

KONRAD ADENAUER AND THE COLD WAR

Twenty distinguished speakers from both sides of the Atlantic gathered at Georgetown University on March 24/25 for a conference on "Western Integration, German Unification, and the Cold War: The Adenauer Era in Perspective," co-sponsored by the BMW Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown and the German Historical Institute. The first three panels reported on new research into the attitudes toward German reunification of the four principal victors of the Second World War plus the two German states. Jost Dülffer, this year's Adenauer Professor at the BMW Center, opened with a report on Adenauer's "Potsdam complex," i.e., his "nightmare" that the four victors would reach agreement among themselves to create a unified but neutral and weak Germany. To prevent this Adenauer sought tenaciously to persuade all Western leaders that the Soviets posed the greatest threat to liberty ever seen, and that Germany was the crucial battleground in the Cold War. He also did his best to prevent diplomatic conferences about Germany, because they would not accept the Federal Republic as an equal partner. Dülffer questioned whether the increase in tensions between East and West that resulted from Adenauer's policy was necessary, or perhaps the harmful by-product of a political strategy based on the deliberate cultivation of fear.

Adenauer's "Potsdam complex" seemed more and more puzzling as the following papers were read. As Christian Ostermann reported, all U.S. policy-makers came to agree with Adenauer by 1952/53 that a neutral, reunified Germany would likely drift into the Soviet orbit; this became their worst nightmare as well as his. As William Hitchcock reported, the French concluded earliest and believed most strongly that their national security required the enduring division of Germany, even as they sought a close partnership with the West Germans. In Great Britain, as we learned from Henning Hoff, Churchill briefly considered talks over German reunification after the death of Stalin. He soon dropped the idea, however, and Selwyn Lloyd argued vigorously in a confidential memorandum in 1953 that "to unite Germany while Europe is divided... is fraught with danger for all. Therefore everyone—Dr. Adenauer, the Russians, the Americans, the French and ourselves—feel in our hearts that a divided Germany is safer for the time being." In view of this striking consensus, the commentator Vojtech Mastny concluded that Adenauer's "Potsdam complex" reflected a strange misunderstanding of the international situation.

The most controversial position at the conference was taken in a paper whose author, Wilfried Loth, unfortunately could not attend. Loth has long maintained that Soviet foreign policy opened a window of opportunity in 1952/53 for the reunification of Germany under acceptably democratic conditions; his paper argued that two documents recently made available to scholars from East European archives substantiate this case. His interpretation of these documents encountered massive criticism from Vojtech Mastny, however, who declared that nobody outside Germany takes this question seriously any longer. Several German participants expressed sympathy with Loth's position but emphasized that the window of opportunity closed quickly after the popular uprising in East Berlin in June 1953 and

the subsequent purge of Beria and Malenkov from the Soviet leadership. Hope Harrison's presentation on East German foreign policy undermined Loth's case, however, by showing that Khrushchev later cited the foolish willingness of Beria and Malenkov to renounce the support of eighteen million East Germans in exchange for nothing as a prime reason for their purge. Harrison provoked some discussion herself by comparing Adenauer with Walter Ulbricht as leaders who felt that German reunification would undermine their own personal power. Commentator Matthias Schulz noted that Adenauer did present a coherent theory about national reunification: that a highly prosperous and secure West Germany would exert an irresistible "magnetic attraction" on East Germans. This theory achieved dramatic successes until the East Germans built the Berlin Wall, and Schulz argued that Adenauer could not have foreseen this development.

In the second half of the conference speakers addressed questions about the domestic base of support for Adenauer's foreign policy, the relationship between diplomacy and economics, and the role of symbolism in international relations. Hans Mommsen delivered the keynote address on the preconditions for the success of Adenauer's "chancellor democracy." Mommsen emphasized that a very old pattern of hostility toward any division of the German people into rival political parties expressed itself in 1949 through widespread calls for a "Great Coalition" between the CDU and SPD as the only legitimate basis for the first government of the Federal Republic. Adenauer campaigned successfully, however, to relegate the SPD to the opposition. His manipulation of Cold War anxieties to polarize German politics might offend the moralist, but it played a crucial role in teaching the German people how parliamentary government functions. It also served to weaken the splinter parties and promote the emergence of a "two-and-a-half party system." Anja Kruke further explored German politics by analyzing the growing reliance of politicians on opinion polls. When Adenauer's foreign policy became most unpopular in 1952, his top advisors learned from the polls to make "security" the theme of all government pronouncements, security from the Russians and from inflation and hardship. This over-arching theme helped Adenauer to achieve a dramatic electoral victory in 1953. Daniel Rogers then reported on the rigid opposition by the SPD to all of Adenauer's major foreign policy initiatives, even when they brought tangible gains. The Social Democrats long feared the re-emergence of old-fashioned German nationalism and felt compelled to don patriotic clothes that fit them poorly. Adenauer understood far better that anti-communism was the only component of the old nationalism to survive the Second World War with undiminished force.

Guido Thiemeyer explored the relationship between economics and diplomacy by analyzing Ludwig Erhard's tenacious opposition within the Adenauer cabinet to the creation of any "supra-national" institutions to promote European economic integration. Erhard insisted that the only path to integration was for all European governments to accept voluntarily the rules of the free market and sound public finance, and he regarded the creation of the Common Market as a major defeat for liberal principles. William Gray addressed the broader question of whether West Germany's "economic miracle" tended to promote or delay progress toward German reunification. Adenauer often encountered mistrust as his allies pondered how West Germans might someday exploit their growing

economic power, but Gray argued that one must trace developments through the late 1960s to understand the full range of foreign policy benefits from economic growth. By 1968 the West Germans finally achieved "parity" with the Western powers, in that their views on trade and monetary policy carried great weight, and their prosperity exerted such a powerful "gravitational attraction" that the Soviet Union and other East Bloc governments scrambled for closer ties. Thus the economic miracle created the foundations for the "Ostpolitik" pursued thereafter by Willy Brandt.

The most imaginative papers at the conference involved cultural or symbolic diplomacy. Simone Derix discussed the efforts by the West German foreign office to orchestrate state visits to Berlin, focused on highly emotional visits to the Wall, where the guest was expected to offer some reaction for the press. After some visitors rebelled against the official program, the foreign office later allowed them to choose their own agenda. It then discovered that their spontaneous gestures often proved more valuable for public relations than did the old choreography. Martin Geyer offered a lively presentation on the diplomacy of sports, one arena in which Adenauer suffered outright defeat for his claim that the Federal Republic was the sole international representative of the "German nation." Geyer suggested that Germany finally entered the "post-national" era at the Munich Olympics in 1972, when the East Germans secured recognition on West German soil of their own flag and anthem to honor their numerous medalists. In the final presentation, Johannes Paulmann discussed the Brussels World's Fair of 1958, for which the architect Hans Schwippert persuaded the West German government to offer a light-hearted exhibition of German efforts to translate technological progress into human welfare in everyday life. The center of the pavilion was a collapsible canoe for vacationers, floating in a pond, with the caption: "In Germany people play, like everywhere else." Visitors greatly appreciated this novel attempt by Germans to display self-restraint and a dedication to democratic values. Commentator Roger Chickering noted that all three of these papers demonstrated the great importance of "soft power" in international relations, but also that the effects of cultural diplomacy are especially difficult to predict and control.

To sum up the results of the conference, Jost Dülffer drew three fundamental lessons: 1) that it took the Federal Republic a long time to discover that it was a state, and even longer to discover that there were two German states; 2) that Adenauer's theory of magnetic attraction did succeed in reunifying Germany; and 3) that NATO's strategy for the deterrence of Soviet aggression also succeeded. Dülffer expressed abiding skepticism as to whether deterrence had been necessary as well as successful, but he readily acknowledged that others at the conference disagreed.

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