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# Freedom versus Security. Debates on Social Risks in Western Germany in the 1950s

Meike Haunschild\*

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**Abstract:** »Freiheit versus Sicherheit. Die Debatte um soziale Risiken in Westdeutschland in den 1950ern«. The article outlines the debate on the expansion of the welfare state in Western Germany during the 1950s. This debate does not only provide important insights into the self-perception of Western German society. It can also be read as a risk debate, because the contemporaries were aware of the ambivalent effects of the preventive measures against poverty: While especially social democrats emphasised the stabilising effect of the fight against poverty on democracy, politicians from economic-liberal circles stressed the risk that such measures could give the state excessive power over its citizens. Despite the consensual conviction of all relevant political actors that an expansion of the welfare state was historically consequent and expected by the population, the weighing of individual freedom on the one hand and social security on the other hand coined the debate on, as well as the organisation of, the Western German welfare state.

**Keywords:** Social risks, social security, welfare state, individual freedom.

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## 1. Basic Social Rights and "*Totalitäre Entartung*"

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At the beginning of the 1960s, the German sociologist Christian von Ferber argued that the standard risks of the poor working classes had lost the power to precipitate individuals into poverty. By "standard risks" he meant events which every individual could equally be effected by, and which typically caused a loss of income. According to von Ferber, these standard risks included sickness, accidents, death of the provider, unemployment and inflation. In his opinion, extensive measure in economic and social politics, such as the implementation of child allowance in 1954 or the pension reform of 1957, had brought the material impact of these risks under control. Even more: In his article von Ferber argued that in the highly industrialised areas of the world, everyone currently enjoyed basic social rights which granted them not only a range of free choice against material distress. These rights also implied the liberation from illiteracy and superstition as well as the restriction to physical work and

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the suppression of intellectual potentials. Furthermore, von Ferber claimed that these basic social rights had been established as standard and goal for the efforts of almost all peoples in the world (von Ferber 1962, 439).

In the sociologist's opinion, however, such a development towards an extension of basic rights for almost anyone was not purely positive, for it also implied an increase in social disciplining and the manipulation of people's behaviour through the state. Modern industrial society could bring with it certain unwanted social effects, not in the shape of material pressure, as it had been the case in pre-industrial societies, but in the shape of *totalitäre Entartung*, i.e. the society lapsing into totalitarian degeneracy. According to von Ferber, the only effective protection against this was democratic control. Contrary to the many voices in the public debate that considered individual freedom to be in danger in industrial society, von Ferber argued that resistance was generally possible in the Federal Republic of Germany. However, he demanded that citizens as well as politicians should not measure social institutions against the benchmark of technical perfection, i.e. they should not expect absolute social security. For if they did, the state's social system might deprive individuals of their right to make free decisions and to act self-responsibly (von Ferber 1962, 439, 442, 445).

Social risks versus security granted by the state, individual freedom versus basic human rights and solidarity – this was the conflict line which ran through almost all socio-political debates in the Federal Republic after the harshest post-war hardship had been overcome. This seemed to be the case from the middle of the 1950s, when unemployment decreased and economic growth was stable. With reference to Ulrich Beck's concept of the "risk society" the article sees in this discussion elements of a modern risk debate. For the discussion revolves around the weighing up of risks: while the risk of poorness was reduced by means of social security measures, this modern problem-solving approach decreased individual freedom. So differently from what researchers assumed for a long period, risks did not disappear through the social production of wealth. Indeed, as Arwen P. Mohun already pointed out in her article in this HSR Special Issue, one outcome of modernity is the intention to "colonize the future," which can be translated as the general wish to control risk. But at the same time, the social experts and politicians of the 1950s' FRG were quite aware of the dilemma that progress could also produce negative consequences.

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## 2. Risk as an Analytical Concept for the History of Post-War Western Germany

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Currently, the scientific use of risk as an analytical concept is strongly influenced by sociological reflections (Knutsen et al. 2012, 13). Niklas Luhmann distinguishes between "risk" and "danger." He speaks of "risks" when an individual can influence the possible negative consequences of his or her decisions.

Usually, the individual has to take the responsibility for such risks. When an individual is affected by the environment, however, Luhmann categorises this as a “danger” (Luhmann 1993, 327). However, in everyday speech people usually do not make this differentiation and treat “risk” and “danger” as synonymous terms. Hence, in historical analyses it is often hard to decide whether contemporaries regarded something as a risk or a danger in Niklas Luhmann’s sense. So Peter Itzen and Simone Müller argued in the introduction to this HSR Special Issue for a broad meaning of risk and defined risks as future events and developments that are caused by human actions and that are potentially harmful to human actors and their environment (Itzen and Müller 2016, 10, in this HSR Special Issue). Transferred to the subject of the article, falling into poverty in the 1950s, FRG can be regarded as a risk because of the installation of a social security system. The same holds true for the loss of individual freedom.

The notion of the “risk society,” introduced by Ulrich Beck in his 1986 book by the same title, very quickly became highly popular and an inspiration for further studies (Teufel 2001, 237). Subsequently, “risk” as an analytical concept has spread into other research areas: at first, into the research on ecology and environmental risks. Today, it has been applied to such various fields as technology, economy and social sciences. Only in the last couple of years have historians introduced the concept into their field (Christmann and Ibert 2012, 259; see also Mohun 2013). However, risk turns out to be a fruitful area of historical research, for the strategies of dealing with risks differ significantly in different regions, societies and eras (Christmann and Ibert 2012, 260; see also Itzen and Müller 2016, in this HSR Special Issue).

Most scholars agree with Beck in so far as they argue that dangers and threats earlier societies were confronted with do not appear abruptly anymore in modern societies. In contrast, technical and scientific progress has made these dangers and threats calculable, which means they have been converted into risks (Münkler 2010, 18). Yet, differently from what researchers assumed for a long time, risks do not disappear through the social production of wealth. Scholars agree that legal regulations and measures of social security have reduced “real” material need and, through this, mitigated the distributional conflict which had dominated industrial societies before. Yet, they argue that new risks have moved into the focus of interest, namely those which are unleashed by the processes of modernisation themselves. Rather than progress, the involuntary production of risks is now seen as the key characteristic of modern societies. According to Beck, this shift began in the 1970s in the Federal Republic of Germany, at the latest (Christmann and Ibert 2012, 260; Beck 1986, 25, 27).

With the principle “need is hierarchical, smog is democratic,” Beck refers primarily to environmental risks that do not halt at class or state borders. At the same time, he refers to social risks by using the term “risk society.” Through the dissolution of traditional structures, individuals do not only gain more possibilities to shape their lives in a positive way. At the same time, “individuali-

sation” also implies that everyone can be hit by social descent. Thus, modernisation itself becomes a problem (Beck 1986, 26, 48, 218 et seq.). But as I will argue in this article not only modernisation in a technological sense but from the point of view of the contemporaries also in a political one. For democracy and human rights also can be in danger by measures actually established to increase social security.

The concept of “security,” often used as an antonym to the concept of risk, has been an expanding field of sociological and political research since the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 (Scherr 2010, 213, cf. Münkler 2010; Zwierlein and de Graaf 2013). At first sight, security and risk may appear to stand in contrast with one another. Yet, both approaches have the same goal, namely to avoid danger. In order to reach this goal, however, they pursue different, partly complementary paths. Security approaches attempt to create areas which are protected from dangers or which are, at least, significantly safer than their environment. Risk approaches develop strategies to make dangers and threats more calculable (Münkler 2010, 11). With this in mind Eckart Conze’s proposal to consider the history of the early FRG as a “search for security” can also be regarded as an input for the risk history of post-war Germany (cf. Conze 2009, 18).

This article concentrates mainly on the second half of the 1950s. Thus, the period it investigates precedes the shift from an industrial society driven by the belief in progress to a so-called risk society identified by Beck by about two decades. But as early as the second half of the 1950s, contemporaries perceived the dissolution of traditional structures as a threat to social security. Additionally, the previous decades with their economic crises, political unrest and wars had unsettled the people. The worst post-war hardship had been overcome, relieved through emergency aid programmes and the beginning economic growth. So welfare experts could now start to reflect on the role which the state should henceforth play in the precautions for its citizens’ social risks. In the following the central lines of argument of this debate will be described. Therefore I will look primarily at speeches and articles on social policy from social experts of the two main parties of the FRG, namely the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Special attention is awarded to the debate about freedom versus security. At first sight, the opposition against the expansion of the social system seems to have had little, if any, effect. For the years of the Western German post-war boom are considered the period of the biggest expansion of the welfare state (see e.g. Ruck 2012). The intensity with which the debate was led in the course of several years, however, suggests that this was more than just an ideological conflict with the sole goal of defaming the political opponent. Rather, it seems that many people were afraid in the 1950s that the Federal Republic might turn out to be an instable system – instable in an economic but also political way. Especially because of the experiences people had made in the Weimar Republic, it appears that the

consciousness for risks of ill-led political developments was especially strong. Following this thesis, it would be necessary to investigate in how far this debate has affected the specific organisation of the Western German welfare state.

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### 3. Social Politics between the Repercussions of the War and the “Economic Miracle”

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Only a few years after the Federal Republic of Germany had been founded, the economic boom reached an unexpected level. However, Western Germany was by no means a stable state in its early years. Especially economic worries were wide-spread. One of the central tasks of the state was supporting those who had lost the basis of their existence because of the Second World War. Such support seemed to be necessary not only for ethical reasons. Politicians and social experts also considered it indispensable in order to strengthen the people’s trust in the new, democratic state. Discontent citizens were regarded as “politically fragile.”<sup>1</sup> During the reconstruction of post-war Western Germany, the consciousness for risks of a disturbance of internal order was ubiquitous. The contemporaries were still well aware of the situation in the Weimar Republic, where economic crises, political unrest and social dislocations had completely destabilised social order. In addition, the Cold War was already in full swing – and communism as a menacing bogeyman hovered over everything. (This also resonated in many social debates, as the CDU always suspected the SPD to strive for communist conditions within the social security system and later the whole society (Hockerts 1985, 254; Conze 2009, 172; Bohlender 2010, 102; Schildt 1995, 355; Lorke 2015, 79).)

The path for social politics seemed to be pre-determined by the constitution, for the Federal Republic of Germany had been characterised as a *sozialer Rechtsstaat*, i.e. a social state governed by the rule of law, in the Basic Law. However, different ways of building such a state were favoured by different groups. Some strove to expand the social system, while others were convinced that individuals were especially capable of protecting themselves against the standard risks of life in times of increasing prosperity. Welfare experts agreed in so far as they considered the social benefits to be completely insufficient where they were someone’s sole income. The biggest restraint for the state to make comprehensive improvements in this sector was at first the tense budgetary situation (Hockerts 1980, 201). Another aspect all stakeholders agreed about was the necessity to get rid of the chaos which the pragmatic-reactive sociopolitics of the immediate post-war years had left behind (Hockerts 1985, 245).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ihme (1955, 400); Letter from the “*Deutscher Frauenring*” to Helene Wessel, October 29, 1949, AdSD, inheritance of Helene Wessel, signature 18.

Thus, Konrad Adenauer stated in the autumn of 1953 in his second government declaration that the guiding principle of the social market economy made it a central governmental task “to integrate the unemployed and to propose measures to the parliament to further improve the economic situation of pensioners, disabled people, orphans and bereaved people” (Von Beyme 1979, 81).<sup>2</sup> Pursuing this, Adenauer focused on two things: on the one hand, further economic growth, including the hope for full employment, and on the other hand, an *umfassende Sozialreform*, a full-fledged social reform. The latter was intended not only to unravel the chaotic web of benefits, but also to direct social expenses more appropriately to those who needed them (Hockerts 1985, 253).

The concept of the Social Democrats for a social reform went further than the chancellor’s. In contrast to the government, the SPD considered health care a part of sociopolitics. Furthermore, the party emphasised the necessity of preventive measures. These were supposed to reduce the risk of falling into a precarious situation as far as possible. According to the SPD, such a comprehensive approach was necessary in order to grant individual freedom and dignity, both of which they considered to be unattainable without social security. From the party’s point of view, times were insecure for two reasons, despite the beginning “economic miracle.” Firstly, most citizens had no savings anymore – due to the war, hardship as refugees and the devaluation of the currency. In addition to this *factual* loss of security, the terrible experiences people had made caused a *perceived* loss of security.<sup>3</sup> In line with Eckart Conze’s proposition to regard the history of the Federal Republic of Germany as a quest for security, the comprehensive socio-political approach of the SPD, focusing mainly on preventive measures, seemed to reveal the wish for a future in which some things might not be possible, a future where many things were determined and calculable (Conze 2009, 18).

As a matter of fact, the population of Western Germany in the 1950s was strongly coined by experiences of poverty between the wars and after the Second World War. Within socio-political debates, experts thus often measured current social problems against those of previous decades. On the one hand, they emphasised the enormous progress the Federal Republic had made within only a few years. On the other hand, they identified those previous problems as the root of the Western German’s desire for well-ordered conditions, social security and social justice. The best way of responding to this was a sociopoliti-

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<sup>2</sup> Original quote: “die Arbeitslosen einzugliedern und dem Bundestag Maßnahmen vorzuschlagen, durch die die wirtschaftliche Lage der Rentner, Invaliden, Waisen und Hinterbliebenen weiter verbessert wird.” From Konrad Adenauer’s government declaration on October 20, 1953.

<sup>3</sup> Pamphlet “SPD Sozialplan. Der Punkt, der jeden interessiert” (1954/55), AdsD, inheritance of Ludwig Preller, signature 92.

cy which avoided the emergence of need as far as possible (Reucher 1999, 35; Conze 2009, 16).

As Hans Günter Hockerts has pointed out, the socio-political positions of the SPD and Adenauer's Christian Democrats were relatively similar on the programmatic level in the 1950s. Differences can be found with regard to accentuation rather than with regard to the general goals. Neither did the SPD aim for a social system which replaced the individuals' responsibility by state benefits, nor was the majority of the CDU opposed to an expansion of the state's social security system. The CDU, too, regarded social peace as a basic condition for a functioning democracy (Hockerts 1980, 230 et seq.). They were also aware that people expected the state to guarantee a certain extent of social security since the introduction of Bismarck's social legislation, and that their expectations had further grown because of their experiences in the previous decades.

The guidelines for social reform, passed in 1956 during the CDU's convention in Stuttgart, are an example for this: "Provisions which used to be required only by a part of the people have become common goods. Therefore they also need a common right."<sup>4</sup> Individual precaution for hard times and individual responsibility were still supposed to antecede support from the community or the state. Yet, socio-political measures which had proven successful for 70 years should be maintained. Legal rights should be respected. The guidelines also acknowledged that many new forms of need seemed to have evolved, and that these demanded not only measures of economic, financial and currency politics, but also socio-political reforms.<sup>5</sup> I here use the word "seemed" not because I think these needs were not real in the years of the beginning "economic miracle." But in my opinion the experiences the German people had made in the past, especially during the 1920s, were more important for this political guideline than the problems they were actually confronted with in the present.

Despite these significant parallels, strong tensions erupted in the debates of the 1950s. Especially the representatives of economic-liberal circles reproached the supporters of an expansion of the social system with promoting a *Versorgungsstaat* which suffocated any form of freedom and self-reliance. *Versorgungsstaat* cannot be translated directly into English. Without knowing the background it just sounds like another expression of the word "welfare state." But within the socio-political debates of the 1950s and 1960s, it was actually mainly used as a swear word. Those who used it wanted to stress the negative effects of a state in which citizens do not have to worry about their social security. To some of them, the creation of a "welfare state" already implied this threat. The concept of the "welfare state" had at its basis the idea of a preven-

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<sup>4</sup> Original quote: "Sicherungen, die früher nur für einen Teil des Volkes notwendig waren, sind Allgemeingut geworden und bedürfen deshalb auch eines allgemeinen Rechtes."

<sup>5</sup> See: Leitsätze zur Sozialreform. CDU-Parteitag Stuttgart 28.4.1956, AdsD, inheritance of Ludwig Preller, signature 77. See also: O.A. 1956.

tive sociopolitics which did not only protect individuals from existential risks like sickness, invalidity or unemployment, or rectified unintended developments of the economic process in hindsight. Instead, the state was supposed to provide its citizens with an optimum of public social benefits from the start – irrespective of their social and economic status. The modern welfare state was thus granted the right to intervene in the economy when its citizens' welfare demanded it (cf. Abelshauser 1987, 9).

In Western Germany, this opinion was initially held mainly by social-democratic circles. In the course of the 1950s, however, it won through. Yet, the fear that the state could become too powerful influenced almost all socio-political debates – on the background of German history as well as with the intra-German competitor in mind: the socialist system in Eastern Germany. In the opinion of opponents within and outside of the government, the highest principle of a democracy should be freedom. Social benefits were regarded as a threat to individual freedom as they made individuals dependent upon the state. These opponents of the welfare state argued that this would lead to collectivism and contradicted the concept of democracy.

Sociopoliticians from within the SPD reproached the government with pursuing ideological and power-conscious considerations through this line of argument (see Schellenberg 1968, 12; also cf. Reucher 1999, 37). In how far this was the case cannot be clearly determined. As a matter of fact, however, employees of social services were confronted with problems in these years: the expansion of help programmes, based on an ever-expanding understanding of poverty risks, implied an expansion of control over those who received social benefits. This contradicted the notion of social work as a partnership which saw it as its main task to motivate those in need to help themselves. As the example of von Ferber at the beginning of the article has already shown, social experts were thus confronted with a paradox: with a continuously expanding concept of "being in need," the state could intervene in an increasing number of areas of life – although the goal behind this was to increase people's chances to free personal development through socio-political measures. This basic dilemma shall now be further explored, using as examples the debates about the *Versorgungsstaat* on the one hand and about the meaning of the constitutional concept of the *sozialer Rechtsstaat*, the social state under the rule of law, on the other hand.

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#### 4. Negative Consequences of Sociopolitics – The Debate about the "*Versorgungsstaat*"

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The first warnings against a *Versorgungsstaat* could already be heard in the early 1950s. Although everyone agreed that the state was responsible for removing the consequences of the war, it was as early as 1951 that Konrad

Adenauer propagated ideas that aimed at a gradual downsizing of the welfare state. In the aforementioned government declaration from 1953, the re-elected chancellor also ascribed a limited potential of social benefits in reducing poverty. Not the expansion of social benefits was what he hoped would lead to improvements, but the reorganisation of existing measures. In addition, he relied on the promotion of the economy. This was supposed to further increase economic growth and thereby raise the prosperity of the whole society, including those parts of the population that had hitherto been undersupplied (Schulz 2005, 149 et seq.).

Another leading politician who repeatedly voiced concerns about the expansion of public social security benefits was Ludwig Erhard, who was minister for economic affairs for many years. Erhard held the opinion that individuals had to be liberated from poverty before they would be able to abandon the “materialistic way of thinking.” In other words, Erhard considered only those whose basic needs were fulfilled to be capable of getting involved in processes of civil society, e.g. volunteer work or political action like participating in elections or demonstrations. However, he did not want to attain this through social benefits, but through well-functioning economic politics and a strengthening of self-reliance. In Erhard’s opinion, social benefits were necessary for a limited period: as soon as the repercussions of the war would have been overcome, sound economic politics and a stable democratic order would make them largely superfluous in the future. For this reason, he argued that the best socio-politics was a sound economic policy (Erhard 1957, 233 et seq.). This was at least partly understandable, for employment and the ability to work had developed into structural characteristics of modern societies. As a consequence, full employment had become the most important socio-political goal from a liberal point of view (Bohlender 2010, 105), for it seemed to be the best protection against the risk of falling into poverty.

Yet, liberalism was also connected with another conception which was frequently held at the time: everyone had to provide for themselves and their families with the means they gained through work and inheritance. Consequently, everyone was considered responsible for what happened to them. No one else was to be held responsible for their losses. This way of thinking is called the principle of liability, and it was intended to make people act with foresight. With respect to sociopolitics, this meant that everyone had to reckon with the so-called standard risks of life. Consequently, everyone was supposed to take precautionary measures, rather than relying on help from the state.

According to French historian François Ewald, the principle of liability was the predominant paradigm of the nineteenth century. In his opinion, it was replaced by the paradigm of solidarity with the turn of the century (Ewald 1998, 6). The socio-political debates depicted above, however, show that many politicians still promoted this principle well into the 1950s. Similar arguments were made again and again in the media: the journalist Heddy Neumeister of

the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* who was proficient in socio-political issues, concluded one year after the great pension reform that sociopolitics had been stretched to its limit. Despite the fact that the citizens' reactions to the newly introduced index-linked pension were predominantly positive, Neumeister considered the reform to have failed. Just like many opponents of the *Versorgungsstaat*, the social welfare state, from within the government, she argued that every individual should provide for their pension themselves, self-responsibly and only supported by their families, not by the state. The sole exception were individual moments of distress, such as the loss of the parents. In such cases, the state was supposed to secure the minimum subsistence level by means of the poor relief (Neumeister 1958a, 1958b).

This seems to confirm, at least in part, the suspicion social democrats always had: namely that the debate had been purposefully fuelled by the government in order to weaken the position of the SPD. Therefore, the SPD repeatedly made a stand against the notion of an alleged causality between an expansion of the social system and communism, which frequently resonated in the debate about the *Versorgungsstaat*. Behind this notion, Ludwig Preller, one of the leading social experts of the SPD, made out a vague and irrational fear which the political opponents purposefully played off against the politics of the SPD:

A ghost has slipped into the debate about the social reform. [...] Those who see this ghost say: the social insurance has 'collectivised' the people; the result of this was a lack of the sense of responsibility and hence a drift towards the 'welfare state'; to fight this tendency and to help the individual to reawaken their obligatory action in freedom, the idea of 'care' has to regain influence within the system of social security. As a consequence, the existing legal claim to social benefits has to be replaced by poverty tests (Preller 1955).<sup>6</sup>

Preller further argued that by insinuating that individual thought and action were eliminated through the great collectives, it could be suggested, without actually being said, that collectivism and communism were not far from one another. With regard to such reproaches, Preller's comrade Walter Auerbach conceded that dictatorships also used social benefits to exert and legitimise their power. Nonetheless, he stressed that social benefits were also justified in a democratic state. They had to be organised differently than in a dictatorship, but that was, according to Auerbach, a question of "how," not of "whether." Therefore, before social benefits could be restructured, the current structural

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<sup>6</sup> Original quote: "Ein Gespenst hat sich in die Diskussion um die Sozialreform eingeschlichen. [...] Die Sozialversicherung, sagen die Gespenstseher, habe die Menschen 'kollektiviert'; daraus resultiere mangelndes Verantwortungsbewußtsein; ihm entspreche die Tendenz zum 'Wohlfahrtsstaat'; um diesen zu bekämpfen und dem Individuum wieder zu verpflichtendem Handeln in Freiheit zu verhelfen, müsse der 'Fürsorgegedanke' im System der sozialen Sicherung stärkeren Einfluß gewinnen. Womit folgerichtig der bestehende Rechtsanspruch auf soziale Leistungen durch Bedürftigkeitsprüfungen fürsorglicher Art zu ersetzen ist."

principles of society had to be determined, and tendencies for development outlined (Auerbach 1956).<sup>7</sup>

In the article these thoughts are taken from, Auerbach also described changes in socio-political goals which, despite diverse forms of resistance, loomed in Western German post-war society. With regard to these changes, he made out parallels to the development in Great Britain and Scandinavia, although the changes in Germany were delayed (cf. Abelshauser 1987, 9). Auerbach thus conceived of sociopolitics as “the entirety of the scheduled measures which guarantee the economic existence and the dignity of the working (and the invalid) people and their relatives” (Auerbach 1956).<sup>8</sup> For Auerbach, this included securing the ability to work up until old age, e.g. through health care and sufficient recovery. He was convinced that in an industrial society, sociopolitics could not be confined to helping the socially deprived. To him social benefits functioned as compensations for lacking income. To support this opinion, Auerbach even referred to the “father” of German sociopolitics, when he argued that Otto von Bismarck had not intended his sociopolitics to be politics for the poor. Rather, he thought that Bismarck already pursued the principle of prevention. For health, accident and pension insurance were not meant to help poor people, but prevent workers from falling into poverty (Auerbach 1956).

Thus, with regard to its socio-political ideas, the SPD relied mainly on the principle of prevention. The party justified its comprehensive approach with the universal right to lead a life in dignity, which, in their opinion, implied a political duty. This approach was not new. Already in the Weimar Republic, the notion of what sociopolitics had to encompass and affect had begun to change fundamentally: The goal of welfare had been supposed to be careful social planning instead of emergency help, and an active fight against poverty through prevention, rehabilitation and professional retraining programmes rather than managing poverty. Besides the professionalization of social work, the fact that people from outside the lower classes, too, could become needy of welfare had been essential to this change of attitude in the 1920s. As a result of war and inflation, not only the lowest social classes had become poor.<sup>9</sup> A disproportionately high share of the middle class had been confronted with economic hardship due to a loss of assets, the death of the provider or unemployment. Municipalities had been no longer responsible only for the traditional care for the poor, but also had have to take care of war victims and disabled people,

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<sup>7</sup> For more information about the socio-political conflict between Ludwig Erhard and the social democratic milieu q.v.: O. A. (1958); Fritze (1958).

<sup>8</sup> Original quote: “die Gesamtheit der planmäßigen Maßnahmen, die der Sicherung der wirtschaftlichen Existenz und der Würde des arbeitenden (und des nicht mehr arbeitsfähigen) Menschen und seiner Angehörigen dient.”

<sup>9</sup> As Sarah Hassdenteufel (2016, in this HSR Special Issue) shows in her article the fast growing numbers of unemployed at the beginning of the 1980s had a similar effect on the social security measures in France.

individuals with insufficient pensions as well as pregnant women and women in childbed (Sachße and Tennstedt 1988, 160). Because of the economic crises, these high expectations towards sociopolitics soon had to be lowered. In contrast to the Weimar Republic, stable economic growth provided the Federal Republic of Germany with sufficient financial means to implement these sociopolitic ideas. Thus, François Ewald's assessment that the twentieth century had been dominated by the paradigm of solidarity seemed to prove true. For the principle of prevention corresponds with solidarity (Ewald 1998, 22). Prevention, in turn, demands science and technical control. It is about reducing the probability for risks to occur (Ewald 1998, 11).

The fact that, in the socio-political debates of the 1950s, social democrats were not the only ones to use the term "solidarity" underlines Ewald's position. Even the supporters of the principle of liability seemed to apply different standards, especially with regard to war victims. The events of the previous decades had shown that the principle of individual risk prevention stopped working when it came to inflation and war. President Theodor Heuss, for example, demanded in 1955 that society offer more support to the elderly. He argued that the elderly who now had to stand in line in front of nursing homes were the ones who had been affected the most by the World Wars, for they had lost their savings through the currency reform. In some cases, they had lost them for the second time. According to Heuss, a fresh start was not possible for them (Heuss 1955, 348). Newspapers also called people's attention to the fact that many contemporaries considered it a blatant injustice that people who had fallen into poverty because of government decisions still lived in want in the times of the "economic miracle" (see e.g. Author Unknown 1955c).<sup>10</sup>

The example of the Christian Democrat Theoder Blank shows that the warnings against an excessive expansion of the welfare state were based on actual concerns on the part of the political actors, not just political strategy. In general, Blank, who was minister for employment and social order from 1957 to 1965, supported the expansion of the welfare state for reasons of Christian responsibility. Yet, he was convinced that there was no need for the state to regulate areas which those who were fit to work and in good health were able to take care of for themselves and their families. In Blank's opinion, the development in the GDR proved that sociopolitics could also function as oppressive power politics and was therefore not innately good.

Economic policy is able to eliminate hunger and to create wealth on its own, as the past has shown quite clearly, but this does not automatically decrease dependence and increase freedom. These improvements must be effected by,

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<sup>10</sup> For sources where the author is unknown, the abbreviation A. u. will be used in the following.

it takes politicians with social expertise through careful consideration and corrective intervention (Blank 1958).<sup>11</sup>

Blank acknowledged that full employment and a stable currency were the material foundation of sociopolitics. Yet, he thought that public measures of welfare and protection had to help everyone who was unable to take care of themselves alone because of sickness, old age, invalidity or a stroke of fate. As one reason for his views he referred to human dignity which to him based on the opportunity to free personal development. He thought that this was impossible in a *Versorgungsstaat*. To him, such a state also implied the danger of neglecting those who worked hard and encourage idleness, which ultimately impeded the ascent of society as a whole and thus prevented social progress. Moreover, he argued that social benefits were unfair because they hit especially the working classes in the pocket. On the other hand, he referred to the “*alten sozialen Gedanken der Nächstenliebe und der Solidarität*,” the old social ideas of compassion and solidarity, when it came to expanding social security for those who had no way of helping themselves.<sup>12</sup>

Blank's assertions partly followed Erhard's notion, but they also recall the position of Walter Auerbach. For, with reference to the Christian image of humanity, Blank warned against the danger of collectivism as well as the danger of excessive individualism and liberalism. In his opinion, the community provided the precondition for the individual's physical and spiritual existence and their moral development.<sup>13</sup> Although the Minister for Employment's opinion resembled Auerbach's, he did not want to be associated with social democratic ideas. For at the end of the 1950s, the SPD was still suspected of striving for a socialist system.<sup>14</sup> In a 1960 speech, Blank emphasised that Christianity, rather than Marxism, had been the hotbed of Germany's sociopolitics with its labour legislation, its occupational safety rules and its principle of social security. He argued that both Protestant and Catholic reformers had provided the impulses for these measures and had influenced their implementation significantly. Consequently, he argued, the social democrats had no “right of primo-

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<sup>11</sup> Original quote: “Hunger beseitigen und Wohlstand schaffen, das vermag die Wirtschaftspolitik allein, wie wir eindringlich erfahren haben; Abhängigkeit mindern aber und Freiheit mehren, das fällt nicht automatisch mit ab, das muß mit Überlegung und Weitsicht vom Sozialpolitiker absichtsvoll bewirkt und korrigierend herbeigeführt werden.”

<sup>12</sup> Speech on “Sozialpolitik aus christlicher Verantwortung” held by Theodor Blank in Fulda on March 5, 1960, ADCP, 1-098 026/1.

<sup>13</sup> Speech by Theodor Blank, delivered on the meeting of the “Junge Union” in Berlin on October 3, ADCP, 01-098 002/1.

<sup>14</sup> The deputy of the German Party, Margot Kalinke, for example imputed to the social democrats, that they did not really want freedom for individuals. She thought that they just wanted to replace the dependence from employers by the dependence from public authorities. Indeed this was before the political convention of Bad Godesberg. Manuscript of Margot Kalinke's speech on social policy in the third legislative period (probably 1957), ADCP, 01-026 012/1.

geniture” with regard to sociopolitics. To the contrary, he claimed that they had initially been opposed to sociopolitics.<sup>15</sup>

The Minister of Employment thus lined out a continuity in Christian sociopolitics from Bismarck’s time until the present. This way, he attempted to both legitimise Christian sociopolitics against doubters from within his own party, and to establish it as superior to the SPD’s sociopolitics. To him, the underlying anthropology was the key aspect of sociopolitics. In his opinion, many politicians, namely those within the SPD, had lost track of this, thinking only in money and benefits. Welfare experts within the CDU, on the contrary, made the Christian conception of the human being, which demanded them to fight poverty, the basis of their sociopolitics.

However, Blank argued that the social preconditions had changed since the Bismarck era. Differently than in the nineteenth century, when being on someone’s payroll was virtually tantamount to living in poverty, in his opinion the society of the Federal Republic was a workers’ society with growing economic opportunities and a remarkable security against the vicissitudes of life (*Wechselfällen des Lebens*). To Blank, history had long overcome the poor, exploited worker who was at danger of misery every day. Therefore, he argued that there was no need for the state to watch over every individual’s wellbeing like a fortress. For this would mean patronising people and making them objects of state welfare.

He indirectly reproached the SPD with having such an attitude. Yet, he conceded that the social security system still had flaws which needed removing, although he did not see this as a general problem, but rather as individual cases. The values he wanted to govern the Federal Republic’s sociopolitics were a sense of responsibility, a public spirit and the will to self-help. Essentially, Blank stuck to these views during his time as minister of employment, although towards the end of his tenure, he argued more frequently that sociopolitics had to be restricted for financial reasons. Again and again, he raged against a patronising authoritarian state (*bevormundenden Obrigkeitsstaat*) and a welfare state of communist character (*Versorgungsstaat kommunistischer Prägung*). Occasionally, he even identified the one with the other. At the same time, he emphasised in a 1964 speech that there “still [remained] a lot of coy and hopeless hardship”<sup>16</sup> and that sociopolitics also had to pay attention to development aid.<sup>17</sup>

In comparison to Ludwig Erhard, the ministry of employment held a moderate position. Nonetheless, politicians from within the SPD struggled vehemently against what they called “Blank’s policy of the restriction of the welfare

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<sup>15</sup> Here and below speech on “Sozialpolitik aus christlicher Verantwortung” held by Theodor Blank in Fulda on March 5, 1960, ACDP, 1-098 026/1.

<sup>16</sup> Original quote: “noch viel verschämte und resignierte Not.”

<sup>17</sup> Speech by Theodor Blank on prevailing questions of social policy, held in Fulda on June 5, 1964, ACDP, 1-098 004/1.

state.”<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, they, too, used the risk of a collapse of the democratic order to lend weight to their standpoint. The difference was: they thought that an insufficient, rather than an excessive, amount of social security guaranteed by the state was the cause for this risk. They referred to the German experiences in the past in order to support their argument: “The tragic fate of the Weimar Republic has shown that democracy will be in danger if it is not socially secured.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, they argued, a democratic state had to protect health and workforce, create appropriate working conditions, improve career opportunities, create an effective equalisation of burdens within families, and ensure sufficient social security to elderly and sick people as well as in the case of accidents or the provider’s death. According to them, the prosperity of industrial society only served the people once a welfare state had been implemented.

The SPD tried to legitimise their position in two ways: firstly, they claimed that the majority of the population, at least within the working classes, backed the party’s socio-political goals. Secondly, they referenced the Basic Law which characterised the Federal Republic of Germany as a *sozialer Rechtsstaat* (a social state under the rule of law). This state, they argued, had to ensure the basic conditions for everyone to strive for a healthy, productive and humane life. According to the SPD, much had been achieved in this regard, but the boundaries of the welfare state had by no means been exhausted, for hardship continued to exist in the Federal Republic.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the differences in language, the position of the ministry of employment under Theodor Blank was remarkably similar to that of the SPD. Both sides argued in favour of a public guarantee of basic social security, i.e. an expansion of social benefits. Both sides, if with different intensities, warned against an excessive limitation of individual freedom through state interventions (Cf. e.g. A. u. 1956; Auerbach 1956). In addition, the leading experts for sociopolitics within the SPD agreed with the ministry of employment about the notion that the legal right to social benefits had to be respected. Most notably, they both believed that annuity claims and benefits from the national insurances had to be paid out regardless of the individual’s need, even when they were (partly) funded by public grants. The ministry of finance, on the contrary, aimed to reduce spending for social benefits by limiting them to those whose need had been proven.

The ministry of employment, however, intended to delineate especially the benefits from national insurances from the stigmatised forms of traditional poor

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<sup>18</sup> Original quote: “Blanks Politik der Begrenzung des Sozialstaates.”

<sup>19</sup> Original quote: “Das tragische Schicksal der Weimarer Republik hat gezeigt, daß es um die Demokratie schlecht bestellt ist, wenn sie nicht sozial gesichert ist.” Pamphlet “Sozialpolitik in unserer Zeit” by the social democratic party (1961), AdsD, inheritance Ludwig Preller, signature 94.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

relief, for which reason they vehemently rejected testing people's need before benefits were paid out to them. Similarly, they wanted annuity claims – for a long period, the largest share were compensation payments for consequential damages from the war – to be paid out regardless of the recipient's economic situation. To them, the rule of law demanded that compensation rather than need was the principle behind benefits for consequences of the war, as Ernst Schellenberg put it in 1967. In their opinion, these benefits thereby contributed to the equalisation within Western German society. Eventually, the SPD and the ministry of employment prevailed.<sup>21</sup>

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## 5. Expansion of the Welfare State on the Basis of the Basic Law

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The denomination of the Federal Republic as a social state governed by the rule of law was the positive counterpart to the notion of the *Versorgungsstaat*. The concept stood at the centre of the social democrats' argument. In their opinion, social risks like invalidity had always represented a challenge to society. Yet, the necessary support used to be provided by relatives, neighbours or the community – until the end of the eighteenth century, when the transition to industrial capitalist society entailed a change in the criteria for social security and social risk (Roos 2012, 53 et seq.). In pre-industrial societies, social insecurity was higher for individuals who did not belong to a community, e.g. a guild of craftsmen. In industrial capitalist societies, however, individuals were threatened with losing their social status when they became incapable of providing for themselves through work. The continuous dissolution of traditional networks and ties through industrialisation, the emergence of the working class movement, and the effects of the economic crises of the modern era had contributed to this development, so that social security increasingly became a matter of being able to work (Bohlender 2010, 105). In the nineteenth century, this led to structural poverty. Because of this, the notion of social right emerged in the second half of the century. Nonetheless, private and public help for the poor was not deduced from citizenship until the end of the German Empire, but rather quite the opposite: until the downfall of the German monarchy, citizens who had to make use of poor relief lost the right to vote, as well as other civil rights. A real consciousness for the social dimension of citizenship was only created by the catastrophes experienced by Germans in the wake of the World Wars. They thus paved the way for the emergence of the modern welfare states (Maul 1955,

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. Press releases and information: statement from Ernst Schellenberg on "Social policy today," February 24, 1967, AdSD, inheritance Ernst Schellenberg, signature 3. Cf. Hockerts 1985, 255.

115, 117 et seq.). It was especially in the second half of the twentieth century that expectations towards the state emerged on the part of the citizens (Bohlander 2010, 102, 105).

Pointing to the determinations of the Basic Law, the social democrats in the 1950s defended themselves against the accusation of striving for a welfare state of socialist character. Yet, the Basic Law had been reluctant to specify social entitlements and guidelines in the form of constitutional norms. The Weimar Constitution had contained such norms, yet it was well established that these could not always be realised. Thus, the Basic Law only contained a *Sozialstaatsklausel*: the constitution committed to the democratic and social federal state (*demokratischer und sozialer Bundesstaat*) in article 20, section 1, and to the democratic and social state governed by the rule of law (*demokratischer und sozialer Rechtsstaat*) in article 28, section 1 (Kaufmann 2001, 72).

From the latter article, vague as it is, together with the dignity of man guaranteed in article 1, the social democrats deduced a public responsibility for the individual's social security, and from their understanding of democracy the principles of integration and equal opportunity. According to the SPD, modern sociopolitics had to be guided by the principle of prevention. To them, sociopolitics was structural politics, which meant it had to be designed in such a way that disadvantages did not occur in the first place. Furthermore, they argued that sociopolitics must not be subordinated to economic and fiscal goals because, according to them, all political aims concerned the society as a whole. Thus, they wanted the different measures to be co-ordinated. They believed that the 'social state governed by the rule of law' had not yet been achieved, although Western Germany had emerged "out of the boundless poverty and the burdensome restrictedness of all living conditions in the time immediately following the collapse at the end of the war,"<sup>22</sup> as Ludwig Preller put it, and although the socio-political status from the Weimar Republic had been restored since the foundation of the Western German state, even breaking new socio-political ground in certain aspects. "The Federal Republic of Germany will only become a 'democratic and social state under the rule of law' when the spirit of solidarity and the spirit of equality pervade all sectors of the FRG, from the workplace through to high policy."<sup>23</sup>

During the remainder of the 1960s, the SPD more and more frequently used the notion of equal opportunity to phrase their central socio-political goal. Ernst

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<sup>22</sup> Original quote: "[a]us der grenzenlosen Armut und aus der drückenden Beschränktheit aller Lebensumstände der Zeit unmittelbar nach dem Zusammenbruch zu Kriegsende."

<sup>23</sup> Original quote: "'Demokratischer und sozialer Rechtsstaat' wird die Bundesrepublik erst werden, wenn der Geist des Sozialen, der Geist der Gleichberechtigung, wenn dieser Geist alle Sektoren der Bundesrepublik, vom Arbeitsplatz angefangen bis in die hohe Politik hinein, durchzieht und erfüllt." Presentation by Ludwig Preller on the conference of the German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB) in Hanau on January 23 and 24, 1960, AdSD, inheritance Ludwig Preller, signature 32; see also Preller (1963).

Schellenberg, who was the party's leading figure in sociopolitics from the middle of the 1950s through the 1970s (Lange 2007, 25; Hockerts 1980, 318), proclaimed equal opportunity to be amongst the prior tasks of sociopolitics, alongside health care, the promotion of capital formation and securing the economic status of broad social strata.<sup>24</sup> Schellenberg's objection to his party's plans to raise telephone charges in 1973 illustrates his efforts to enable everyone to partake in society: he argued that these plans were highly questionable with regard to the elderly and disabled, for many of whom the telephone was an indispensable means to stay in touch with their environment. In Schellenberg's opinion, raising the charges thus contradicted the government's policy statement.<sup>25</sup>

Many conservative politicians, by contrast, emphasised that the constitutional principle of the social state governed by the rule of law placed individual freedom, rather than the state, in the centre of law and politics. They argued that political order as a whole was dominated by the continuous antagonism between freedom and constraint, between individual and community, which became especially apparent in sociopolitics. In their opinion, these antagonisms had to be balanced out. They resisted the call for an expansion of social jurisdiction because they believed that since the 1960s, at the latest, consolidating the status quo and securing it for the future was what needed to be done, now that widespread distress had been resolved.<sup>26</sup>

Despite this resistance, social security was juridified more and more. Even the final social safety net of poor relief, which had been strongly restricted and immensely dependent on the individual administrative clerk's judgement until the 1950s, was standardised more and more and, at the same time, handled more liberally. While those who applied for poor relief were still expected to prove their need and to pay the benefits back later, these rules were now applied less strictly. The obligation to pay back benefits was omitted altogether through the passing of the *Bundessozialhilfegesetz* in 1961. Politicians from within the SPD especially fought for the fixation of the legal entitlement to poor relief (see e.g. Lange 2007, 23). They argued that social security was a prerequisite for the freedom of choice, and thus for democratic participation (see e.g. Dalberg 1957).

The Federal Administrative Court had created de facto-right to poor relief through a verdict in 1954. However, it was not laid down by law until several

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<sup>24</sup> Manuscript of the speech on "Aufgaben der sozialdemokratischen Politik" from 1965, AdsD, inheritance Ernst Schellenberg, signature 2; q.v. comment about social policy from November 25, 1968, AdsD, inheritance Ernst Schellenberg, signature 4; Statement on social policy in the German Federal Republic from October 1970, AdsD, inheritance Ernst Schellenberg, signature 5.

<sup>25</sup> Manuscript of Ernst Schellenberg's speech on November 16, 1973, AdsD, inheritance Ernst Schellenberg, signature 7.

<sup>26</sup> Manuscript of Margot Kalinke's speech on sociopolitics (probably 1964), ACDP, 01-026 012/1.

years later, in the *Bundessozialhilfegesetz* in 1961. The court had avoided to get involved in the organisation of poor relief. The social welfare offices thus retained a certain discretion concerning the appropriate level of benefits for the individual applicant – although indicative rates, based on a scientifically grounded market basket system had been established (Neumeister 1956). What the court had determined was the right of those in need to file a suit when they considered the rejection of their application for poor relief to be unjustified. This made a previous notion obsolete which stemmed from Prussian poverty legislation: until well into the 1950s, public poor relief had been considered a means to secure public order, rather than being granted to individuals for their own sake. Thus, altogether, the position of those in need was strengthened (A. u. 1954; Gerstung 1955; Schrappner 1993, 208).

In its reasoning, the court based its decision on two things: the change in socio-ethical value judgements on the one hand, and the transformation of the legal preconditions through the Basic Law on the other hand. According to the court, the earlier had started already in the Weimar Republic, yet without affecting the traditional legal conception. And even after 1945, jurisdiction had stuck to these old conceptions, although the economic and social circumstances had changed fundamentally. The court argued that these traditional conceptions were no longer sustainable, all the more after the Basic Law had come into effect. On the one hand, the dignity of man forbids treating individuals as nothing more than objects of state action. Rather than subjects, individuals were now citizens, which was reflected, amongst other things, in the fact that recipients of poor relief did not have the right to vote revoked, as had been the case in German Empire. On the other hand, the court argued, the Basic Law had defined the Federal Republic as a social state governed by the rule of law. Any relationship between citizens and the state was thus a legal relationship. By using the adjective “social,” the constitution had furthermore pointed to the idea of community and the social obligation that came with property. Consequently, the citizens, as participants of the community, now had rights of their own, from which the court deduced a fundamental right to life and health.<sup>27</sup>

In professional circles, the verdict of 1954 had been received with mixed feelings. Social security offices raised doubts because their actions were still governed by the legally granted discretion, but could be examined by courts once someone had filed a suit. The social security offices claimed that courts hereby became a supervisory authority of the administration. An organisation which was close to the SPD, the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, was sceptical as well when it came to the practical value of the verdict. An article in the *Neues Beginnen*; the periodical of the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, clearly welcomed the fact that those in need were no longer objects of state action, but could demand their rights in

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

court. At the same time, the verdict did not place any new duties on the social security offices. It merely determined that those in need were entitled to support from the social security offices, and had the right to go to administrative court when they were of the opinion that the office had unlawfully refused their request for poor relief. However, the author argued that the court had not questioned the principles of subsidiarity and individualisation, which provided the authorities with substantial discretion. Courts could only intervene when the authorities transcended or abused this discretion, e.g. when clerks neglected the market basket system (Gerstung 1955).

As a matter of fact, the following years provide several examples which show that jurisdiction struggled with the idea of granting everyone in need, even the allegedly “unworthy,” the right to poor relief. Problems occurred for example with “work dodgers.” As late as 1960, the Higher Administrative Courts thus fought about the question whether it was legal to refuse poor relief to those who rejected a job they had been offered. While the Higher Administrative Court in Münster decided that someone in need who was unwilling to work was no longer to be considered “in need,” the courts in Lüneburg, Berlin and Bavaria argued that poor relief for those unwilling to work could be limited to a minimum which just about sufficed for survival, but must never be withdrawn completely (Zabel 1960).

Christian welfare organisations, which were traditionally close to the Christian democrats, were also sceptical of a legally granted right to poor relief. The principles of juridification and bureaucratisation were, for large parts of their staff, incompatible with the Christian notion of welfare. In their opinion, legal regulations implied the risk of reducing individuals to objects or even “collective beings.” At the same time, they did not exclude anyone from the right to poor relief because to them, Christian anthropology implied that everyone who needed help had to be treated as a creature of God because God had created man in his image (Suhr 1957).<sup>28</sup>

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## 6. Conclusion

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However, referring to Peter Itzen’s and Simone Müller’s claim in the introduction to this HSR Special Issue, Beck’s assumption that modernising processes often produce unintended negative effects turned out to be a fruitful starting point for analysing the debates on social risks in the 1950s’ FRG. It sensitized me to the fact that the contemporaries were well aware that the expansion of the welfare state not only reduces the risk of poverty. They also knew about the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Speech by Theodor Blank delivered at the meeting of the “Junge Union” in Berlin on October 3, 1958, ADCP, 01-098 002/1.

negative consequences of their actions and tried to weigh up between the desire for social security and the value of individual freedom. So, as Arwen P. Mohun already argued the concept of “risk society” does not only fit for the “second modernity.” It is worth working with it also for earlier historical periods. In case of the 1950s FRG this approach sensibilised for the big insecurity contemporaries felt because of the bad experiences they had made in the past, not only with the economic system of rampant capitalism but also with statual power and the handling of human rights. While social democrats chiefly argued that publicly guaranteed social security was a prerequisite of a functioning democracy, representatives of economic-liberal circles predominantly stressed the potential threat to individual freedom. Different hybrid forms existed between the two poles of “individual freedom” on the one side and “social security” on the other side.

With regard to rhetorical controversies, the expansion of the welfare state was a highly contested and emotionally charged issue. Most socio-political debates in the second half of the 1950s were dominated by reciprocal reproaches: the conservatives suspected the social democrats of striving for communism, who in turn accused the conservatives of disregarding the definition of the Federal Republic as a social state in the Basic Law. Only in the 1960s did these these reproaches slowly subside. Despite the many warnings against an excessive empowerment of the state, the expansion of the welfare state was eventually a consensual goal. For the previous decades had proven unmistakably that the risk of falling into poverty continued to exist for everyone: individuals had no way of protecting themselves against economic crises, inflation and the consequential damages of wars. It seemed that public social security systems were the only thing that could preserve citizens from the risk of social descent.

The Federal Republic thus saw an unforeseen heyday of the welfare state in the years of the “economic miracle”: from the introduction of child benefits in 1954 to the great pensions reform in 1957 to substantial improvements in public welfare (*Bundessozialhilfegesetz*, 1961) and training assistance (BAföG, 1971) – although the fiercest opposition against the welfare state sometimes came from within the respective governments. The reasons for this were manifold: compared to other states, Western Germany was faced with especially strong consequences of the war. Developments in demography and the economical structure added to this, for the growing share of elderly and of employed people raised the number of members of social insurance. Moreover, an extended understanding of social rights seemed to have established itself. Furthermore, continuous economic growth enlarged the financial room for manoeuvre, which the governments used to meet the voters’ wish for more social security. Behind all this, it must not be forgotten that in its early years, the Federal Republic was far from being a stable political system. Sociopolitics was an important tool of legitimising, and winning the citizens’ trust in, democracy, especially because

of the competitive situation between Western Germany and the GDR (Hockerts 2011, 68; Conze 2009, 172).

Nonetheless, as this article has shown, the basic conflict of freedom versus security dominated the sociopolitical debates of the 1950s. Now the question is: What was the effect of this debate? Indeed at this point it cannot be discussed. But for future researches it seems to be worth to think about the influence of this conflict on the specific arrangements in Western German sociopolitics, e.g. the emphasis on the insurance principle, the promotion of the nuclear family as the standard family, and the strong position of Christian welfare organisations. Path dependence is only one of several reasons for the implementation of these traditional forms of social protection. The outline of the debate on the welfare state has shown that while ideological demarcations against the respective political opponent did play a role, the citizens of Western Germany actually were well aware of the negative consequences of direct welfare measures that granted the state excessive power over the individual's way of living.

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