

Klimke, Martin: *The Other Alliance. Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2010. ISBN: 978-0-691-13127-6; 346 S.

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In 1969, at the height of the worldwide political upheavals of the 1960s, representatives from the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican street gang politicized by the upheavals of the 1960s, and the Young Patriots, a gang of white working class youth from Appalachia, met in Chicago and agreed to form what came to be called a „rainbow“ coalition.¹ Unlike Jesse Jackson's more well-known coalition of the same name, however, this „rainbow“ coalition was expressly committed to social revolution and not integrating Fortune 500 boardrooms. It was peculiar for its time in that, while maintaining the centrality of race in social struggles in the U.S., this alternative „rainbow“ coalition demonstrated that class could unite, in common cause against common oppressors, people of different and seemingly antagonistic races. But like the movements of the '60s, the potential of this alliance remained just that – a potential not realized.

The alliances and movements of the 1960s more often took a different direction, and had a different character, than this „rainbow“ coalition of working class blacks, Puerto Ricans, and whites that emerged in Chicago. More often, they resembled the alliance that Martin Klimke describes in his new study of the transnational student movements of the 1960s, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany & the United States in the Global Sixties*. Here, Klimke describes the „other“ alliance formed in direct opposition to the official alliance of policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic by the German SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, or German Socialist Student League) and the Students for a Democratic Society in the U.S.

While inspired by the struggles of the Black Power movement in the U.S. and anti-colonial movements in the third world, this alliance remained largely confined to white college students. Additionally, taking cues from New Left mentors such as Herbert Marcuse and C. Wright Mills, it paid little attention to, and found itself still further removed from, the lives and struggles of working people.

Chapter 1 explores the influence German exchange student Michael Vester had on the founding document of the U.S. SDS, the Port Huron Statement. In it, Klimke demonstrates that Vester's experiences in the leadership of the German SDS provided him with the training, experience, and essential contact information that enabled him to play a significant role as an intellectual advisor to Al Haber, Tom Hayden, and other members of the fledgling American SDS who would be instrumental in drafting the Port Huron Statement. Vester's influence on SDS in the U.S. was thus an early example of the transnational linkages that would develop further in the course of the 1960s.

As significant as the German influence on the American SDS was, however, Klimke argues that the political struggle in the United States was still more influential on developments within the student movement in Germany. Chapter 2 examines the ways in which ideas and actions in the U.S. were transmitted through complex transnational networks. This would prove decisive in the history of the German SDS, as Rudi Dutschke's anti-authoritarian faction, using tactics borrowed from U.S. movements, gained a hearing and ultimately a majority of the Berlin chapter of SDS. From there, Dutschke and his cohort would go on to „dominate the national discussions“ within SDS „as well as the attention of the media.“²

What begins to emerge through this transnational exchange is the „other“ alliance that gives Klimke the title of his study. Klimke's third chapter attempts to synthesize the preceding two and give expression to this „other“ alliance that emerges as a result of the interplay of influence between rebellious students in the U.S. and Germany.

Perhaps Klimke's most significant contribu-

¹Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Rainbow Radicalism: The Rise of the Radical Ethnic Nationalism*, in: Peniel Joseph (eds.), *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, New York 2006, p. 215-19.

²Klimke, *Other Alliance*, p. 74.

tion to our understanding of these transnational networks is his discussion of the influence of the Black Power movement on activists in Germany. In Chapter 4, Klimke describes that influence, from Black Panther solidarity committees throughout West Germany, to speaking tours and defense campaigns for imprisoned GIs. The highlight of this chapter is Klimke's fascinating discussion of the way in which Black Power militancy, alongside Guevara's „foco“ theory, and Fanon's account of the role violence plays in psychologically redeeming the wretched of the earth, inspired West German activists to work through their country's National Socialist past. No example perhaps better illustrates this relationship than the RAF manifesto Klimke reproduces.³ There, above and far larger than the Kalashnikov that became the group's symbol, a black panther virtually leaps off the page, and nearly into obscurity, until Klimke uncovered these links and their significance for the West German student movement.

Policymakers in the U.S. and Germany, of course, responded to the challenge posed by this „other“ alliance vigorously. The final two chapters of Klimke's study are devoted to an examination of the cultural diplomacy that constituted an important part of that response.

U.S. policymakers did not invent cultural diplomacy in 1962, when they founded the Inter-Agency Youth Committee (IAYC) and intensified their efforts to win the hearts and minds of young people in Europe. These efforts began shortly after the end of hostilities in World War II, and bore significant fruit as early as 1969, when 13 of 16 cabinet members serving under Brandt had participated in exchange programs with the U.S.⁴ Still, the IAYC and similar efforts played an important role in the political battles of the 1960s as the main institution through which the U.S. sought to expand its „soft“ power and influence. Through his examination of previously classified documents, Klimke provides a fascinating portrait of the inner workings of U.S. efforts at hegemony through cultural exchange.

Klimke concludes his study by noting that these efforts at cultural diplomacy were not

unilateral but negotiated and contested. Even as policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic promoted cultural and intellectual exchange, these same exchanges undermined those efforts. Angela Davis, Joan Baez, and a host of other U.S. political and cultural figures presented an „other“ America to the world, an America shot through with the very problems policymakers suggested „Americanism“ could solve elsewhere.

Michael Vester's year spent in the United States is another example of this. Hoping to entice someone with „Americanism“ who might then participate in Brandt's government or criticize student protest when it emerged in Germany (as many others did),⁵ Vester contributed instead to the „grassroots Americanization“⁶ that characterized the „other“ alliance, and proved instrumental in shaping one of the central institutions of the New Left in the United States.

Klimke succeeds admirably in documenting the emergence and complex transnational entanglement of this „other“ alliance, using carefully crafted prose to support his exhaustive and painstaking research.

But what of this still other alliance that emerged briefly in Chicago in 1969, this „rainbow coalition“ from below and along class lines? Similar fleeting examples exist here and there in the archives, or the memories of the activists that forged them. But their potential remains largely untapped, waiting for answers historians of the past and movements of the future may yet provide.

Still, *The Other Alliance* is a bold and exciting work that will remain relevant for some time, both for the questions it answers and those it leaves unanswered.

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³ Ibid., p. 127-8.

⁴ Ibid., p. 223.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 235.