

DGAPanalyse

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Political Consulting in the Early Federal Republic

The Role of the DGAP in the Development of “Ostpolitik,”
Exemplified in West German-Polish Relations

by Estelle Bunout



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Summary

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What is political consulting? What can it achieve? Which tools can be used to influence political opinion-making and how does one reach the relevant political actors?

A glimpse into the archives of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) offers us an interesting insight into these issues. Taking the example of the development of “Ostpolitik” from the mid-1960s, this article examines the question of what role the DGAP has played in political opinion-making.

Founded in 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany was absorbed in a controversial political debate during the first years of its existence over its own state sovereignty and territorial composition. At the center of the young Federal Republic’s political discourse and apparently indivisible from the emerging East-West conflict was “the German question”—that is, the question of German reunification and the future of the lost “eastern German territories.” As West Germany persisted with the Hallstein Doctrine of an exclusive mandate over all of Germany, it quickly found itself at the limit of its space for negotiation.

The first recommendations to realign Bonn’s foreign policy toward its eastern neighbor emerged in the mid-1960s. Regarded by many as a betrayal of German interests, this approach was extremely controversial and polarized foreign policy debate in the Federal Republic.

It was against this backdrop that the DGAP—founded in 1955 on the model of the British think tank Chatham House—began its vigorous work to support the processes of political opinion-making. In 1964-65, the DGAP launched the “Ost” study group, a discussion forum bringing together leading foreign policy experts and politicians. The DGAP was, at the same time, forging strong contacts with the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and, as a result, the two institutes were appointed by their governments in 1976 to organize the bilateral Forum of the Federal Republic of Germany and People’s Republic of Poland.

In her analysis, Estelle Bunout traces the DGAP’s endeavors to develop new approaches to German foreign policy and to promote debate between the relevant political, scientific, and societal actors. Using a variety of sources, Bunout shows that the DGAP employed policy consulting tools to successfully bring together the relevant protagonists of German foreign policy and qualitatively enhance political debate. All of this occurred in a particular political climate, which, according to Bunout, “maintained the fine balance between diplomatic and academic exchange.”

Zusammenfassung

Politikberatung in der jungen Bundesrepublik

Die Rolle der DGAP bei der Entwicklung der Neuen Ostpolitik am Beispiel der westdeutsch-polnischen Beziehungen

von Estelle Bunout

Was ist Politikberatung? Was kann sie leisten? Mit welchen Instrumenten lässt sich der politische Meinungsbildungs- und Gestaltungsprozess beeinflussen und wie erreicht man die relevanten Akteure?

Ein Blick in das Archiv der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP) bietet hierzu interessante Erkenntnisse. Am Beispiel der Entwicklung der »Neuen Ostpolitik« ab Mitte der 1960er Jahre geht die vorliegende Untersuchung der Frage nach, welche Rolle die DGAP im politischen Austausch- und Meinungsbildungsprozess gespielt hat.

Die 1949 gegründete Bundesrepublik erlebte in den ersten Jahren ihres Bestehens eine kontroverse politische Diskussion über die eigene staatliche Souveränität und territoriale Verfasstheit. Im politischen Diskurs der jungen Bundesrepublik und scheinbar unlösbar eingekeilt im heraufziehenden Ost-West-Konflikt stand die »Deutsche Frage«. Westdeutschland beharrte mit der Hallstein-Doktrin auf dem Alleinvertretungsanspruch und engte damit seinen Handlungsspielraum ein. Mitte der 1960er Jahre entstanden erste Gedanken zu einer Neuausrichtung der Bonner Außenpolitik gegenüber den östlichen Nachbarn. Allerdings war dieser Ansatz äußerst umstritten, galt vielen als Verrat deutscher Interessen und polarisierte damit die außenpolitische Diskussion in der Bundesrepublik.

Vor diesem Hintergrund entwickelte die 1955 nach dem Vorbild des britischen »Chatham House« gegründete DGAP intensive Aktivitäten zur Förderung des politischen Austausch- und Meinungsbildungsprozesses. Die DGAP initiierte 1964/65 mit der »Studiengruppe für die deutschen Beziehungen zur Sowjetunion und den übrigen Ländern des Osten« ein überparteiliches Diskussionsgremium, das bedeutende außenpolitische Experten und Politiker zusammenführte. Begleitend dazu baute die DGAP intensive Kontakte zum »Polnischen Institut für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten« auf, infolgedessen beide Institutionen 1976 von ihren Regierungen mit der Organisation des bilateralen »Forum BR Deutschland-VR Polen« beauftragt wurden.

Estelle Bunout zeichnet in der vorliegenden Analyse das Bemühen der DGAP nach, neue Ansätze für die deutsche Außenpolitik zu entwickeln und die Diskussion zwischen den relevanten Akteuren aus Politik, Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft zu fördern. Anhand zahlreicher Quellen zeigt Bunout auf, dass die DGAP mit ihren Instrumenten der Politikberatung die relevanten Protagonisten deutscher Außenpolitik erfolgreich zusammenbrachte und die politischen Diskussionen qualitativ weiterentwickelte. All dies geschah in einer besonderen Atmosphäre, so Bunout, »die das feine Gleichgewicht zwischen diplomatischem und wissenschaftlichem Austausch zu halten vermochte«.

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Die DGAP trägt mit wissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen und Veröffentlichungen zur Bewertung internationaler Entwicklungen und zur Diskussion hierüber bei. Die in den Veröffentlichungen geäußerten Meinungen sind die der Autoren.

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First Attempts at Political Consulting in the Early Post-War Era

World War II radically altered the political map of Europe. The Soviet Union expanded its territory to the west, moving the eastern border of Poland around 200 km further westward than the Polish-Russian border of 1937. In order to compensate for this loss of territory, the victorious Allies divided the so-called “eastern German territories” de facto from the rest of the new German state and turned them over to Poland. In the early stages of the post-war era, the future of an occupied Germany, now divided into four zones, was unclear. With the collapse of this anti-Hitler coalition and the resultant confrontation between Western powers and the Soviet Union, the development of Germany took on central importance. Lines of division ran across the entire country, fissures along which the political and military spheres of influence of the impending Cold War collided. The birth of the Federal Republic of Germany from the three western occupation zones and the German Democratic Republic from the Soviet-occupied zone created states of limited sovereignty. Germany was not only divided, but also had lost large portions of its territory to Poland and the Soviet Union. The political dialogue of the early Federal Republic was closely tied to this “German question”—that is, to the questions of German reunification and the future of the “eastern German territories.”

This situation, as well as the increasing division of Europe, was the focus of the journal *Europa-Archiv*, founded in 1945 by Wilhelm Cornides. German and foreign politicians and academics wrote about these changes in foreign relations.¹ Cornides, who

served for many years as editor and publisher of the *Europa-Archiv* and as director of the DGAP research institute, was a glowing advocate of cross-European integration and was one of the first to publish articles from eastern European colleagues. He had gathered experience in international political consulting in Britain’s Chatham House before the war; given the looming Cold War and the start of western European integration, Cornides hoped to establish similar instruments of political consulting in Germany as well.

On March 29, 1955, the German Council on Foreign Relations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, or DGAP) was established with the support of the Federation of German Industry (Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie, or BDI) and the German Foreign Office, itself newly founded in 1951.² The Council was intended to enhance the work of the Foreign Office through academic study, as well as to draw questions of industry and economics into discussions on foreign policy. The DGAP sought members from political parties, industry, science and academics, the highest levels of government leadership, and the media. This led to wide diversification in funding sources and meant relative independence from state funding, an orientation which the DGAP follows to this day.

The founders had a two-pronged goal: on one hand, to influence opinions on foreign policy “from the grassroots”; and on the other, to convey foreign policy to an interested public.³ One method was the formation of study groups, combined from representatives of political parties, of government agencies working in international relations, as well as from central figures in business, academia,

religious organizations, and unions. These private study groups followed the Chatham House model. Chatham House, an independent organization, coordinated informal, confidential transatlantic discussions between politicians of various parties in the period after the First World War. In 1962, DGAP organized its first study group on “International Security.”

Relations with the East began to take primary focus, overshadowing the other central topics of “Western European Integration” and “Disarmament.” This was especially the case after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the introduction of the policy of detente between the great powers, both of which pushed any solution to the German question further into an incalculable future. This is where the DGAP most wanted to take action, yet it was faced with two obstacles: the lack of credible “Eastern experts,” and the heavy taboo associated with the topic.

The Search for a New Perspective on East-West Relations

After 1945, Germany was forced to rebuild its relationship with Eastern Europe from the bottom up, a relationship that was damaged by the Great Patriotic War, the Holocaust, the expulsion of Germans from the east, the division of Germany, and the East-West conflict. Neither the participation of numerous so-called “Eastern European researchers” in the Third Reich’s eastward expansionist plans nor the presence of Cold War-molded “Sovietologists” in German federal institutions made the rehabilitation of relations with Eastern Europe any easier in practice.

When Egon Bahr, who would later serve under Chancellor Willy Brandt and would play a definitive role in the development of the policy of detente, took control of the planning committee at the Foreign Office, he uncovered a lack of credible academic expertise. While a few intellectual impulses came from society at-large, above all from religious leaders and universities,⁴ there were hardly any “practical political possibilities for East-West relations.”⁵ The Hallstein Doctrine and the FRG’s exclusive mandate had found their limits; it was

time to reconsider the fundamentals of West Germany’s policies toward Eastern Europe and reunification and to find paths toward their realization.

The DGAP’s “Study Group on Eastern Europe” as a Platform for Discussion

Wilhelm Cornides tried as early as 1964 to construct a DGAP study group dedicated to German division and relations with the Soviet Union, the “Study Group on German-Soviet Relations and German Relations with the Rest of Eastern Europe” (abbreviated as the “Ost” study group, SGO or SGII). Before its creation, an analysis was done to gain an overview of who was already working on Eastern Europe in the FRG. Ulrich Scheuner, a professor at the University of Bonn and a member of the directorate of the DGAP, warned against filling the study group with Sovietologists. This, he feared, would be a repeat of all previously failed experiments in this direction.⁶ There was no such comparable study group, either in academia or in independent research organizations, which focused on the rehabilitation of West Germany’s relations with Eastern Europe.⁷ The Foreign Office was therefore welcoming of its establishment.⁸ Cornides was even able to convince influential member of the Bundestag Kurt Birrenbach that Eberhard Schulz would present a concept for the study group that would even be approved by the CDU party.

Leading researchers were selected from the various candidates proposed, including Boris Meissner,⁹ renowned for his knowledge of the Soviet Union and his critical stance toward changes in relations with Eastern Europe, and Richard Löwenthal,¹⁰ political scientist and a proponent of the policy of detente. Both contributed to the discussions of the “Ost” study group for decades.

The next challenge was to find political representatives for the study group. The SGO intended to increase understanding of the complexities of rapprochement with the East, known as Ostpolitik, among politicians,¹¹ above all in the CDU, where resistance to such ideas was the strongest. Kurt

Birrenbach,¹² who served for years in the foreign affairs committee of the German Bundestag, chaired the group.

Skeptics were also invited from the ranks of the SPD. Stephan Thomas, for example, leader of the SPD's Ostbüro¹³ (the party arm which dealt with GDR party refugees) later became a supporter of Ostpolitik. The composition of the SGO reflected the entire spectrum of positions on Ostpolitik, both in the federal government as well as in wider West German society. Even displaced Baltic-German minorities and those expelled from eastern territories took part. Journalists such as Peter Bender, Hansjakob Stehle, and Marion Gräfin Dönhoff¹⁴ infused the group with their special interest in Poland. Otto Wolff von Amerongen,¹⁵ chair of the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft), represented German business and industry.

The “Ost” study group met for the first time on December 16, 1965, and continued to meet regularly nearly every two months.¹⁶ In the beginning, the SGO agenda was decided by the realities of the East-West conflict, with topics such as Soviet “expansionist drive” and the hegemony of the Soviet Union in “Soviet Europe.”¹⁷ The main focus of attention for participants was the aforementioned German question and the “eastern border complex”¹⁸—that is, the question of the restoration of the former borders of German territory in the east. The SGO was given the goal of “gathering fundamental findings and opinions on the prospects of German rapprochement with the East, whereby specific German interests, such as those presented from the viewpoint of the federal government, are assumed.”¹⁹ These findings and opinions should also reflect Soviet foreign relations and the “goals of the Eastern European policy of the Western powers.”²⁰

Soon after, the group's topics were decided by the political agenda of the day. According to Eberhard Schulz, the organizers wanted to forge a space for constructive debate and expert-level exchange, “Not as in the Bundestag, where tactical debates occur—in the SGII, we debated on content. Many politicians knew almost nothing about the East,

and they would have learned something in our sessions.”

Until ratification of the Ostverträge, a series of political and economic agreements between West Germany and the East in the 1960s and '70s, the group sought to create consensus around Ostpolitik and around compromise, above all with Poland. Eberhard Schulz, who was responsible for oversight of the SGO in 1965, spoke various Eastern European languages, including Polish; he had been granted the opportunity to visit Poland on multiple occasions and was an advocate for reconciliation with Germany's eastern neighbor. In his speeches before the SGO he explained, among other things, the historical and political background for Poland's position toward the FRG. The quality of this information, remembers Hagen Graf Lambsdorff, was a characteristic trait of the SGO. The question of the Oder-Neisse border and the “lost” territories was a central topic of West Germany's policy toward Poland.

From the minutes of SGO meetings and conversations with some of the participants,²¹ it becomes clear that in the private, protected space of the study group, relaxed and factual discussions could be held in a way that would have been impossible in the public sphere. The diverse contributions also reflected, however, the deep divisions between the various positions. Some speakers wanted to destroy the “illusions” of negotiations over the Oder-Neisse border once and for all, while others considered the possibility of a swap in which Germany could reconnect its former territories in the “reclaimed areas” of western Poland in exchange for the Soviet Union passing Kaliningrad to Poland.²² This shows the importance of this protected space, in which such discussions took place and in which even the most controversial topics could be addressed—a space, according to Egon Bahr, where one “could exchange ideas, thoughts, and questions that had not first been vetted for the press, and could contribute to a transformation in thinking.”²³ It was an attempt to bring the vast variations in policy positions in West Germany to the table together in order to build consensus. The divisions between Germans and Poles were barely narrower than those between Germans themselves.

DGAP as Intermediary: Making Contact with PISM

Despite contact between *Europa-Archiv* and the Polish Institute of International Affairs (Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, or PISM)²⁴ as well as the journal's outreach targeting Polish authors since 1948, the establishment of institutional and academic relations between DGAP and PISM in the 1960s was arduous. Isolated contacts occurred between 1961 and 1966; a regular exchange of publications between the two research institutes began in 1961. It was not until the first direct, personal contact on the occasion of the European-wide gathering of foreign policy institutes in 1967 in Mariánské Lázně, Czechoslovakia, where concrete plans for structural partnership could be developed. Eberhard Schulz was in attendance, and it couldn't have hurt that Schulz sent his freshly published book "An Ulbricht führt kein Weg mehr vorbei"²⁵ to Mieczysław Tomala, PISM's Germany expert, who found Schulz's "remarks on the German nation state and its necessary steps with regard to Poland" quite interesting.²⁶

In October 1968, Eberhard Schulz took his first visit to PISM in Warsaw. There he traced out the framework for cooperation between DGAP and PISM, which set out an ambitious plan of regular academic exchanges starting in 1969. After his trip, Schulz prepared a report which was forwarded to all relevant agencies, including the Federal Chancellery, the Foreign Office, and the Federal Ministry for Pan-German Affairs.²⁷ In this way, the DGAP positioned itself as an informal source of information for West German diplomats on the general mood of West German-Polish relations.

The partnership between DGAP and PISM took concrete forms at academic symposia held in Bonn in 1971 and Warsaw in 1973. For these small groups of participants, the primary exercise was the visit to the neighboring country. Karl Kaiser, DGAP research director from 1973 to 2003, remembers discovering on his trip "that there were vast differences under the blanket of conformity in the Warsaw Pact countries, especially in Poland."²⁸ The general topics of the symposia were European security and West German-Polish relations.

These meetings quickly grew outside of their original academic framework, as they were joined by representatives from religious intellectual circles. The organizers had set lofty goals: not only did they hope to attract influential politicians from the West German side to a West German-Polish dialogue, but they also tried to find an especially diverse group for the Polish delegation. In order to balance the weight of "Warsaw Headquarters," organizers encouraged participation from Poznań, Katowice, and Kraków.²⁹ In the end, they were able to gather just one representative from Katowice, the protestant headmaster of the Christian Theological Academy, and a member of the Christian Social Society for the symposium in Bonn.³⁰ On the German side, organizers sought to bring together the widest possible spectrum of opinions, including the political leaders who had not supported the Treaty of Warsaw. In the sphere of official relations between the two countries, such a dialogue would have been nigh unto impossible; the Polish government would have categorically declined participation.

Initially, such West German allowances raised suspicions on the Polish side, as Eberhard Schulz discovered in the November 1975 preparatory discussions in Warsaw. From the Polish perspective, the recognition of the Treaty of Warsaw was a precondition for bilateral meetings. That the DGAP would represent any other contrary West German position created resentment. The Polish side called off their participation in an expanded symposium in 1975; their reason—the participation of the West German politician Herbert Hupka, a well-known spokesperson for expelled Germans.³¹ A series of talks in which the DGAP organizers could explain their point of view allowed this distrust to dissipate. The symposium finally took place in November 1976. It was such regularly organized visits which formed a stable basis for trust between participants and enabled direct insights into the Polish political situation.³²

Formation of the FRG-PRL Forum

Cooperation with Poland took on a new dynamic after ratification of the *Ostverträge* with the Soviet Union in August 1970 and Poland in December

1970, as well the Helsinki Accords of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in August 1975. As a result of the cooperation between PISM and DGAP, Edward Gierek and Helmut Schmidt commissioned the Institutes to organize bilateral fora.³³ The leadership of both countries, it was argued, should be brought together on a regular basis in order to discuss common problems. Such an exchange with a flexible framework promised Polish and West German diplomacy an “indirect influence on governance” and “new impulses for decision-makers.”³⁴ These fora were intended to function as a platform for dialogue between the two countries, supporting the fulfillment of their treaty obligations.³⁵

For the organization of the fora, a steering committee (SC) was convened, made up on the Polish side of PISM, the planning commission of the council of ministers, the *Sejm*, and the Central Committee of the United Polish Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, or PZPR). On the German side were DGAP, SPD, CDU, FDP, the German Confederation of Trade Unions (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, or DGB), and the Federal Ministry of Economics. Despite the fact that neither Foreign Ministry was directly represented, each carefully followed the developments, especially the planning of the first *Forum*.³⁶ On the Polish side, thank-you letters from the Polish Foreign Minister Emil Wojtaszek and the Chair of the privy council of the People’s Republic of Poland (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, or PRL) Henryk Jabłoński attested to the hope that this type of meeting would bring together Germans and Poles from all walks of life. On the German side, Richard von Weizsäcker underlined the importance of such gatherings,³⁷ and Helmut Schmidt stressed that the discussions were desperately necessary “to overcome misunderstandings on both sides.”³⁸

The formation of the SC resulted in new difficulties, however, above all surrounding the participation of Philipp von Bismarck (CDU). The Polish reservations against von Bismarck were not simply an expression of PISM’s unwillingness to speak with CDU members and refugee benevolent societies. It touched far more on the “experience” that dialogue with the German “generation which had

directly experienced” expulsion³⁹ was especially tense. The FRG-PRL Forum, it was argued by the Polish side, should not be misappropriated as a political instrument for German historical revisionism. The German organizers, not unlike the “Ost” study group, felt it should serve as a platform for the broad spectrum of positions on Poland represented in larger West German society.⁴⁰ Reconciliation and cooperation could only succeed in the long term if they were supported generally by a large swath of society. Philipp von Bismarck, it was argued, was an important partner who was engaged within the CDU for reconciliation with Poland: “[He] was a very sophisticated man who loved the Polish people. He had lost all of his possessions and he served as the president of the Pomeranian refugee benevolent society, but he desired a new relationship with Poland. [...] The SC became a body in which the CDU was dragged into Ostpolitik,” said Karl Kaiser, decades-long director of the DGAP research institute, in a discussion on von Bismarck.⁴¹

The ambivalent position of Philipp von Bismarck became apparent in 1978, during the second Forum in Olsztyn. That the meeting was to take place in a former “eastern German territory” led to vibrant discussions within the CDU. Von Bismarck was instructed to read a statement during the forum and to indicate that the “German question” remained unanswered. Karl Kaiser worked as a facilitator between the CDU and PISM and made clear to von Bismarck the importance of the Treaty of Warsaw for the Polish constituency. On the Polish side, Kaiser worked to increase understanding of von Bismarck’s position.⁴² Kaiser traveled not once but twice to Warsaw before the creation of the SC in order to convince the Polish side to accept von Bismarck’s membership. His actual behavior in the SC and the fora, however, led all Polish fears to quickly dissipate; and as von Bismarck congratulated the Polish delegation in the name of the German delegation on the unexpected selection of the first Polish Pope, “even the eyes of the hardest Polish Communists were misty.” The expansion of the circle of participants was accepted, and von Bismarck could present the CDU’s prepared statement on the “German question.” The selection of Karol Wojtyła as Pope

shortly before the start of the forum pushed concerns over border questions and the potentially controversial CDU/CSU statement so far out of focus that the meeting proceeded relatively harmoniously and productively.

The first *fora* were a success. Marian Dobrosielski, PISM director, called them a “useful tool of normalization,” which “without a doubt contributed to positive developments on the path toward German-Polish understanding and reconciliation.”⁴³ One of the assets of these discussions were their non-binding nature: participants were neither forced to end their meetings with an united concluding statement, nor were they expected to lead to future political negotiations.⁴⁴ An additional strength of this format was the unofficial nature of its creation: the participants held various political offices, but were not serving as official representatives of the federal government. On the other hand, this non-binding character at times complicated the implementation of concrete ideas and plans. A few projects, however, such as Darmstadt’s German Polish Institute (Deutsche Polen-Institut, or DPI) and the Kreisau memorial were ultimately completed.⁴⁵

The DPI, later according to Eberhard Schulz, was a suggestion of Karl Dedecius, who imagined an institution dedicated to the translation of Polish literature, whereby the Polish (Communist) side hoped to use it as a propaganda center in Germany. For this reason, it was not straightforward moving both sides toward agreement on a center focused on cooperation.⁴⁶

DGAP Efforts Toward a West German-Polish Dialogue from 1980

At the end of the 1970s, there was a change in the structural framework of West German-Polish relations. Factors behind the shift were Polish political unrest, the huge success of West German aid collection for Poland, the worsening of East-West relations in the early 1980s, and the assumption of leadership by Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) in October 1982, under whom the political discus-

sions of the expelled Germans took on greater resonance. The *Solidarność* movement increased pressure on the Polish side to represent greater diversity within the Polish delegation of the FRG-PRL Forum.

The fourth Forum, originally planned for Kraków in December 1981, was delayed for many years, among other reasons due to the declaration of martial law in Poland between 1981 and 1983, but also because the German organizers were attempting the integration of members of the Polish opposition. The forum did not take place until November 1985. The selection of the “Polish Pope” and his journey to Poland in 1979 was occasion enough for the DGAP to promote the integration of Polish religious representatives in the existing bilateral dialogue. During these difficult years, the organizers of the *fora* attempted nonetheless to maintain contact. The planned forum was replaced by extended SC meetings and in this way participants were able to regularly exchange opinions on the internal political developments in Poland.⁴⁷

One of these meetings took place in Essen in 1984; invitation was extended by Berthold Beitz, chief representative of the Krupp Trust, who had a special relationship with Poland his entire life. As the director of the Carpathian Oil Exchange in the Polish city of Boryslaw, he rescued the lives of hundreds of Jewish forced laborers.⁴⁸ After the end of the war, reconciliation with Poland remained a cause for which he was active, as illustrated by the Krupp-Stiftung’s financial support of the “Ost” study group. The meeting took place despite the cancellation of then West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who sought with his absence to protest the murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, a human rights activist and *Solidarność* supporter.

Popiełuszko’s murder was cause for great outrage in the FRG, which weakened the legitimacy of the Polish leadership and led for a time to the closure of all official channels of communication. Polish religious representatives and their associated intellectuals such as Krzysztof Skubiszewski⁴⁹ participated in the Essen meeting, which addressed even delicate questions, such as the continuity of West

German Ostpolitik under the Kohl government or the perspective of the expelled Germans that reconciliation with Poland was possible only if the Polish side would somehow express sympathy for German losses.

The atmosphere at the meeting seemed open. Nevertheless there were critical notes; for example, Prelate Heinz-Georg Binder asked the Polish participants whether there might not be a Polish tendency to “select the most unfortunate interpretation of the positions of the FRG.”⁵⁰ Beyond this, participants discussed the possibilities for further economic and political cooperation between the two countries, with a special focus on the economic difficulties in Poland. During this time, in which tensions and distrust reigned, these unofficial meetings allowed for direct exchange, which itself enabled a loosening of cramped relations.

The stagnation of West German-Polish relations, largely due to the ongoing political crisis in Poland, disappointed everyone who worked for rapprochement between these countries. The continuation of discussions on West Germany’s policy toward Poland seemed in this context evermore pressing. Even the SGO sought ways to end the standstill. The question of border demarcation remained on the table, but the primary goal of the study group had now changed. No longer were they hoping to create societal acceptance for reconciliation with Poland; rather, they sought “to understand the position and background of the Communist side and [...] to convey sensible policies and general knowledge to the Bundestag and to the government.”⁵¹

Some participants pointed to the importance of the FRG’s role in the Poland policy of the West, which was effective against the double isolation of Poland from the West and the East. Given Poland’s high debt, discussions focused above all on suggestions for economic reforms and a possible opening of the market of the European Community. Parallel to the 1980s expansion of the circle of the participants of the fora, the SGO also included Catholic religious leaders and political representatives of the expelled Germans. The participation of representatives of civil society aided a leveling of

the “gloom” in bilateral relations and reflected “the true situation,” as the economic and social relationships, in contrast to the diplomatic, did not lie fallow during this period.⁵²

“An Alliance of West German and Polish Interests”

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, looming German reunification, the appointment of the first non-Communist government in Poland in September 1989, and Poland’s economic transformation, new perspectives were opened on the “German question” and in German-Polish relations. Even the “German-Polish Forum” was renamed in February 1990 to accommodate these developments.

During the bilateral and multilateral negotiations on the German-Polish border agreement, signed on November 14, 1990, and the Friendship treaty between reunified Germany and Poland, signed on June 17, 1991, the SC busied itself with the goals of its next meeting. Should the forum advance the immediate negotiations with concrete suggestions? Or should it continue in its “opinion-forming function,” that would contribute at some point in the future to the realization of concrete suggestions on European integration, on the issue of German minorities in Poland, etc.?⁵³

The discussions remained non-binding. On the Polish side, however, there were new participants: the former opposition was represented by Bronisław Geremek,⁵⁴ among others, at the *forum* in Poznań. In the end, they continued on their previous course of economic cooperation and European security policy. The advent of a new era was most noticeable in the discussions of societal questions: the reevaluation of “taboos in German-Polish relations,” the address of the question of German minorities in Poland. For the expelled Germans, a vision of the bridging of these two countries emerged.⁵⁵

In 1990, an informal German-Polish working group was founded to monitor the German-Polish negotiations;⁵⁶ on the German side, DGAP representatives Karl Kaiser and Eberhard Schulz sat

with leading Poland experts, Foreign Officers, and representatives of the Federal Chancellery. This group met in October 1990, according to Karl Kaiser, in order “to infuse not only good thoughts into the treaty, but also to assist with the domestic safeguarding of it.”⁵⁷ This illustrates further the two-pronged goal of the DGAP: they sought to influence not only German-Polish relations, but also the German internal discourse. Direct contact with the Polish side made it possible to exchange thoughts on the new Polish government’s acceptance of the outcome of the negotiations.⁵⁸ The informal working group allowed for the formulation of suggestions which were essential for future bilateral relations, in the fields of energy policy, Polish European integration, and cross-border cooperation.

Even the SGO discussed the changed political landscape, albeit with different emphasis. The discussions in this forum were charged by politician Herbert Czaja, a supporter of expelled Germans, who raised the question of the German minorities and the feasibility of a German-Polish agreement. He was of the opinion that the Polish government was now expected to make concessions, as the reunified German government had already made theirs with the final abdication of possession of the former eastern territories. Even in this context, the SGO made it possible for participants to discuss the newest issues in international relations and to formulate consensus around various suggestions.

An Accounting of DGAP Engagement

The decades-long engagement of DGAP made possible a lively discussion between the major actors of German-Polish relations. The goal was to influence not only relations between the two countries, but also the German domestic discourse.

The “Ost” study group offered above all a reliable source of information—not least for its creation of a space that allowed perspectives and motives from all sides of the debate to be voiced and heard. These discussions were, due to their unofficial and confidential character, free from public pressure and absent of forced results.

A further strength of these discussions was in the convergence of political and societal forces which represented different—when not entirely contrary—points of view. Additionally, representatives of both countries could regularly meet at the bilateral fora, allowing for the establishment of long-term relationships and uninterrupted exchanges. Personal relationships, grounded in mutual trust, formed from these meetings—relationships that proved essential to the survival of the dialogue,⁵⁹ to a common socialization, and, one can assume, to an easing of tensions in political negotiations. The relative prominence of the members of the fora granted the meetings weight and credibility.

Due to limited institutional capacities, few concrete projects were ever realized. However the largest success of DGAP engagement in German-Polish relations lies in another field entirely: in the creation of a societal platform for discussion which maintained the fine balance between diplomatic and academic exchange. This hybrid format allowed the DGAP to advance foreign exchange even at times when official possibilities for contact were limited. At the same time, over the course of decades, DGAP was able to build a platform credible to the various political movements in the Federal Republic of Germany.

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Attachments

List of meetings of the “Study Group for East-West Relations,” in which Poland was discussed

4/17/1967: The Oder-Neisse Border and German-Polish Relations

5/4/1970: German-Polish Relations

7/6/1970: German-Polish Relations

9/21/1970: German-Polish Relations

3/21/1977: Poland’s Domestic Political Situation and East-West Relations

5/25/1981: The Polish Situation and its International Implications

2/28/1983: The Situation in Poland 2.5 Years after the Crisis

5/5/1983: Conceptual Considerations for Western Policy toward Poland

10/1/1984: German-Polish Relations

10/22/1990: The Basic Treaty with Poland—Possible Components and Conceivable Lines of Negotiation

Chair of the “Study Group for East-West Relations”

Kurt Birrenbach: December 1965–December 1978

Richard von Weizsäcker: December 1978–June 1981

Alois Mertes: June 1981–April 1985

Hans Stercken: April 1985–1990

The FRG-PRL Fora, 1977–1990

First FRG-PRL Forum in Bonn, June 14–16, 1977: “The Further Development of Relations between FRG and PRL in a European Context”

Second FRG-PRL Forum in Olsztyn, October 17–19, 1978: “An Accounting of the Process of Normalization: Problems and Future Outlooks”

Third FRG-PRL Forum in Darmstadt, May 13–15, 1980: “The Further Development of Relations 10 Years after the Treaty of Warsaw, in the Context of Detente in Europe”

Fourth FRG-PRL Forum in Kraków, November 21–24, 1985: “An Accounting of the Last 15 Years of Relations between the Two States”

Fifth FRG-PRL Forum in Kiel, May 8–10, 1987: “What Can We Do for Europe Together?”

Sixth German-Polish Forum in Poznań, February 22–24, 1990: “Poles and Germans in Europe at the Threshold of the 21st Century.”

Endnotes

1 See Daniel Eisermann, *Außenpolitik und Strategiediskussion: Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik 1955 bis 1972*, München 1999, p. 22.

2 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 62 ff.

3 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

4 Cf. Werner Plum (ed.), *Ungewöhnliche Normalisierung. Beziehungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zu Polen*, Bonn 1989, p. 326.

5 Eberhard Schulz, interview on 3/2/2011.

6 Cf. Wilhelm Kewenig, Ergebnisse der Besprechungen zur Vorbereitung der Studiengruppe “Ost,” 7.12.1964, in: DGAP Studiengruppe “Ost,” Vorbereitungen.

7 While there were various organizations that dealt with these issues, they had difficulties escaping from the conceptual boundaries of the time—the working group on East-West Issues of the Ostkollegs der Bundeszentrale für Heimatdienst (later die Bundeszentrale für politische Bil-

- nung) or the Göttingen working group, a union of experts on Eastern Europe whose work in the so-called field of “Ostforschung” was Germanocentric and maintained a nostalgic look at the East.
- 8 Cf. Wilhelm Kewenig, Ergebnisse der Besprechungen zur Vorbereitung der Studiengruppe “Ost,” 7.12.1964, in: DGAP, Vorbereitungen zur FI-Studiengruppe “Ost.”
 - 9 Boris Meissner, a German Baltic refugee and expert on Eastern Europe, former diplomat and professor at the University of Cologne, was a member of various bodies dedicated to Eastern European research and was president of the Göttingen working group from 1965 to 2000.
 - 10 Richard Löwenthal, who served in the immediate post-war period as the German correspondent for British newspapers and later as a professor at the Free University of Berlin, was a member of the board of directors for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde (DGO) from 1964 to 1967, a member of the SPD, and a member of the research advisory council “Ostblock und Entwicklungsländer” of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
 - 11 Eberhard Schulz, interview on 3/2/2011.
 - 12 Kurt Birrenbach, CDU, was the chair of the board of trustees for the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung from 1965 to 1986 and from 1973 to 1981 president of the DGAP. He was asked by Konrad Adenauer to explore the American position on the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and in 1965 the Israeli position on the potential for the assumption of relations.
 - 13 Stephan G. Thomas was the leader of the SPD Ostbüro between 1947 and 1966, and from 1966 to 1968 director of the international division of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
 - 14 Peter Bender, Warsaw correspondent for WDR (radio and TV station “Westdeutscher Rundfunk”), Hansjakob Stehle, Warsaw correspondent for DIE ZEIT and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), and Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, leader of the political department of DIE ZEIT and later editor-in-chief and publisher, were all active supporters of a redirection of policy in Eastern Europe and rapprochement with Poland.
 - 15 Otto Wolff von Amerongen, chair of the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations since 1956, pushed for the assumption of economic relations with the “Eastern bloc.”
 - 16 The “Ost” study group existed between 1965 and 1990 and held 94 meetings during this period. Meetings were chaired by Kurt Birrenbach (December 1965 to December 1978), Richard von Weizsäcker (December 1978 to June 1981), Alois Mertes (June 1981 to April 1985) und Hans Stercken (April 1985 to 1990).
 - 17 Cf. Wilhelm Cornides, “Entwurf des Arbeitsplanes für die geplante Studiengruppe der DGAP über die Fragen der deutschen Ostpolitik,” 4/12/1964, in: DGAP FI, SGII Vorbereitung.
 - 18 Cf. Vermerk—Gespräch mit dem Botschafter Becker, 7/7/1964, in: DGAP FI, SGII Vorbereitung.
 - 19 Cf. Eberhard Schulz, Vermerk zu den Zielen der Studiengruppe “Ost,” 7/24/1965, in: DGAP FI, SGII Vorbereitung.
 - 20 Cf. Wilhelm Cornides, “Entwurf des Arbeitsplanes für die geplante Studiengruppe für die deutschen Beziehungen zur Sowjetunion und zu den übrigen Ländern des Ostens,” July 1965, in: DGAP FI, SGII Vorbereitung.
 - 21 The author interviewed Eberhard Schulz, Karl Kaiser, Hagen Graf Lambsdorff, Dieter Bingen, and Egon Bahr.
 - 22 Cf. Niederschrift der SGO »Oder-Neiße Grenze und deutsch-polnische Beziehungen«, Sitzung des 17.4.1967 in: DGAP FI, SGII Niederschriften 1965–1968.
 - 23 Egon Bahr, interview on 4/6/2011.
 - 24 PISM was founded in 1947, also following the British Chatham House example. For a history of PISM, cf. Grzegorz Sołtysiak, “Historia Polskiego Instytutu Spraw Międzynarodowych w latach 1947–1993 – pierwsze przybliżenie” [The History of the Polish Institute for Foreign Affairs in the Years 1947–1993—a First Approach], in: *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* 2/2008, p. 93–124.
 - 25 Cf. Eberhard Schulz, An Ulbricht führt kein Weg mehr vorbei, Hamburg 1967, p. 264.
 - 26 Cf. Mieczysław Tomala on Eberhard Schulz, 5/1/1967 in “Institute Ostländer 1965–1972,” FI DGAP.
 - 27 Cf. Eberhard Schulz, Rundbrief am 3.10.1968, in: FI DGAP, “Institute Ostländer 1965–1972.”
 - 28 Interviews on 2/24 and 2/25/2011.
 - 29 Cf. Eberhard Schulz, “Grundsätze für die bilateralen Kolloquien mit dem Warschauer Institut,” 11/6/1975, in: FI DGAP, “Institute Ostländer 1973–1980.” The DGAP maintained relations not only with PISM, but also with the Western Pomerania Institute of the Silesian University.
 - 30 Lists of the Polish participants from the DGAP-PISM symposium on February 16–17, 1971 in Bonn, in: FI DGAP, “Institute Ostländer 1973–1980.”
 - 31 Herbert Hupka was the president of the Silesian refugee benevolence society from 1968 to 2000. After the signing of the Ostverträge, he switched from the SPD to the CDU/CSU party.
 - 32 Eberhard Schulz, interview on 3/2/2011.
 - 33 The text of the common statement of the German Chancellor and the First Secretary of the PZPR (Polish United Workers Party) from 6/11/1976 as well as a section of the agreements of the “FRG-PRL Forum” are available on the website of the German Polish-Institute: <<http://www.deutsches-polen-institut.de/Projekte/DPForum/DPForum13/ForumGeschichte.php>>.
 - 34 Cf. Ministry Director van Well, Deputy Foreign Minister Czyrek, “Gesprächsnotizen – Deutsch-polnische Konsultationen vom 16 bis 20.9.1976,” in: FI DGAP, “I. DPF-Korrespondenz.”

- 35 Preceding the first Forum, the Polish diplomat Piątkowski suggested that these meetings should work toward the concrete furtherance of bilateral cooperation. Cf. Eberhard Schulz on Karl Kaiser, Vorbereitung der LA-Sitzung, 23.3.1977, *ibid*.
- 36 The FRG Embassy in Warsaw prepared a list in which possible topics of conversation were marked “open for discussion” or “closed for discussion.” Botschaft an LA am 24.3.1977, in: FI DGAP “I. DPF-Korrespondenz.” This methodology was continued by the DGAP organizers of future fora.
- 37 Cf. Richard von Weizsäcker (CDU politician, one of the few supporters of the Ostverträge in his party, later mayor of West Berlin and German president) on Karl Kaiser, 7/13/1977, in: *op.cit.* (note 34).
- 38 Cf. Helmut Schmidt (SPD) on Karl Kaiser, 4/26/1977, in: *Ibid*.
- 39 Cf. Karl Kaiser, Vorbereitungsgespräche für das Forum BRD-VRP, 3.–4.3.1977, in: FI DGAP “I. DPF-Korrespondenz.”
- 40 Karl Kaiser, Interviews on 2/24 and 2/25/2011.
- 41 *Ibid*.
- 42 Cf. Karl Kaiser on Helmut Schmidt, 10/27/1978, “Deutsch-polnisches Forum in Olsztyn/Allenstein vom 16. bis 20. Oktober 1978,” in: FI DGAP, II. DPF-Korrespondenz.
- 43 Marian Dobrosielski (PISM director 1971–1980), in a letter to the author dated 2/6/2011.
- 44 This was stressed by, for example, Richard von Weizsäcker on WDR-Morgenmagazin on 6/14/1977 and Marian Dobrosielski on 6/16/1977 on Deutschlandfunk, in: *Ibid*. (Anm. 34).
- 45 The German Polish Institute was founded on the suggestion of Professor Gotthold Rhode (historian of Eastern Europe) and Karl Dedecius (translator and expert on Polish literature) in 1980 during the third Forum. Its primary function was the propagation of Polish culture in West Germany; in this line, it was concerned with the academic and political exchange between the two countries. The DPI took over the organization of the German-Polish Forum after 2005. Cf.: <<http://www.deutsches-polen-institut.de/Institut/Geschichte/index.php>>. The suggestion to create a memorial in Kreisau to the German resistance was made during the fourth Forum in Kraków. It celebrated its opening during the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.
- 46 In correspondence between Eberhard Schulz and the author.
- 47 For example, about the status of political prisoners, in: Eberhard Schulz, Vermerk “Gespräch mit Herrn Sułek,” am 11.5.1983, in: FI DGAP, “LA DPF 1977–1983.” Such discussions took place multiple times per year.
- 48 Joachim Käppner wrote a detailed biography: *Berthold Beitz: Die Biographie. Mit einem Vorwort von Helmut Schmidt*, Berlin 2010.
- 49 Krzysztof Skubiszewski, human rights activist and member of the Rada Prymasowska, a Catholic organization, was the foreign minister from 1989–1993 for the first non-Communist government in Poland.
- 50 Cf. Protokoll der Sitzung des erweiterten LA des Forums BRD-VRP am 10.12.1984 in Essen, in: FI DGAP, LA DPF 1977–1983.
- 51 Hagen Graf Lambsdorff, interview on 4/21/2011.
- 52 Cf. Niederschrift über die Sitzung der Studiengruppe Ost-West-Beziehungen am 1.10.1984, über den “Stand der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen,” in: FI DGAP, SGII Niederschriften 1983–88.
- 53 Cf. Protokoll des LA, 24.11.1989, in: FI DGAP, “DPF Posen.”
- 54 Bronisław Geremek, historian and participant of the Round Table, was a politician and member of the Democratic Union, foreign minister from 1997–2000, and a member of EU parliament from 2004–2008.
- 55 Recommendations of the sixth German-Polish Forum in Poznań, available at: <<http://deutsches-polen-institut.de/Projekte/DPForum/ForumGeschichte/PosenEmpfehlungen.php>>.
- 56 The German-Polish negotiations were in connection with the border agreement and the preparations for the Friendship treaty signed between Poland and reunified Germany on June 17, 1991. Text of the agreements in: *Europa-Archiv* 13/1991, p. D 315–325.
- 57 Cf. Karl Kaiser on Artur Hajnicz, oppositional Polish journalist, on 10/26/1990, in: FI DGAP, Deutsch-polnische Arbeitsgruppe.
- 58 Cf. Bericht über die Runde der inoffiziellen deutsch-polnischen Gespräche, 13.12.1990 in: FI DGAP, Deutsch-polnische Arbeitsgruppe.
- 59 Eberhard Schulz, interview on 3/2/2011.

