AN INTERNATIONALIST IN ISOLATION. ROBERT HAVEMANN'S ENGAGEMENT WITH EUROCOMMUNISM IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC DURING DÉTENTE

Jong, Elian de

AN INTERNATIONALIST IN ISOLATION.

ROBERT HAVEMANN'S ENGAGEMENT WITH EUROCOMMUNISM IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC DURING DÉTENTE

Name: Elian de Jong
Research Master History
Politics, Culture and National Identity
Master Thesis
30 ECTS
Supervisor: Bernhard Rieger
Second Reader: Terence Renaud
30-06-2024.
Word Count: 22753 (excluding front page, table of content, footnotes and bibliography)

Content

Introduction

On the 27th of Dezember 1976, the East German Marxist and scientist Robert Havemann wrote a letter to his friend in exile, the singer Wolf Biermann. Only a month before, Biermann had been stripped of his citizenship on the orders of the ruling communist party of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In his letter, he advised him not be "discouraged" by people who told him that he was now "torn" from his "political and artistic home soil." Cheering him up as a true communist, Havemann stated: "Mon Dieu – Even in the GDR, we never solely only in the GDR!"[1]

Having protested the expulsion of his friend, Robert Havemann was placed under permanent surveillance by the secret police. Since the 1960s, Havemann had turned from loyal party-member to one of the most prominent dissidents in the GDR. At the same time, he remained an avowed communist, believing that its humanitarian ideals could be reclaimed in face of an enduring dictatorship. Therefore, the letter to his friend Biermann reflected little pessimism. In fact, he called upon him to "seek the most intensive contact with comrades from the Italian, Spanish, French and even the English" communists. The specific actors he referred to were part of the same movement, Eurocommunism, which had increasingly opposed the doctrines of Moscow. Denouncing the Soviet one-party model as unapplicable to Western conditions, Eurocommunism embraced democratic values, parliamentarism and civil rights.

This is a notable act from someone who was isolated and marginalized. What led Havemann to seek ties with Eurocommunists? How did this letter reach Wolf Biermann? And how did this relate to Havemann's self-understanding as an internationalist and communist? These questions touched upon a particular form of dissent that has not always been acknowledged as a potential driver for change.

Research on Eastern European dissent has come a long way since Jonathan Bolton's groundbreaking study of Charta 77. Up until the 2010s, debates were often dominated by questions whether dissidents brought communism down in 1989. This results-driven perspective drove, as Bolton pointed out, scholarship to an impasse where dissidents remained "trapped in older models." By transcending the focus on 1989 and placing the dissidents back into their own context of uncertainty and open-endedness, he sought to understand the actions of those who braved dictatorship between the late 1960s and early 1980s.[2] Bolton's study

[1] Letter Robert Havemann to Wolf Biermann, 27-12-1976, file RH0221 Bd. 076
[2] Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (Harvard University Press 2012) 21-23, 44.

reflected a larger shift within academia. At the centre of focus came the complexities of dissident' identities, dilemma's and motivations. Often from a transnational perspective[3] scholars mapped networks, exchanges of ideas and cross-border encounters between oppositionists and Western activists. While these dynamics challenged traditional notions of an East-West divide, academics also re-evaluated dominant narratives that portrayed Eastern Europe as a stagnant, backward region that finally returned to a democratic liberal Europe in 1989.[4] Eastern European actors were not passive recipients of Western notions of democracy and human rights, but actively adapted, re-interpreted or even rejected them.[5]

Yet, one group of activists remains significantly underrepresented in an otherwise very diverse historiography of dissent. Much of the literature focus on the well-known cases of the Polish Trade Union, Solidarnosc, and dissidents from the Czechoslovakian human rights group, Charta 77. Only a handful of scholars deals with socialists from an international and transnational perspective. Certainly, with their extensive networks and sophisticated methods to reach a large audience, the Polish and Czechoslovakian dissident's milieux were in many respects "groundbreaking innovations in East European dissent."[6] However, the underrepresentation of socialist oppositionists in the narratives also reflects a bias towards Western ideas. Natasha Wilson who studied a group of young Soviet dissidents on the eve of perestroika remarked that socialist dissent was still "perceived by scholars as an insular current associated with the contested politics of the Thaw."[7] Indeed, the socialist dissident of the 1970s seemed an antiquated figure in a period when transnational human rights networks developed into an increasingly prominent trend.

As Havemann's entanglement with Eurocommunism demonstrates, however, left-wing regime-critics did not simply remain idle in face of a repressive dictatorship. While they regarded their societies as superior to those in the West, these socialists were dynamic and adaptive to changing circumstances. Oftentimes, they looked to models from beyond their home state in order to engender change from within. In Havemann's case, his reference to

[3] Charlotte Alston, Daniel Laqua, 'Introduction: Subversion, Dissent and Opposition in Communist Europe and Beyond', *East Central Europe*, 50 (2023), 1–13.
[4]Robert Brier, 'Broadening the Cultural History of the Cold War: The Emergence of the Polish Workers' Defense Committee and the Rise of Human Rights', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 15.4 (2013), pp. 104–27.
James Mark, e.a., *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[5] Ned Richardson-Little, *The Human Rights Dictatorship Socialism, Global Solidarity and Revolution in East Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[6] Kacpar Szulecki, *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe: Human Rights and the Emergence of New Transnational Actors* (2019) 8.
[7] Natasha Wilson, '"A New Prague Spring, but from Below?" Socialist Dissent in the Last Soviet Generation and the Emergence of Solidarność in Poland, 1980–1981', *Contemporary European History*, (Cambridge University Press 2024), 1–17, at 2.

Eurocommunism spoke of broader concerns about European division, persistence of dictatorship in the Eastern bloc and renewal of the international worker's movement.

In addressing these aspects, this thesis will transcend the usual focus on Havemann in the context of the GDR.[8] Instead, it will locate him within a broader, European dimension. As a communist, Havemann never only thought in terms of overcoming the "second German dictatorship", but linked this struggle with a broader movement in pursuit of European transformation. His communist leanings long preceded opposition in the GDR. When he came to the East Germany in 1950 at the age of forty, he had experienced the fall of the Weimar Republic, the rise of the *Third Reich* and imprisonment under the Nazi regime. It was, in the words of Dutch journalist Paul Scheffer, a life in which "all the horrors of modern Germany coalesced."[9] Therefore, Havemann provides an interesting case study for the analysis of socialist dissent from a broader, international perspective.

The core question which this thesis seeks to address is: *Why did the socialist dissident Robert Havemann engage with Eurocommunism between 1975 and 1980?* By analysing Havemann as a socialist dissident, the thesis draws from Natasha Wilson's concept. She defines socialist dissent as "an extra-systematic movement for reform on a continuum with establishment reformers." She transcends the binary of opposition and state, highlighting the complex identities of socialists who shared their regime's humanitarian goals, but condemned political repression.[10] In the context of dictatorship, socialist activism in pursuit of change was seen as subversive by the authorities and elicited a sharp response leading to isolation and marginalisation. This backlash created tensions within dissent, forcing those who opposed the state to seek support from the West.

This thesis draws upon a diverse body of sources, ranging from theoretical works and autobiographies to private correspondences. An important source concerned *Warum ich Stalinist war und Antistalinist wurde*, a collection of Havemann's works published eight years after the Marxist's death, and at the time of *Die Wende*. It sheds light on the trajectory of Robert Havemann's reform communist dissent, as he turned from loyal supporter of the SED to an outspoken critic of state socialism. Besides this compilation of documents, Robert Havemann has published many other works on the subject of socialism and democracy, such as *Fragen, Antworten, Fragen: Aus der Biographie eines Deutschen Marxisten* (published in

[8] Dirk Draheim, ed. e.a., *Robert Havemann: Dokumente eines Lebens* (1991); Katja Havemann, Joachim Widmann, *Robert Havemann oder wie die DDR sich erledigte* (München 2003).
[9] Paul Scheffer, "Paranoia in Grünheide", *De Volkskrant*, 21-10-1989, 19.
[10] Wilson, '"A New Prague Spring, but from Below?", at 3.

1970) and *Robert Havemann. Ein deutscher Kommunist. Rückblicke und Perspektiven aus der Isolation* (published in 1978). Besides these sources, the private correspondence housed in the personal archive of Robert Havemann in Berlin have been utilized. Some of the Havemann's letters are also available online. In addition to Havemann's own works, this thesis incorporates memoires from his contemporaries, such as Wolf Biermann's *Warte nicht auf bessre Zeiten!*

Analysing the private correspondence at the archive of Robert Havemann requires careful consideration of two main issues. First, many of the letters used in this research were written during Havemann's house arrest between 1976 and 1979. Some of these documents were intercepted by the secret police and never reached their intended recipients. However, Havemann was well aware of this obstacle and often made multiple copies of the same letter, which are also present in the archives. Moreover, his network of intermediaries frequently found inventive ways to circumvent Stasi surveillance.

A second issue to consider is the public nature of this private correspondence. Given the constant threat of interception, these documents should not be treated solely as private letters. For dissidents, especially during periods of increased repression, surveillance was omnipresent, potentially leading to self-censorship in order to protect themselves and others. Nevertheless, Havemann's letters remain insightful accounts of his political beliefs, providing valuable information on how he perceived crucial developments within the Eurocommunist movement.

Other limitations in the utilization of sources relate to language barriers. This thesis primarily relies on German or English sources. Despite the significant role of Spanish and Italian Eurocommunists in Havemann's dissident activities, only a few works from Southern Europe are included. Still, this has little impact on the larger narrative for two reasons. First, Havemann closely cooperated with Eurocommunists who spoke and wrote German. Second, the focus of this thesis is on Havemann and how his engagement with Eurocommunism shaped his dissent and how he sought to influence the movement.

The first chapter centres on the prehistory of Robert Havemann's entanglement with Eurocommunism. It will trace the Marxist's political trajectory from antifascist hero to East German dissident. It will focus on Havemann's notions of fascism, capitalism and revolution, and how this informed his dissent. Importantly, this chapter will stress how Havemann linked the democratization of the Eastern bloc as a precondition for the growth of socialism in the West. This evolutionary approach to European transformation laid the basis for his future

interaction with Eurocommunism. Furthermore, this chapter investigates the tensions within Havemann's reformist programme, especially in the context of heightened hostilities.

Chapter two will trace the emergence of Eurocommunism as a model for Havemann. It will highlight how Détente and the decline of the Soviet Union as a global alternative to capitalism created opportunities for Western European communist parties to pursue an independent course and play a more assertive role on the international stage. Furthermore, the chapter will investigate how Havemann gravitation towards Western communism, culminating in his declaration of allegiance to Eurocommunism after the Pan-European Congress of 1976 in Berlin.

The third chapter will turn towards increasing repression at home. After the expulsion of Wolf Biermann and the subsequent protests of socialist intellectuals against the measure, Haveman was put under house arrest. While the Wolf Biermann' Affaire corroded the prospects of reform, it did not prove the end to reformist ideas in the GDR. Instead, Havemann's dissent continued in isolation, galvanized by the emergence of Eurocommunism on the international stage.

The fourth chapter will delve deeper into why Havemann engaged with Eurocommunism during his house arrest. It will examine his rejection of human rights, another increasingly prevalent trend within dissident movements, in favour of advocating for broader societal transformation. Additionally, the chapter will highlight Havemann's preference for Eurocommunism by first exploring how he saw it as a potential unifier of the divided worker's movement and second, by recognizing its potency in legitimizing his own dissent in East Germany.

The epilogue will explore Havemann's eventual abandonment of reform communism. Already before the Cold War re-escalated, Havemann became aware of the limitations of the Third Way project. This chapter will delve into the crisis of reform communism on the international stage, and the emergence of new grassroots movements, such as Solidarnosc and the West German Peace movement.

Chapter 1. Antifascism, Communism and Dissent

This chapter investigates the antecedent of the interaction between the East German dissident Robert Havemann and the Eurocommunist movement. To elucidate this, the first section of the chapter will briefly outline Havemann's political life during the Nazi regime, his involvement in resistance movements, and his eventual clash with the party. The second section will explore Havemann's vision for socialist transformation following his exclusion from the party, highlighting his belief that the overthrow of Stalinism presupposed the end of capitalism. The third section will shed light on Havemann's gradual, evolutionary, and internationalist approach to achieving this transformation. The fourth section will discuss the crucial contacts and Western media that facilitated his reform agenda. It also led to tensions and dilemma's, which shall be addressed in the final section.

1.1 A Stalinist-turned-dissident: Life of Robert Havemann in five different Germany's

Robert Havemann's political and scientific development found its roots in his trajectory through different Germanies. Born on March 11, 1910, in München, Havemann grew up in a well-educated middle-class household during the tumultuous period of the First World War. At the age of eight, he witnessed the end of the Wilhelmine Empire and the emergence of a democratic system on German soil. During the Great Depression, the nineteen-year-old Havemann began his studies in chemistry. By the time he completed his education, the Weimar Republic was in deep crisis, marked by mass unemployment and violent clashes in the streets of Berlin. During the fall of the first democracy, he worked as a research assistant at the *Kaiser-Wilhelm Institut für Physikalische und Elektrochemie* in Berlin. The Nazi regime's political influence on science led to the dismissal of Havemann's Jewish colleagues and complicated his own career due to being considered politically unreliable. Despite these challenges, he continued his research with the support of colleagues and his friend Georg Groscurth, who provided him with a laboratory. Under the direction of Wolfgang Heubner, who permitted a diverse group of scientists - from loyal NSDAP members to critics of the Nazi-regime - to conduct research at his institute, Havemann earned his *Habilitation* on March 16th in 1943.[11]

Unbeknownst to the authorities, Havemann had been part of various antifascist networks since the early 1930s. A self-described communist, Havemann belonged to a generation of leftists that had witnessed the destructive rivalry between the communists and

[11] Alfred Neubauer, "Chemiker im Widerstand: Robert Havemann", 276-283, at 276-278.

the socialists. He joined a radical left-wing resistance group, *Neu Beginnen*, led by Walter Löwenheim. A neo-Leninist group, *Neu Beginnen* espoused the idea that the Nazi regime came into being due to the disunity of the worker's movement. Therefore, it sought to unite the communists and socialists in a common front to overthrow the National Socialist regime.[12] Ideas from this group crucially shaped Havemann's perception of communism, capitalism, and fascism.[13] When it broke apart in the mid-1930s, Havemann did not leave the *Third Reich* like many of his fellow resistance fighters. He continued his attempts to renew socialism and build a new movement inspired by *Neu Beginnen*. Together with Georg Groscurth and a few others, Havemann organized a new antifascist socialist group, *Europäische Union*.[14]

As its founding document stated, *Europäische Union* identified itself as an antifascist, international movement with the goal of establishing a more humane, socialist Europe.[15] The group hid Jews in safehouses and supported forced labourers. However, not long after its declaration, the EU was caught by the Gestapo. Groscurth and many others were tried by a so-called People's court and sentenced to death. Initially, Havemann would meet the same fate as the other members of the group. However, he was saved by friends and colleagues from the institute where he worked. They convinced the authorities that Havemann was too valuable and could contribute to the war effort. As a result, his execution was postponed, and Havemann was confined in a cell with a small laboratory where he was supposed to work on chemical warfare agents at the Zuchthaus Brandenburg-Görden.[16]

Imprisoned in 1943, Havemann had already come to terms with the likelihood that he would not see the end of the war. But that was not to be. On April 27, the Red Army arrived at the gates of Zuchthaus Brandenburg-Görden. It was a moment of utter joy and euphoria for the prisoners, many of whom were completely exhausted and underfed. That the Soviets, whom Havemann already held in high regard, were the ones that liberated him from his chains and stood in the heart of the German Reich, convinced Havemann of the superiority of socialism.[17]

---

[12] Terence Renaud, *New Lefts. The Making of a Radical Tradition* (Princeton University Press 2021), 53-55.
[13] Bernd Florath, "Havemann, der Publizist" in: Werner Theuer, Bernd Florath, ed., *Bibliographie Robert Havemann. Mit unveröffentlichten Texten aus dem Nachlass* (Berlin 2007) , XIX-XXXI, at XIX.
[14] See the study by Simone Hannemann, *Robert Havemann und die Widerstandsgruppe "Europäische Union"* (Berlin 2001).
[15] Robert Havemann "Flugblatt der 'Europäischen Union' in: Robert Havemann, *Warum ich Stalinist war und Antistalinist wurde*, Dieter Hoffmann, Hubert Laitko, ed., (Berlin 1990) 80-81, at 80-81.
[16] Katja Havemann, Joachim Widmann, *Robert Havemann oder Wie die DDR sich erledigte* (München 2003) 28-29.
[17] Robert Havemann*, Ein deutscher Kommunist. Rückblicke und Perspektiven aus der Isolation,* Manfred Wilke ed., (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1978) 58-64.

In the wake of the Second World War, the Soviet army occupied the ruined city of Berlin. Looking for loyal, qualified scientists, the authorities appointed Havemann as director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physical Chemistry and Electrochemistry in the western part of Berlin before the arrival of the Americans. In the initial years of the Cold War, the American authorities left Havemann in charge. However, as the confrontation between East and West escalated over Berlin, Havemann's communist leanings increasingly became a concern. After he criticized the American project on the Hydrogen bomb, he was summarily dismissed from his position in 1948. In the following two years, the American authorities disallowed him from entering the research facilities. In 1950, he travelled East, to the newly constituted German Democratic Republic, where he gained a prominent position at the Humboldt University.[18]

The East German state was *de facto* ruled by the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED). The party's ideology, Marxism-Leninism, legitimized the existence of a one-party state on the basis of a revolutionary transition. According to this ideology, communism could only be achieved under the leadership of an avant-garde group of revolutionaries. In practice, this entailed bureaucratisation of the state, mass censorship, and the suppression of opposition. The regime identified itself as the first "socialist state" on German soil, rooted in the tradition of communist resistance against National Socialism and Western "imperialism."[19] This antifascist ideology was not merely propaganda but resonated with a broad stratum of the population and intelligentsia who viewed the GDR as morally superior to its Western neighbour.[20] With its promise to break from the dark past, East Germany attracted a significant number of people. Despite the 1.5 million who eventually migrated to the West, around 300. 000 people moved the other way, including the young Wolf Biermann and philosopher Ernst Bloch.

Between 1950 and 1963, Havemann rose from being a Western emigrant to one of the most prominent functionaries in the ranks of the SED. From 1951 to 1963, he was a member of the *Volkskammer*, the official parliament in the GDR. In 1953, he agreed to cooperate with the secret police, the Stasi, and informed on fellow scientists deemed politically unreliable.[21]

---

[18] Ibidem 64-73.
[19] Konrad H. Jarausch, "Care and Coercion. The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship", in: Ibidem, *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (1999) 47-69, at 47-52.
[20] Martin Sabrow, "Socialism as Sinnwelt: Communist Dictatorship and its World of Meaning in a Cultural-Historical Perspective", in: Celia Donert, Ana Kladnik, Martin Sabrow, ed., *Making Sense of Dictatorship : Domination and Everyday Life in East Central Europe After 1945* (2022) 3-18, at 7.
[21] See Arno Polzin, *Der Wandel Robert Havemanns Vom Inoffiziellen Mitarbeiter Zum Dissidenten Im Spiegel Der MfS-Akten* (2005) 23-38.

By 1956, his doubts about the dictatorial system surfaced openly for the first time.[22] Galvanized by Khruschev's revelations about the terror and repression under the Stalinist regime, Havemann began to challenge fundamental concepts and tenets of communist ideology. However, it was not until the early 1960s that he publicly called for the democratization of the system. Until that time, his internal destalinization was accompanied with outward conformity. In 1959, the state awarded him a national prize for his contributions to scientific research.[23]

His public lectures in the winter semester of 1963 and 1964 marked a watershed moment in Havemann's life, resulting in his clash with the party and eventual dismissal as a professor. Leading up to these lectures, Havemann condemned party representatives for discrediting Marxism in a public lecture in September 1962.[24] Condequently, he faced increasing repression and denunciation. Nevertheless, he continued his critique of dogmatism and political freedom in his lectures "*Naturwissenschaftliche Aspekte philosophischer Probleme*" during the winter semester of the following year. Hundreds, even thousands of students from all over the country attended these lectures. In February 1964, Havemann was stripped of his position at the Humboldt-University and expelled from the SED.[25] After his expulsion, Havemann was further marginalized and harassed by the Stasi. At the party congress of 1965 in December, the former professor, singer Wolf Biermann and writer Stefan Heym were branded as enemies of the state. Havemann, Biermann and Heym had been close friends since 1963 and were the most well-known critics of the GDR. Perceived as a threat by the SED, a slander campaign was led by Erich Honecker, the future leader of the GDR. All three dissidents were banned from publishing any of their works in East Germany, until 1966, when Heym distanced himself from the two.[26] Havemann and Biermann remained close, while continuing their opposition by publishing their works in the West.

---

[22] Robert Havemann, "Meinungsstreit fördert die Wissenschaften", *Neues Deutschland*, 08-07-1956. All the sources from *Neues Deutschland* used in this thesis can be accessed in the online database of the Staatsbibliothek of Berlin, see ZEFYS, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany, https://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ (last accessed online June 2024).
[23] Havemann, Widmann, *Robert Havemann,* 34-35.
[24] Bernd Florath, 'Ein Verworfener Traum. Robert Havemanns Abschied Vom Masterplan Des Kulturprozesses', in *Annäherungen an Robert Havemann Biographische Studien Und Dokumente*, Bernd Florath ed., 307–49.
[25] Hartmut Hecht, "Philosoph und Kritiker (1956-1964)", in: Dirk Draheim, ea., ed., *Robert Havemann. Dokumente einens Lebens* (Berlin 1991) 116-159, at 142-157.
[26] Cathy S. Gelbin, "Learning Years on the Path to Dissidence. Stefan Heym's Friendship with Robert Havemann and Wolf Biermann", in: Jay Howard Geller, Michael Meng ed., *Rebuilding Jewish life in Germany* (2020) 118-149, at 118, 121-122, 130-132.

1.2. The Uncompleted Revolution: Notions of capitalism, fascism and socialism

Havemann's dissident life and opposition have often been described as an East German case with political, scientific or moral aspects. In his book *Fragen. Antworten. Fragen*, written two years after the Prague Spring in 1968, Havemann shared his experiences of continuous harassment by the Stasi to the outside world. Published in the West, the book reflected a courageous struggle by a faithful communist who fought for a state he regarded as superior.[27] Yet, it also provides key insights that related more broadly to the division of Europe, the disunity of the left and the persistence of dictatorship in the East. As this part argues, Havemann saw the end of Stalinism as a precondition for the end of the Cold War.

Central in his political ideology concerned the idea that capitalism was inherently a repressive, reactionary system, laying at the core of modern-day evils. Colonialism, imperialism, nationalism, mass-murder, racism, economic downturns and exploitation of the workers were all rooted in the interests of a ruling class of capitalists who wanted to preserve their privileges. Capitalism manifested itself in different ways depending on the interests of the ruling class and the threat to its hegemony in society. In Havemann's view, the *Third Reich* and Fascist Italy embodied the most extreme, chauvinistic cases of capitalism. In the 1930s and 1940s, he and many other communists self-understood their conspiratorial activities as an international struggle against aggressive expansionism steered by the greed of the capitalist ruling class. One of the pamphlets circulated by Haveman's resistance group *Europäische Union* clarified this vision: "Any continuation of capitalism in Europe will bring new Hitlers to power, who will again make the labour power of modern industrial production serve their power-political aims. The continuation of capitalism and nationalism in Europe will certainly mean a third imperialist world war."[28]

Despite the victory over Axis powers, Havemann perceived that the roots of the authoritarian ideology still persisted in Europe. As he wrote: "As long as capitalism exists, the danger of fascism has not been eliminated, especially in Germany."[29] The expansion of liberal democracy in the West had not led to the fundamental transformation of the fundaments on which fascism had thrived. Capitalism had just taken another form, a democracy, that appeared to give the power to the people. In reality, the ideals of freedom and parliamentarism

[27] Robert Havemann, *Fragen. Antworten. Fragen* (München 1970).
[28] This was later published by Bernd Florath and Werner Theuer in the part: *Dokument: 1 Vier Flugblätter der Europäischen Union*, zie Robert Havemann, "Texte aus dem Nachlass", in: Bernd Florath, Werner Theuer, ed., *Bibliographie Robert Havemann. Mit unveröffentlichten Texten aus dem Nachlass* (Berlin 2007), 201-394, at 205.
[29] Havemann, *Fragen. Antworten. Fragen*, 298.

masked the "hollowness" of this system. Only a "few cliques of party oligarchies" were in charge, who "manipulated public opinion with the help of the press and other mass media."[30]

Whereas Havemann saw Western liberal democracy essentially as a farce, he envisioned that the Eastern European regimes were in a state of transition. This had its origins in the Bolshevik victory in 1917. Although the leaders destroyed the fundaments of capitalism, they had not completed the next step in the revolutionary process. This two-part revolution could only be completed if society was thoroughly democratized and reformed. Yet, Russian society diverged from this path, with the revolution stalling under Stalin's rule. Instead of a socialist democracy, a deformed version of socialism emerged – a dictatorship led by a clique of party bureaucrats who had centralised authority and repressed the freedoms of the masses.[31]

Havemann acknowledged the discrepancy between the ideal of socialism and its manifestation in a dictatorship. Nevertheless, he clarified that he considered "this state to be a decisive step forward in German history" and that it could "make a decisive contribution to overcome capitalism and fascism."[32] These views shaped Havemann's perception of the Cold War and the division of Germany. He saw West Germany as a revanchist state allied with the imperialist United States. Under the leadership of Konrad Adenauer, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) had sought integration in the Western alliance and steered an anti-communist course of isolating East Germany from the world. The GDR was portrayed as an occupied zone, not an independent state, and West Germany refused to establish diplomatic ties with any state recognizing the GDR, except for the Soviet Union.[33] In addition, West Germany contested the Oder-Neisse Line, the border between Poland and East Germany.

In Havemann's view, the *Hallstein Doctrine* particularly hindered the road to socialism in Europe. It convinced him of the reactionary intentions to overturn the achievements of the October Revolution in 1917. Moreover, he believed that this confrontation led to the persistence of dictatorship and the continued absence of reform. Key in this thinking was the link between socialist renewal and the end of capitalism. He argued that if Stalinism could be overcome in the Eastern bloc, the foundations of the capitalist system would collapse. Havemann believed that the Western liberal democracies legitimized their rule by contrasting their freedoms with the perceived dictatorial nature of socialism. For instance, the United

[30] Ibidem 296-297.
[31] Ibidem 54-59.
[32] Ibid. 301.
[33] William Glenn Gray, *Germanys's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany 1949-1969*, (2003) 1-9.

States pointed to the Soviet Union as proof that socialism was inherently repressive, thereby masking its own exploitative system.[34] In essence, then, the Stalinist system prolonged the existence of capitalism rather than contribute to its demise, which the ruling parties in the Eastern bloc proclaimed.

Here, Havemann linked the threat of fascism's re-emergence to the persistence of Stalinism. In other words: in order to combat the rise of a new national socialist regime, the socialist states had to be reformed. Only through democratization could the fears about the dangers of socialism be alleviated, removing one of the key obstacles to a socialist transformation of Europe. Thus, Havemann's platform for democratization was not only a programme for the GDR, but it was tied to issues about the division of Europe and the Cold War rivalry. In essence, Havemann aimed at overcoming the rigid bipolar world.

1.3 The "Overthrow" of capitalism and Reform communism: A Gradual, Democratic Road for West and East

Revolution, class struggle, the overthrow of capitalism and class struggle. These concepts evoke a rather radical, revolutionary attitude on the part of the East German. This seemed logical, given his past in a neo-Leninist organization, *Neu Beginnen*. Yet, a closer inspection revealed that Havemann's vision of social transformation was gradual rather than sudden. His emphasis on democratization as the second part of the revolution underscored this observation. Moreover, as this section will argue, Havemann advocated a peaceful approach: in the West through parliamentarism, and in the East through reform from above. This evolutionism fused with pluralist ideals anticipated the emergence of Eurocommunism in the middle of the 1970s.

Havemann's conception of socialist transformation in East and West was formulated in the wake of revolutionary upheaval and transnational dialogue among leftist intellectuals. After being excluded from the party, the East German Marxist sought to establish ties with reformists, many of whom were Western European. An example of this is his letter to the Lucio-Lombardo Radice, a leading member of the Italian Communist Party. Lombardo-Radice had established a well-known reputation as a fierce critic of the Eastern bloc. During an interview with a West Germany broadcast in 1966, he and Ernst Fischer, an Austrian reformist, "distanced themselves from the dogmatism of their German comrades" in the SED.[35] This elicited a harsh response in the SED's newspaper *Neues Deutschland*, in which

[34] Havemann, *Fragen*, 293-295.
[35] "Kampf im Lager", *Der Spiegel*, 31-07-1966.

the Italian Communist was denounced for his "anti-Marxist views" and his "bourgeois approach."[36]

In his letter, Havemann expressed the need for cooperation across the boundaries of the Cold War: "I have long been convinced that we will never recover from the disease of "Stalinism" if we fight against it in each country and in each party individually and relatively independently of each other."[37] The letter reflected his growing aspirations to link his struggle with a broader current of reformists within the international movement. Despite their ideological similarities, there was no lasting correspondence between the Italian and the East German. It remains unclear whether this was due to the work of the East German secret police or Lombardo-Radice's caution. Yet, a decade after Havemann's attempt, the two like-minded reformists would closely collaborate, albeit under very difficult circumstances.

Havemann did correspond frequently with Ernst Fischer since the early 1960s. Their exchange exemplify how similar the idea of transformation was imagined by socialists across the Iron Curtain. In the tumultuous year of 1968, Ernst Fischer and Havemann exchanged thoughts about the meaning of the upheaval that occurred throughout the world. In many cities, protests had broken out in response to the ongoing Vietnam War and the growing prominence of civil rights issues. The rise of the New Left in the West was accompanied by significant shifts in Czechoslovakia, where a reformist faction led by Alexander Dubczek took power. Under his leadership, the party moved towards more openness, liberalization and relaxation of censorship.[38] For Havemann, the Prague Spring was the most significant global event. It corresponded with his beliefs about the pioneering role of the socialist states in the process of European transformation. He articulated these views in an article for a Czech magazine, stating that "one of the main obstacles to further the revolution from capitalism to socialism" had been removed "namely the deeply depressing experience" that democracy could only be "possible under the conditions of bourgeois capitalism."[39] These feelings were shared by Ernst Fischer, who argued: "What we are experiencing is world history. Vietnam, Prague and Paris are, I believe, the dawn of a new era (…). Prague is probably the most important in a global revolutionary struggle."[40]

---

[36] Max Friedrich, "Das Verhör des Lombardo Radice", 24-12-1966, *Neues Deutschland*, 5.
[37] Letter Robert Havemann to Lucio Lombardo-Radice, 20.1.1966, file RH021 Bd.066
[38] Marie Cerna, e.a., "Revolutions", in: Robert Gildea, James Mark, Anette Warring ed., *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt*, (2013) 106–130, at 110-116.
[39] Originally published as Robert Havemann, "Socialismus a demokracie", *Svet v Obrazech 20* (Prague 1968), later posthumously published in: Robert Havemann, "Sozialismus und Demokratie. Der "Prager Frühling" – Ein Versuch, den Teufelskreis des Stalinismus zu durchbrechen", in: Robert Havemann, *Die Stimme des Gewissens*, Rüdiger Rosenthal, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1990), 150-155, at 150.
[40] Letter Ernst Fischer to Robert Havemann, 04-06-1968, file RH0221 Bd.070

Despite the eventual crackdown, the Prague Spring had a profound impact on Havemann's hopes of socialist renewal. In his view, it demonstrated that democracy and socialism could be reunited. Moreover, it occurred in an Eastern bloc state, confirming that the first steps towards overcoming capitalism would be in the East. In contrast, the struggle in the West would be more challenging, as their "goal was the overthrow of capitalism."[41] But what kind of transformation did Havemann envision? And what did democratization in the Eastern bloc look like?

Despite the revolutionary rhetoric, Havemann's vision of overcoming capitalism reflected a deep concern for a non-violent, gradual road. In fact, his idea of socialist transformation shared more features with Eduard Bernstein's evolutionary thought than of Lenin's emphasis on vanguardism. Certainly, he considered the liberal democratic system a farce, a "very convincing illusion" in which "all power really comes from the people." But there was a difference between the unequal power relations in capitalist society, and the institutions that supported it. Under the latter he included the parliament, which did have a "progressive, liberal character." The problem, Havemann argued, concerned its embeddedness in capitalism which made the parliament a tool of the oppressive class. The overthrow of capitalism did not mean the end of the parliamentary system, but its transformation in a progressive institution in service of the people. As a result, he warned the left not to "fall into the error of attacking the form instead of the content." In fact, the left had "to utilise" the parliament in combatting the "reactionary content" of the system. Only then could be demonstrated that the "political content violated the fundamental rights of freedom."[42] Thus, Havemann supported parliamentarism and reform from within the Western bloc. By respecting the traditions of the parliamentary systems and democratic freedoms, the East German believed that capitalism could be overcome peacefully.

So how did he envision democratization at home? Havemann located the driving force for change within the communist party. Consequently, many of his works directly or indirectly, addressed leading party officials in the party, whom he still considered fellow *Genossen,* urging them to initiate the democratization of the dictatorial system. The reforms were not meant to be a drastic overhaul of the system on a short notice, but gradually implemented from above. Measures included the abolishment of censorship, the establishment of an independent newspaper and the institutionalization of pluralism within the party.[43]

[41]Havemann, *Die Stimme des Gewissens,* 152-153.
[42] Havemann, *Fragen. Antworten. Fragen* 235-236.
[43] Havemann, *Die Stimme,* 154.

The Prague Spring greatly influenced Havemann's programme for reform. But a key issue emerged with this form of dissent in a dictatorship. Why did a dissident still have faith in a democratization steered from above, despite being expelled from the party? Havemann's idealistic and optimistic personality, shaped by his experiences in a death cell, certainly played a role. Even his close friends frequently remarked on his almost quasi-religious faith in a future socialist democracy. One of his associates from West Germany, Hartmut Jäckel, characterized it as "a certain deformation, a transformation of reality (not of truth)" which "was part of the style of the philosopher Havemann."[44] But it was perhaps not so much about reform from above, but rather a reluctance to embrace a bottom-up political approach. Whereas some philosophers and political thinkers began to stress independent formation outside of the party, Havemann emphasized the dangers of a movement exerting pressure on a dictatorship.[45] This becomes evident in an interview with the *Frankfurter Rundschau* in 1973. A "progressive and better political development", Havemann stated in the conversation, should always be launched "from the top." In his view, it "harboured the least risks" of escalation and confrontation. In contrast, a movement from below would "always run the risk of unrest" and "violence."[46]

1.4. The Third Way across the German-German Border

Havemann's socialist conception of peaceful transformation within the two ideological blocs could not be communicated without the help of transmitters. Forbidden by the communist regimes to publish their works in domestic publishing houses, dissidents were forced to depend on media from the West. With a highly secured border marking the division between East and West, this seemed an impossible endeavour. Yet, recent works have pointed out that the transfer of illegal books, documents and letters across the German-German border was not uncommon. As Kind-Kovács stated: "inner German connections were the most frequent and thoroughly institutionalized cases of transsystemic interaction in the Soviet bloc."[47]

In Havemann's case, this interaction required the willingness and determination of Western agents to circumvent Stasi surveillance and border security. Those involved in the

[44] Letter Hartmut Jäckel to Robert Havemann, 14-01-1966, file RH021 Bd.066
[45] In her book on dissidents, Barbara Falk describes a number of innovative dissidents, many of whom originate from Polan. This includes Jacek Kuroń and Leszek Kołakowski, see Barbara Falk, *The dilemmas of dissidence in East-Central Europe : citizen intellectuals and philosopher kings* (2003).
[46] Robert Havemann, 'Zweites Gespräch', in: Robert Havemann, *Berliner Schriften*, Adreas W. Mytze ed., (Berlin 1976) 21-25, at 24.
[47] Friederike Kind-Kovács, 'Crossing Germany's Iron Curtain Uncensored Literature from the GDR and the Other Europe', *East Central Europe*, 41 (2014), pp. 180–203, at 183.

circulation of the East German's works were primarily West German, left-wing intermediaries with extensive networks and influential contacts within countries at both sides of the Iron Curtain. Following Havemann's exclusion from the party, Hartmut Jäckel became one of his key contacts. A member of the SPD, Jäckel taught at the Free University of West Berlin where he later served as vice chairman. Deeply impressed by Havemann's resistance, Jäckel offered logistical support and helped connect Havemann with established reformists from Western European parties. Even after the regime banned Jäcekl from entering East Germany in 1965, he was able to reach Havemann through other means, including the use of confidants, many of whom were female students.[48] Journalists and diplomats were also frequently brought into this informal network of transmitters. Until the arrival of Détente and the relaxation of tensions, Jäckel primarily recruited couriers from Austrian and Italian communist parties, whose Journalists often demonstrated greater leniency towards socialist dissidents, due to the presence of significant reformist currents within these factions.[49] Another important figure in Havemann's network was Manfred Wilke, a West German sociologist with close ties to the trade unions. Wilke met Havemann in the late 1960s and gradually became the most important interlocutor for Havemann's Third Way within the broader European left. Like Havemann, Wilke believed that renewing socialism could help overcome the status quo of the Cold War. In his memoires, he explained: "We hoped for a democratic society without the exploitation of man by man, which we had described with the term socialism and in which interpersonal solidarity as a norm of behaviour was to replace the cold self-interest of capitalist market relations."[50]

Wilke was not the only one whose political leanings encouraged him to seek ties with inspiring reform communists beyond the Iron Curtain. Another West German, Andreas W. Mytze, offered a valuable podium for Havemann to share his views on European transformation. The journalist and theater critic had been galvanized by the Prague Spring, which he saw as the model for how the Third Way should unfold. In 1973 he established the left-wing journal, *Europäische Ideen*, aiming to foster a transnational exchange of ideas that bridged the East-West divide.[51] He invited leftist thinkers from Western Europe and

[48] Hartmut Jäckel, "Der Dissident, der aus der Kälte kam", 11.03.2010, *Die Welt*; Havemann, Widmann, *Havemann*, 72-73.
[49] Jäckel, "Der Dissident", 11.03.2010, *Welt*.
[50] Manfred Wilke, '1968 Und Die Folgen – Reflexionen Nach 40 Jahren', in *40 Jahre 1968. Alte Und Neue Mythen - Eine Streitschrift*, Bernhard Vogel Matthias Kutsch ed., (2008) 159-194, at 165.
[51] See his "Nachruf", Carsten Pfeiffer, "Andreas W. Mytze", 14-07-2021, published online: https://buchmarkt.de/andreas-w-mytze/ (Last Accessed in June).

prominent socialist dissidents from Eastern Europe to contribute to his journal. Articles by Robert Havemann frequently appeared in Mytze's publication.

Besides the critical role of West German intellectuals, Havemann received support non-German left-wing individuals. The French Germanist Jean-Pierre Hammer facilitated the distribution and translation of Havemann's works from German to French.[52] Translation of Havemann's works were also initiated by Marxists with little to no direct connection to him. For example, the Spanish communist Manuel Sacristán and the Italian publishing house Einaudi translated his book *Dialectics without Dogma* into their native languages. [53] Consequently, Havemann's dissident views reached various communist parties in Western Europe long before Eurocommunism emerged and subsequently influenced the East German dissident.

In addition to democratic socialist and communist media, Havemann also circulated his essays in liberal newspapers such as *Der Spiegel, Die Zeit* and the *Frankfurter Rundschau*. In the initial years of dissent, he sent his pieces to established party members like Kurt Hager before releasing them in Western media. For instance, Havemann published an article promoting the democratic renewal of the illegal communist party in West Germany in *Der Spiegel* only after receiving no response from Hager.[54] This was part of his effort to present himself as a true communist. To effect change from within the communist party, he publicly stressed that Western media was only used as a last resort. In an item for *Europäische Ideen* in 1973, Havemann was asked why he published his works in media that "served the interests of capitalism." Havemann responded that it was "very important" for him to have "as many copies as possible" in the GDR.[55] He then addressed the East German ruling party, asking: "How long will we, whose writings are not printed here and whose names are not allowed to be mentioned here, be forced to publish for the GDR in the West?"[56]

With this question, he clarified that he was acting in the best interests of socialism. In contrast, he argued that the SED damaged Marxist ideals by forcing those loyal communists

[52] Jean-Pierre Hammer, "Robert Havemann aus der Sicht eines französischen Freundes", in: Bernd Florath, *Annäherungen an Robert Havemann Biographische Studien Und Dokumente* (2016) 129-158.
[53] Originally published as Robert Havemann, *Dialektik ohne Dogma? Naturwissenschaft und Weltanschauung* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1965); translated version: Robert Havemann, *Dialectica sin Dogma. Ciencia natural y concepcion del mundo*, trans. by Manuel Sacristán (Barcelona 1966); Magda Martini, "Die DDR Der Italienischen Linken. Erfindung Und Entzauberung Einer Kulturellen Projektion", trans. by Tobias Hof, *Vierteljahrshefte Für Zeitgeschichte*, *58:2* (2010) 231–57, at 247.
[54] Klaus Richter, Manfred Wilke, "Opponent und Bürgerrechtler", in: Dirk Draheim, ed., e.a., *Robert Havemann: Dokumente eines Lebens* (1991) 191-239, at 191-193.
[55] Robert Havemann, "Schreiben für die DDR", in: Robert Havemann, *Berliner Schriften* ed, Myzte A.W., (Berlin 1976), 26-27, at 26-27.
[56] Ibidem 27.

to publish in Western media. This tactic of reinforcing his communist credentials was meant to pressure for change and delegitimize dictatorial rule. Yet, relying on Western channels posed a fundamental problem for a reform communist. The final section of this chapter will explore this tension in Havemann's dissent.

1.5. The Dilemma of Socialist Dissent

In his seminal monograph, political scientist Kacper Szulecki traced the meaning of "dissident" to the Central European dissident movements in the 1960s and 1970s. He argued that the first dissidents were Marxist revisionists, because their opposition attracted international attention. Figures like Robert Havemann in East Germany, and Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski in Poland gained recognition due to attention from Western media outlets. As Szulecki wrote: A "court of world opinion" outside the domestic box is necessary for the moral superiority of dissidence over the authoritarian regime to be fully spread out."[57] Thus, the dissident figure was crucially mediated by the West.

Although this dissident status brought recognition and a degree of protection, dependency on the West created significant problems for socialist dissidents. First, the label of dissident potentially undermined their calls for renewal of the communist party. It contributed to sense of illegitimacy and subversion, rather than a righteous plea for reform of a dictatorship. Aware of this restriction, Havemann often coupled his critiques of the Eastern bloc states with loyal statements towards the socialist projects. This, however, created an additional problem. The international spotlight was crucial, without it, the dissident would remain isolated and marginalized. Given their reliance on Western media to reach a broad audience, Havemann had to balance his loyalty towards the East with the demands of the West.[58]

Negotiating between his own ideals of overcoming Stalinism, his strategy of influencing the party, and the Western demand for courageous critics often led to a complex, contradictory image. This can be seen in his book *Fragen. Antworten. Fragen.* Throughout the book, Havemann detailed his conversations with the Stasi, frequently alternating between descriptions of his interrogations by the Stasi and his earlier interrogations by the Gestapo in the 1940s, where he was questioned for his participation in antifascist resistance networks. This implied a continuation from the Nazi regime to the East German state. In fact, Havemann

[57] Kacpar Szulecki, *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe: Human Rights and the Emergence of New Transnational Actors* (2019), 33.
[58] Florath, "Havemann", XXVIII,

saw many similarities, describing it as almost a “new edition of fascist behavioural norms and ways of thinking.” He stated: “There is once again "the" party, a lifeless, synchronised press, an overpowering secret police, a parliament without opposition, an official cultural policy that interferes in all questions of art and literature, a state-prescribed world view and state suppression of all deviations from the ruling "ideology.”[59]

After these observations, however, he continued to emphasize that he still regarded the GDR as a “decisive step forward in the German history.”[60] These contradictory statements puzzled readers. In Dutch newspapers, reviews of the translated work were marked by a mix of fascination with Havemann’s resistance and disbelief about his ideals. Huub Hendrikse of the newspaper *Trouw* characterized Havemann’s ideas as “primitive” and more aligned with the GDR regime than opposed to it. He argued that the East German’s critique even served the GDR regime: “it is enough to keep him in constant quarantine. In a way, this also adds to the prestige of the GDR. East Germany now has a red rebel of international repute and he is not even in jail.”[61] Given Havemann’s concern with the renewal of socialism, the fact that his own words were interpreted in such a way illustrated the difficulties of overcoming the rigid bipolarity of the Cold War.

Another problem concerning his dissent related to the Cold War dynamics of the 1960s. While his dissident status mediated by Western media, provided Havemann with some protection, it also hindered dialogue with like-minded individuals constrained by political division. A good illustration of this was Havemann’s attempts to strengthen ties with the Prague Spring reformers in 1968. In his work “Socialism and Democracy” Havemann declared his allegiance to Prague, reflecting his hope for a common project towards democratization in the Eastern bloc. The essay’s translation and publication in the Czech magazine *Svět v obrazech* (The World in Pictures) in May 1968 seemed to represent a step towards cooperation with reformist forces in Czechoslovakia.[62]

Yet, on closer inspection, it illustrated the boundaries of transnational solidarity. The daily newspaper of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Rudé Právo, did not publish Havemann’s works. Moreover, Havemann’s expressions of support were not reciprocated by leading reformers, at least in public. An account by Jiří Pelikán, the head of state television during the Prague Spring, provided an important perspective. At the time of writing his

[59] Havemann, *Fragen*, 300.
[60] Ibidem 301.
[61] Huub Hendrikse, “Robert Havemann. Een revolutionair werd strijd voor burgerrechten”, 07-11-1970, *Trouw*, 9.
[62] Robert Havemann, “Socialismus a demokracie”, *Svet v Obrazech 20* (Prague 1968).

memoir in 1980, Pelikán lived in exile. He remembered that he and his fellow reformers were aware of Havemann's public resistance in the first half of the 1960s. These lectures "generated enthusiasm in us because until then we had mainly heard admonitions from Walter Ulbricht and his associates."[63] "Many of my friends considered inviting Havemann to give lectures at the Karls-University", he continued, while others proposed "to make recordings with Biermann for television and to dramatize some of Stefan Heym's works." Crucially, Pelikan admitted they refrained from doing so: "This time we decided not to do anything that would give the enemies of the renewal process an excuse to criticise us for "interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.""[64]

These examples highlight the difficulties faced by dissidents in the Eastern bloc. Despite sharing a common vision for a democratic socialism, Havemann and the Czechoslovakian reformers did not exchange ideas or interact with each other. The fundamentally different circumstances in which these reform communists operated inhibited the establishment of cross-border cooperation. Despite their hopes for a Third Way between authoritarian communism and social democracy, the Prague reformers still worked within the framework of a bipolar world.

With the onset of Détente, however, new opportunities arose. The constrains of the Cold War were substantially lifted, and the space for alternative political projects widened. The next chapter will investigate how Robert Havemann gravitated towards a new model, Eurocommunism, in the context of international relaxation.

[63] Jiří Pelikán,"Warum ist es schwer, ein Kommunist in der DDR zu sein", in: Hartmut Jäckel ed., *Ein Marxist in der DDR. Für Robert Havemann* (München 1980) 44-54, 47.
[64] Ibidem 48.

Chapter 2. From Prague to Rome: The Promise of Eurocommunism

While the tensions of the Cold War posed enormous difficulties for dissidents, the advent of Détente seemed to offer hope for change. The first part will examine how the rise of Détente raised expectations among regime critics. However, as the Eastern bloc turned increased repression, its image as a global alternative to capitalism declined sharply. The third section will demonstrate how Détente and the decline of Soviet's vanguard role facilitated the rise of Eurocommunism, an autonomous and pluralist political experiment that thrived in the mid-1970s. Despite internal contradictions and differences among the various parties aligned with the project, Eurocommunism's public identification as a Third Way between authoritarian communism and social democracy garnered fascination from scholars, politicians and reform-minded dissidents. With his faith in the propulsive force of international socialism, Robert Havemann became increasingly convinced of Eurocommunism's potential. The final section, will argue that the East Berlin conference in the summer of 1976 played a crucial role in this reorientation towards Western European communism.

2.1 Dynamic Détente: International Relaxation, Ostpolitik and Heightened Expectations

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Europe had experienced an unprecedented period of rapprochement between East and West. The Soviet Union and the United States recognized the dangers of confrontation, especially after the Cuba crisis. To ease tensions, they signed multiple treaties reducing the threat of nuclear annihilation and established bilateral agreements promoting peace and security. In 1969, Willy Brandt became chancellor of West Germany, promising a break with the anti-communist policies of his Christian Democratic predecessors. His *Ostpolitik* respected the status quo of the two Germanies and informally acknowledged the Oder-Neisse line as the border between Germany and Poland.[65] This contributed to the normalization of relationships between East and West. From 1973 onwards, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) brought countries from both sides of the Iron Curtain to the negotiating table. The outcome, the Helsinki Accords of 1975, arguable marked the pinnacle of rapprochement between East and West. European countries recognized the post-war order and agreed to further minimize tensions.[66]

With the opening of the GDR to the West, signs of improvement began to appear on the horizon. Walter Ulbricht was replaced with Erich Honecker, who announced at a party

[65] Carole Fink, Bernd Schaffer, *Ostpolitik, 1969–1974: European and Global Responses* (Cambridge University Press NY 2009).
[66] Oliver Bange, Gottfried Niedhart, *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (2008).

meeting that "from the firm position of socialism" there were "no taboos" in the fields of art and literature.[67] This rather remarkable declaration from a hardliner did not signify a sudden policy shift, although he did allow artists more freedom within the constraints of dictatorship.[68] Together with the GDR's official acceptance into the international community, this limited cultural freedom contributed to heightened expectations among socialists hoping for structural change.

Détente warmed people's expectations about the end of the Cold War, especially after years of confrontation that had brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. An uplifting mood was noticeable, generating ideas about a possible convergence between West and East.[69] Even some dissidents viewed the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the United States positively. Notably, many of them were socialist dissidents who linked Détente with democratization in the Eastern bloc. In the Soviet Union, historian and dissident Roy Medvedev was an ardent proponent of international relaxation, seeing it as a precondition for inner relaxation.[70] Similarly, Robert Havemann displayed cautious optimism regarding negotiations between East and West Germany, hoping that Détente allowed more room for democratic renewal. In an article he wrote for *Der Spiegel* in 1970, he welcomed the "progressive" politics of a state where "the bourgeoisie" was still in power. Unlike the previous governments, the social democrats contributed to a "Thaw" in relations between East and West, providing more room for political experimentation.[71] He wrote: "The eventual dissolution of the Stalinists structure is only possible if the security of the socialist states is not threatened from outside." Havemann believed that the possibilities for domestic relaxation would open up with the GDR's official status as an independent state. As he stated: "In general, it can be expected that the reduction of tensions in the world will lead to a retreat of the hawks and a strengthening of the doves."[72]

Importantly, Détente did have unintended consequences over which the SED had little control, yet these contributed to an intensification of dissident activities. After the signing of the Basic Treaty between East and West, journalists from the West were sent with permanent accreditation from 1973 onwards. As Hartmut Jäckel recalled, finding a journalist eager to

[67] "Ja muffig*", Der Spiegel*, 03-06-1973.
[68] Thomas W. Goldstein, Writing in Red: The East German Writers Union and the Role of Literary Intellectuals (Cambridge 2017) 69-70.
[69] James Mark e.a., *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2019) 85-86.
[70] See Barbara Martin, "The Sakharov-Medvedev Debate on Détente and Human Rights: From the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Helsinki Accords", *Journal of Cold War Studies 23:3* (2021) 138-174, at 158-162.
[71]Orignally published in *Der Spiegel*, 15-03-1970. Later also published in Robert Havemann, Tauwetter ist ein gefährliches Klima", in: Havemann, *Warum ich Stalinist war und Antistalinist würde*, 216-222, at 216-217.
[72] Ibidem 220-222.

meet with the GDR's most prominent dissident was not particularly hard. In this regard, journalists served as crucial intermediaries between the East German Marxist and his contacts in the West.[73] Periodically, Havemann came to be visited by journalists from all over Western Europe, including Italy and the Scandinavian countries. Despite the Stasi's knowledge about these encounters, the government could do little about it, fearing to jeopardize its international image.

So it was that a journalist from a Dutch newspaper spoke with Havemann about his hopes and uncertainties, discussing "the historical necessity of a Prague Spring." This encounter, reported in *De Volkskrant* on October 13, 1973, illustrated the specific strand of reform communist dissent at the height of Détente. The conversation revealed the prevailing mood of reform communists at the time. One topic was the non-communist dissidents, like Andrei Sakharov and Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, in the Soviet Union. Although he "firmly disagreed" with the views of these dissidents, Havemann supported their right to express themselves. More importantly, he stated that their "recent declarations" in public and the "press conferences" were indicative of a broader transformation. While it was "difficult to make concrete predictions about further developments in the GDR", Havemann told the Dutch interviewer, there was "a lot of discussion even in the Soviet Union. It may even be the case that Brezhnev is one of those who pursues a positive development."[74] These comments reflected his faith in reform from above at the time when rapprochement between East and West was at its peak.

2.2. Stagnation and the Decline of the Soviet's union's "Revolutionary Privilege"

However, it became increasingly clear that developments in the Eastern bloc clashed with the expectations of the dissidents and the broader, European left. Like the United States, the Soviet Union aimed to preserve the status quo in Europe. It sought to establish itself as an equal power to the United States while maintaining its hegemony in Eastern Europe.[75] Efforts to achieve these goals seemed to translate into political change, such as the signing of the Helsinki Accords of 1975. However, ongoing repression in the East led many on the European left to abandon the idea that the Soviet Union embodied a viable alternative to capitalism.

---

[73] Jäckel, "Der Dissident", *Die Welt,* 11-03-2010.
[74] 'Oostduitse Dissident Havemann: Nieuwe "Praagse Lente" Een Historische Noodzaak", *De Volkskrant*, 13-10-1973, 27.
[75] Dionysios Chourchoulis, "Understanding the Long Détente and its Crisis in Cold War", *Journal of Contemporary History 55:3* (2020), 666-678, at 668.

In the 1970s, a significant challenge to the foundations of the Soviet's global alternative came from within the homeland of the October revolution. Disenchantment with socialism following the suppression of the Prague Spring and frustration with continued repression of dissidents prompted Russian civil activists like Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Volpin to turn to the West to exert pressure on their government. The use of human rights was a particularly useful tool, as it reached a wider audience across the political spectrum than the reformist language of Marxist dissidents.[76] Additionally, the publication of harrowing accounts about the Soviet Union's repressive apparatus further put the spotlight on the violation of individual rights. One particularly influential book, "the Gulag Archipelago", written by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and published in 1973, shed light on the brutal realities of the Soviet system. Solzhenitsyn, a former Marxist, had been arrested for his critical remarks about Stalin's regime and subsequently incarcerated in a forced labour camp. Released and rehabilitated during Kruschev's Thaw, he eventually abandoned Marxism for Eastern orthodox Christianity. The book's central argument was that Stalinist terror was not merely an aberration, but an inherent part of the repressive and totalitarian Bolshevik system that originated with Lenin.[77] Despite efforts by the secret police of the Soviet Union to prevent its publication, Solzhenitsyn managed to smuggle manuscripts to the West. Following its circulation, the Russian dissident was expelled from the country after which he eventually emigrated to the United States.

Solzhenitsyn's critique and the civil rights activists had important ramifications on the Western left. It contributed to a gradual decline of Marxist-inspired visions of large-scale social transformations and fostered the rise of human rights politics on the international stage. Excesses and abuses of the Soviet system became the focal point of attention, undermining the "revolutionary privilege" ascribed to the Soviet Union.[78] Many re-examined their stance towards the Soviet Union, among them democratic socialists Rudi Dutschke and Manfred Wilke. They directed a volume engaging with the Solzhenitsyn affair. In their introduction, they criticized the Russian dissident for confounding the system's "symptoms" with the socialist foundations. Believing that Europe could be taken to a socialist society, all authors shared the conviction that a common anti-capitalist front with the leading parties in the East

[76] Benjamin Nathans, 'The Disenchantment of Socialism: Soviet Dissidents, Human Rights, and the New Global Morality', in *The Breakthrough Human Rights in the 1970s*, Samuel Moyn, Jan Eckel ed., (2014) 33–48, at 33-35.
[77] Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag archipelago, 1918-1956: an experiment in literary investigation*, trans. by Thomas P. Whitney (1975).
[78] Robert Horvath, '"The Solzhenitsyn Effect": East European Dissidents and the Demise of the Revolutionary Privilege', *Human Rights Quarterly 29:4* (2007), 879–907, at 879-882.

could not be excluded as an option. Interestingly, however, they emphasized that primary support should be given to the "reform-communist/socialist opposition" who they believed stood in the vanguard of "practicing" an "anticapitalist" approach.[79] This shift from the Soviet Union to the dissidents reflected a larger transition among the Western left. The intrinsic link between the Soviet Union and socialist transformation increasingly gave way to the support for civil rights activists in face of a society deemed more despotic than socialist. Manfred Wilke would later portray his book as a prehistory to his support for civil rights dissidents in the second half of the 1970s. For him, the issue of individual rights subverted any concession to the revolutionary authority of the Soviet Union: "How credible is a socialist left in Western Europe that remains silent about human rights violations in the Soviet empire and refuses to demonstrate solidarity with the artists and dissidents there in the struggle for the realisation of human rights in their countries?"[80]

A critical engagement with the Soviet system was not limited to dissidents who had renounced Marxist utopian ideals. In fact, Solzhenitsyn's book paralleled the efforts of socialist dissident grappling with the dictatorial system, especially after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Roy Medvedev was expelled from the communist party after he published his book, *Let History Judge* in 1969, condemning the trend among Soviet hardliners to rehabilitate Stalin. Still, Medvedev's work primarily attributed the causes of a deformed socialism to Stalin, not to the system as a whole. [81] Similarly, Robert Havemann analysed the enduring dictatorship that had shattered his dream of a "socialism with a human face." In April 1970, he published an article in *Die Zeit*, titled *Der Irrtum der Leninisten*. He began with the provocative statement: "The foundations of the future Stalinist development were laid in Lenin's time." Indeed, Lenin had taken the first steps towards dictatorship by institutionalizing a rigid "tightly organised cadre party."[82] In this article, however, Havemann did not intend to doubt Lenin's humanitarian intentions – and undermine a core foundation of the Bolshevik revolution. He attempted to reclaim Lenin's democratic aspirations, by pointing out that "Lenin hoped for a democratic development of socialism" and that the Russian

[79] Reinhard Crusius, Rudi Dutschke, Manfred Wilke, "Einleitung" In: Rudi Dutschke, Manfred Wilke ed., *Die Sowjetunion, Solschenizyn und die westliche Linke* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1975) 9-15, at 12-15.
[80] Hannes Schwenger, Manfred Wilke, "Leben Mit Und Gegen Die Deutsche Teilung. Hannes Schwenger Und Manfred Wilke Im Gespräch", in: Manfred Wilke ed., *Der SED-Staat. Geschichte Und Nachwirkungen. Gesammelte Schriften* (2006) 297–326, 306.
[81] Later published in English, see Roy Medvedev, *Let history judge: the origins and consequences of Stalinism* (1972).
[82] Robert Havemann, "Der Irrtum der Leninisten. Auch im Sozialismus: Widerspruch zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft", in: Robert Havemann*, Warum ich Stalinist war und anti-Stalinist wurde,* Dieter Hoffman, Hubert Laitko, ed., (1990), 211-215, at 211.

revolutionary was forced "by circumstances" to take the step to dictatorial rule as a "temporary" solution.[83] For Havemann, it was Stalin who turned Lenin's provisional decision into a permanent feature of the system. Like Medvedev, he believed that the October Revolution's propulsive force was still present, despite the deterioration that had taken place over the decades.

This engagement heralded a gradual de-ideologization from the Soviet model. For Havemann, the suppression of Solzhenitsyn, Medvedev and other Soviet dissidents evidenced the shortcomings of "really existing socialism", providing even more munition to the opponents of socialism who could further delegitimize a potential Third Way. This frustration was evident in his contribution to the edited book of Dutschke and Wilke. The system of "unfreedom", he noted, was the "decisive stumbling block" for the further development of socialism, and at the same time, "tarnished the international reputation and credibility of socialism."[84]

With his hopes on a global alternative to the Soviet Union and the capitalist West, Havemann belonged to a leftist current that aspired to modernize the revolutionary traditions. In Europe, this current increasingly split into rivalling, different groups, ranging from Maoist communists to Trotskyists. Paradoxically, it was precisely the emphasis on revolutionary upheaval that alienated Havemann from these groups. Instead, his peaceful, gradual approach to socialist transformation aligned him with another development that steadily asserted itself on the international stage in the middle of the 1970s.

2.3. Eurocommunism: the Emergence of an International Third Way

Scholars have traced the emergence of Eurocommunism to 1975, the year in when the three major Western European communist parties allied in opposition to Soviet influence.[85] Interestingly, it was not until the conference in Madrid in 1977 that the term Eurocommunism was formally adopted by these parties. In fact, the term was not even invented by them but by journalist Frane Barbieri who identified a trend of Moscow-critical practices across various European parties.[86] At the East Berlin Conference of 1976, where the three major communist

[83] Ibidem 211, 215.
[84] Robert Havemann, "Freiheit als Notwendigkeit", In: Rudi Dutschke, Manfred Wilke ed., *Die Sowjetunion, Solschenizyn und die westliche Linke* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1975) 16-28, at 26.
[85] Silvio Pons, 'The Rise and Fall of Eurocommunism', in: Melvyn Leffler, Odd Arne Westad ed, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 3: Endings* (New York, 2010), 45–65, at 50-52.
[86] Nikolas R. Dörr, Emanzipation Und Transformation: Rückblick Auf Den Eurokommunismus', *Osteuropa 63:5/6* (2013) 255–269, at 257-259.

parties formed a block against Soviet hegemony, only the Italian communist leader, Enrico Berlinguer, and the head of the Spanish party, Santiago Carillo, briefly alluded to the term.

Although the term Eurocommunism may not have been coined by the actors themselves, it denoted a phenomenon where primarily Western European parties sought to pursue an independent course from Moscow's dictates. The leading forces of the Eurocommunist movement were the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), and the French Communist Party (PCF). These parties collectively recognized the limits of Marxist-Leninist doctrine within pluralist democracies and embraced democratic values, civil liberties, parliamentarism and pluralism as essential elements of a national road towards socialism. [87] They also sought cooperation with non-communist forces, including socialists and even Christian democrats. Maintaining a communist outlook, their vision of overcoming capitalism was peaceful, gradual, and within the framework of parliamentary democracy.[88]

Despite these shared characteristics, Eurocommunism was far from a unified movement with a common programme. The degree to which the parties adhered to the principles of liberal democracy varied significantly. While the PCI and PCE became ardent proponents of democratic values, the PCF's approach was more pragmatic. Each party also operated within distinct national contexts, facing different political and economic issues. The largest and most influential of the big three, the PCI, held significant positions in Italian politics and controlled majorities in regional parliaments. From the early 1970s, under the leadership of Enrico Berlinguer, the PCI announced a policy of cooperation with the Christian Democrats, known as the Historic Compromise, and provided external support to Aldo Moro's government.[89]

The second largest communist party in the West, the French Communist party (PCF), was a reluctant follower of Eurocommunism. In the early 1970s, it signed the *Union de la Gauche* with Francois Mitterand's Socialist party, hoping to gain electoral appeal by promoting a democratic course.[90] The third and last faction, the Spanish Communist party (PCE) had experienced a long period of exile during the Francoist dictatorship. With the

[87] Laura Fasanaro, "Myth and Perceptions of Europe in the German Democratic Republic, 1975-1985: From Italian Eurocommunism to European Integration", *Histoire Politique Revue du Centre d'histoire de Sciences Po 46* (2022) 1-20, at 4.
[88] Silvio Pons, Michele Di Donato,"Reform Communism", in: Juliane Fürst, Silvio Pons, Mark Selden, ed., *The Cambridge History of Communism. Volume 3: Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present* (Cambridge 2017) 178-202, at 179, 187-190.
[89] Pons, "The Rise and Fall of Eurocommunism", 49.
[90] Gino Raymond, "PCF and Front de Gauche: exploiting a communist nostalgia in France?", *Twentieth Century Communism: A Journal of International History 11* (University of Bristol 2016) 115-129, at 115-117.

transition to democracy in the middle of the 1970s, the PCE sought to play an active role in the democratization process.[91]

From its inception, Eurocommunism was a complex, heterogeneous and contradictory movement, consisting of orthodox (PCF) and progressive factions. (PCI, PCE) Yet, mutual recognition and shared interests led to an alignment between the PCF, PCI and PCE from 1975 onwards. Détente played a significant role in creatin an environment conducive to political experimentation, allowing Western European communist parties to emergence from isolation.[92] Furthermore, the decline of the Soviet Union's authority provided these parties with the opportunity to chart their own course. While the French communist leadership primarily perceived Eurocommunism in terms of sovereignty and non-interference, Italian and the Spanish communist parties went further. They saw Détente as an important catalyst for establishing of a new model of European socialism. Internationalist in their outlook, they aspired to export a pluralist socialist alternative to other countries in Western Europe, and even beyond.[93]

Under the leadership of Enrico Berlinguer, the PCI became an assertive player on the international stage, committed to overcoming the Cold War rivalry through a program of gradual reform. In his efforts to transcend the rigid bipolar system, Berlinguer often made notable comments about the balance of powers in Europe. In June 1976, he explicitly stated that he felt more secure aligned with NATO than the Warsaw Pact.[94] Santiago Carillo of the PCE sometimes took an even more radical stance. In a interview in 1975, later published as a book, *Spanien nach Franco*, Carillo declared: "If we were in power and the troops of a socialist country came across our borders, I would undoubtedly mobilise the army against them to defend ourselves."[95] These remarks, while not intended to sever ties with the Soviet Union, portrayed the Soviet Union as a power acting against the interests of socialist renewal.

These words from Eurocommunists resonated powerfully beyond the Iron Curtain, where hopeful socialists closely watched autonomous tendencies within the communist

---

[91] José M. Faraldo, "Entangled Eurocommunism: Santiago Carrillo, the Spanish Communist Party and the Eastern Bloc during the Spanish Transition to Democracy, 1968–1982", *Contemporary European History 26:4* (2017) 647-668, at 649-650.
[92] Frédéric Heurtebize, 'Eurocommunism and the Contradictions of Superpower Detente', *Diplomatic History 41:4* (2017), 747–771, at 765.
[93] Pons, "The Rise and Fall of Eurocommunism", 46; Laura Fasanaro, 'Neither in One Bloc, nor in the Other Berlinguer's Vision of the End of the Cold War', in *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945-1990*, Frédéric Bozo e.a., ed, (2012) 163–176, 165-166.
[94] Zie Laura Fasanaro, 'Neither in One Bloc, nor in the Other Berlinguer's Vision of the End of the Cold War', in *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945-1990*, Frédéric Bozo e.a., ed, (2012) 163–176, .
[95] Debray Régis, Max Gallo, Santiago Carrillo, *Spanien nach Franco*, transl. by Hans-Werner Franz, (1975), 124.

parties. In East Germany, the book-interview with Carillo was well received, prompting the East German Marxist to devote significant attention to Eurocommunism for the first time. Using mediums like TV, Havemann endeavoured to promote a Third Way in an conversation with Wolf Biermann. In the past years, Détente had enabled more opportunities for cross-border activities, leading to regular interviews on West German television. On 21 April, 1976, they discussed the implications of the Eurocommunist trend. Having read the book *Spanien nach Franco,* Wolf Biermann expressed his admiration for Santiago Carillo's defiance of Soviet authority. Following this, Biermann asked why it was that the Eurocommunists were "really capable of making something politically out of this crisis of capitalism." Havemann responded accordingly. He emphasized the independency of "the Italians, the French and the Spanish"" who "freed themselves from the stagnant and dogmatically rigid Eastern CP." In his view, "they had become real communists again."[96] Havemann increasingly realized that the dynamics for renewal had shifted to these Western parties. consequently, the socialist dissident eagerly anticipated the upcoming conference of communist parties held in East Berlin in the summer of 1976.

2.4. The Berlin Effect: Robert Havemann and the Appeal of Eurocommunism

The second half of the 1970s saw significant dynamics in the dissident movements of Eastern Europe. One of the key developments particularly captured the fascination of numerous people in the West: the emergence of human rights groupings. With the signing of the Helsinki Accords, the Eastern bloc had agreed to a treaty that guaranteed the protection of human rights. Within a few years, Charta 77 in Czechoslovakia or the Polish Workers' Defence Committee were established. In their activism, they referred to the provision in their critiques of the communist regimes. To this day, scholars are coming back to period of the 'human rights breakthrough', where they seek to uncover connections between Western actors and dissident intellectuals. [97] An influential account on Helsinki dubbed the peculiar development that occurred in the wake of Accords the "Helsinki Effect", tying the emergence of the first human rights group to the eventual fall of communism.[98] Yet, there was another major event in the same period that also evoked awe and consternation from onlookers and

[96] Robert Havemann, "Sechstes Gespräch (mit Wolf Biermann)", in: Robert Havemann*, Berliner Schriften*, Adreas W. Mytze, ed., (Berlin 1976) 82-85, at 84-85.
[97] Samuel Moyn, Jan Eckel ed., *The Breakthrough Human Rights in the 1970s* (2014); Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge University Press 2011).
[98] Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (2001 Princeton University Press) 3-4.

participants at the time. It was the Pan-European Congress of Communist Parties in the summer of 1976. Although the end of the Cold War and Western triumphalism of the 1990s consigned this flashpoint into obscurity, the congress left a considerable impact on opponents and sympathizers alike. Among them were dissidents, including Havemann, who identified it as a watershed moment in the history of the international communist movement.

The Conference of Communist and Workers Parties of Europe in East Berlin in the summer of 1976 followed in the wake of the Helsinki Accords of 1975. At the meeting, the Soviet Union attempted to reconfirm its hegemonic position in the communist movement.[99] Yet, it faced staunch opposition from the leading Eurocommunist parties, the PCI, the PCE and the PCF. One after the other, the Eurocommunists stressed an autonomous and national road towards socialism. Carillo Santiago, for instance, characterized this shift away from Moscow's dictates in the following manner: " There is no doubt, however, that we communists today have no centre of leadership and are not bound by any international discipline."[100] This organized resistance to Soviet authority echoed in the final document of the conference. Although the communists still paid lip service to the cause of anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism and solidarity with national liberation movements, a crucial tenet was removed from the document. "Proletarian Internationalism", which denoted the Soviet Union's leading role, was replaced with a statement emphasizing autonomy and equality.[101]

It was a historic event in the eyes of the beholder. A few days after the congress, *Der Spiegel* published a lengthy article describing the final resolution as "a document of ideological decomposition."[102] Flora Lewis from *The New York Times* reckoned that the conference could become a "turning point" of which the "impact" would be felt "far beyond Europe."[103] But the Conference did not only have impact on Western public opinion. At the Eastern side the Iron Curtain, socialist oppositionists referred to the event as a watershed moment in the international communist movement. In an open letter to general-secretary Brezhnev, the disillusioned Marxist Arnost Kolman referred to the Conference as a reason for his decision to leave the Russian Communist Party.[104] In the wake of the conference, other dissidents often blended ideals of Eurocommunism with human rights activism. Within Charta 77, some members were former Prague reformers who still resonated with

[99] Silvio Pons, "The rise and fall of Eurocommunism", 53-54.
[100] "Reden auf der Konferenz der kommunistischen und Arbeiterparteien Europas", *Neues Deutschland*, 30-06-1976, 8.
[101] Dörr, "Emanzipation Und Transformation", 255–69.
[102] "KP- Konzil: "Einfach selbstmörderisch", *Der Spiegel*, 04.07.1976.
[103] Flora Lewis, "The Conference Turned to a New Theme, 'Eurocommunism", *New York Times*, 04-07-1976.
[104] Arnost Kolman, "A.E. Kolman an L. Breschnew", *Europäische Ideen* 31/32 (1977) 16-18.

communism. Jiri Hajek, for instance, declared himself a communist "ideologically close to the West European parties."[105]

The events in the summer of 1976 had perhaps the greatest impact on the East German Marxist dissident's milieux. The organizer of the conference, the SED, was responsible for the administration and the editorial office. Therefore, the SED was obliged to publish their speeches in the party press *Neues Deutschland.* Consequently, every citizen could read the uncensored declarations made by Enrico Berlinguer, Santiago Carillo and Georges Marchais about the virtues of pluralism, democratic elections, freedom of opinion, respect for civil liberties and legal guarantees. It formed a potential breach in regard to the SED's monopoly on political rule. If the Eurocommunist's speeches could be public knowledge, why were dissidents suppressed for similar views? Does the publication of the Eurocommunist's speeches not demonstrate the legitimate cause of dissent – and the illegitimacy of repression?

Fascinated by the East Berlin conference, Havemann made sure to emphasize the salience of the publication in his essays. "For the first time", he wrote a few days after the conference in *Der Spiegel*, party members "were able to read opinions of leading comrades of other communist parties" in the party's central organ "that were in sharp contradiction to the official opinion" of the SED.[106] For an issue of *Europäische Ideen*, Havemann dedicated an article to the events in June in which he quoted Georges Marchais' speech at length – and bracketed the source, *Neues Deutschland*, after the quotation to tell his readers where they could find this information. In his speech, Marchais spoke about the PCF's decision to distance itself from the concept of "the dictatorship of the proletariat", a concept that the ruling parties in the Eastern bloc utilized in order to legitimize their dictatorial rule. Havemann stressed that the PCF's decision stemmed from a "misuse" of the term by their Eastern counterparts.[107] Referring to the speeches, Havemann hoped to exploit the potential gap in the Marxist-Leninist state. Marchais' speech in particular served as a point of reference here. By emphasising that the French communists felt compelled to reject core concepts of Marxism, Havemann wanted to make it clear that the SED was turning against the ideals of the Founding Fathers of communism.

But Havemann did not only see the conference as a useful means to exert pressure on the SED. The organized opposition by the three main parties in Western Europe convinced

[105] Quoted from Louis Menash, "End of the Bolshevik Tradition in the West", Carl Boggs, David Plotke ed., *The Politics of Eurocommunism: Socialism in Transition* (1980), 291-334, at 325.
[106] Robert Havemann, "Das sind schreckliche Wahrheiten", *Der Spiegel*, 05-07-1976
[107] Robert Havemann, "Der Sozialismus und die Freiheit", in: Havemann. *Berliner Schriften,* 101-105, at 102.

him that the events in the summer of 1976 represented a break with the past. As he expressed in an interview with Armin Beth for *Deutschlandfunk*: "At this conference, the communist parties of Western Europe finally asserted themselves against the Soviet Union's claim to hegemony."[108] This pointed to key elements of Havemann's conception of a radical transformation along socialist lines. At a time when the revolutionary tradition sharply declined, Havemann searched for a model that presented itself in opposition to the Soviet Union. It appeared that Eurocommunism had proven itself to be capable motor to engender the transformation, not only of the West, but of the East as well. In *Der Spiegel*, he emphasized that Western communism was not a "Western variety of communism", but it designated "communist politics." It was not only "independent of Moscow, but in sharp, critical opposition to the politics of the communist parties in the so-called socialist camp." According to Havemann, what the Soviet Union had produced and defended with all its might was not socialism: "At best, it can claim to be called a socialist revolution that got stuck halfway and has increasingly turned into a farce."[109] By mentioning this failed revolution, Havemann acknowledged that the centre for socialist renewal had now shifted to the West. In his view, Eurocommunism was the driving force that could overcome the stagnated Stalinist system. Even the reformists, he believed, were so stuck in old structures that their "consciousness of mission" got diluted."[110] He stated that only "with the help of the communist parties of Western Europe", could a "small minority in the party who thought independently" initiate a "new communist policy."[111]

Headed by Havemann, this orientation towards Eurocommunism seem to become a significant trend in oppositional spheres in the GDR. Yet, the threat of Eurocommunism contributed to growing repression and a crackdown on pluralist socialist ideals in the state. As the next chapter will demonstrate, severe curtailments in the freedoms of dissidents, evident in Biermann's expulsion and Havemann's house arrest, problematized Havemann's theory of the link between inner-relaxation and democratization.

[108] This interview was later published in *Europaïsche Ideen Verlag*, see Robert Havemann, Armin Beth, "Achtes Gespräch", in: Havemann, *Berliner Schriften*, 93-95, at 93.
[109] Havemann, "schreckliche Wahrheiten", *Der Spiegel*, 04-07.-1976
[110] Robert Havemann, „Die DDR nach Stalin", in: Havemann, *Berliner Schriften,* 96-100, at 100.
[111] Havemann, "schreckliche Wahrheiten", *Spiegel*.

Chapter 3. An end to Reform? Robert Havemann and the "Berlin Effect"

From 1976 onwards, Robert Havemann put his hopes on Eurocommunism. Yet, the context in which this took place was complicated and ambiguous. On the one hand, the East Berlin Congress of June 1976 promised a major transformation in the political, stagnated system. On the other hand, the East German state descended into more oppressiveness and harassment. Significantly, the SED ordered the expulsion of Wolf Biermann and put Havemann under permanent surveillance. An era of limited liberalization after Honecker's rise to power had come to pass. Nevertheless, the Wolf Biermann-affaire did not completely marked the end of reformism in the GDR. In the first part, this chapter will delve into the Wolf Biermann's expatriation. The second part will demonstrate why it corroded the prospects of socialist opposition. The last part qualifies this perspective by emphasizing continuities in Havemann's dissent.

3.1 The Expatriation of Wolf Biermann

For a few months, the spirit of the East Berlin Congress raised expectations within the ranks of the opposition. It seemed as though East German society was steering towards more openness. But the rise in optimism quickly dissipated in November 1976, when the government ordered the expulsion of East Germany's most vociferous critic, Wolf Biermann. A chain of protests and repressions was set in motion, leading to an exodus of East German socialists to West Germany. Sometimes portrayed as the beginning of the end, this section will scrutinize how the Wolf Biermann case unfolded.[112]

In the events leading up to November 1976, the East Berlin Congress loomed large in the minds of East German oppositionists. In fact, Wolf Biermann's journey to the West was predicated upon the belief that change was in the air. After an invitation from a West German trade union to perform in Cologne, Biermann applied for permission to travel to West Berlin. Much to his surprise, the state approved his application and allowed Biermann to perform in public. Unsure about the situation, he discussed with several artists and compatriots whether this official approval was genuine or not. Dissident-singer Gerulf Pannach recalled in 1992 that he and his friends told Biermann in Leipzig that they "thought it was actually okay" to journey to the West: "It was time for him to finally work on stage again, and the opportunity

[112] Fritz Pleitgen ed., *Wolf Biermann*, *Die Ausbürgerung: Anfang vom Ende der DDR* (2001).

was great", Pannach clarified.[113] In his memoir, Wolf Biermann remembered the feeling that "the historical wind had shifted favourably once again." He had conversations with Havemann about the official approval, and both agreed that the rise of Eurocommunism had enabled fruitful conditions to carve out spaces of freedom and further pressure the government for reform. In Biermann's words, the performance in Cologne was meant to function as "a trial balloon", a provocation in order to observe the reaction of the "reformist opposition within the Politburo." Any doubts about the government's intentions were assessed, but eventually dismissed due to the fact that the banishment of a communist would seriously harm the SED's reputation. As he remembered Havemann's blatant words at the time: "Our Honecker is a pig, but not an idiot!"[114] After the discussions with friends and family, Biermann left for West Germany.

Contrary to his expectations, however, the SED never intended to let Biermann back into the country after his tour. At the concert, Biermann had criticized the state of socialism in the world. Notably, he sang a song in West Germany in which he promoted a form of socialism the model of the Italian Communist Party: "*Die BRD braucht eine KP, wie ich sie wachsen und reifen seh', unter Italiens Sonnenschein, so soll es sein, so soll es sein, so wird es sein.*"[115] Even though Biermann also held speeches in which he professed his loyalty to the GDR multiple times, the SED used Biermann's critical attitude as a means to legitimize the measures against him. A few days later after the concert, the SED stripped Wolf Biermann of his citizenship while the latter was still touring through West Germany. It left the communist devastated, stuck in a capitalist state and unable to return to his former homeland.

Yet, the SED faced opposition from within its own ranks. A group of socialist intellectuals mobilized themselves in support for Biermann, many of whom, including Christa Wolf, Sarah Kirsch, Volker Braun and Stefan Heym, were regarded as esteemed writers of the GDR.[116] Now, they initiated a petition in protest against the measures of their own government. Despite Biermann being "an uncomfortable poet", the petition read, Biermann never had "allowed there to be any doubt about which German state he advocates. We protest his expatriation and ask that the measures taken be reconsidered."[117] Signed by hundreds of

[113] Gerulf Pannach, "Aus einem Interview von 1992", in: Fritz Pleitgen ed., *Wolf Biermann und andere Autoren. Die Ausbürgerung. Anfang vom Ende der DDR* (München 2001) 95-105, at 97.
[114] Wolf Biermann, *Warte nicht auf bessre Zeiten!* (2016; 2021 Berlin) 323-324.
[115] Nikolas Dörr, *Die Rote Gefahr. Der italienische Eurokommunismus als sicherheitspolitische Herausforderung für die USA und Westdeutschland 1969-1979* (Köln 2017) 183.
[116] Ann Stamp Miller, *The Cultural Politics of the German Democratic Republic. The Voices of Wolf Biermann, Christa Wolf, and Heiner Müller* (1999) 84-85.
[117] "Leading GDR Writers Protest the Expatriation of Wolf Biermann", November 17, 1976, available at https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1172 (last accessed online June 2024).

East Germans, including workers, dissidents and Marxist intellectuals, it marked the first major protest in East Germany since the uprising of 1953.

People from Robert Havemann's dissident circle at *Grünheide* also signed the petition, including Jürgen Fuchs and Gerulf Pannach. Deeply affected by Wolf Biermann's expulsion, many feared a further curtailment of the limited freedom. Robert Havemann expressed this concern in a personal letter to Honecker and appealed to the general-secretary to rethink this drastic measure.[118] Caught off guard, the SED regime was under pressure to respond to the first major protest since 1953. In the weeks that followed, a wave of crackdowns on the protesters were carried out. The SED swiftly forced distinguished individuals like Stefan Heym to revoke their support. Those who refused experienced systematic harassment and marginalization. Dissidents linked to Havemann's close circle witnessed especially harsh measures. One of them, the 25-year old writer Jürgen Fuchs, had been driving with Havemann when he was forced out of the car by the Stasi.[119] But the primary target of the SED was Havemann himself. With Biermann gone, the old ailing Marxist was one of the few prominent dissidents left in East Germany. As a result, the communist party ordered the dissident to be put under house arrest. Police blockaded the streets near *Grünheide* with vans and barriers, whilst Stasi agents took up residence at the neighbours and nearby houses.

3.2. Disillusion and Oppression: the Limits of Socialist Reform

The Wolf Biermann-Affaire formed a rapturous event, precisely because it followed a period of limited liberalization. Honecker's rise to power in 1971 had initially seen much hope and trust in the system. The GDR had been recognized as an independent state and artists gained more freedom to express themselves. This hope was still evident in the wake of Biermann's expatriation. The petitions by the intellectuals and Havemann's letter both indicated a plea for dialogue with the regime. Indeed, the language of these documents reflected a cautious and loyalist rhetoric, aimed at preserving the limited spaces of freedom. Yet, despite the loyalist tone, the government cracked down upon intelligentsia, demonstrating that the boundaries of civil liberties were even more narrower than originally thought.

Havemann's hopes on the transformative power of the conference in 1976 had not come to fruition. In fact, the threat of Eurocommunism seem to have contributed to an increase in repression. Havemann had appealed to the Eurocommunist parties in the West to pledge their support for Wolf Biermann and the PCI and the PCF did publicly condemn the

[118] "Fall Biermann: Honecker im Teufelskreis: Honecker im Teufelskreis", *Der Spiegel*, 21-11-1976.
[119] "Die führende Klasse und basta", *Der Spiegel*, 28-11-1976.

expulsion of Wolf Biermann.[120] However, the party made clear that it would not accept any further incursion of Eurocommunism in the wake of Biermann's expulsion. At an a conference for *Gesellschaftswissenschaftler* in 25 November, the leading ideologist of the SED, Kurt Hager, denounced Eurocommunism as a foreign bourgeois import dangerous to the socialist project. Hager stated that "the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist course" was the true path, not the "Eurocommunist-social democratic course represented by Biermann and Havemann."[121] Social-Democratic, in the eyes of orthodox party members, denoted a pro-Western attitude and undermined the revolutionary process.

Discrediting Eurocommunism was also employed as a torture tactic by the Stasi to pressure dissidents into submission, as seen in the case of Jürgen Fuchs. Like Havemann, Fuchs was intrigued by *Neues Deutschland's* publication of the Eurocommunist speeches in the summer of 1976. When the Stasi arrested him in November, they imprisoned and isolated him for over six months. In his book *Gedächtnisprotokolle Vernehmungsprotokolle*, Fuchs described the harrowing experience and how his beliefs were weaponized against him. Nearly a year after the hopeful East Berlin conference, his interrogator distressed him by stating that the Soviet Union had condemned Eurocommunism as an "enemy of peace and socialism", rather than a harbinger of democracy and freedom. Devastated by this revelation, Fuchs found it "increasingly difficult to assess the political situation."[122] After enduring months of isolation and psychological torture, he was deported to the West.

Fuchs' was forced into exile, but many other socialist intellectuals left the East disillusioned in the years after Wolf Biermann's expatriation. These included writers like Sarah Kirsch, but also actors like Manfred Krug. Following the series of repressive measures in November, the dissident circle at *Grünheide* had been broken apart. Havemann's daughter, the family of Biermann, Jürgen Fuchs' wife and many others emigrated to the West. Paradoxically, it were the loyal, though critical socialists that the regime permitted to leave. The exodus of socialist intellectuals over the course of the 1970s and 1980s contributed to the image of the GDR as unreformable. In subsequent literature, the expatriation has been regarded as a flashpoint, a watershed moment.[123] Indeed, it could even be argued that Eurocommunism had been overshadowed by the Wolf-Biermann Affaire. With the

[120] G. Ann Stamp Miller, *The Cultural Politics of the German Democratic Republic. The Voices of Wolf Biermann, Christa Wolf, and Heiner Müller* (2004), 93.
[121] Kurt Hager, quoted from Helmut König, "Moskau und die Eurokommunisten", *Osteuropa 28:10* (1978), 892-910, at 905; "Nach Biermann: Kampf dem Eurokommunismus", 12.12.1976, *Der Spiegel*.
[122] Jürgen Fuchs, *Gedächtnisprotokolle, Vernehmungsprotokolle* (Hamburg 1990) 209-210.
[123] David Robb, "Introduction", in: ibidem, *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s* (2007) 1-10, at 1; Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918–2014: The Divided Nation* (Oxford 2015), 239.

expatriation of a critical communist, the protest of socialist intellectuals against the measure and the subsequent crackdown on opposition, the impact of the conference of the summer in 1976 has seemed all but relevant. Biermann himself would later express in his autobiographical book how illusory and hallucinatory his belief in Eurocommunism was.[124] From this perspective, then, it seems to indicate that the expulsion was a rupture that sparked the end of reformism in the GDR. Yet, beliefs in reform remained alive underneath the ostensibly Marxist-Leninist monolith.

3.3. The Continuation of Reform Communism during Havemann's Isolation

" I'm not even thinking of leaving the GDR, where you can really see the regime losing all credit at every turn …"[125]

This statement comes from Havemann's autobiography, published more than a year after the events of November 1976. It expressed an ongoing belief in engendering change within the dictatorship, despite his own confinement and the overt surveillance by the secret police. This demonstrates that the Wolf Biermann's expulsion had not crushed his beliefs in reform communism. This section will demonstrate that instead of a rupture his house arrest reveals many continuities and even strengthened Havemann's endeavour to link up with Eurocommunism.

While the Wolf Biermann's expulsion contributed to a further erosion in the prospects of reform, not every socialist interpreted the Biermann's expulsion in the same fatalistic way. Perhaps the best example of this was Wolf Biermann himself. Exiled in West Germany, where he declined to become a citizen, he believed that this measure was only temporary. Months after his expatriation, Biermann expressed in an interview that the fear of the "Stalinists" for Eurocommunism's influence led to his exile: "All this is clearly due to Euro-Communism. Because Euro-Communist Parties have supported the tendencies of the internal socialist opposition." Moreover, Biermann expected that, "together with the Helsinki agreements", Eurocommunism would be "politically explosive" for the SED: "The Stalinist bureaucracy has its nose caught between the blades of Helsinki and Euro-Comminism and is crying out in pain."[126] This testified to the powerful resonance of a European Third-Way inspired by democratic socialist ideals.

---

[124] Biermann, *Warte nicht,* 324.
[125] Robert Havemann, *Ein deutscher Kommunist*, ed. by Manfred Wilke, (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1978) 9.
[126] Wolf Biermann, Thomas Hoernigk, review of *Two Interviews with Wolf Biermann*, by Wolf Biermann, trans. by Jack Zipes, *New German Critique*, 10 (1977), 13–27 at 24.

The case of Manfred Wilke illustrated how these ideals motivated transnational solidarity campaigns, leading to the partly removal of Havemann's barriers to the outside world. After Biermann's expulsion, Wilke set up a Committee for "*Freiheit und Sozialismus*" in support for the dissidents who were arrested in the wake of the protests. With a large network of dissidents, socialists and communists at both sides of the Iron Curtain, Wilke encouraged a transnational debate among dissidents covering topics such as reform communism, Solzhenitsyn and human rights, issuing multiple periodicals and editing publications in collaboration with Jiri Jiří Pelikán.[127] Throughout Havemann's house arrest, Wilke supported the dissident's reform communist programme by having Havemann as a contributor to his editions. Furthermore, he frequently corresponded with him and even managed to get an autobiography of Havemann's life published, *Robert Havemann, Ein deutscher Kommunist. Ruckblicke und Perspektiven aus der Isolation*. This was made possible by another dissident, Jürgen Fuchs.

Indeed, after his expulsion to the West, he became one of the important links with oppositional circles within the GDR. He made use of accredited journalists and diplomats in order to smuggle books and documents over the borders.[128] Throughout the period of Havemann's house arrest, he corresponded with Havemann collaborated closely with Manfred Wilke in an operation that led to an autobiographical book of Havemann's life and vision for the future. This book was not a written by Havemann himself. The circumstances prevented him from producing a book unnoticed. Instead, he was send a set of questions about his life together with a tape on which he could record his answers discreetly.

Besides Fuchs and Manfred Wilke, Havemann maintained contact with Biermann, Hartmut Jäckel and the French Germanist Jean-Pierre Hammer. Moreover, women also played an important intermediary role in Havemann's transnational opposition. His own wife, Katja Havemann, had relatively more freedom than the dissident to visit the neighbours, which allowed her to get into contact with the outside world through the neighbour's telephone.

Significantly, then, the house arrest of Havemann did not put an end to the cross-border activities of the dissident. Yet, one question still lingers: why did Havemann expect that change would still occur? A lengthy interview with Jean-Pierre Hammer, published in a French Marxist paper in 1978, Havemann revealed a rather bleak situation of the overt Stasi

[127] See the part "Jiri Pelikan und die Bürgerrechtler in Mittel- und Osteuropa", in: Manfred Wilke, "1968 und die Folgen", 173-175.
[128] "DDR-Kritiker Jürgen Fuchs: Heimliche Post vom Staatsfeind", *Der Spiegel*, 08-09-2014.

surveillance: “When I leave Grünheide by car, I am always followed by police cars, between two and five depending on the day. Five when my wife accompanies me. (…) At night there are lights which illuminate the borders of my property. (…) Whenever I say hello to someone on the street, my “companions” in uniform immediately demand their cards of identity and write their names down on a list.”[129]

An important reason was that Havemann believed, like Biermann, that the conference of 1976 was still a watershed moment. In the wake of his house arrest, he continued to refer to 1976 as a breakthrough in the international communist movement. In a letter to an old friend and colleague, Arnost Kolman, in 1978, he stated that with the Berlin Conference “the ruthless application of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" was no longer so easily possible.”[130] But his reason for staying in the GDR was also of a more fundamental nature. Havemann wanted to demonstrate that he was an alternative to orthodoxy in the GDR, especially after the crackdown on the protests had led to an exodus of socialist intellectuals. In the letter to Kolman - who had emigrated to Sweden - he emphasized how it was crucial for reform communists to resist the temptations of exile. Leaving East Germany, Havemann argued, would be a “awful disappointment to many great and still forward-looking people here in this country.” All of Havemann’s oppositional activities would be “forced out of people's consciousness” like what happened with many “literary emigrants.” [131] For the sake of having a certain degree of influence on the political evolution, then, Havemann remained in the GDR. Despite the isolation, the dissident still saw possibilities for organised opposition.

Signs of change did seem to emerge on the horizon with Rudolf Bahro. A member of the SED since 1952, Bahro had become increasingly disillusioned with a party that he found “patronising the citizens on a daily basis.” Like many other reformists and communists, the invasion of Czechoslovakia deeply impacted him, after which he had begun to develop a countermodel to state socialism.[132] With the end result, *Die Alternative,* Bahro criticized the GDR for failing to live up to its ideals, the bureaucratization of society and the emphasis on consumer goods, all of which alienated the masses from the government. Remaining faithful to socialism, Bahro called for a reinvigorated party. This party was dubbed the League of Communists, based upon equality and inner-party democracy rather than rule by a small

[129] Robert Havemann, Jean-Pierre Hammer, trans. by Jack Zipes, “Interview with Robert Havemann”, *New German Critique 15* (1978), 37-46, at 37-41.
[130] Letter Robert Havemann to Arnost Kolman, 16-03-1978, file RH0221 Bd.078.
[131] Ibidem.
[132] Rudolf Bahro, “Der Einmarsch hat mich persönlich betroffen”, in: Jiří Pelikán, Manfred Wilke ed., *Opposition ohne Hoffnung? Jahrbuch zu Osteuropa 2* (1979), 139-140, at 139-140.

group of Apparatchiks. The League would bring about social change by addressing the needs and interests of the working class.[133] After details of *Die Alternative* were leaked in West German press in 1977, the SED ordered his arrest and imprisonment. Before his arrest, Bahro managed to smuggle the manuscript out of the GDR. Receiving widespread coverage for *Die Alternative* amid his trial and incarceration, Bahro established himself as the most prominent dissident next to Havemann.

In letters to his friends, Havemann made clear that Bahro was a promising development in the GDR. To Wolf Biermann, the dissident wrote that the *Die Alternative* was an "amazing and extremely important" book. Together with the public protest against Biermann's expatriation Bahro's book had "shaken up" the "political situation" in East Germany.[134] In his letter to Kolman, he emphasized that "Bahro's example revealed that the political-theoretical contortions of the state-paid Marxist falsifiers at our universities cannot completely block access to the original ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin."[135] For Havemann, Bahro and Biermann, it was clear that reform communism was still a powerful force to be reckoned with in GDR society.

Yet, his house arrest did leave a substantial impact on where he located the driving force for social transformation. Certainly, he still believed that the communist party in East Germany would eventually lead the process of democratization, and this would have important repercussions in West Germany. Unlike the East, the capitalist class essentially maintained control over the system despite the Eurocommunist's growing influence in the countries of Western Europe. Therefore, he expected the transition of society to occur sooner in the East, where the roots of capitalism had already been destroyed. At the same time, however, ongoing repression across the Eastern bloc made Havemann more convinced of the structural deficits of the system. With Wolf Biermann's expatriation and his own house arrest in simultaneity with the emergence of a pluralist socialist approach in the West, he had now come to realize that the centre for communist renewal had shifted to Western Europe.

[133] Rudolf Bahro, *Die Alternative. Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus* (Frankfurt Am Main 1977).
[134] Letter Robert Havemann to Wolf Biermann, 26-09-1977, file RH0221 Bd.077.
[135] Letter Robert Havemann to Arnost Kolman, 16-03-1978, file RH0221 Bd.078.

Chapter 4. Entanglement with Eurocommunism

The previous chapter explored the ruptures and continuities in Havemann's reform communism in the context of Wolf Biermann's expulsion and his own house arrest. Despite increasing repression, Havemann continued his dissent and managed to circumvent Stasi surveillance under difficult circumstances. This chapter will examine why Havemann engaged with Eurocommunism during his isolation. The first part will analyse how Havemann chose Eurocommunism in light of another trend that became increasingly prevalent within the Eastern European dissident movements, namely human rights. The second part will look at how he formulated a Eurocommunist theory of socialist renewal, aiming to shift the movement's direction away from Leninism. Finally, the third section will explore how Eurocommunism provided Havemann with a platform to legitimize his critique within the international communist movement, focusing on his personal interactions with an Italian Eurocommunist.

4.1. Havemann's Eurocommunism and the Human rights Critique

Havemann's house arrest came at the moment of an emerging human rights trend in various states of the Eastern bloc, most prominently in Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Soviet dissidents like Andrei Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, or the Czechoslovakian human rights group Charta 77 became well-known symbols of dissent in the Eastern bloc. However, not every dissident believed that human rights advocacy was the most effective means of engendering change. The human rights trend existed alongside, and sometimes overlapped with, other forms of dissent. In the Soviet Union, Roy Medvedev advocated for a reform communist program inspired by Eurocommunism. Ideals of pluralism, parliamentarism and democratic socialism were embraced by various dissident circles, including Charta 77 and Marxist intellectual milieux in the GDR. These diverse trends were documented by Wilke and Pelikán in the periodical *Menschenrechte. Ein Jahrbuch zu Osteuropa*, published in 1977.[136] This publication provided a platform for a wide range of voices, including activists, dissidents, social democrats, communists from both East and West.

As one of the contributors to the volume, Robert Havemann sought to generate support for the Eurocommunist movement. His document was part of a correspondence with Jochen Steffen, a SPD politician and supporter for human rights activism.[137] Before delving into his

[136] Jiří Pelikán, Manfred Wilke, ed., *Menschenrechte. Ein Jahrbuch zu Osteuropa* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1977).
[137] Robert Havemann an Joachim Steffen, In: Jiří Pelikán, Manfred Wilke, ed., *Menschenrechte. Ein Jahrbuch zu Osteuropa* (Hamburg 1977), 474-477.

interactions with Eurocommunists, it is essential to consider Havemann's stance towards human rights and Eurocommunism.

In the first place, it touched upon a keystone of his dissent, providing insights into why he engaged with Eurocommunism during this period of isolation and increased repression in the Eastern bloc. Second, Havemann's position in the document had important ramifications, not only in regard to the strengthening of ties between like-minded reformists. It also shed light on a lack of transnational dialogue between GDR Marxists and dissidents from Czechoslovakia or Poland in the second half of the 1970s. Whereas the Polish and Czechoslovakian dissidents regularly established contact with each other in the second half of the 1970s, no lasting relationship was formed between Havemann and Chartists or intellectuals from the Workers' Defence Committee.[138] Notably, this absence was reflected in Havemann's essays and theoretical contributions he managed to smuggle out of his isolation, despite his awareness of these developments. There were almost no references to the human rights groupings.[139] Why, then, did he reject human rights, and chose Eurocommunism as the driving force for change?

In his letter to Steffen, Havemann did not denounce the concept of rights outright, but he was very sceptical of its usefulness in overcoming bloc-confrontation. In his view, it might actually reproduce the tensions between East and West, due to both sides continuously "beating" the other side with the "human rights stick." Where the West accused the authoritarian East of violating "political rights", the East denounced the lack of "social rights" in the capitalist West. But for Havemann, human rights was indivisible, and therefore, each bloc would do well to focus on their own shortcomings. Human rights was "indivisible", just like socialism and democracy were indivisible. As a result, the East should embrace democratic ideals, and the West should progress towards socialism, according to Havemann. In European socialism, the merging between political and social rights would be realized.[140] Havemann, then, prioritised democratic socialism in overcoming the Cold War and reconstruct Europe on the principles of socialist democracy. In his view, this process of West and East steering towards socialist democracy was mutually depended upon one another. As

[138] "Bericht über das tschechoslowakisch-polnische Treffen", in: Jiří Pelikán, Manfred Wilke ed., *Opposition ohne Hoffnung? Jahrbuch zu Osteuropa 2* (1979), 217.
[139] In one of the few essays, the dissident movements were mentioned. But this was an unpublished manuscript, and it referred only once to Charta 77 and Polish protests. See Werner Theuer, Bernd Florath, "Dokument 21. Entspannung und Opposition", in: ibidem ed., *Bibliographie Robert Havemann. Mit unveröffentlichten Texten aus dem Nachlass* (Berlin 2007) 370-374, at 373.
[140] Robert Havemann an Joachim Steffen, In: Jiří Pelikán, Manfred Wilke, ed., *Menschenrechte. Ein Jahrbuch zu Osteuropa* (Hamburg 1977), 474-477, at 474-475.

he stated: "Any progress on the road to democracy that we achieve in the East would inspire the struggle of the socialist labour movement in the West, just as, conversely, any progress on the road to socialism that the socialist and communist parties in the West achieve would also support our struggle for democracy and political human rights in the countries of real socialism."[141]

He believed that Eurocommunist parties were the driving force behind this project. They had demonstrated their independence from the Soviet Union at the conference of 1976 and transcended the East-West struggle. Underlying his rejection of human rights was his idea that the concept was too much embedded in the confrontation between East and West. Instead, what Havemann was looking for was a movement that operated independently of the military blocs. This vision was related to his anti-fascist past, and coloured by his views on capitalism and socialism. He still believed that the Eastern bloc regimes was more capable of change than the capitalist West. In his letter, he stated that that it was "easier" to "bring a group of powerful communist leaders" who were "still loyal to the cause of the working class to overcome their prejudices" than to "eliminate the privileges of the bourgeois class" in the west.

While Havemann thereby joined the Eurocommunist path to gradual transformation, his insistence on a socialist programme also generated confusion and misunderstanding. Human rights activists of the Czechoslovakian group, Charta 77, demonstrated little interest in the reform communist opposition in the GDR, even distancing themselves from the perceived loyalist rhetoric of the Marxists.[142] A great illustration of this discomfort was expressed by the exiled dissident and supporter of Charta 77, Jiří Pelikán. Asked by Hartmut Jäckel to provide a contribution to his book in honour of Havemann's 70th birthday in 1980, Pelikán wrote a piece to proclaim his solidarity with the East German dissident. At the same time, however, he criticized him for putting too much faith in the "ruling groups in the countries of real socialism."[143] Given the book's aim, the critique of Pelikan reflects an interesting glimpse into the mutual perceptions that informed the relationships between different opposition groups. In this case, mutual solidarity was more imagined than real.

[141] Ibidem 477. See also next quote on the same page.
[142] See Tomas Vilimek, "Oppositionists in the CSSR and the GDR. Mutual Awareness, Exchanges of Ideas and Cooperation, 1968-1989", in: Robert Brier ed., *Entangled Protest: Transnational Approaches to the History of Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (2013), 56-86.
[143] Jiří Pelikán,"Warum ist es schwer, ein Kommunist in der DDR zu sein", in: Hartmut Jäckel ed., *Ein Marxist in der DDR. Für Robert Havemann* (München 1980) 44-54, at 53.

In turn, Havemann expressed uneasiness with the persistence of human rights activism. Months after the publication of the correspondence, Havemann wrote in his letter to Arnost Kolman that the focus on human rights distracted dissidents from the fundamental problems facing socialist renewal: "We hear a lot about the Soviet civil rights movement. But apart from Medvedev none of these critics seem to think much of socialism and communism in general, and they are only campaigning against the excesses and external symptoms of really existing socialism instead of attacking it at its roots. And that would mean recognising this disgusting distortion of socialism for what it is: the dictatorship of a handful of bigwigs."[144]

According to Havemann, then, human rights exemplified an ineffective method to engender change, embodying the problems of Cold War rivalry rather than solving the fundamental nature of the conflict. An interdependent process where democratization in the Eastern bloc was accompanied by parliamentarism in the West was the only road towards change, and Eurocommunism embodied the driving force in this process. Therefore, unlike many Soviet human rights dissidents and Chartists, the East German held on to a vision of great societal transformation.

But Havemann's rejection of human rights did not imply a passive acceptance of Eurocommunist ideals. He sought to actively shape the Eurocommunist current. Already a few weeks after his house arrest, he wrote to wolf Biermann that the exiled singer should "seek the most intensive contact with comrades from" the various Eurocommunist parties." He further stated: "In future, I want to publicize all political statements and publications exclusively through the publication organs of these parties."[145] The next section will illustrate how Havemann critically engaged with the communist identity by leveraging the platforms offered by Western Communist Parties.

4.2. A United Front, the Renewal of Socialism and De-Leninization

The conference of 1976 had a profound impact on Havemann. Eurocommunism's public opposition to Soviet hegemony, after decades of perceived decline and stagnation, suggested that the movement could have significant repercussions for the Eastern bloc. However, Havemann did not see Eurocommunism merely as a potential catalyst for socialist transformation in the East. He was increasingly fascinated by Eurocommunists' efforts to cooperate with non-communist parties in the West, such as the Historic Compromise in Italy

[144] Letter Robert Havemann to Arnost Kolman, 16-03-1978, file RH0221 Bd.078
[145] Letter Robert Havemann to Wolf Biermann, 27-12-1976, file RH0221 Bd.076.

and the *Union de la Gauche* in France. In 1977, an article by him appeared in the PCI's journal *Studi Storici*, praising the rapprochement between former rivals. An excerpt of this was published in *Der Spiegel* under the title *Diktatur oder Demokratie?*[146] The article reflected Havemann's concerns about a thorough renewal of the international communist movement, linking the emergence of a new united front on the left with the necessity of De-Leninization.

Havemann's support for the policies of the West European parties reflected his own ideological convictions about peaceful change and parliamentarism. In fact, he elaborated upon these concepts of revolution, transformation and gradualism in his essays and his autobiography of 1978.[147] According to Havemann, revolution was not a great "upturn", but the end result of a long, gradual road towards democratization in the East and socialization in the West. The cooperation between Eurocommunists and non-communist forces in Italy , through the Historic Compromise, and France, through the agreement between Marchais Mitterand, was part of this strategy towards socialism. These non-communist forces were not reactionaries, but part of new proletariat, "not in the traditional, industrial sense.' By "uniting all the progressive forces" in society, Havemann believed, capitalism could be overcome peacefully and without "barricades." He wholeheartedly supported Eurocommunism's policy of reform. For Havemann, Eurocommunism had inherited the ideals of the 19th century labour movement, while the importance of the October Revolution had greatly diminished.

This was reflected in his article *Diktatur oder Demokratie.* The central argument in this essay was that Lenin made a "great historical mistake" by forcing a "split" between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. This had thrown "Russian social democracy" into crisis and anticipated the divisions within the international communist movement. However, the emergence of Eurocommunism promised to mend the split in the international communist movement. As he wrote: "I believe the true political essence of the Eurocommunist movement lies in overcoming this division and achieving a new, higher level of unity."[148]

In legitimizing Eurocommunism as the heir to the 19th century labour movement, Havemann invoked another Marxist thinker, Rosa Luxemburg. Luxemburg had criticized Lenin's dictatorship in her pamphlet *The Russian Revolution,* particularly the centralization of power in the hands of a few Bolsheviks. She argued that this centralization diminished the

[146] An excerpt of this was published in *Der Spiegel*, see Robert Havemann, "Haben unsere führenden Genossen Mut?", *Der Spiegel*, 05-06-1977.
[147] Robert Havemann, *Ein deutscher Kommunist*, ed. by Manfred Wilke, (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1978). See the part, *Perspektiven*, 85-103. The following quotations are from this part.
[148] Robert Havemann, "Haben unsere führenden Genossen Mut?", *Der Spiegel*, 05-06-1977.

power of the people's councils. Havemann's decision to reclaim Luxemburg was partly influenced by the fact that her works were published in the GDR in 1974, a point noted by the dissident himself.[149] He referenced her concept of "red democracy", which emphasized a "free socialist society" with "freedom of the press also for those who think differently, freedom of assembly and the right to strike, freedom of faith, of ideology, of artistic creation, i.e. the abolition of any interference or paternalism in culture and science by the state."[150] However, the focus was not solely on Luxemburg's ideas but rather on her condemnation of Leninist revolutionary theories. By utilizing Rosa Luxemburg's critique of the October Revolution, Havemann sought to discredit the legacy of the Soviet Union without stepping outside the boundaries of communist thought. Highlighting the mistakes of Lenin who divided the worker's movement, Havemann emphasized continuity between the unified labour movement of the 19th century and the Eurocommunist movement of the present. In doing so, Havemann made clear that Leninism was an aberration that had to be abandoned.

Havemann's advocacy for a form of Marxism that broke with the Leninist past parallelled similar developments within the PCE. Throughout the 1970s years, the Spanish communists had become the most ardent critics of the Soviet Union. In his speeches at international congresses, such as the East Berlin conference of 1976, General-Secretary Santiago Carillo expressed fervent criticism of the Eastern bloc states.[151] In 1977, he published a book in which he denounced the Soviet model, labelling Lenin's theories as "outdated."[152] The book's message resonated widely on both sides of the Iron Curtain, with dissidents in Prague secretly distributing and discussing it.[153] In response, the Soviet Union orchestrated a slander campaign against Carillo, portraying the Spanish leader as "anti-Soviet."[154] However, the PCE continued to steer towards a confrontational course. At the ninth congress of the PCE, the name "Leninist Party" was officially dropped. One of the foremost ideologues, Manual Azcárate legitimized this decision by pointing out that the PCE is a "democratic party" that draws "its inspiration from Marxism and from whatever continues to be valid in the thought of Lenin and other revolutionaries."[155]

---

[149] Havemann an Steffen, In: *Menschenrechte,* 476.
[150] Havemann, " führenden Genossen?", *Spiegel*.
[151] Faraldo, "Entangled Eurocommunism", 663-667.
[152] See Santiago Carillo, *Eurocomunismo y Estado* (Barcelona 1977).
[153] Paul Hoffman, "Prague Reads About Eurocommunism Clandestinely", *New York Times*, 24-07-1977.
[154]This critique would later be published in the SED's *Neues Deutschland.* It would be one of the few instances in which the SED did not remain silent on the phenomenon of Eurocommunism, see: "Entgegen den Interessen des Friedens und des Sozialismus in Europa", *Neues Deutschland*, 25/26-06-1977, 10.
[155] Manual Azcárate, "What is Eurocommunism?", in: G.R. Urban, *Eurocommunism. Its roots and future in Italy and elsewhere*, (London 1978) 13-31, at 30.

Unsurprisingly, Havemann greatly admired the PCE, particularly Santiago Carillo. In 1975, he and Biermann were deeply impressed by his interview-book, *Spanien nach Franco*. A few years later, he expressed his fascination with the party's developments in a letter to Jürgen Fuchs, stating that Carillo "made the most progress by quite a wide margin" in "overcoming long-established prejudices." He praised the Spanish communist who "not only had an effect on Spain and Western Europe, but also a very strong one on us here."[156] This admiration was not merely admiration. But it also spoke of how Eurocommunism should pursue socialist renewal. According to Havemann, by abandoning the Leninist past and reclaiming the democratic ideals of earlier Marxist thinkers, Eurocommunism could become an effective force that restored the traditional worker's movement to its former glory.

The cooperative efforts between communists and socialists greatly inspired Havemann in his vision of socialist transformation. He recognized that a united front among the left required a decisive break from the dictatorial legacy of the Soviet Union. Consequently, he promoted a form of de-Leninization, as evident in his article for a left-wing theoretical journal. In his view, Santiago Carillo and his party best personified this historical evolution from Leninism towards socialist democracy.

Havemann also sought to use the opportunities Eurocommunism provided to break out of his isolation. This became apparent in personal, cross-border interactions with Eurocommunists. Indeed, as the next section demonstrates, his systematic support for Eurocommunism translated into close cooperation between him and the Italian Communist, Lucio Lombardo-Radice, while he was still under strict surveillance. Their partnership reflected a potentially fruitful dialogue that could offer a way out for regime-critics and transcend their dissident status.

4.3. From Communist Dissent to Legitimate Communism: The Interaction between Robert Havemann and Lucio-Lombardo Radice

Although the Italian communists remained cautious about escalating tensions between the SED and the PCI in the 1960s, the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in 1976 deeply antagonised them. This led to an open confrontation, with PCI leader Enrico Berlinguer challenging Honecker on the GDR's lack of legality and arbitrariness of state action.[157] In this context, Lombardo-Radice emerged as a committed ally for Havemann. A member of the central

[156] Letter Robert Havemann to Jürgen and Lilo Fuchs, 06-08-1978, RH0221 Bd.078.
[157] Magda Martini, "Die DDR der italienischen Linken. Erfindung und Entzauberung einer kulturellen Projektion", *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 58:2* (2010), transl. By Tobias Hof, 231-257, at 247-248.

committee of the PCI and a mathematician by training, Lombardo-Radice had been familiar with the East German nestor of opposition since the middle of the 1960s.[158] Both shared similar views about the stagnation of socialism in the Soviet Union. In an interview with George Urban of Radio Free Europe, for instance, Lombardo-Radice argued that "there must be complete freedom in Socialist society or else it cannot call itself Socialist."[159] In early 1977, the two communists managed to meet in secret, leading to a productive relationship that extended across the East-West divide. How did this came about?

Through Havemann's network, most prominently Hartmut Jäckel, Lombardo-Radice circumvented Stasi surveillance and met the East German dissident unopposed at an appartement in the capital. This was only possible, because Havemann was allowed to travel to East Berlin. Despite this, it was still a very difficult task to meet in private, and the two reform-minded communists had to ensure that the Stasi would remain ignorant. Knowing that the secret police eavesdropped, Havemann often used a record-player to mask his conversations.[160] In the case of Lombardo-Radice, the secret service found out about the identity of the Italian communist only long after he had left for West Germany.[161]

The meeting at the appartement in Berlin between a leading figure of the PCI and one of the Eastern bloc's most closely monitored dissidents was striking. It indicated a strong sense of solidarity and mutual recognition. But what exactly was the purpose of the meeting? Answers could be found in Lombardo-Radice's actions following the meeting with Havemann. Only days after the meeting to East Berlin, *Der Spiegel* interviewed the Italian communist about his encounter with the dissident. Despite his claims that it "was not primarily a political visit", he defended Havemann's activities and calls for reform. Havemann, he asserted, "was no enemy of the GDR", but "a loyal communist." The East German stood "within our movement, not outside it." He reproached the SED for its repressive measures against him, stating that it was "a great mistake to treat a man, a comrade, a scientist like Robert Havemann in this way."[162] The link between Havemann and the international movement communist movement was crucial. Lombardo-Radice stressed that Havemann was not an internal enemy and an agent of Western powers, but a loyal communist who was part of the movement.

---

[158] "Havemann", *Der Spiegel,* 23-01-1966.
[159] Lucio Lombardo Radice, "Communism with an Italian Face", in: G.R. Urban, *Eurocommunism. Its roots and future in Italy and elsewhere* (London 1978) 32-57, at 36.
[160] Similar meetings like those between Havemann and Lombardo-Radice are described in Havemann's biography, see Havemann, Widmann, *Robert Havemann,* 200-203.
[161] Martini, "Die DDR der italienischen Linken", 255.
[162] Lucio Lombardo-Radice, "Havemann ist ein sehr treuer Kommunist", *Der Spiegel*, 27-02-1977.

This moral support and vindication of Havemann's dissent were further expressed through the rehabilitation of his antifascist past. A few years earlier, the SED had intensified a slander campaign against Havemann, denouncing him as a conformist who had profited politically and scientifically from the Nazi regime. In 1975, the SED officially expelled Havemann from the *Komitee der Antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer*.[163] This was one of many efforts by the SED to undermine Havemann's calls for democracy and pluralism. Therefore, gaining credence from a well-established Marxist in the international communist movement was crucial for the dissident's image.

On behalf of Havemann, Lombardo-Radice wrote an epilogue to his autobiography, *Ein Deutscher Kommunist*, edited by Manfred Wilke. In this contribution, Lombardo-Radice portrayed him as an antifascist war hero who fought for the "indivisibility of socialism and freedom." He argued that those who "survived the bloody battle for the restoration of freedom" during the Nazi-regime would "logically" become the "defenders" of Eurocommunism.[164] By drawing a straight line between Havemann's antifascist past and his Eurocommunist present, Lombardo-Radice depicted him as a true communist who consistently upheld Marxist ideals of emancipation, equality and freedom.

Thus, the two communists aimed to establish Havemann as a legitimate communist. To achieve this, Lombardo-Radice offered Havemann a significant bridge to the PCI and its media outlets. The Italian communist assisted in translating his essay, *Diktatur and Demokratie*, which would later be published in the PCI's journal *Studi Storici*.[165] This essay, then, reflected the diverse character of Havemann's dissent in these years. It illustrated his attempts to steer the Eurocommunist movement towards a critical engagement with its past, while using Eurocommunism as a platform to legitimize himself as a committed communist within the international movement.

In addition, Lombardo-Radice facilitated Havemann's frequent contributions to the PCI's newspaper, *l'Unitá*. This provided another core medium through which Havemann voiced his critique of the SED and informed the public about the oppression he experienced. An example of this occurred during a tightening of repressive measures in 1979. On April the 18th, Havemann managed to smuggle a secret statement out of the GDR, with an appeal to the

[163] Klaus Richter, Manfred Wilke, "Opponent und Bürgerrechtler", in: Dirk Draheim, ed., e.a., *Robert Havemann: Dokumente eines Lebens* (1991) 191-239, at 213.
[164] Lucio Lombardo-Radice, "Rote Fahnen in Grünheide", *Der Spiegel*, 06-05-1979; Lucio Lombardo-Radice, *Die Kommunisten der dreißiger Jahre. Ein Nachwort*, in: Robert Havemann, *Ein deutscher Kommunist. Ruckblicke und Perspektiven aus der Isolation*, ed., by Manfred Wilke (Hamburg 1978) 155-159, at 155-159.
[165] This was mentioned in the letter by Robert Havemann to Arnost Kolman, 16-03-1978, RH0221 Bd.078. A shorter version of the essay was also published in *Der Spiegel*.

"comrades" of the PCI "to publish" this document in the party newspaper.[166] A few days later, subscribers to *l'Unitá* could read the statement in its entirety, revealing the dire situation of the Havemann family.[167] It contributed to growing international pressure on the SED. A few weeks after the publication, on the 9th of May, 1979, Havemann's house arrest was lifted, allowing him to travel relatively freely within the GDR.

The link with the Eurocommunist parties was very significant, providing Havemann with a platform beyond Western liberal media. Unlike those outlets, Eurocommunist media offered a legitimate framework within which he could critique the dictatorial conditions of the Eastern bloc. Until his death in 1982, Havemann was considered a fellow compatriot by the Italian communist party, providing numerous theoretical and polemical works from his isolation in Grünheide.

The interaction between Havemann and Lombardo-Radice highlighted the tactics that underscored the Third Way. By emphasizing Havemann's credibility as a communist, they aimed to garner support on both sides of the Iron Curtain and exert pressure on the regime by exhibiting Havemann's antifascist identity. Additionally, Lombardo-Radice, a prominent figure within the PCI, served as a crucial point of contact for Havemann, enabling him to publish his works within Western Europe's largest communist party. Their relationship suggested a potential transnational dialogue between dissidents and Eurocommunists.

However, the interaction also shed light on the limitations of the Third Way. Most prominently, the dictatorial context made interactions between Havemann and Eurocommunists exceptionally difficult. Furthermore, the fact that only a few Eurocommunists systematically spoke on behalf of Havemann indicated a cautious and inconsistent approach on the part of the Eurocommunists. The epilogue will explore how this ambiguity impacted Havemann in the context of Eurocommunism's decline.

[166] Lucio Lombardo-Radice, "Rote Fahnen in Grünheide", *Der Spiegel*, 06-05-1979.
[167] "Lo scienziato e studioso marxista agli arresti domiciliari nella RDT", 22-04-1979, *l'Unitá*, 18.

Chapter 5. Epilogue: Robert Havemann and the Eclipse of Reform Communism

The last chapter demonstrated how the Third Way unfolded in the context of Havemann's house arrest. This thesis concludes by tracing Havemann's journey from Eurocommunism to peace activism in the last years of his life. This shift began with the ambiguous practices of Eurocommunists to reform both blocs from within. Havemann identified this inconsistent approach as insufficient, particularly in addressing the plight of socialist dissidents. He believed these cautious practices further eroded Eurocommunism's credibility in Western Europe, which he greatly feared. His concerns were validated by a discrediting campaign launched by the Italian socialists against the Eurocommunists. Despite Havemann's efforts to mediate the conflict, hopes for a united front dissipated. By 1979, the Eurocommunist movement had collapsed due to internal division, external pressure and domestic stagnation. When the Cold War re-escalated, the Eurocommunist program for European transformation fell apart. Consequently, Havemann turned away from Eurocommunism towards peace activism. Influenced by the rise of social movements like Solidarnosc in Poland and the West German peace movement, the East German Marxist embraced grassroots reform shortly before his death.

5.1. Dilemmas of the Third Way: Rudolf Bahro, solidarity and the credibility of the Eurocommunists

The ambiguous stance of Eurocommunist proponents towards dissidents related to balancing the vision of overcoming the Cold War with the complex ties to both the Soviet Union and the West. The PCI and the PCE had to work within the frameworks of the Western powers and the international communist movement at the same time. For the PCI, this meant supporting the Christian-Democratic party in power, while seeking to increase Eurocommunism's influence in one-party states like Janos Kadar's Hungary.[168] In practice, the party's critical attitude towards Eastern bloc states was complex, reflected in their inconsistent approach to the repression of oppositionists. In early 1977, for instance, a commentator from the Washington Post noted the party's rather "cautious" and "restrained dealings with Eastern dissidents."[169] Even the PCE, a fierce critic of the Soviet Union, had a conflicting record when it came to its

[168] Pons, "Rise and Fall of Eurocommunism", 60.
[169] Sari Gilbert, "Italian Communists Quiet on Dissent", 24-02-1977, *the Washington Post*.

support for dissidents.[170] This ambiguity frustrated Havemann, who was more radical in his approach.

An example of this concerned the case of the East German dissident Rudolf Bahro. Imprisoned for his critical views of state socialism in 1977, Bahro was, in Havemann's view, representative of the resonance of reform communist ideals among the upper ranks of the GDR.[171] According to Havemann, it was absolutely necessary that Bahro remained in the GDR and help sustain a democratic alternative to authoritarian socialism. To increase on the government to release Bahro, Havemann appealed to his contacts to initiate a solidarity campaign in cooperation with Eurocommunists. Writing to Wolf Biermann in September 1977, Havemann stated: "I expect that our Euro-comrades will stand up for Bahro. I believe it is absolutely necessary and politically right."[172]

Yet, what followed was only sporadic support for Bahro. Most of the responses came from well-known critics, such as Lucio Lombardo-Radice and Jean Elleinstein.[173] But the parties initiated no campaigns to pressure the GDR regime. Havemann noted this lack of support in his letter Kolman in March of 1978: "It is not enough to distance oneself temporarily in a newspaper from the treatment of a man like Bahro in the GDR." Significantly, Havemann pointed out that an inconsistent stance towards dissidents endangered the "credibility of Eurocommunism." He noted that "all manifestations of actual or even apparent conformism" of Eurocommunists could be quite "damaging" to the project of a Third Way.[174] Following this, he elaborated how a campaign of solidarity should look like: "It is very important that decisive steps are taken in his favour on the international level. This includes translations of his writings, ideally brought about by the Communist parties' publishing houses. An international discussion of his most important theses must be started in journals, radio and TV programmes."[175] Solidarity with dissidents like Bahro, then, was of the utmost importance for transcending the political boundaries of the Cold War. Havemann knew that anything less than unequivocal support would discredit the image of Eurocommunism as an independent actor.

The Bahro Congress in 1978 illustrates even more the discrepancy between Havemann's expectations and the practice of Eurocommunism. Organized by the Technical

[170] Jiri Valenta, "Eurocommunism and Eastern Europe", 51.
[171] See chapter three.
[172] Letter Robert Havemann to Wolf Biermann, 26-09-1977, RH0221 Bd.077.
[173] Rudi Steinke, Walter Süss, Ulf Wolter and Michel Vale, "His Refrain Is Heard around the World: An Initial Assessment of the Bahro Congress", International Journal of Politics, *2/3:10* (1980), . 213-233, at 226.
[174] Letter Robert Havemann to Arnost Kolman, 16-03-1978, RH0221 Bd.78.
[175] Ibidem.

University in West Berlin in November 1978, The "International Congress on and for Rudolf Bahro" sought to unite all the disparate groups of the left, from communists to the New left. By supporting Bahro and discussing his concepts and ideas, the Congress hoped to achieve common insights for a left-wing programme. It was the most significant manifestation of international solidarity, with thousands of participants.[176] When he heard of the upcoming Bahro Congress in November 1978, Havemann wrote to Jürgen Fuchs that he held "high hopes" for this endeavour. At the same time, it was crucial, Havemann believed, that Eurocommunists like Lombardo-Radice or French party member Jean Ellenstein should be "involved."[177]

However, both Eurocommunists did not attend the Congress, despite their earlier critiques of Bahro's imprisonment. In fact, the organizers of Congress revealed that there were almost no representatives from the Eurocommunists. Only the Italian Communist Party send one delegate, Angelo Bolaffi. The French and Spanish parties had no presence at the congress.[178] It is unknown how Havemann's responded or if he did hear about the absence of Eurocommunists at the congress. But his fears that the credibility of the Eurocommunism was coming under increasing attack materialised. Just before the Congress, two members of the Italian Socialist Party started an offensive in the SPD magazine, *Berliner Stimme:* "We are convinced that Eurosocialism and not Eurocommunism is the force that will fulfill the expectations of those who are in opposition in the countries of real socialism."[179] That there were almost no representatives present at the congress only seemed to confirm this statement. Eurocommunism inspired little trust if it did not pursue an equidistant position consistently, as Havemann already stated before. And the fact that socialists now opened the attack on communists marked a fundamental problem that shook the foundations of the Third Way. Instead of the prospect of a united left, Havemann witnessed an increase in hostilities between the communists and the socialists.

5.2. Crisis and Decline of the Eurocommunist' Third Way

The critique in *Berliner Stimme* was part of a broader shift within the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). Led by Bettino Craxi, the PSI abandoned Marxism in the course of the 1970s. Craxi

[176] Jeffrey Lee Canfield, "Marxist Revisionism in East Germany: The Case of Rudolf Bahro", *The Fletcher Forum 4:1* (1980) 23-48, at 28-29.
[177] Letter Robert Havemann to Jürgen and Lilo Fuchs, 06-08-1978, RH0221_Bd.078.
[178] Steinke, e.a., His Refrain Is Heard around the World, *International Journal of Politics,* at 221. 226-227.
[179] Ibidem 222.

steered his party towards confrontation with the PCI, a party three times larger, by denouncing its Marxist-Leninist past and its ties with the Soviet Union. He hoped to gain appeal from the Italian electorate and further isolate the PCI.[180] In a letter to Havemann in November 1978, Manfred Wilke informed the East German of this feud between the communists and socialists. He asked him to publicly "intervene" on the matter.[181]

By intervening, Havemann and Wilke hoped to preserve the Third Way amidst growing antagonisms. In Havemann's view, this necessitated not only a systematic critique of the Soviet Union but also required communists to be critical of their own past. Eurocommunists often struggled to distance themselves from the foundational moment of 1917 in public. This was evident in an interview conducted by George Urban of Radio Free Europe with Lucio Lombardo-Radice. When asked if "the Leninist interpretation of Communism" was "morally wrong and a practical failure", Lombardo-Radice responded that it was indeed "utterly false" in today's conditions. However, he also argued that Leninism remained "the most powerful motor for liberation in human history."[182] This comment highlighted the importance for communists to distinguish themselves from social democrats. But it also revealed a fundamental problem. If Eurocommunists aspired to a gradual transformation of Europe, their revolutionary identity was the main obstacle, providing opponents like Craxi ammunition to discredit the Eurocommunist project.

When a breakdown in cooperation between socialists and communists loomed large, Havemann responded in January 1979 with an open letter to the communist mayor Gabbuggiani, reproaching the increasing hostilities in the face of "the major changes that lie ahead of us." He was "convinced that the political developments in Italy will be of great importance for the whole of Europe, especially for the coming changes in the GDR." However, this would require a "restoration of the unity of all forces of socialism beyond the boundaries of the traditional parties." Havemann sought to save the Third Way of the communists by pointing out that Lenin made a "fundamental error in the days of the October Revolution" by establishing a dictatorship and "the rule of a clique." This "weakened the socialist movement as a whole" and paved the way for "Stalin's inhuman dictatorship."[183] By

[180] Gianluca Fantoni, "After the Fall: Politics, the Public Use of History and the Historiography of the Italian Communist Party, 1991–2011", *Journal of Contemporary History 49:4* (2014), 815-836, at 815-816.
[181] Letter Manfred Wilke to Robert Havemann, 09-11-1978, RH0221 Bd.078.
[182] Lucio Lombardo Radice, "Communism with an Italian Face", in: G.R. Urban, *Eurocommunism. Its roots and future in Italy and elsewhere*, (London 1978) 32-57, at 50-51.
[183] Letter Robert Havemann to Gabbuggiani, 08-01-1979, file RH02201 Bd.079.

presenting Leninism as anathema to genuine socialism, Havemann hoped to mitigate the crisis between the communists and socialists in Italy.

However, it became increasingly clear that Eurocommunism was too divided and limited in its influence to provide an effective counter-model to the Soviet Union. As some contemporary commentators pointed out, the Eurocommunist movement began to collapse, and "public interest in the phenomenon" gradually "waned" after a series of setbacks. The French communists did not profit from its cooperation with the socialists, but lost a substantial part of their electorate to Mitterand's party. After this deception, the French communists gradually turned away from Eurocommunism. Re-adopting orthodox positions, the PCF sought rapprochement with Brezhnev and ended its partnership with the socialists in 1978. During Spain's first democratic elections, the PCE's gains were modest at best.[184] While the PCI remained a large force in society, conditions were becoming less favourable. Besides the condemnations by Craxi's party, the communists encountered growing anti-communist sentiments. The once-celebrated Historic Compromise disintegrated in 1979. Eurocommunism had, in the words of a *New York Times* correspondent, "faded away as any kind of cohesive political force" by April 1979.[185]

The decline of Eurocommunism was also reflected in Havemann's dissident activities. In September 1979, he published his *Ten Theses* in light of the thirtieth anniversary of the GDR.[186] Besides his general critique the existing conditions of dictatorship, his reference to Eurocommunism and its difficulties in Western Europe was particularly notable. In his eight thesis, he highlighted the dilemma of Eurocommunism facing increasing hostilities from the East and the West. On one side, the reform communists had to "make it credible" that this socialism "absolutely guarantees" liberty. On the other side, Havemann argued, this would most likely elicit the accusation of "serving the interests of the class enemy" by the Eastern bloc regimes.[187] This statement did not only reflect the situation of Eurocommunism but also pointed to the persistent dilemma facing socialist dissidents, stuck between an authoritarian regime and a capitalist West. The *Ten Theses* illustrated the failure of reform at home and the end of a transnational project in overcoming the political boundaries through a socialist Third Way.

---

[184] Edward Mortimer, Jonathan Story, Paolo Filo Della Torre, "Whatever Happened to 'Eurocommunism'?", *International Affairs 55:4* (1979), 574-585, at 574.
[185] Flora Lewis, "Events Have Left Eurocommunism Behind", 15-04-1979, *New York Times*.
[186] Robert Havemann, "Zehn Thesen zum 30. Jahrestag der DDR", in: Robert Havemann, *Die Stimme des Gewissens*, Rüdiger Rosenhal ed., (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1990) 193-201, at 197.
[187] Ibidem 198.

5.3 A Dream of Socialist Renewal from Below

With the escalation of the Cold War in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Eurocommunist project came at an end. The relations between the Soviet Union and the United States hardened when the former deployed a new type of missiles, threatening the balance of power in Europe. In response, the United States agreed with Helmut Schmidt's government to place their own Pershing II weapon system on West German soil in 1979. The same year saw also the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas day. Additionally, the election of Ronald Reagan, who ran for presidency on an anti-Communist platform only increased the tensions between East and West.[188]

With the return of Cold War rivalry in Europe, a socialist programme that supported a gradual dissolution of the two military blocs became a distant dream for Havemann. Internationally, an alternative to the Soviet Union and the capitalist West collapsed. Domestically, the East German state seemed more rigid than before, while the ideals of reformism dissipated. Havemann witnessed more and more socialists leaving the GDR for the West. Among them was Rudolf Bahro who was released in October 1979 after two years of imprisonment. When news broke of Bahro's decision to leave the GDR, Havemann was shocked. Hindered by the state in his attempts to visit Bahro, the dissident send a confidant with a letter to dissuade him: "The news that you seriously intend not to stay here has really frightened me and fills me with concern. I am utterly convinced that it is right and necessary for you to stay here." Havemann hoped that they could meet and "talk things over, before you take a step that is irreversible."[189] His efforts to persuade the writer of *Die Alternative* were ultimately unsuccessful. With the emigration of Bahro, Havemann remained in the GDR as one of the last outspoken dissidents.

The failure of Eurocommunism, the escalation of the Cold War and the exodus of prominent reformists contributed to Havemann's realization that the SED was unreformable. Gravely ill and concerned about the confrontation between East and West, he looked for new ways and methods in engendering change. Encouraging signs came from Poland, where the Trade Union Solidarnosc exerted significant pressure on the government. Following a series of strikes, the unofficial trade union was officially accepted as a legal organization by the

[188] Christoph Becker-Schaum, e.a., "Introduction: The Nuclear Crisis, NATO's Double-Track. Decision, and the Peace Movement of the 1980s", in: Ibidem, *The Nuclear Crisis. The Arms Race, Cold War Anxiety, and the German Peace Movement of the 1980s* (2016) 1-36.
[189] Letter Robert Havemann to Rudolf Bahro, 14-10-1979, file RH0221 Bd.079

ruling party on the last day of August 1980.[190] This unprecedented event had important repercussions. It illustrated that an autonomous, mass organization could be established in communist-ruled Europe. In an article for *Die Abend*, Havemann wrote that the Trade Union was a groundbreaking innovation of "non-violent" political resistance against the "Gentlemen in the Politburo." It demonstrated that a "large organisation of the working class, recognised by the masses as their representative, should be independent of the party and thus of the Politburo."[191]

In Western Europe, Havemann also witnessed hopeful developments. Coinciding with the advent of Solidarnosc in Poland, was the spread of the peace movement across the European continent. In response to the arms race and the increasing threat of nuclear annihilation, peace movements developed into significant transnational organizations within the Netherlands and West Germany. These "extra-parliamentary movements", as Manfred Wilke later recalled, fascinated the East German dissident.[192] Unlike the 1960s, the escalation of a "second" Cold War had elicited mass protests, reflecting growing dissatisfaction and weariness among the European population. For Havemann, the protest movements at both sides of the Iron Curtain offered new ways of challenging the bipolarity that had continuously threatened peace on the European continent. It signalled that the driving forces for change had shifted to society rather than from within government institutions.

In his endeavour to overcome the Cold War and preserve Détente, Havemann's network of operations extended beyond his usual circle of political allies. He befriended the youth pastor, Rainer Eppelmann, who maintained significant ties with the East German Protestant Church.[193] This powerful institution had gained an autonomous position within East German society since its accommodation with the communist party in the second half of the 1970s. As such, the Church developed into a safe space for nonconformists and activists who wanted to discuss political and societal matters relatively free from government interference.[194] Havemann and Eppelmann cooperated closely with other activists in the early

[190] Anna Machcewicz, *Rebellion: The Shipyard Strikes in Poland and the Birth of Solidarność in August 1980* (2023).
[191] Originally published in *Der Abend*, 15-09-1980; Later also published in *Europäische Ideen*, see Robert Havemann, "Die Macht der Politbüros brechen", in: Adreas W. Mytze, ed., *Europäische Ideen 49* (1980) 17-18, at 17.
[192] Manfred Wilke, '1968 Und Die Folgen – Reflexionen Nach 40 Jahren', in *40 Jahre 1968. Alte Und Neue Mythen - Eine Streitschrift*, Bernhard Vogel, Matthias Kutsch ed., (2008), 159–194, at 180-181.
[193] Rainer Eppelmann, *Fremd im eigenen Haus. Mein Leben im anderen Deutschland* (Köln 1993) 173-182
[194] Steven Pfaff, "The Politics of Peace in the GDR: The Independent Peace Movement, the Church, and the Origins of the East German Opposition", Peace & Change 26:3 (2001) 280-300, at 283-287.

1980s, developing proposals and appeals that called upon the superpowers to ease tensions and demilitarize society.[195]

What was most striking was the absence of socialist democracy in these efforts. No longer did it play a key role in the efforts of Havemann to exert pressure on the government to reform. This was reflected in January of 1982, when Havemann and Eppelmann published the Berlin Appeal. The document was signed by Germans on both sides of the border and called for demilitarization and a neutral Germany: "Divided Germany has become the deployment base for the two nuclear superpowers. We propose ending this life-threatening confrontation. (…) The former Allies should withdraw all occupation troops from Germany and negotiate guarantees of non-intervention into the internal affairs of the two German states."[196] Directed to the major powers, the appeal reflected Havemann's belief that the division of Germany lay at the foundation of Cold War rivalry. Only by resolving the German question, could peace be assured on the European continent.

By now, he had become disillusioned with a democratization process steered from above, a conviction confirmed by the events in Poland at the end of 1981. After a short period of liberalization, the government enacted Martial Law in December to crush the Trade Union. The crackdown on Solidarnosc enraged Havemann who wrote an article for L'Unità in response to the events: "What is happening in Poland these weeks is only the political demise of the Polish United Workers' Party, which, with the declaration of a state of war between it and the Polish working class, has finally ceased to be a workers' party, let alone a Polish one."[197]

This feeling of embitterment with the situation reflected a disillusion among the wider leftist community. Eurocommunist leaders Enrico Berlinguer and Santiago Carillo distanced themselves from the Soviet Union. Berlinguer even proclaimed that "the propelling capacity for renewal of the Eastern European states has exhausted itself."[198] Havemann still identified the presence of this propulsive force, but relocated it now within society. He stated this in his final testimony to the world, a few days before his death. At his home in Grünheide, he was reunited with his close friend Biermann. The latter had been given permission by the ruling party to visit the dying East German Marxist one last time. In secret, his wife filmed the

[195] Eppelmann, *Fremd im eigenen Haus* (1993), 183-191.
[196] "Berlin Appeal: "Make Peace without Weapons"", January 25, 1982, available at https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1134 (last accessed online June).
[197] An excerpt of this was also published in *Der Spiegel*, see: Robert Havemann, "Die 'Solidarität' ist nicht tot!", *Der Spiegel,* 10-01-1982. See also the next citations.
[198] Quoted from Jacques Levesque, *Italian Communists versus the Soviet Union: The PCI Charts a New Foreign Policy* (Berkeley 1987), 24.

conversation between the two dissidents, after which the video was smuggled to West Germany. Recorded was the East German Marxist, lying in his bed, revealing his final message with Wolf Biermann sitting beside him and visibly upset: " Free and independent movements in the socialist countries are of great, decisive importance for the future. I believe that such a free movement has also got under way here in the GDR."[199]

Until the end, the Marxist hoped that socialism could inspire a new generation, and that they would not simply accept what he perceived as a return to a capitalist state. But this message also reflect the transformation of Havemann in the last years of his life. Havemann left it up to a new generation of East German activists rather than the party, making him a crucial transitional figure in the shift from Marxist revisionism of the 1960s to the civil rights movement of the 1980s.

[199] From: Havemann, Widmann, *Robert Havemann*, 344.

Conclusion

At the core of this research stood the East German dissident Robert Havemann and why he engaged with Eurocommunism between its emergence in 1975 to 1980, the year he abandoned reform communism. Given that Eurocommunism was rooted in the pluralist societies of Western Europe, it was not immediately apparent why an East German Marxist would adopt it as a model within the context of a one-party state. By transcending a national perspective and analysing Havemann within a broader international framework, this thesis sought to uncover the motives and beliefs that drove his actions. Utilizing the concept of socialist dissent, it explored the complexity of Havemann's communist identity and its impact on his dissident activities. In examining Havemann's interaction with Eurocommunism, this thesis aimed to provide a different perspective on key developments and flashpoints in history, such as European division, Détente, the expulsion of Wolf Biermann, the emergence of human rights activism and the re-escalation of the Cold War.

The origins of Havemann's entanglement with Eurocommunism can be traced back to the early 1930s when he was active in various antifascist resistance networks. This experience profoundly shaped his views on socialism, capitalism and fascism. His antifascist roots led him to view capitalism as a fundamental threat to humanity, causing destructive wars and racist imperialism. This conviction underscored his loyalty to the socialist projects in the Eastern bloc and the international communist movement. Moreover, Havemann connected his antifascist past to his dissidence, viewing his opposition to the SED as part of a broader struggle to end capitalism and overcome the Cold War. His experiences in East Germany, the suppression of the Prague Spring, and ongoing stagnation led him to conclude that state socialism was the primary obstacle to socialist renewal in Europe. To overcome Stalinism, he attempted to forge stronger ties with like-minded communists and reformists in other countries, such as Ernst Fischer and Lucio Lombardo-Radice. Although he still identified as a communist, his approach was inherently peaceful and gradual, marking him as a Eurocommunist before the movement emerged.

However, his status as a dissident complicated efforts to overcome the Stalinist dictatorship. Relying on the "bourgeois" media potentially jeopardized his calls for socialist renewal. This dilemma particularly limited the manoeuvrability of socialist dissidents in the context of heightened hostilities, impeding transnational dialogue among reformists across the Iron Curtain.

With the easing of tensions between the two superpowers, there appeared to be more room for alternative political experiments. Among socialists, there was a strong belief that

rapprochement heralded democratization, now that the perceived external capitalist threat had diminished. However, these expectations proved illusory as the Soviet Union increased repression, further damaging its image as a global alternative to capitalism. At the same time, international relaxation and disillusion among the left created a vacuum between social democracy and authoritarian communism that the Eurocommunists capitalized on. Pursuing an independent, pluralist and democratic course, the Italians, the Spanish, and to a lesser extent the French, embarked on a programme of reform within the two military blocs. Throughout the following years, Havemann and his fellow dissidents closely monitored the promising developments in Western Europe. The Pan-European congress of communist parties in the summer of 1976, held in Berlin, saw Eurocommunist parties openly opposing Soviet hegemony. To the astonishment of GDR Marxists, the speeches of the Eurocommunists were printed in the party newspaper of *Neues Deutschland.* This publication and the public opposition impressed Havemann, reinforcing his conviction that the momentum for socialist renewal had shifted to the West. He believed that the Eurocommunists could exert even more pressure on the ruling parties to loosen their grip on society.

Yet, this "Berlin effect" proved to be short-lived. The ruling party intensified its oppression rather than easing its control. With the Berlin congress still looming in the background, GDR Marxists misjudged the situation. When Wolf Biermann decided to travel to West Germany, the GDR regime stripped him of his citizenship. This action sparked a major public protest led by prominent socialist intellectuals and dissidents, catching the regime off guard. In response, the government cracked down on the protesters, leading to an exodus of intellectuals and placing Havemann under house arrest. Despite the ongoing repression, however, Havemann refused to leave the country. Believing that emigration meant capitulation to both Stalinism and capitalism, he sought to establish ties with Eurocommunists through his contacts, many of whom were his friends in exile.

While supporting Eurocommunism, Havemann rejected other trends, such as human rights activism, which became increasingly prevalent among dissidents. In Havemann's view, human rights aggregated tensions rather than transcended it. He maintained a vision of a profound societal transformation and saw significant potential in Eurocommunism, hoping to influence its direction while under strict surveillance in Grünheide. He drew inspiration from the cooperation between the Eurocommunists and non-communist parties, which for him revived the belief that a new left front would appear on the international stage. Havemann formulated a vision that linked a common front with a critical distance from the Soviet Union and the Founding Father, Lenin. He saw this endeavour best personified in Carillo's PCE,

which had denounced Leninism. Eurocommunism also offered a solution to his dissident status. In cooperation with the Eurocommunist Lucio Lombardo-Radice, Havemann exerted pressure on the GDR regime, hoping to legitimize himself within the international communist movement.

However, internal divisions of Eurocommunism eventually culminated in the untimely demise of the movement. Furthermore, the case of Rudolf Bahro and growing antagonisms between Italian communists and socialists illustrated that the Eurocommunist movement was extremely limited in its approach. When it disintegrated during the re-escalation of the Cold War, Havemann abandoned socialism as a platform for dissent. Inspired by the emergence of Solidarnosc and the West German peace movement, the dissident took up the cause of Détente from below shortly before his death in 1982.

By addressing the question why an East German dissident engaged with the Eurocommunist movement, the thesis illustrated how socialist dissent in the GDR was tied to broader issues of rapprochement, the dilemma of European division in two ideological blocs, and the end of the Cold War. Havemann did not only identify as a GDR citizen, but he imagined himself as part of a wider movement in pursuit of overcoming the rigid bipolar world. In his view, this could only be accomplished through reform from above in the one party states of the Eastern bloc and through the parliamentary system in the West. In the context of East German dictatorship, however, his calls for reform was met with even more suppression and harassment by the secret police. Therefore, the Third Way pursued by Havemann and his Eurocommunist contacts was primarily confined to moral support via Western mediums and a critical attitude towards the dictatorships. In the end, Eurocommunism did not lead to significant changes, but it did contribute to a further delegitimization of communist rule.

These observations point to the importance of recognizing the heterogeneity of dissidence. The bulk of the literature still focus on those regime-critics whose political works and petitions closely resemble Western ideals of democracy and human rights. Yet, this tendency may actually obscure other driving forces for change and how these impacted the trajectory of dissent and dictatorship. Although different in goals and strategies, socialist dissidents were no less courageous than the Soviet human rights activists or Chartists 77. In fact, Eastern European regimes generally regarded them as more dangerous, given that socialism with a human face found resonance among established party members. The Prague Spring and the rise of Gorbachev demonstrated that reformism still retained a significant allure underneath the rigid layers of Marxism-Leninist orthodoxy. But studying socialist

dissident's Third Way-thinking also opens up new ways of understanding how and why specific cross-border connections between dissidents and left-wing intermediaries surfaced. Based on notions of antifascism and anti-capitalism, Havemann's vision of a socialist path beyond the East-West confrontation informed his endeavour to primarily link up with reform-minded communists in the West. At the same time, Eurocommunism revived Havemann's faith in the unity of communists and socialists in a common European worker's movement. It explained his attempts to intervene when the Italian socialists unleashed a discrediting campaign against the communists who, as Havemann himself had noted, remained wary of pursuing a critical stance towards Moscow. Despite its failure, this intervention pointed to Havemann's internationalist character of dissent. Not only was he concerned with the GDR, but he linked the programme of a socialist democracy in East Germany more broadly to a general European struggle.

A final point to consider for further research. Given that the dissident's image was in important part mediated by the West, a substantial part of regime-critics may have remained under the radar. Novel concepts, like those proposed by Natasha Wilson, enable scholars to explore the complexities of dissident's identities and offer new perspectives on Eastern European dissent. Consequently, future research could present a more heterogeneous picture of oppositionists in the late 1970s and early 1980s, highlighting both continuities and ruptures in their strategies, goals and ideological convictions.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archival Sources

Archiv der DDR-Opposition, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft, Berlin

IISG, Amsterdam

Digital Collections and Databases

Delpher, KB, Nationale Bibliotheek, The Hague, The Netherlands, accessed at https://www.delpher.nl/ (last accessed online June 2024).

German History in Documents and Images, German Historical Institute, Washington DC, USA, accessed at www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org (last accessed online June 2024).

ZEFYS, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany, accessed at https://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ (last accessed online June 2024).

Published Sources

Bahro, R., *Die Alternative. Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus* (Frankfurt Am Main 1977).

Biermann, W., Warte nicht auf bessre Zeiten! (2016; 2021 Berlin).

Carillo, S., *Eurocomunismo y Estado* (Barcelona 1977).

Debray, R., Gallo, M., Carillo, S., *Spanien nach Franco*, transl. by Hans-Werner Franz (1975).

Dutchke, R., Wilke, M., ed., *Die Sowjetunion, Solschenizyn und die westliche Linke* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1975)

Eppelmann, R., *Fremd im eigenen Haus. Mein Leben im anderen Deutschland* (Köln 1993).

Fuchs, J., *Gedächtnisprotokolle, Vernehmungsprotokolle* (Hamburg 1990).

Havemann, R., "Socialismus a demokracie", *Svet v Obrazech 20* (Prague 1968).

_____, *Fragen. Antworten. Fragen* (München 1970).

_____, *Berliner Schriften*, Mytze, A.W., ed (Berlin 1976).

_____, *Ein deutscher Kommunist*, ed. by Manfred Wilke, (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1978).

_____, *Warum ich Stalinist war und Antistalinist wurde*, Hoffmann, D., Laitko,H., ed., (Berlin 1990).

_____, *Die Stimme des Gewissens*, Rüdiger Rosenthal ed., (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1990).

Jäckel, H., ed., *Ein Marxist in der DDR. Für Robert Havemann* (München 1980).

Medvedev, R., *Let history judge: the origins and consequences of Stalinism* (1972).

Nathans, B., 'The Disenchantment of Socialism: Soviet Dissidents, Human Rights, and the New Global Morality', in *The Breakthrough Human Rights in the 1970s*, Moyn, S., Eckel, J., (2014) 33–48.

Pelikán, J., Wilke, M, ed., *Menschenrechte. Ein Jahrbuch zu Osteuropa* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1977).

_____, Wilke ed., *Opposition ohne Hoffnung? Jahrbuch zu Osteuropa 2* (Reinbek bei Haburg).

Pleitgen, F., ed., *Wolf Biermann, Die Ausbürgerung: Anfang vom Ende der DDR* (2001).

Solzhenitsyn, A.I., *The Gulag archipelago, 1918-1956: an experiment in literary investigation*, trans. by Thomas P. Whitney (1975).

Theuer, W., Florath, B., ed., *Bibliographie Robert Havemann. Mit unveröffentlichten Texten aus dem Nachlass* (Berlin 2007).

Urban, G.R., *Eurocommunism. Its roots and future in Italy and elsewhere* (London 1978).

_____, ed., *Der SED-Staat. Geschichte Und Nachwirkungen: Gesammelte Schriften* (2006) 297–326.

_____, '1968 Und Die Folgen – Reflexionen Nach 40 Jahren', in: Vogel, B., Kutsch, M., ed., *40 Jahre 1968. Alte Und Neue Mythen - Eine Streitschrift* (2008) 159-194.

Newspapers, Magazines, Journals

De Volkskrant

Der Spiegel

Die Welt

Europäische Ideen

Foreign Affairs

International Affairs

International Journal of Politics

L'Unità

New York Times

New German Critique

Neues Deutschland

Trouw

Washington Post

Websites

Pfeiffer, C., "Andreas W. Mytze", 14-07-2021, published online: https://buchmarkt.de/andreas-w-mytze/ (Last Accessed in June 2024).

Secondary Sources

Alston, C., Laqua, D., 'Introduction: Subversion, Dissent and Opposition in Communist Europe and Beyond', *East Central Europe 50* (2023) 1–13.

Andry, A.D., *Social Europe, the Road Not Taken. The Left and European Integration in the Long 1970s* (2022).

Baumann, J., *Ideologie Und Pragmatik. Die DDR Und Spanien 1973-1990* (2023).

Becker-Schaum, C., e.a., "Introduction: The Nuclear Crisis, NATO's Double-Track. Decision, and the Peace Movement of the 1980s", in: Becker-Schaum, C., e.a., ed., *The Nuclear Crisis. The Arms Race, Cold War Anxiety, and the German Peace Movement of the 1980s* (2016) 1-36.

Bange, O., Niedhart, G., *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (2008).

Bolton, J., *Worlds of Dissent Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (2012).

Brier, R., 'Broadening the Cultural History of the Cold War: The Emergence of the Polish Workers' Defense Committee and the Rise of Human Rights', *Journal of Cold War Studies 15:4* (2013) 104–27

——— *Poland's Solidarity Movement and the Global Politics of Human Rights* (Cambridge 2021)

Canfield, J.L., "Marxist Revisionism in East Germany: The Case of Rudolf Bahro", *The Fletcher Forum 4:1* (1980) 23-48,

Cerna, M., e.a., "Revolutions", in: Gildea, R., Mark, J., Warring, A., ed., *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt,* (2013) 106, 106-130.

Chourchoulis, D., "Understanding the Long Détente and its Crisis in Cold War", *Journal of Contemporary History 55:3* (2020), 666-678.

Devlin, K., 'Eurocommunism: Between East and West', *International Security 3:4* (1979) 81–107.

Draheim, D., e.a., ed., *Robert Havemann: Dokumente eines Lebens* (1991).

Dobson, M., 'The Post-Stalin Era De-Stalinization, Daily Life, and Dissent', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 12:4* (2011) 905–24.

Dörr, N.R.., 'Emanzipation Und Transformation: Rückblick Auf Den Eurokommunismus', *Osteuropa 63:5/6* (2013) 255–269.

———, 'Eurokommunismus Als Teil Der Historischen Kommunismusforschung', *Zeitgeschichte Für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam* (2014) 1–10.

_____, *Die Rote Gefahr. Der italienische Eurokommunismus als sicherheitspolitische Herausforderung für die USA und Westdeutschland 1969-1979* (Köln 2017).

Falk, B., *The dilemmas of dissidence in East-Central Europe : citizen intellectuals and philosopher kings* (2003).

Fantoni, G., "After the Fall: Politics, the Public Use of History and the Historiography of the Italian Communist Party, 1991–2011", *Journal of Contemporary History 49:4* (2014), 815-836.

Faraldo, Josë M., ‘Entangled Eurocommunism: Santiago Carrillo, the Spanish Communist Party and the Eastern Bloc during the Spanish Transition to Democracy, 1968–1982’, *Contemporary European History 26:4* (2017) 647–668.

Fasanaro, L., ‘Neither in One Bloc, nor in the Other Berlinguer’s Vision of the End of the Cold War’, in: Bozo, F., e.a., ed., *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945-1990,* (2012), 163–176.

_____, ‘Myth and Perceptions of Europe in the German Democratic Republic, 1975-1985: From Italian Eurocommunism to European Integration’, *Histoire Politique Revue Du Centre d’histoire de Sciences Po 46* (2022), 1–20.

Fink, C., Schaffer, B., *Ostpolitik, 1969–1974: European and Global Responses* (Cambridge University Press NY 2009).

Florath, B., “Havemann, der Publizist“ in: Theuer, W,. Florath, B., ed., *Bibliographie Robert Havemann. Mit unveröffentlichten Texten aus dem Nachlass* (Berlin 2007) , XIX-XXXI.

_____, "Ein Verworfener Traum. Robert Havemanns Abschied Vom Masterplan Des Kulturprozesses", in: Ibidem ed., *Annäherungen an Robert Havemann Biographische Studien Und Dokumente* (2016) 307–349.

Fulbrook, M., *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (2005).

_____, *A History of Germany 1918–2014: The Divided Nation* (Oxford 2015).

Gelbin, C.S., “Learning Years on the Path to Dissidence. Stefan Heym’s Friendship with Robert Havemann and Wolf Biermann”, in: Geller, J.H., Meng M., ed., *Rebuilding Jewish life in Germany* (2020) 118-149.

Goldsborough, J., O., ‘Eurocommunism after Madrid’, *Foreign Affairs 55:4* (1977) 800–814.

Goldstein, T.W., *Writing in Red: The East German Writers Union and the Role of Literary Intellectuals* (Cambridge 2017)

Graf, M., ‘The Rise and Fall of “Austro-Eurocommunism”. On the “Crisis” within the KPÖ and the Significance of East German Influence in the 1960s’, *Journal of European Integration History* 20 (2014) 203-218.

Gray, W.G., *Germany’s Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany 1949-1969* (2003).

Hanisch, A., ‘Zwischen Militarisierung Und Abnehmender Systemloyalität. Die Ostdeutsche Gesellschaft an Der Wende Zu Den 1980er Jahren’, in: Gassert P., Geiger T., ed., *Zweiter Kalter Krieg Und Friedensbewegung - Sondernummer. Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in Deutsch-Deutscher Und Internationaler Perspektive* (2011) 155-174.

Hammer, J.P., “Robert Havemann aus der Sicht eines französischen Freundes”, in: Bernd Florath, *Annäherungen an Robert Havemann Biographische Studien Und Dokumente* (2016) 129-158.

Hannemann, S., *Robert Havemann und die Widerstandsgruppe “Europäische Union”* (Berlin 2001).

Havemann, K., Widmann, J., *Robert Havemann oder wie die DDR sich erledigte* (München 2003).

Hecht, H,. “Philosoph und Kritiker (1956-1964)“, in: Draheim, D., ea., ed., *Robert Havemann. Dokumente einens Lebens* (Berlin 1991) 116-159.

Heurtebize, F., ‘Eurocommunism and the Contradictions of Superpower Detente’, *Diplomatic History 41:4* (2017) 747-771.

Horvath, R. ‘“The Solzhenitsyn Effect”: East European Dissidents and the Demise of the Revolutionary Privilege’, *Human Rights Quarterly 29:4* (2007) 879-907.

Kind-Kovács, Friederike, ‘Crossing Germany’s Iron Curtain Uncensored Literature from the GDR and the Other Europe’, *East Central Europe 41* (2014) 180-203.

Klimke, M., Pekelder, J., Scharloth, J, ‘Introduction’, in *Between Prague Spring and French May Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980* (2011) 1-13.

König, H., ‘Die Eurokommunisten Und Moskau’, *Osteuropa 28:9* (1978) 811-819

Kopeček, M., ‘The Socialist Conception of Human Rights and Its Dissident Critique Hungary and Czechoslovakia, 1960s–1980s’, *East Central Europe 46* (2019) 261-289.

Kramer, M., ‘The Changing Pattern of Soviet–East European Relations 1953–1968’, in: Naimark, N., Pons, S., Quinn-Judge S., ed., *The Cambridge History of Communism: Volume 2. The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941–1960s* (Cambridge 2017) 139-169.

Laqua, D., ‘Transnational Dimensions of a “German Case”: The Expatriation of Wolf Biermann and the Politics of Solidarity in the 1970s’ *Labour History Review 86:3* (2021) 369-396.

Lavau, G., ‘Eurocommunism Four Years On’, *European Journal of Political Research 7* (1979) 357-374.

Jacques Levesque, *Italian Communists versus the Soviet Union: The PCI Charts a New Foreign Policy* (Berkeley 1987).

Jarausch, K.H.,"Care and Coercion. The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship", in: Ibidem, *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (1999) 47-69.

Machcewicz, A., *Rebellion: The Shipyard Strikes in Poland and the Birth of Solidarność in August 1980* (2023).

Mark, J., e.a., *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Martin, B., 'The Sakharov-Medvedev Debate on Détente and Human Rights .From the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Helsinki Accords', *Journal of Cold War Studies 23:3* (2021) 138-174.

Martini, M., 'Die DDR Der Italienischen Linken. Erfindung Und Entzauberung Einer Kulturellen Projektion', trans. by Tobias Hof, *Vierteljahrshefte Für Zeitgeschichte 58:2* (2010) 231-257.

Menash, L., "End of the Bolshevik Tradition in the West", Carl Boggs, David Plotke ed., *The Politics of Eurocommunism: Socialism in Transition* (1980) 291-334.

Miller, A.S., *The Cultural Politics of the German Democratic Republic. The Voices of Wolf Biermann, Christa Wolf, and Heiner Müller* (1999).

Moyn, S., Eckel J., ed., *The Breakthrough. Human Rights in the 1970s* (2014).

Neubauer, A., 'Chemiker Im Widerstand: Robert Havemann', *Chemie in Unserer Zeit 44* (2010) 276-283.

Neubert, E., *Geschichte Der Opposition in Der DDR 1949-1989* (1997).

Nolan, M., 'Antifascism under Fascism: German Visions and Voices', *New German Critique 67* (1996) 33-55.

Pfaff, S., "The Politics of Peace in the GDR: The Independent Peace Movement, the Church, and the Origins of the East German Opposition", *Peace & Change 26:3* (2001) 280-300

Pleitgen, F., ed., Wolf Biermann, *Die Ausbürgerung: Anfang vom Ende der DDR* (2001).

Pollack, D., 'Zwischen Ost Und West, Zwischen Staat Und Kirche: Die Friedensgruppen in Der DDR', in Gassert, P., Geiger, T., Wentker H., ed., *Zweiter Kalter Krieg Und*

Friedensbewegung - Sondernummer. Der NATO-Doppelbeschluss in Deutsch-Deutscher Und Internationaler Perspektive (2011) 269-282

Polzin, A., *Der Wandel Robert Havemanns Vom Inoffiziellen Mitarbeiter Zum Dissidenten Im Spiegel Der MfS-Akten* (2005).

Pons, S., 'The Rise and Fall of Eurocommunism', in: Fürst, Leffler, M., Westad, O.A., ed, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 3: Endings* (2010) 45-65.

Pons, S., Di Donato, M., 'Reform Communism', in: Fürst, J., Pons., S., Selden, M., ed., *The Cambridge History of Communism. Volume 3: Endgames? Late Communism in Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present* (2017) 178-202.

Raymond, G., 'PCF and Front de Gauche: Exploiting a Communist Nostalgia in France?', *Twentieth Century Communism: A Journal of International History 11* (2016) 115-129.

Renaud, T. R., *New Lefts. The Making of a Radical Tradition* (Princeton University Press 2021).

Revel, J.F., 'The Myths of Eurocommunism', *Foreign Affairs 56:2* (1978), 295-305.

Richardson-Little, N., *The Human Rights Dictatorship Socialism, Global Solidarity and Revolution in East Germany* (Cambridge University Press 2020).

Richter, K., Wilke, M., "Opponent und Bürgerrechtler", in: Dirk Draheim, ed., e.a., *Robert Havemann: Dokumente eines Lebens* (1991) 191-239.

Robb, D., "Introduction", in: ibidem, *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s* (2007), 1-10.

Sabrow, M., "Socialism as Sinnwelt: Communist Dictatorship and its World of Meaning in a Cultural-Historical Perspective", in: Donert, C., Kladnik, A., Sabrow, M. ed., *Making Sense of Dictatorship : Domination and Everyday Life in East Central Europe After 1945* (2022) 3-18.

Snyder, S.B., *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge University Press 2011).

Szulecki, K., *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe: Human Rights and the Emergence of New Transnational Actors* (2019).

Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton University Press, 2001).

Valenta, J., ‘Eurocommunism and Eastern Europe’, *Problems of Communism 27:2* (1978) 41-54.

Vilimek, T., ‘Oppositionists in the CSSR and the GDR. Mutual Awareness, Exchanges of Ideas and Cooperation, 1968-1989.’, in: Brier, R., ed., *Entangled Protest: Transnational Approaches to the History of Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (2013) 55-85.

Wilson, N., ““A New Prague Spring, but from Below?” Socialist Dissent in the Last Soviet Generation and the Emergence of Solidarność in Poland, 1980–1981”, *Contemporary European History* (2024) 1-17.