkskammer that Adenauer and “the big capitalists and reactionary circles who still support him today” negotiated with France, exchanging the Saar for French military protection over Adenauer’s regime.²⁶ These assertions were difficult to sustain, as the FRG became increasingly assertive in pursuit of the Saar against France. In March 1950, France and the Saar Protectorate signed the Franco-Saar Convention to strengthen the latter’s autonomy and widen its distance from Germany. The SED again accused Adenauer of collusion, disregarding the protest issued by the FRG days before the SED’s.²⁷ The omission was deliberate, for an earlier draft of the SED protest accused the FRG of staging a “sham opposition.”²⁸ By July 1951, the SED dropped its accusation of collusion. Instead, it used the FRG’s forceful pursuit of the Saar Dispute as evidence that it harboured a perverse kind of German nationalism, that of imperialism and chauvinism with parallels to Nazi Germany. On instructions from the SED, the KPS organised a press conference in response to developments of the Schuman Plan and addressed the FRG’s opposition to France head on, declaring

Adenauer [...] pretends to the German people that [he] is acting on the interests of the Saar population against the arbitrary acts of the French imperialist. In reality, Adenauer is working to [...] secure [German imperialists’] dominance over French imperialists to [...] regain its lost position after the Second World War and expend its influence on other European countries.²⁹

²⁶ Erklärung des Ministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten vor der Volkskammer am Mittwoch, den 18. Januar 1950, January 18, 1950, A 15527, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts [henceforth PA-AA].

²⁷ Erklärung des Ministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten vor der Volkskammer am Mittwoch, den 18. Januar 1950, January 18, 1950, A 15527, PA-AA.

²⁸ Erklärung des Ministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten vor der Volkskammer am Mittwoch, den 18. Januar 1950, January 18, 1950, A 15527, PA-AA.

²⁹ Erklärung des Ministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten vor der Volkskammer am Mittwoch, den 18. Januar 1950, January 18, 1950, A 15527, PA-AA.

By the KPS's own admission, its rhetoric of FRG imperialism and neo-Nazism did not convince the Saarlanders. It wrote in February 1952 that "the overwhelming majority of Saarlanders wanted [the Saar to return] to Germany, but to [FRG Chancellor] Adenauer's Germany."³⁰

While the socialist society built in the GDR was not without its merits, it certainly was not an overwhelming success that could bring about unification with the FRG and the Saar by sheer magnetism. International developments were not favouring reunification on SED terms either. In May 1955, the FRG signed the Paris Treaties with the Western Allies, thus gaining *de facto* sovereignty and admission into the Western European Union (WEU) and NATO.³¹ The treaties signalled the complete inclusion of the FRG into the Western Alliance as an equal partner, making the prospect of German reunification on terms acceptable to the SED remote, if not impossible.³²

With hopes of reunification dashed, the SED could consolidate its hold on power without regards to its possible implications on reunification. The Soviet Union previously limited the legitimacy that the SED was allowed to claim through the GDR, such that it could leave room for negotiations with the Western Allies for a unified Germany neutral in the Cold War, sacrificing the GDR state.³³ Without the possibility of a neutral Germany, the Soviet Union prompted the SED to adopt the Two State Doctrine. Rather than competing to be the sole legitimate German state, the SED began asserting only legal equality with the FRG.³⁴ Unification remained the long-term goal of the SED, but in lieu of socialist unity, a partly socialist Germany would be preferable to no socialist Germany at all. Although the SED was content with pausing its active pursuit of

³⁰ SED Org. Instrukteur Einsätze in der BRD 1952-53, February 28, 1952, DY 30/14828, BArch.

³¹ Hans Buchheim, *Deutschlandpolitik 1949-1972: Der politisch-diplomatische Prozess* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1984), 51-2.

³² McKay, *The Official Concept of the Nation*, 15.

³³ Joachim Scholtyseck, *Die Außenpolitik der DDR* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2003), 92.

³⁴ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 103.

unification, the FRG was not. In response to the Two-State Doctrine, the FRG introduced the Hallstein Doctrine, where the FRG demanded the international community, with the exception of the Soviet Union, to refrain from diplomatic recognition of the GDR³⁵ Through the Hallstein Doctrine, the FRG leveraged its diplomatic and economic influence to isolate the GDR internationally, thus attacking its legitimacy as a state in its own rights.³⁶

Europeanisation Referendum and the 1956 Landtag Election

The Paris Treaties, which indirectly gave birth to the Two State Doctrine, was also an opportunity for the SED to break the FRG's opposing Hallstein Doctrine. Subjected to the approval of the Saarlanders by referendum, the Saar would be "Europeanised" into a territory of the Western European Union (WEU).³⁷ The European Saar government would have full internal autonomy, while its external relations would be administered by the WEU. The SED opposed Europeanisation not only because of its hostility towards the European integration movement as a whole, which the next chapter would discuss. By defeating the referendum, the political status of the Saar would once again be in flux, which could then be an opportunity for the SED to assert its new conception of German nationhood outside of its own GDR.

The SED was not alone in opposing the Europeanisation referendum. With the exception of Adenauer's CDU, all major FRG parties also opposed Europeanisation. Though the CDU outwardly supported Europeanisation, opinion within was also divided.³⁸ The Paris Treaties guaranteed the free expression of political opinion in the Saar without foreign involvement in the run-up to the referendum.³⁹ This prevented the FRG parties from campaigning in the Saar, but also

³⁵ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 97-8.

³⁶ Gray, *Germany's Cold War*, 21.

³⁷ *Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Regierung der Französischen Republik über das Statut der Saar* (October 23, 1954)

³⁸ Jacques Freymond, *The Saar Conflict, 1945-1955* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1960), 238-240.

³⁹ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 193.

allowed the banned pro-FRG parties to return and new parties to form. The Democratic Party (DPS), banned in 1952 for its FRG connections, was allowed to reform. The Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), a pro-FRG splinter from the pro-autonomy Saar Social Democratic Party (SPS) could finally officially constitute as a political party. The Saar-CDU, nominally independent from the FRG CDU, was also established. These pro-FRG parties formed a coalition known as the *Heimatbund* (Homeland League) to campaign against the referendum.⁴⁰ Thus emerged the somewhat bizarre situation of the Saar-CDU campaigning against the official line of the FRG CDU.

Although the SED's and the Heimatbund's objectives were temporally aligned, the SED instructed the KPS to campaign against the referendum alone.⁴¹ In line with the SED's portrayal of the FRG as a dangerous and chauvinistic threat to international peace, the KPS rejected the Heimatbund as "chauvinist provocateurs."⁴² KPS chairman Fritz Bäsel issued an open letter to the members of the Heimatbund parties, cautioning them from having their "just indignation" against the Saar government be exploited for chauvinism.⁴³ Nevertheless, the campaign slogan of the KPS was not much different from the Heimatbund: The former declared "Every German says NO" (Jeder Deutsche sagt NEIN) while the latter demanded "Your NO for Germany" (Eure NEIN für Deutschland).⁴⁴ They both appealed to German nationalism and decried Europeanisation as separatism.

⁴⁰ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 194.

⁴¹ Protokoll Nr. 29/55 der Sitzung des Politbüros des Zentralkomitees am 21. Juni 1955 bis 14.00 Uhr im Amtssitz des Genossen Pieck, June 21, 1955, DY 30/42396, BArch.

⁴² "Nein zum Saarstatut fördert Entspannung: Kundgebung der KP Saar in Saarbrücken / Warnung vor chauvinistischer Hetze," *Neues Deutschland*, August 30, 1955, 2.

⁴³ "Nein zum Saarstatut fördert Entspannung," 2.

⁴⁴ "Unser Nein steht!" *Deutsche Saar*, October 8, 1955, 1; "Letzer Appell zur Saarabstimmung," *Neue Zeit*, October 22, 1955, 1.

With the combined effort of the Heimatbund and the KPS, Europeanisation was defeated in October 1955 with 67 percent of the voters rejecting the referendum.⁴⁵ In the regions where the KPS held seats to the Landtag, more than 80 percent of the voters voted no.⁴⁶ The SED attached great meaning to the referendum, interpreting its result not only as a rejection of Europeanisation, but of the entire Paris Treaties, i.e., FRG sovereignty, rearmament, and entry into NATO.⁴⁷ In other words, the referendum was a “no” to both the WEU and the FRG. With the failure of Europeanisation, the political status of the Saar was seemingly open to new definition. To define the future of the Saar, the KPS needed to win the Saar Landtag election in December 1955. A month before the election, the SED Central Committee Politburo issued a set of detailed guidelines for the KPS Landtag campaign.⁴⁸

According to the new party line, the KPS’s fundamental position on the future of the Saar was that “the Saar region is and will remain German. It should be a peace-loving and democratic German state, in which only the will of the people is law.”⁴⁹ The “peace-loving and democratic” qualifier excluded the supposedly chauvinistic FRG. The use of “be” rather than “be in” and “German state” (deutsches Land) rather than Germany (Deutschland) was an expression of the Two State Doctrine. The SED was no longer appealing for the Saar to return to the singular Germany, but to become an independent Saar state while still remaining German in nationality. It was possible, accordingly to the SED, for a politically independent German state to exist without being charged for separatism, so long as it respects “the will of the people.” This also implied that

⁴⁵ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 195.

⁴⁶ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 350-5.

⁴⁷ Erklärung des Ministerrates zur Saarabstimmung, October 28, 1955, DC 20/I313, BArch.

⁴⁸ Richtlinien für die Führung des Wahlkampfes im Saargebiet, November 8, 1955, DY 30/42419, BArch.

⁴⁹ Richtlinien für die Führung des Wahlkampfes im Saargebiet, November 8, 1955, DY 30/42419, BArch.

the will of the German people in the Saar could support an independent state, in contrast to the SED's early rhetoric that no German in the Saar could possibly stand for independence.⁵⁰

Translating principles into actions, the KPS was to campaign on a platform against the expansion of NATO and conscription that would come with the Saar's integration into the FRG.⁵¹ It was to also support the participation of the Saar in the All-German Council, a political umbrella proposed by the Soviet Union to bring the GDR and FRG under a loose political confederation. The guideline believed that the failure of the Europeanisation referendum signalled the Saarlanders' German nationalism. It also presupposed that the voter base of the social democratic parties of Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and the Social Democratic Party of the Saar (SPS) was against the expansion of NATO. Thus, they would abandon the pro-Europeanisation and pro-autonomy SPS, while refusing to vote for the pro-FRG and therefore pro-NATO DSP, leaving the KPS as their only choice. In the last Landtag election, the SPS (before the DSP split) and KPS won a combined 42 percent of the popular vote.⁵² Should the KPS manage to poach the social democratic vote, on top of the projected fall in popularity for the pro-Europeanisation and pro-autonomy CVP, it could take control of the Saar. Believing that the referendum results as "the victory of the Communist Party's politics," the KPS had high hopes for the December election.⁵³

The SED and KPS' electoral aspiration did not materialise. While the SPS was deserted by its voters, losing 15 of its 17 seats in the 50-seat Landtag, the votes went to the pro-FRG parties instead.⁵⁴ The DPS and Saar-CDU, barred from the previous elections for their pro-FRG views,

⁵⁰ Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, An die Saarbevölkerung! An das ganze deutsche Volk!, October 1, 1947, DY 30/87288, BArch.

⁵¹ Richtlinien für die Führung des Wahlkampfes im Saargebiet, November 8, 1955, DY 30/42419, BArch.

⁵² *Amtsblatt des Saarlandes vom 8. Dezember 1952.*

⁵³ "das NEIN des Volkes hat gesiegt," *Neue Zeit*, October 24, 1955, 1.

⁵⁴ *Amtsblatt des Saarlandes vom 22. Dezember 1955.*

barely secured a majority at the expense of the pre-existing SPS and CVP. The DSP, also previously barred from elections, took 14 percent. Not only could the KPS not poach the social democratic vote, but it also lost two seats.

Party	National Leaning	1952 Seats	1955 Seats	Changes
CDU	FRG	-	14 (28%)	
DPS	FRG	-	12 (24%)	
CVP	Autonomy/Europe	24 (58%)	13 (26%)	-11 (-22%)
DSP	FRG	-	7 (14%)	
KPS	GDR	4 (8%)	2 (4%)	-2 (-4%)
SPS	Autonomy/Europe	17 (34%)	2 (4%)	-15 (-30%)

The German Democratic Republic of the Saar?

Despite their election failure, the KPS and SED remained hopeful of their independent Saar ambition. In a SED Central Committee document written shortly after the 1955 election titled, *Thesis on the Saar Question*, a new strategy in light of the lackluster results was formed.⁵⁵ Annexation of the Saar into the FRG would require a constitutional amendment, which would need a qualified majority in the Saar Landtag. The SED believed that it could form a coalition with the weakened but not beaten CVP and SPS. With 34% of the seats, they had just enough power to block any constitutional amendment. Without an amendment, the Saar could not join the FRG. However, with a pro-FRG majority, the Saar would nevertheless enact pro-German policies. The net result would be an independent German Saar.

An independent German Saar could both break the FRG's Hallstein Doctrine and bolster the SED's Two State Doctrine. A German Saar State could not fit comfortably under the FRG's conception of German nationhood. A democratic, multiple party Saar's refusal to join the FRG would be a powerful rebuff to the exclusive legitimacy that the FRG had claimed for itself and

⁵⁵ Thesen zur Saarfrage, January 11, 1956, DY 30/80956, BArch.

embody the SED's doctrine of multiple equally valid political organisations of Germany. Moreover, the Hallstein Doctrine, if consistently applied, would have to either isolate the Saar internationally, or make an exception therefor. To isolate the Saar State, where the Saar-CDU held a plurality of Landtag seats through free election, would be absurd. To exclude the Saar from the purview of the doctrine would mean an implicit acceptance of the legitimate existence of multiple German states, thus bolstering the SED's doctrine. Furthermore, if the German Saar state establish relations with the GDR, the FRG must also choose between sanctioning the Saar in accordance with its doctrine or not implementing it. Either way, the Hallstein Doctrine could not remain static with the emergence of a third German state.

The implications of an independent German Saar would not stop at breaking the Hallstein Doctrine; it also had the potential to directly support the SED's Two State Doctrine. The KPS pledged to establish equal relations between the FRG and GDR.⁵⁶ A duly elected German Saar establishing relationship with the GDR would be a legitimating exercise of the Two State Doctrine in action. In other words, if the KPS was able to enact pro-SED policies in the Saar through parliamentary maneuvering, the SED could leverage the democratic legitimacy of the Saar for its own ends.

Although the KPS was the only pro-GDR party in the Saar, establishing GDR-Saar relations was not as fanciful as it seems at first glance. The DSP, which merged with the FRG SPD soon after the election, was somewhat sympathetic to the GDR.⁵⁷ The SPD had advocated for better relations between the GDR and FRG since their establishments, despite the party's distaste

⁵⁶ Richtlinien für die Führung des Wahlkampfes im Saargebiet, November 8, 1955, DY 30/42419, BArch.

⁵⁷ Joachim Heinz and Hans-Joachim Kühn, *150 Jahre Sozialdemokratie an der Saar* (Saarbrücken: Stiftung Demokratie Saarland, 2013), 115.

for the SED.⁵⁸ Just three months before the Landtag election, the SPD party leader Erich Ollenhauer argued in the FRG Bundestag that “as more authority devolved to the [SED] regime, the West German government must overcome its reluctance to undertake practical dealings with East German officials.”⁵⁹ While Ollenhauer stopped short of calling for recognition of the GDR, his opposition to complete and forceful isolation of the GDR nevertheless revealed the party’s sympathy towards the GDR, relative to Adenauer’s CDU. Combined with the SPD’s opposition towards NATO and (democratic) socialist ideology, it was not impossible that it could support the establishment of Saar-GDR relations. The pro-FRG DPS could also be swayed. Though the DPS itself did not express a clear opinion on the SED, it later merged into the FRG Free Democratic Party (FDP), who also held a position on the SED softer than the CDU.⁶⁰ The FDP called for the establishment of relationships between the FRG and GDR first in 1955, then again in 1957.⁶¹ Under the most optimistic calculation, only 28 percent of the Landtag, that being the Saar-CDU, would be inflexibly against Saar-GDR relations.

Despite the KPS’ optimism, it could not build a grand anti-CDU coalition in the Saar Landtag to support its mother party’s Two State Doctrine. The French government interpreted the referendum results both as a “no” to French policies, and a “yes” for the FRG. Instead of continuing to support an independent Saar, it negotiated for its annexation by the FRG in exchange for modest economic concessions.⁶² Without French support or the prospect of Europeanisation, the CVP and SPS had no desire for autonomy and opted for the FRG. The CVP merged into the FRG Centre Party while the SPS made up with the DSP and joined the SPD.⁶³ The SPD’s

⁵⁸ Gray, *Germany’s Cold War*, 24.

⁵⁹ Gray, *Germany’s Cold War*, 40.

⁶⁰ Heinz and Kühn, *150 Jahre Sozialdemokratie an der Saar*, 101.

⁶¹ Gray, *Germany’s Cold War*, 45, 72.

⁶² Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 198.

⁶³ Heinz and Kühn, *150 Jahre Sozialdemokratie an der Saar*, 101.

opposition to NATO could not override its desire for German unity. Thus, it supported the Saar's annexation and deemed the consequent expansion of NATO as an "acceptable compromise."⁶⁴ With France, FRG, and 96 percent of the Saar Landtag in agreement, the FRG annexed the Saar in 1957.

Conclusion

Despite the failure of the SED and KPS to realise their ambitions to break the Hallstein Doctrine and to assert their Two State Doctrine through the Saar Dispute, their ambitions are nevertheless illuminating for our understanding of the history of SED nationalism. Contrary to the narrative constructed by Gray and Gehrig, the SED and FRG's fight for international recognition were not contained in the Third World. Though ultimately unsuccessful, the SED attempted to break the Hallstein Doctrine through machinations in the heart of Western Europe in the Franco-FRG borderlands. While fanciful in retrospect, the SED did believe that it could attain legitimacy for its national doctrine outside of the socialist and recently decolonised world.

The SED's ambition in the Saar Dispute also showed that its Two State Doctrine was in fact ready to accommodate not just two German states. Given the perceived opportunity, the SED actively worked towards the creation of a third German state. Under the Two State Doctrine, division was no longer an indefensible sin, further division of Germany was preferable over the strengthening of the "wrong Germany." This preference could theoretically extend to the Bavarian and Alemannic separatist movements, which would have happened at the expense of the FRG. Whether the SED had actually attempted to clandestinely rebuild the Bavarian Soviet Republic remains the subject for future research.

⁶⁴ Correspondent Report from Ruth Kallmann, December 15, 1956, DC 900/3866, BArch.

This chapter also reminds us of the interconnectedness of international politics, where seemingly bilateral diplomatic disputes could reverberate in, and be exploited by, third-party states. The Saar Dispute was on the surface merely a minor territorial dispute between France and the FRG, while in fact it was deeply connected to the SED and its ambition to break out of its diplomatic isolation enacted by the FRG. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Saar Dispute had even deeper ties to the SED than illustrated here. Not only was the dispute an occasion for the SED to enact its vision of German nationhood, but it was also an opportunity to influence the political organisation of the wider Western Europe through the European integration project.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SAAR AS A EUROPEAN QUESTION

Introduction

FRG émigré Matthias Göbel lived a quiet life as an agricultural worker in Lusatia on the GDR-Polish border, until he suddenly found himself wanted by the FRG police for attempted murder in 1955.¹ He was accused of sending a mail bomb to the Saar Prime Minister, Johannes Hoffmann, which was found and diffused by the Saar police instead. Alarmed by the accusation, Göbel reached out to the GDR government, hoping to understand what have happened. The Ministry of State Security, more commonly known as the Stasi, assured him that no assassination attempt had actually occurred and that the accusation was only an act of provocation by the West. Unsatisfied with the explanation, Göbel continued to raise the matter to other GDR officials in the years following. In 1958, the GDR Dresden District Court issued an arrest warrant against Göbel. The warrant was revoked months later at the request of the Stasi. After experiencing being wanted on both sides of the iron curtain, Göbel presumably learned the value of silence and returned to his quiet agricultural life.²

The truth behind Göbel's predicament emerged in 1997, revealed by former chemical worker and Stasi agent Alfred Weise in a magazine interview.³ When Göbel had emigrated to the GDR in 1954, he had surrendered his FRG identity papers to the Stasi. A year later, the Stasi gave the papers to Weise to enter the Saar to assassinate Hoffmann. The assassination was attempted during the ratification of the Paris Treaties of 1954, with the intention of sabotaging this treaty between France and the FRG by blaming the act on West German nationalists. The treaties rearmend the FRG, established the Western European Union (WEU), and mandated a Europeanisation

¹ Hans-Christian Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," *Dialog* 15, no. 15 (2007): 38.

² Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visar der SED," 41.

³ Jan von Flocken, "Attentat: Bombers Berichte," *Focus Magazin*, May 5, 1997, 36–39.

referendum to resolve the Saar Dispute. The attempt failed, Weise escaped, and the Saar and FRG police misidentified Göbel as the real culprit. Had the attempt succeeded, Europe might look very different today.

This episode of GDR subterfuge and the role of the SED in the development of European integration did not appear in the current historiography. The Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, of which the GDR was a member, were portrayed as an external factor that motivated European integration but were never involved with its internal process. Historian Alan Milward wrote, “although the process of integration was a Western European solution to a Western European problem, [...] Western Europe had much to thank the Soviet Union for, especially its threatening, unremitting hostility throughout the whole period.”⁴ Historian Klaus Schwabe afforded more importance to the Soviet Union, writing that “The [European Defense Community (EDC)] was seen as the panacea that assured a continued double containment of the Soviet Union and of Germany.”⁵ Historian Kiran Klaus Patel went even further by claiming that “during the 1950s and 1960s [European integration] contributed to stoking the conflict between East and West.”⁶ On to the 1970s, GDR’s economic ties with the FRG and EEC were well-studied, so was the political implication of said economic ties. Historian Maximilian Graf argued that the EEC exerted tremendous economic and political impact over the GDR and SED through trade and finance, ultimately bringing about the regime’s downfall.⁷

⁴ Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945 - 51* (London: Routledge, 2003), 502.

⁵ Klaus Schwabe, “The Cold War and European Integration, 1947 - 63,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 4 (2001), 26.

⁶ Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 53.

⁷ Maximilian Graf, “Drifting Westward? East Germany and Integrated Europe,” in *European Socialist Regimes’ Fateful Engagement with the West*, ed. Angela Romano and Federico Romano (London: Routledge, 2020), 107.

Historians generally agreed that the European integration project was at least in part designed and pursued against the Eastern bloc. Graf explained the SED's behaviour in 1970s as an act of desperation, as it needed to provide its citizens a high standard of living (by Eastern bloc standards) to combat the allure of the much richer FRG, which could only be financed by the FRG itself and the EEC.⁸ Milward, Schwebe, and Patel provided no such answer for their period of study. This chapter traces how the SED's attitude toward European integration changed over time by incorporating the Saar Dispute into the existing historiography of GDR-European integration entanglement. The SED had in fact attempted to shape, and even halt, the European project, with an emphasis on political integration. Only after the failure of political integration did the GDR begin to trade with the EEC. The SED rejected political integration but was willing to participate later for economic reasons, a more nuanced picture than previous scholarship has drawn.

The Hoffmann assassination plot shows that at the very least, the SED did perceive European integration as a threat. This chapter looks at the plot and other SED responses that attempted to affect the course of European integration through the Saar Dispute, beyond being a part of an external threat that motivated the project. It also reminds us that inter-German relations, Franco-German relations, European integration, and the Cold War were not siloed but tightly bound together. It argues that the Saar Dispute served as a wedge issue and a pathway for the SED to sow discord among the Western European states, especially between France and the FRG. The history of European integration was not a one-sided response of the Western Europeans against the Eastern bloc. The SED alone, as just one member of the bloc, conducted much more than "superficial and conflictual" speeches in return.⁹ The Saar episode shows how a history of

⁸ Graf, "Drifting Westward?" 125.

⁹ Patel, *Project Europe*, 53.

European integration is also a history that needs to include Eastern Europeans as actors, not just a monolithic bloc against which Western Europeans reacted.

European Integration and the Cold War

The SED's opposition to the European integration project was not pre-determined. European integration as a political ideal that could be traced back to Jeremy Bentham, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, or even William Penn, was not necessarily incompatible with the SED's ideology or its policy priorities.¹⁰ However, the specific pattern of the European integration movement, as occurred post-World War II, was deeply entrenched in the Cold War context on the side of the liberal capitalist West. Before diving into how the SED opposed the European integration project, this chapter will first identify the connection between the project and the Cold War, which motivated said opposition.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, the United States believed that it could not commit enough resources to defend Western Europe in case of an all-out war with the Soviet Union. Institutionalised as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the transatlantic alliance needed more resources, firepower, and bodies to defend against the Soviet Union. With the Americans spread thin across the globe, the Western Europeans had to either increase their defense spending, which they could not afford, or allow the FRG to reconstruct and rearm.¹¹ This would happen at the expense of Germany's recently invaded neighbours, most vocal and influential of which was France. Their war-torn and battered industries would have to face additional competition on the market, and possible military threats from a revanchist Germany.¹² Thus, the

¹⁰ Derek W. Urwin, *The Community of Europe: A History of European Integration since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2014), 15.

¹¹ Urwin, *The Community of Europe*, 60.

¹² Schwabe, "The Cold War and European Integration," 21.

reconstruction and rearmament of the FRG needed to be made palatable to France. The solution was European integration of the economy, military, and politics. That is not to say the Cold War was the sole motivation and purpose of the project. Desire for economic efficiency, adaptation to the post-war international political and financial systems, decolonisation and the consequent loss of overseas colonies, and the pursuit of peace and prevention of another world war, have all been argued as the motivations and goals of the project.¹³

The first major step towards economic integration was the Schuman Plan, proposed in 1950 by the French foreign minister.¹⁴ The proposal called for the establishment of the European Steel and Coal Community (ECSC), which would pool the coal and iron resources of France and FRG, and to establish a Common Market for coal and steel for member states to trade without barriers. The aim of this proposal was not limited to economics. Since coal and steel were vital resources for industry, which in turn was vital for industrialised warfare, the ECSC would theoretically render war between France and Germany materially impossible. Thus, the ECSC would, in one fell swoop, lessen the economic harm and military threat that a reconstructed Germany would pose for France.

The second and much more controversial step of European integration was military integration. Until 1955, the FRG had no military forces and no sovereignty to establish one. To defend Western Europe from a Soviet attack, which seemed probable in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the Korean War, NATO needed contribution from the FRG. Rearmament was much less palatable than reconstruction for France. Military integration was the solution, such that

¹³ For a fuller discussion on the subject, see Martin Dedman, *The Origins & Development of the European Union 1945-2008: A History of European Integration* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁴ Victor Gavin, "Power through Europe? The Case of the European Defence Community in France (1950–1954)," *French History* 23, no. 1 (2009), 74.

the FRG would not have total control of its rebuilt military to threaten its Western allies. The ECSC member states proposed to establish the European Defense Community (EDC) with a joint European Army, composed of national divisions from its member states wearing the same uniform falling under the same operational command. In the words of Charles de Gaulle, an ardent opponent of the EDC, “Germany may be thought of as having no army while it rebuilds its military strength.”¹⁵

Both the ECSC and the EDC were designed in part to contain the FRG and prevent it from dominating France, which makes the FRG’s eagerness to participate puzzling at first glance. Despite their inequitable conditions, the FRG could nevertheless extract key benefits from the ECSC and EDC. The most obvious benefit was the allowance to reconstruct its industry and rearm, rather than to have its industry dismantled. Moreover, the FRG’s participation in the EDC would end the military occupation by the Western allies and give sovereign power back to the FRG.¹⁶ Although the FRG has been founded in 1949, it was not sovereign and was under the ultimate control of the Allied High Commission.¹⁷ Through the commission, the US, UK, and France could and did interfere in the FRG’s policies. Ending the occupation would give the FRG government “full authority of a sovereign state over its internal and external affairs,” with caveats on the status of Berlin and future reunification.¹⁸

In a broader geopolitical sense, the project would further incorporate the FRG into the Western alliance, a development that would secure the regime’s safety. Much like its Eastern

¹⁵ Cited in Gavin, “Power through Europe?” 81.

¹⁶ The FRG was given power akin to sovereignty while it remained officially non-sovereign, since the Potsdam Agreement dictated that German sovereignty could only be attained by the agreement of the four powers. Official sovereignty was given to the FRG only after the fall of the Berlin Wall with the Two Plus Four Treaty in 1990. For more details on the distinction between sovereign-like power and sovereignty, see Ruth Lambertz-Pollan, *Auf dem Weg zu Souveränität und Westintegration (1948-1955)* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2016).

¹⁷ Lambertz-Pollan, *Auf dem Weg*, 172-3.

¹⁸ *Convention on Relations between the Three Powers and the FRG* (October 23, 1954).

counterpart, the continued existence of the FRG in its early years was not guaranteed. The Soviet Union could theoretically break through the Fulda Gap and invade. This may seem fanciful in retrospect, but it was a real concern in the context of the Korean War. Subterfuge and coup d'états could take place to undermine the FRG political system, so could negotiation between the Eastern and Western bloc. The Soviet Union made multiple proposals to merge the GDR and FRG into a neutral and unified Germany.¹⁹ What “neutrality” would mean for the liberal democratic values of the FRG was unstated, but it was unlikely that the FRG’s parliamentary system could survive a merger with the GDR’s people’s democracy unscathed. As such, the FRG, under the leadership of Adenauer, pursued a policy of Western integration as the only perceived available means to protect its liberal democratic values from the Soviet Union.²⁰ By making itself indispensable to the Western alliance, the FRG could count on the protection of NATO. While the conditions of the ECSC and EDC were inequitable, the FRG would be in a better position to renegotiate once it became economically reconstructed, militarily rearmed, and diplomatically integrated to the West. Besides, the FRG could hardly be expected to be treated well less than a decade after its unconditional surrender from a world war.

The very same reasons that made the European integration project attractive for France and the FRG made it repugnant for the SED. Inverting the logic of Schumann that the ECSC would make war between member states impossible, the pooling of coal and steel would make jointly starting wars by the member states very possible. Economic and military integration enhanced the Western alliance’s capacity to defend, but also attack, or so the SED feared. Since the ideology and political system of the FRG and GDR were diametrically opposed, political developments that

¹⁹ Joanna McKay, *The Official Concept of the Nation in the Former GDR: Theory, Pragmatism and the Search for Legitimacy* (London: Ashgate, 1998), 16.

²⁰ Manfred Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall: Critical Stages in the History of Divided Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 83-4.

could ensure the survival of the former would of course not be viewed favourably by the latter. The GDR Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MfAA) understood economic integration as the pooling of materials for war, military integration as a military pact to invade, and any measures that benefitted the FRG would be to the detriment to the GDR.²¹ The SED's hostility towards the project was shared by its Soviet benefactor, who had a strong influence on its foreign policy to say the least.²² Following the Soviet Union's lead, the entire Eastern bloc was hostile towards the project. The SED, with its uniquely intimate connection to the project through the Saar, was well placed to turn its hostility into actions. These actions gradually escalated from propaganda to subterfuge, eventually cumulating into assassination.

Sabotaging Integration through the Saar

Rather than fighting the European integration project from without, the SED embarked on a programme of propaganda to halt it from within by influencing French politics. As explored in the previous section, from a position of weakness, the FRG had every reason to pursue European integration. As such, France used Europe as leverage to extract concessions from the FRG on the Saar Dispute while it remained weak.²³ Once France coupled the Saar Dispute with European integration, the SED could exploit the dispute as a wedge issue between France and the FRG, stirring up tension to paralyze the European integration process.

During the Saar conflict, France maintained that the Saar was an autonomous political entity with a special relationship with France, while the FRG held the position that the Saar was not autonomous and was simply occupied by France. France used the ECSC to force the FRG to

²¹ Erklärung des Ministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten vor der Volkskammer am Mittwoch, den 18, Januar 1950, January 18, 1950, A/15527, PA-AA.

²² Robert David English and Ekaterina (Kate) Svyatets, "Soviet Elites and European Integration: From Stalin to Gorbachev," *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 21, no. 2 (2014), 221-2.

²³ Jacques Freymond, *The Saar Conflict, 1945-1955* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1960), 131.

recognise the autonomy of the Saar. Negotiation for the establishment of the ECSC began with France insisting that the Saar government would be a signatory of the treaty in its own rights.²⁴ The signature of the FRG and the Saar government on the same treaty would mean an implicit recognition of the Saar government. Though the French position eventually softened, the FRG did accede to membership for the Saar. The FRG had to participate in an international organisation that recognised a distinct legal personality for the Saar.²⁵

But Europe was not just France and Germany. Negotiations for the ECSC was already lengthened by the Saar Dispute to the dismay of the other member states. Diplomatic wrangling between France and the FRG threatened the establishment of the EDC.²⁶ The other ECSC member states, anxious to secure themselves from the “Soviet menace,” pressured France and the FRG to quickly resolve the dispute and remove it as an impediment to further integration. The US, impatient for the FRG to rearm in light of the intensification of the Korean War, threatened to rearm the FRG through NATO regardless of French concerns over German revanchism.²⁷

If the US had unilaterally rearmed the FRG, France would have lost its remaining leverage on the Saar. Consequently, France softened its position and began renegotiation with the FRG with mediation from the Council of Europe to resolve the Saar Dispute and form the EDC.²⁸ Despite the conciliatory tones of the French and FRG governments, they both had to reckon with the nationalists within and without their governments. Once France coupled the Saar Dispute with European Integration, it became impossible to separate the two issues. The Gaullist Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF), the growing and largest party in opposition, demanded

²⁴ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 76-7.

²⁵ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 91-2.

²⁶ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 117.

²⁷ Urwin, *The Community of Europe*, 66.

²⁸ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 153-4.

the French government to extract as much concessions as possible from the FRG, before France loses its leverage with the establishment of the EDC.²⁹ In the FRG, the right-wing faction of Adenauer's own CDU, and the oppositional SPD also saw no reason to concede.³⁰ Facing domestic pressure, the French government could not ask the National Assembly to ratify the already-signed EDC Treaty until the Saar Dispute has been settled.³¹ During the negotiation, France and the FRG agreed in principle to Europeanise the Saar, resolving this impediment to European Integration with European Integration. Still, the two countries could not agree on what "Europeanise" meant.

The SED engaged in a propaganda campaign to fan the flames between the French and FRG government, and their domestic Eurosceptic opponents. It did so by reinforcing French beliefs of the threat of a rearmed FRG, and that the EDC would be contrary to French national interests, across the political spectrum. On the left, the French Communist Party (PCF) was a natural ally for the SED. It published articles written by GDR President Wilhelm Peck, warning that European integration would lead to remilitarisation of the FRG and an unjust settlement of the Saar Dispute, which would give the FRG the means and the motivation to threaten France.³² The SED also directed the Saar Communist Party (KPS) to cooperate with the PCF to agitate against European integration.³³ The SED, KPS, and PCF were all in agreement that European integration, which would rearm the FRG, needed to be stopped.³⁴ Otto Nuschke of the East German CDU was also sent to France to make contact with the Mouvement de libération du Populaire, a relatively

²⁹ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 131.

³⁰ Herbert Elzer, *Konrad Adenauer, Jakob Kaiser und die "kleine Wiedervereinigung": Die Bundesministerien im Außenpolitischen Ringen um die Saar 1949 bis 1955* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2008), 295.

³¹ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 131.

³² Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 33.

³³ SED Org. Instrukteur Einsätze in der BRD 1952-53, February 28, 1952, DY 30/14828, BArch.

³⁴ Au Comité Central du Parti Communiste du Territoire de la Saar, December 21, 1954, NY 4190/17, BArch.

small French socialist party.³⁵ The SED expended considerable effort to build an alliance with the broad French left, demonstrating the importance of European integration to the party.

The SED did not appeal exclusively to its leftist fellow-travellers in France. It also attempted to reinforce the French right and the Gaullists' belief that European integration would threaten French safety by invoking painful memories of World War II. The GDR Council of Minister drew parallels between the FRG's policy on the Saar and that of Nazi Germany, publishing in *L'Humanité* saying, "Hitler understood well how to toy with German national feelings in the Saar."³⁶ This parallel both implicates the FRG as a threat to France and warns France from aggressively pursuing its policy in the Saar, lest it wants to encourage the growth of neo-Nazism.

The Röchling dispute in the Saar was another potent propaganda fodder for the SED. The Röchlings were a wealthy industrialist family in the Saar. Hermann Röchling was a member of the Nazi Party and administered industry in the German-occupied Lorraine during the war.³⁷ He was tried, convicted, and imprisoned for multiple crimes against humanity, along with a number of his relatives.³⁸ The Röchling family's property in the Saar was first sequestered, later confiscated by the French state, most notably the Völklingen Ironworks. Confiscation by the French state, rather than by the Saar government, became a rallying point for anti-French forces in the Saar and the FRG as evidence for French tyranny and oppression of the Saar people, and the lack of genuine autonomy of the Saar government.³⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, the newspaper of the SED central

³⁵ Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 33.

³⁶ Die Saar muß wieder deutsch werden! Feierlicher Protest der Deutschen Demokratischen Regierung gegen die Saar-Annexion, March 13, 1950, DY 30/42046, BArch.

³⁷ Margaret Manale, "Hermann Röchling : un baron de fer allemand en Lorraine (1914-1944)," *Les Temps Modernes* n° 679, no. 3 (2014), 217.

³⁸ Manale, "Hermann Röchling," 244.

³⁹ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict*, 184.

committee, highlighted the Röchling family's Nazi connection and therefore interpreted the FRG-based opposition as Neo-Nazis, eager rearm with Saar coal and steel to reinvade France.⁴⁰

Escalating Propaganda to Direct Actions

Perhaps recognising that rightists and Gaullists were not likely to read, let alone be convinced by L'Humanité and other Communist publications, the SED also conducted subterfuge to more directly "demonstrate" the FRG threat. In 1952, the SED instructor to the KPS, Ulrich Kloock, made contact with the Socialist Reich Party (SRP), a self-proclaimed Neo-Nazi party in the FRG. Through an intermediary, the SRP promised to "take any action against the Saar government" if the SED provide it with financial support.⁴¹ However, it is not known if the SED took up this offer. Still, encouraging neo-Nazi agitation in the Saar would fit the SED's narrative of the FRG being a state of Fascists and neo-Nazis eager to reinvade France. In the same year, the pro-FRG Democratic Party of the Saar (DPS) was banned by the Saar government after a telegram between the SRP and DPS emerged as evidence for their illegal collusion, which triggered outrage in both France and the FRG.⁴² The former was outraged by this seeming resurgence of Nazism, the latter decried the ban as an infringement of the Saar Germans' democratic rights. Public outrage was followed by government posturing, followed by yet another delay in the negotiation for European integration.⁴³ The telegram was alleged to be forged by some. There is no consensus among historians if it was indeed forged, and if so, who forged it.⁴⁴ At any rate, the SRP-DPS debacle certainly benefited the SED.

⁴⁰ "Eine Stütze des Adenauer-Regimes: Röchling — Der Prototyp eines imperialistischen Räubers," *Neues Deutschland*, July 28, 1955, 2.

⁴¹ Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 36.

⁴² Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 36-7.

⁴³ Freymond, *The Saar Conflict, 1945-1955*, 97-100.

⁴⁴ Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 37.

In August 1954, the attempt to establish the EDC died at the hands of the French National Assembly. Without the EDC, France could no longer control how the FRG would rearm.⁴⁵ Moreover, France had little leverage left on the Saar Dispute. In the months after French rejection of the EDC, both FRG rearmament and the Saar Dispute were seemingly resolved by the Paris Treaties, signed in October 1954.⁴⁶ The FRG was allowed to rearm except for nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, long range missiles, and large warships. It joined the Western European Union (WEU) and NATO. The WEU was a military alliance of the European member states of NATO and operated in close conjunction with NATO, within which the FRG could maintain control of its own military. The same set of agreements ended the occupation and gave sovereign powers to the FRG.⁴⁷ Although American, British, and French forces remained on FRG soil, they were now stationed with the revokable consent of the FRG. As for the Saar Dispute, France and the FRG agreed to Europeanise the Saar, subject to approval by the Saarlanders by referendum.⁴⁸ The European Saar would have full internal autonomy, with its external relations represented by the WEU. The Saar would remain neither French nor German, until a final peace treaty could be signed. In the meantime, the Saar would act as a capital of sorts for the WEU, hosting its institutions.

The failure of the EDC was both a win and a loss for the SED. On one hand, it ended the possibility of a unified European army against the Eastern bloc; on the other hand, it elevated the FRG's diplomatic position within the West. The Paris Treaties of 1954 threatened to both resolve the Saar Dispute, the SED's primary mean to sow discord, and rearm the FRG under NATO.

⁴⁵ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 245-6.

⁴⁶ *Text of the Brussels Treaty as amended by the Protocol modifying and completing that Treaty* (October 23, 1954).

⁴⁷ *Convention on relations between the Three Powers and the FRG* (October 23, 1954).

⁴⁸ *Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Regierung der Französischen Republik über das Statut der Saar* (October 23, 1954).

Moreover, Europeanisation of the Saar could keep the European federalists' dream of political integration alive. Unlike the EDC, the WEU did not profess an ambition for political integration. Nevertheless, the administration of the Saar would still give the WEU both a territorial and non-military mandate, which could still be a baby step towards political integration. Otherwise, the WEU would simply be the European branch of NATO. With so much hinging on the negotiation, signing, and ratification of the Paris Treaties of 1954, the GDR Stasi took drastic measures to sabotage them – it attempted to assassinate Johannes Hoffmann, the Saar Prime Minister, at the final stage of ratification.

The assassination attempt was carried out by Alfred Weise, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.⁴⁹ Weise travelled from Munich to the Saar in February 1955. He first built a mailbomb in a hotel room in Neunkirchen, then posted it to Hoffmann's home from a mailbox in the Saarbrücken train station. Attached to the bomb was the slogan "The Saar is German," the pro-FRG Heimatbund, presumably to implicate German nationalists as the perpetrator. Weise wrote "personal" on the package and believed that it would ensure only Hoffmann would open it. However, it was Hoffmann's son who received the package. Suspicious of this mysterious personal package from an unknown sender, he called the police who discovered and diffused the bomb.

Despite the plot's failure, its mere attempt still could have stirred up tension in the way of treaties ratification. However, the Saar and FRG police quickly identified the GDR as the real culprit, and there was a concerted effort to conceal the attempt from the public by the Saar government.⁵⁰ The mailbomb was wrapped with a Munich newspaper, which was preserved by the Saar police while defusing the bomb. The Saar police matched the handwriting on the mailbomb

⁴⁹ Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 37.

⁵⁰ Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 40.

with the few people recently registered for a hotel room in the Saar arriving from Munich, thus identifying “Göbel.” Passing the name to the FRG police, it was discovered that Göbel had emigrated to the GDR, thus identifying the GDR as the real culprit. Hoffman learnt of the assassination attempt but initially kept it from the public. By the time the public learnt about the attempt, they were also told of the GDR’s involvement and the FRG police’s invaluable cooperation in solving the case.⁵¹ The attempt could not inflame the French public against the FRG, the plot was a complete failure, and the Paris Treaties were ratified by the FRG Bundestag and French National Assembly.

With the ratification of the Paris Treaties, resolution of the Saar Dispute was in sight. The Europeanisation referendum was the last chance for the SED to keep the dispute alive, such that it could continue to meddle in Western Europe. Its rejection could also be the final nail in the coffin for political integration. Under the direction of the SED, the KPS engaged in a campaign to defeat the referendum in the Saar. As illustrated in the previous chapters, the referendum was defeated, though the importance of the KPS’ campaign was unlikely to be significant. The pro-FRG parties also campaigned against the referendum and received much more popular support from the Saarlanders in the following Landtag election. Still, the dispute was not kept alive. Resistance to FRG annexation of the Saar crumbled both in the Saar and in France after the referendum. Seemingly, so did the SED. The SED only made a half-hearted attempt at appealing to both France and the FRG to afford the Saar a special status that would exclude it from NATO, at an improvised request of an individual member of the Presidium of the Volkskammer.⁵² The MfAA did send a

⁵¹ Herrmann, “Die Saar im Visier der SED,” 40.

⁵² Niederschrift über die 42. Sitzung des Präsidiums der Volkskammer am 13. Dezember 1956, December 13, 1956, DA 1/3188. BArch.

few letters to the French and FRG government accordingly, but no response from them was filed at the MfAA archive.⁵³ The Saar received no special status.

Conclusion

The European integration project was widely and rightfully regarded in part as a reaction to the Cold War. It was Western European states' response to the looming threat of the Eastern bloc. This chapter reveals that the West's response did not go unheard in the East. The SED answered with a programme of propaganda, subterfuge, and political maneuvers to halt the project by leveraging the Saar Dispute, made possible by France's coupling of the dispute with European integration. This programme is forgotten today because it made little discernable impact on the development of European integration, despite the SED's ambition to do so. The ECSC was established despite the tension from the Saar. Military and political integration failed, but the SED's contribution thereto was not significant. The EDC was defeated in France by the Gaullists and the PCF. It seemed unlikely that the former would not deem a resurgent FRG a threat, nor would the Stalinist PCF be favourably disposed to NATO, if not for the SED's dire warnings. The KPS' contribution to the defeat of the Europeanisation referendum was similarly minimal, as demonstrated by its abysmal electoral results both before and after the referendum. Through the Saar Dispute, the SED tried in various ways to influence European integration. Despite its ambition and effort, it achieved little. Nevertheless, the mere fact that the SED had such ambition reveals that the Eastern bloc attempted to shape European integration, rather than just being a distant looming threat that motivated the project, contrary to the prevailing historiography. As such, more

⁵³ An den Bundeskanzler Herrn Dr. Konrad Adenauer, May 5 1956, A/2983, PA-AA; An den Minister für auswärtige Angelegenheiten der Republik Frankreich Herrn Christian Pineau, April 18, 1956, A/2983, PA-AA.

scholarly investigations must be done to incorporate the Eastern bloc onto the early history of European integration.

Rather ironically, the SED went from an opponent to a beneficiary of European economic integration in the years following. In keeping with the Hallstein Doctrine, the FRG successfully petitioned the EEC, the successor to the ECSC, to not recognise the GDR as “foreign.”⁵⁴ As such, the GDR enjoyed preferential access to EEC market and credit through the FRG. In 1955, the SED was still loudly declaring that the European integration project would bring nuclear armageddon. By 1957, the GDR began quietly exporting into the EEC at a rate more favourable than its communist brethren to the displeasure of the allies of the FRG and the SED. France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands accused the FRG of smuggling the GDR into the EEC as a “secret 13th member” to their detriment.⁵⁵ The Soviet made the Eastern Bloc’s Comecon refuse to establish trade relations with the EEC, much to the dismay of the other member states which needed the income. The SED had no issue supporting the Soviet decision thanks to its own privileged access through the FRG.⁵⁶ The GDR’s economic privileges thus became a source of friction between it and its communist allies. By the 1980s, the GDR traded more with the EEC than with Comecon.⁵⁷

Weise was never held accountable for his assassination attempt.⁵⁸ However, he was later imprisoned from 1962 to 1965 in the FRG for other sabotage activities, after which he was deported back to the GDR. When interviewed in 1997 at the age of 85, he maintained that he felt neither regret nor guilt over the attempt, for he had acted “in the interest of peace.”⁵⁹ The other

⁵⁴ Krämer, “‘German Internal Trade’ under EEC-Rules,” 434–5.

⁵⁵ Maximilian Graf, “Die DDR und die EWG 1957-1990,” *Revue d’Allemagne et des Pays de Langue Allemande* 51, no. 1 (2019), 22.

⁵⁶ Graf, “Die DDR und die EWG 1957-1990,” 25.

⁵⁷ André Steiner, “The Globalisation Process and the Eastern Bloc Countries in the 1970s and 1980s,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’histoire* 21, no. 2 (2014), 170.

⁵⁸ von Flocken, “Attentat: Bombers Berichte,” 36–39.

⁵⁹ von Flocken, “Attentat: Bombers Berichte,” 36–39.

supposed actor for peace, the KPS, was banned in 1957 following the Saar's annexation in the FRG as an extension of the German Communist Party (KPD).⁶⁰ The KPD was already banned in 1956 in the FRG as an extremist party, the second party banned after the SRP, which the SED possibly funded to cause unrest in the Saar back in 1952.⁶¹ Even without its foothold in the Saar, the SED would continue its propaganda campaign to discredit the FRG among its Western allies as a state of Nazis and Neo-Nazis in the years following. Perhaps the most successful aspect of this campaign was the publication of the *Braunbuch* in 1965, which allegedly outed 1,800 FRG officials, judges, generals, and other men of authority and influence as former Nazis.⁶²

The Communists returned to the Saar in 1999 as the Party of Democratic Socialism, the successor party of the SED post-reunification, winning 0.8 percent of the votes and no seat.⁶³ Ten years later and after a merger with the left-wing splinter of the SPD, it would sweep 21.3 percent of the votes, becoming the second-largest opposition party in the Saar Landtag.⁶⁴ It is more concerned with raising the minimum wage, providing affordable housing, and adopting clean energy, than defining German nationhood.⁶⁵ No longer unrelentingly hostile towards European integration, it now pledges to drive the European Union towards enacting social policies for the people.

⁶⁰ BVerfG, March 21, 1957, BVerfGE 6, 300.

⁶¹ Herrmann, "Die Saar im Visier der SED," 36.

⁶² Albert Norden, *Braunbuch — Kriegs- und Naziverbrecher in der Bundesrepublik: Staat - Wirtschaft - Verwaltung - Armee - Justiz - Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Verlag Zeit im Bild, 1965).

⁶³ Landtag des Saarlandes, *Ergebnisse der Landtagswahlen seit 1947*, <https://www.landtag-saar.de/landtag/wahlen/>

⁶⁴ Jürgen R. Winkler, "Die saarländische Landtagswahl vom 30. August 2009: Auf dem Weg nach Jamaika," *Zeitschrift Für Parlamentsfragen* 41, no. 2 (2010), 347.

⁶⁵ "Themenseite Europa" (Die Linke), <https://www.die-linke.de/themen/europa/>.

CONCLUSION

Ruth Kallmann, a correspondent of the GDR news agency, travelled to the Saar to report on its annexation on January 1, 1957. Arriving in November 1956, well ahead of the event, Kallmann found the Saarlanders eager, excited, and surprisingly friendly and welcoming of a GDR correspondent.¹ While there was some grumbling about possible cuts to social services, the Saarlanders by and large welcomed their reunification into the FRG. The Saar political parties, including the formerly pro-French CVP, had no issue casting their lot with their ideologically proximate counterparts in the FRG. Kallmann reported that the centrist faction of the CVP would soon merge with Adenauer's CDU, and the DSP and the FRG's SPD have already begun planning a joint mayoral campaign for Saarbrücken, the soon-to-be state capital.² As annexation approached, Kallmann reported increased hostility against her, much like she would have experienced in the FRG. She was barred from attending and reporting on an SPD meeting as an "Eastern Zone press official."³ Two weeks before the Saar's official annexation in the FRG, the hearts and minds of the people and political parties seemed to have already reunified. Kallmann stayed in the Saar after it became Saarland, the tenth state of the FRG. Two months after the annexation, she described the transition in her report as "not much has changed."⁴

Much like Kallman, Ilsa Ehrlich, the single mother of Magdeburg introduced in chapter one, also found few changes. Soon after annexation, the new Saarland state government wrote to the GDR Ministry for People's Education, promising that regulations will soon be put in place to enable alimony and child support payment.⁵ This promise seems to have not materialised, as the

¹ Tätigkeitsbericht, November 22, 1956, DC 900/3866, BArch.

² Correspondent Report from Ruth Kallmann, December 15, 1956, DC 900/3866, BArch.

³ Correspondent Report from Ruth Kallmann, December 15, 1956, DC 900/3866, BArch.

⁴ Correspondent Report from Ruth Kallmann, February 13, 1957, DC 900/3866, BArch.

⁵ Unterhaltsverrechnung für Minderjährige zwischen dem Saarland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, February 6, 1957, DN 1/1003, BArch.

GDR Ministry of Finance continued to receive complaint letters from Ehrlich about the lack of payment in the months following.⁶ The would-be victim of Weise, Johannes Hoffmann, retired from politics after the referendum. He wrote a memoir of his prime ministerial career titled *The Goal was Europe*.⁷ He died in 1967 in Völklingen, the town housing the contested Völklingen Ironworks.⁸ This once important industrial complex ceased production in 1986 and was handed over to the Saar government as a monument to the state's industrial heritage.⁹ The year after, Erich Honecker visited the FRG, the first GDR leader to do so.¹⁰ He briefly visited his hometown, his sister, and the graves of his parents in the Saar.¹¹ Holding fast to the Two State Doctrine, he made a speech appealing for better FRG-GDR relations but only to the point where "the border between the Germanies could someday be like East Germany's border with Poland."¹² Receiving him was Oskar Lafontaine, SPD Minister-President of Saarland, who would later lead the SED's successor party into political relevance once again in the Saar Landtag in 2009.¹³ Today, the Saar is no longer an important industrial hub, but a UNESCO-certified relic of the past.

This thesis illustrated the ambitious programme of the SED on the Saar Dispute, and how none of these ambitions materialised. The SED attempted to promote its vision of German nationalism through the Saar to no avail. It could not sustain an exclusive claim on German nationhood in face of the ever-stronger FRG. Instead, the SED retreated to only claiming its own

⁶ Unterhaltsverrechnung für Minderjährige zwischen dem Saarland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, February 21, 1957, DN 1/1003, BArch.

⁷ Johannes Hoffmann, *Das Ziel war Europa: der Weg der Saar 1945-1955*, (St. Ingbert: Conte Verlag, 1963).

⁸ Wolfgang Tischner, "Johannes (Eigentlich Johann Viktor) Hoffmann" *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, 2008, <https://www.kas.de/en/web/geschichte-der-cdu/biogram-detail/-/content/johannes-eigentlich-johann-viktor-hoffmann>.

⁹ UNESCO, *Advisory Body Evaluation (ICOMOS)*, <https://whc.unesco.org/document/154029>.

¹⁰ Serge Schmemmann, "Honecker Flies Home, Leaving a Puzzle Behind." *The New York Times*. September 12, 1987, 5.

¹¹ "Erich Honecker in Neunkirchen Wiebelskirchen," *Neues Deutschland*, September 11, 1987, 5.

¹² Schmemmann, "Honecker Flies Home," 5.

¹³ "Staatsoberhaupt der DDR in Rheinland-Pfalz und im Saarland herzlich Begrüßt," *Neues Deutschland*, September 11, 1987, 1; Winkler, "Die saarländische Landtagswahl vom 30. August 2009," 340.

corner of Germany against the totalising Hallstein Doctrine, a claim that the SED attempted but failed to bolster through supporting an independent German Saar. The SED also tried, but again, failed to sabotage the European integration project that could integrate the FRG into the Western Alliance, which killed whatever hope the SED had for reunification in acceptable terms.

Incorporating the Saar Dispute into the historiography of SED nationalism, we can see that the history of the SED's nationalism began not in 1956 with the inauguration of the Two State Doctrine, nor in 1949 with the establishment of the GDR. The currently historiography portrays the GDR's nationalism as a sudden break with tradition, implanted by Moscow, used only to legitimise the existence of the GDR state. The GDR is supposedly a regime masquerading as a nation state, "taking advantage of an ideology they claimed to despise", lest it be swallowed up by the FRG, the "real" German nation state.¹⁴ While the SED's rhetoric of nationalism no doubt played a role in supporting the SED's grasp on power, the Saar Dispute reveals that the SED's nationalism did not emerge as suddenly as currently portrayed. The SED began defining, redefining, and asserting its understanding of German nationhood through the Saar Dispute as early as 1947, and developed with time into the well-publicised and well-derided socialist nationalism. The Saar Dispute shows that the SED's nationalism had its gestation and birth in the late 40s to early 50s. A full account of the history of the SED must incorporate the origin of its nationalism and understand that it actually had an origin at all.

The now-known effort of the SED and GDR to bolster its conception of German nationhood through the Saar Dispute was ultimately a failure, and so was its wider effort to build a credible national identity independent of the FRG. After these failures, the GDR took drastic

¹⁴ Joanna McKay, *The Official Concept of the Nation in the Former GDR: Theory, Pragmatism and the Search for Legitimacy* (London: Ashgate, 1998), 14.

measures to protect its half of the German nation state from the FRG by closing off the inter-German border. The Berlin Wall, erected in 1961, became a salient symbol of the Cold War. The guarded, militarised, and mined border would claim at least 327 lives before the fall of the GDR.¹⁵ The SED's nationalism did not find enough purchase amongst its citizens, as they eagerly dismantled the Berlin Wall and "their nation" in 1989.

These failures do not mean that this history is unimportant. In fact, it shows us how nationalism could be expressed and legitimised internationally in surprising ways, even without the hallmark institutions of international diplomacy. The SED developed a doctrine of nationalism and asserted it against conflicting French designs in the Saar not with an ambassador to the Quai d'Orsay, but by withholding payment to the post office; it demanded recognition for its statehood from the FRG not by building an embassy in Bonn, but by building a state in Saarbrücken; it attempted to prevent the FRG's entry into NATO not by negotiation with the FRG Chancellor, but by bombing the Saar Prime Minister. While the SED ultimately failed to legitimise its flavour of nationalism, we now know through examining the Saar Dispute that it was not for a lack of effort, which was entangled with the neighbouring European integration project. It would be a mistake to assume that just because the SED was diplomatically isolated, its nationalism had no connection abroad. In examining the relationship between national and international development, we must not take for granted that lack of official action means actual inaction.

This history also harks back to our understanding of nationalism and borderlands. A wealth of borderland studies has explored the relationship between the borderlands and their national centres: National centres often implement forceful, violent, or even genocidal policies to turn

¹⁵ Freie Universität Berlin, *Biografisches Handbuch: Todesopfer der Grenzregime am eisernen Vorhang*, October 2, 2020, <https://todesopfer.eiserner-vorhang.de/suche/>.

borderlanders into homogenous national citizens, while the borderlanders responded with compliance, apathy, or resistance. The history of the SED in the Saar reminds us of an additional layer of interaction in borderlands, beyond the bilateral national centre-borderlands interplay. Not only were the Saarlanders caught between France and the FRG, but they were also subjected to the machinations of the SED. Politically malleable and uncertain, borderlands are fertile grounds for subversions against their national centres. Borderlands are not just a space for national centres to express their nationalism but are also a space for other interested parties to challenge said nationalism.¹⁶

Such insights can help to illuminate other historical disputes over borderlands. The conflict between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC), whose government occasionally contemplated Taiwanese nationhood, is closely analogous to this thesis' subjects. The PRC pursued the "One China Policy," which demanded international isolation of the ROC, much like the Hallstein Doctrine have done.¹⁷ In response, the ROC sought diplomatic recognition, mostly from micronations such as Palau, established alternative forms of international ties short of official diplomatic relations, and eagerly participated in international institutions.¹⁸ Unlike the Hallstein Doctrine, the One China Policy did not end. While the two Germanies were able to both attain full membership in the United Nations under the Basic Treaty in 1973, the ROC's membership was taken over by the PRC in 1971. The ROC remains barred from the UN

¹⁶ Scholars have looked at the history of foreign activities in borderlands, though generally not under the conceptual framework of borderland studies, such as (Northern) Ireland's relationship with Revolutionary France, and Imperial and Nazi Germany. For example, Reinhard R. Doerries, *Prelude to the Easter Rising: Sir Roger Casement in Imperial Germany* (London: Routledge, 2014); Sylvie Kleinman, "Initiating Insurgencies Abroad: French Plans to 'Chouannise' Britain and Ireland, 1793–1798," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 4 (2014): 784–99.

¹⁷ Frank Chiang, *The One-China Policy: State, Sovereignty, and Taiwan's International Legal Status* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier, 2018), 258-9.

¹⁸ Timothy S. Rich, "Status for Sale: Taiwan and the Competition for Diplomatic Recognition," *Issues & Studies* 45, no. 4 (2009), 168.

today, though the ROC's effective combat against COVID-19 renewed international debates on its exclusion from the World Health Organisation and the UN.¹⁹ This conflict of nationhood drove the PRC to pursue the Senkakau/Diaoyu Islands dispute with Japan as a mean to demonstrate its nationalist credential and delegitimise the ROC, much like how the two Germanies sought to demonstrate their nationalist credentials through pursuing the Saar Dispute.²⁰ The parallel between this conflict and that of the two Germanies shows us that diplomatic isolation and competing claims of statehood and nationhood were not exclusive to the two Germanies, nor are they a phenomenon of the past.

¹⁹ Heidi Tworek, "Taiwan's COVID-19 and Pandemic Experience: What Are the Lessons for Canada?" (Canadian Global Affairs Institute, April 2021), https://www.cgai.ca/taiwans_covid_19_and_pandemic_experience_what_are_the_lessons_for_canada.

²⁰ Xiaolin Duan, "Think Territory Politically: The Making and Escalation of Beijing's Commitment to Sovereignize Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands," *The Pacific Review* 32, no. 3 (2019): 419.

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DC 20	Ministerrat der DDR
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