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Against the Détente! The Formation of a Global Anti-Communist Community during the ‘Long’ Sixties (1955–1980). PhD Project

Subject of the Dissertation project and analytical levels

The subject of this PhD project is the up until today only barely analysed transnational cooperation between diverse anti-communist actors and organizations from Asia, West Europe, the United States and Latin-America. Focusing primarily on the genesis and evolution of the *World Anti-Communist League* (WACL), this project will study the formation of a global anti-communist community during the ‘Long’ Sixties (approximately 1955–1980) as a reaction to the concept of peaceful co-existence promoted by First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev and Chinese Foreign Minister Chou En Lai since the mid nineteen-fifties and the Détente policy adopted by the American government and some Western European states in response. By following WACL’s evolution, this project seeks to combine the history of Cold War and Globalization in a transnational and global perspective.

WACL was founded in 1966 in Seoul, South Korea, as a global anti-communist umbrella organization. Its founding was made possible by a long process of rapprochement between various anti-communist groups and actors from East Asia, Latin-America, Europe and the United States. Driving forces of this process were two transregional anti-communist organizations from East Asia and Latin America: The *Asian People’s Anti-Communist League* (APACL), jointly founded in 1955 by the South Korean and Taiwanese and Philippine presidents, Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai Shek and Elpidio Quirinho and the Latin American *Confederation Interamericana de Defensa del Continente* (CIDC). CIDC came to life one year prior to APACL’s founding on the initiative of the former mayor of Mexico City, Jorge Prieto Laurens, and the Brazilian Admiral, Carlos Penna-Botto. As an advocate for an active liberation from communism, WACL adopted a clear position against the Détente policy led by the USA and their Western European allies and became a global platform for the critics of Détente.

The project is based upon the assumption that Détente did not lead to a decline of anti-communism but rather to a shift, reorientation and adaption of anti-communist actors, ideas and practices. As a platform for the global networking of anti-communist actors, WACL provides an ideal entry point to examine the mechanisms of transnational entanglements as well as the transformation of anti-communism on a global scale during the ‘Long’ Sixties by intercultural and international transfer of ideas. Thus, this period will be understood as a transformative phase of anti-communism.

Using the history of WACL as a starting point, this project attempts to find new insights on three intertwined levels: The History of anti-communism, the History of the Cold War and the History of Globalization. Anti-communism shall be understood in this project as a complex historical phenomenon. Therefore, it will not be evaluated from a normative position nor will it be reduced to its intellectual underpinnings. Following Andreas Wirsching's typology, anti-communism shall be defined as a dynamic interaction of empirical, ideological and functional logics.¹ It will be therefore analysed in its dimension as a social movement; as an intellectual and rhetoric frame of reference; and, finally, as a political practice.² Anti-communism will be viewed being more than the simple negation of a certain political current, a political and socio-economical teaching or a ruling system. Rather, it will be seen to have had not only a destructive but also a creative dimension: it created new ideas, gave new meaning to contexts and new policies and had, as well, an integrative and community-forging effect which will constitute the core of the analyses that will be offered in this project.

Beyond this analysis, this project will also challenge concepts that underpin Western European and American Cold War Studies. The project will focus on non-state actors and the inclusion of anti-communist actors from the Global South. Based on recent work on the Cold War in Latin America, East Asia and Africa³ this project will ask how actors from the so-called periphery of the Cold War saw and considered their own role and possibilities of agency as independent and equal partners pursuing their own national interests in the international concert of nations during the 'Long' Sixties. Further, by focusing on the history of WACL and its predecessors the project will also examine the interplay between the processes of decolonisation and anti-communism and refer to the emergence of the 'Third World' as a new actor in the enfolding Cold War dynamics.⁴ This will challenge the reduction of the Cold War as a bipolar confrontation between the two superpowers, between East and West and the classical assumption of centres and peripheries. It therefore challenges the Eurocentric interpretation of the Cold War as a purely bipolar conflict between two homogenous blocs.

¹ Andreas Wirsching: Antikommunismus als Querschnittsphänomen politischer Kultur, 1917–1945. In: Stefan Kreuzberger, Dierk Hoffman (eds.): „Geistige Gefahr“ und „Immunsierung der Gesellschaft“. Antikommunismus und politische Kultur in der frühen Bundesrepublik, München, Oldenbourg, 2014, pp. 14–28.

² Johannes Großmann: „Die Grundtorheit unserer Epoche“? Neue Forschungen und Zugänge zur Geschichte des Antikommunismus. In: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 56 (2016), pp. 549–590.

³ For example: Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (ed.): *The Cold War in East Asia 1945–1991*, Washington DC/Stanford, Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Stanford UP, 2011; Sue Onslow (ed.): *Cold War in South Africa. White Power. Black Liberation*. London, Routledge, 2009. Yangwen Zheng, Hong Liu, Michael Szonyi (eds.): *The Cold War in Asia. The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, Leiden, Brill, 2010. Patrick Iber: *Neither Peace nor Freedom. The Cultural Cold War in Latin America*, Cambridge MA/London, Harvard UP, 2015. Masuda Hajimu: *Cold War Crucible. The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World*, Cambridge MA/London, Harvard UP, 2015.

⁴ See for example: Sandra Bott et al. (eds): *Neutrality and Neutralism in the Cold War – Between or within the Blocs?* London, New York, Routledge, 2016; Christopher J. Lee (ed.): *Making a World After Empire. The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, Athens, Ohio UP, 2010; Christopher Kalter: *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt. Dekolonisierung und radikale Linke in Frankreich*, Frankfurt/New York, Campus Verlag, 2011.

Finally, this project will analyse how the members of the WACL contributed to the production of globality by an active initiation of transnational processes of cultural and intellectual transfer, rapprochement and interdependence. Based on Johannes Großmann's approach of *biographies croisées*,⁵ the concept of the production of globality considers persons as the main bearer of ideas and ideals and as such as main actors of cultural transfer and cross-border integration processes. Following Henri Lefebvre's⁶ theory of space, the 'Globe' in this project will be understood as a seemingly absolute space that needs to be produced and reproduced by actors. A process which happens in a dynamic interaction of practises, conceptions and representations. Globalisation, therefore, will be more understood as a process created and advanced by humans and less as an independent and unstoppable impersonal force driving humanity. In order to examine the production of globality by WACL members, the project strives to analyse their understanding of the world, how they created worldwide relationships and connections as well as their self-perception and stage themselves as a global community by using WACL as their platform. In this project the WACL will be identified as an instrument as well as the location of transnational approach and intercultural transfer and as the location of a global anti-communist communitarisation.

Sources and archival research

The analysis of the mechanisms of the formation of a global community of anti-communist actors as well as the transformation of a globally circulating anti-communism by intercultural contact and transfer of ideas is based on the evaluation of the correspondence of former WACL members, their publications as well as the minutes of the annual WACL conferences. Additional sources looked at will be printed and televised media material such as the journals published by WACL and its associated organizations as well as media reports on the annual WACL congresses. Further, reports on leading members of the WACL and their global interaction with other active anti-communists groups as well as the observation of their global anti-communist activities by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs from Germany, France, Great Britain as well as the US, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan allow the analysis of different points of view of state actors on the global interaction of anti-communists and their evaluation of WACL. The materials for this global historical project have to be collected from different private and national archives in the US, Europe, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan.

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⁵ Johannes Großmann: Die Internationale der Konservativen. Transnationale Elitenzirkel und private Außenpolitik in Westeuropa seit 1945, München, Oldenbourg, 2014.

⁶ Henri Lefebvre: La production de l'espace, Paris, Anthropos, 1974.