

Greiner, Bernd; Müller, Christian Th.; Walter, Dierk (Hrsg.): *Angst im Kalten Krieg*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, HIS Verlag 2009. ISBN: 978-3-86854-213-4; 527 S.

Rezensiert von: Jan Plamper, Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung, Berlin

Is there anything left to say about fear in the Cold War? Haven't historians always associated the Cold War with fear, so that the period and the emotion have become nearly synonymous? John Lewis Gaddis is in the mainstream when he writes that it all began with „the return of fear“ which stayed on to guarantee an equilibrium of peace: „the world spent the last half of the twentieth century having its deepest anxieties not confirmed.“¹ Although Cold War historiography is awash with fear, when looking closer, fear hardly emerges as an object of analysis in its own right. Rather than historicizing fear, Cold War historians have often projected their present-day and culturally specific understandings of fear onto the past. Enter this pioneering volume: „Angst im Kalten Krieg“ is the first attempt to place Cold War fear at the very center of analysis rather than viewing it as an epiphenomenon of larger sociopolitical processes. Based on a 2007 conference at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, the bulk of the contributions are from history, but some also from sociology, anthropology, and film studies. The volume opens with a stimulating introductory essay by Bernd Greiner followed by 18 articles.

What unifies the articles is above all an emphasis on the ironic nature of Cold War fear. States cultivated fear in order to then contain it, yet became increasingly anxious that this cultivated fear was too volatile and unpredictable to be managed and controlled. Thus in the East, fears of a nuclear inferno kindled by GDR Party bureaucrats led not to a heightened sense of „pugnacity“ (*Wehrhaftigkeit*), but to popular pacifism which ultimately delegitimized the Party itself (see Christian Th. Müller's contribution). The pilgrimages that followed postwar apparitions of Mary in Germany played out with similarly

ironic consequences, as Monique Scheer persuasively argues. She reads the apparitions as outlets for the articulation and management of fears (of the Russians, Bolshevik secularism, or a new war) that however stimulated potentially uncontrollable religious enthusiasms.

A second common theme is a questioning of 1945 as a caesura and an insistence on historical depth. Many authors see World War Two continuing to exert a powerful influence on postwar, including Cold War, developments. To illustrate with just one example, Marie Cronqvist shows how 1950s Swedish civil defense was in fact a continuation of 1930s programs set up to defend the Swedes against an air war that never materialized.

A third theme is gender. That fear regimes are bound up with gender seems a foregone conclusion. But how exactly were they enmeshed? In a dense, exciting essay Holger Nehring demonstrates how the protagonists of the late 1950s, early 1960s British and West German anti-nuclear movements showcased male composure in order to avoid a World War One-like charge of „endangering national security with their 'female' emotionality“ (p. 452). Marcus Payk convincingly portrays the „coolness“-exuding hero-agent John Kling of the West German 1960s tv series „John Klings Abenteuer“ as unimaginable without latent female counterparts, whose emotionality Kling successfully contains – thus reinforcing a culturally virulent pattern of male fear control. These patterns could not be further from masculinity in the 1980s West German peace movement and its counter-discourse to officially demanded emotional coldness, as Jörg Arnold and Susanne Schregel explicate. Not being able to demonstrate fear in a highly scripted manner became a serious liability for male protagonists of the peace movement.

A fourth and final unifying theme is the focus on the varying nature of fear objects. What does it mean when the source of threat remains invisible, as in the case of the nuclear age? A concrete-but-invisible fear object puts a different spin on the old (Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre) distinction of object-driven fear and objectless anxiety that has haunted so much fear research since the 19th century. Specifically unspecific fear objects en-

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War. A New History*, New York 2005, p. 266.

gender specific fantasy production, as Ok-sana Bulgakowa shows in her article on Cold War U.S. and Soviet film, which bristles with original insights. Also in the Soviet Union, Olga Sezneva probes the discursive consequences of the replacement of fear of the concrete „German“ by the free-floating signifier of „Anglo-American imperialist“ in the Soviet enclave Kaliningrad (former Königsberg).

Apart from robustly recentring Cold War scholarship on fear, the greatest strengths of „Angst im Kalten Krieg“ are twofold. For one, it moves beyond the superpower United States and writes Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden) and the communist world into the narrative (GDR, Poland, Russia, but also China – in Bernd Schaefer’s article on Chinese fears of the USSR during the Sino-Soviet conflict 1969-76). Second, the collection introduces a wealth of new empirical evidence, including fascinating visual material from West German and GDR civil defense brochures (Frank Biess, Christian Th. Müller) and West German peace movement posters (Schregel). It also includes some terrific and genuinely fresh (close) readings of high politics, as in Melissa Feinberg’s piece on the postwar Eastern European show trials, which, she explains, successfully propagated the idea that a lack of watchfulness toward political enemies threatened the body politic with annihilation in a nuclear war. Similarly, Susanne Schattenberg’s fascinating article on the Cuban Missile Crisis highlights its origins in diplomatic miscommunication: namely the West’s inability to correctly interpret Khrushchev’s threatening rhetoric (and actions – recall the shoe-banging at the U.N.!) as a sign of his fear of humiliation (which, in turn, stemmed from his biography, Soviet fear of backwardness, and the formative years in Stalin’s inner circle).

What are the weaknesses of this collection? While claiming to be indebted to the history of emotions, this is only true for the articles of Biess, Nehring, Scheer, and Schregel. Elsewhere terms like „hysteria“ and „psychosis“ are often banded in an uncritical, everyday, and essentialist manner (see, for example, pp. 299, 313, 319). Dariusz Jarosz’s piece on war rumors in Poland has serious problems, because it uncritically reads (for 1946-56) at face value the secret police and Party reports, test-

ing whether the rumors recorded in them had any real basis (p. 321).² Some authors seem to have hastily tailored their – unrelated – research projects to fear, and this shows.³ I would also quibble with the editing⁴ and the arrangement of the articles.⁵

But in sum and quibbles aside, this is a very important volume and a huge step forward in Cold War research. Its importance extends not just to Cold War history proper, but to the history of the second half of the 20th century more generally. As historians are increasingly focusing on „security“ as a key concept and sign of the epoch, it will become clear that security and fear are two sides of the same coin.⁶

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² In fact, this genre is highly constructed and has been exerted to intense source criticism. See, most recently, Marcin Kula, Poland: The Silence of Those Deprived of Voice, in: Paul Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes. Fascism, Nazism, Communism*, Oxford 2009, pp. 149-167.

³ See esp. Oliver Bange’s and Tim B. Müller’s essays.

⁴ Sigurd Sørli, for example, in his essay on Norway’s concept of „total defense“ explains what an „ideal type“ is (pp. 123-124) – common knowledge that an editor should have deleted.

⁵ One wonders what motivated the editors to place the weakest article – Eric Singer’s empiricist, unfocused recounting of four years of Baltimore’s civil defense – first and one of the strongest, Susanne Schregel’s, last.

⁶ See Eckart Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit. Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis in die Gegenwart*, Munich 2009 (reviewed by Patrick Wagner, in: H-Soz-u-Kult, 07.10.2009, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/2009-4-023>> (16.03.2010)).