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The South Tyrolean Minority and the Cold War

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Theoretical considerations and typological approaches

I. Introduction

The Cold War, which covered the period from 1945 to 1990, represented a particular phase in East-West relations. That is, these relations became inter-systemic: maintained between countries and societies with contrasting political and economic systems. Communist or so-called ‘real socialist’ systems, namely, the Soviet Union and East European countries, were set against liberal-democratic capitalist systems, namely North America and West European countries (LaFeber 1997; Schwartz 1997). A third group was made up of neutral and non-aligned states, which sought diplomatic mediations between the other two systems. The Cold War was a phase of international system bipolarity, which from *macroscopic* analytical approaches was expressed by military, political, ideological and economic aspects. As a complement to these macroanalytic perspectives, *microanalytic* approaches ask heuristically and praxeologically, how specific conflicts in the old East-West relationship were dealt with. Here a differentiation is noted between conflicts concerning absolutely valued interests (such as economic gain) and relatively valued interests (such as positions of power) as well as conflicts about the choice of the means to achieve common ends and about underlying values (Efinger/List 1993: 385).

Ethnic minorities during the Cold War may be investigated under such microanalytic frameworks; they fall under the category of relatively valued interests, whose power positions between the Cold War antagonists could be consolidated or expanded. In this context, I analyze the situation of the South Tyrolean minority from two theoretical perspectives: the order function and the action function.

1. Order function

A first theoretical starting point for such an analysis may be the typology, in the sense of a *function of order* (Knight 2004) Namely:

- a) Internal or ‘intra-bloc’ ethnic politics: that is, conflicts between the “host-state” and the “kin-state” may lead to internal destabilisation. In the extreme case, an ally’s claim to internal or domestic harmony may be undermined.

- b) ‘Trans-bloc’ East-West ethnic conflicts: that is, cases in which the country of origin is aligned with the ‘wrong’ political bloc. In the extreme case, this may lead to irredentism and separatism.
- c) Diaspora ethnic politics: that is, ethnic communities in the Diaspora as opponents of the Communist regime in their home countries.
- d) German ethnic politics: that is, a Diaspora *sui generis*, which uses anti-Communism as a means of returning to one’s own old, Communist-dominated homeland (Knight 2004: 9-11).

2. Action function

This proposed categorisation of the *function of order* can be extended by the category of the *function of action* so as to distinguish an *objective* function of action from a *subjective* one.

2.1 Concerning the *objective function of action*, an essential question is:

In which functional framework of action does the respective political bloc view its *own* minorities – or the ethnic minorities of the *opposing* bloc? The point of departure in this case is when ethnic minorities become an *object* of politics. Here we can distinguish between the function of *ideological propaganda* and the function of *political destabilisation*.

a) *Ideological propaganda*

There are two types of ideological propaganda – a positive one, which refers to one’s own minorities, and a negative one, which refers to minorities of the opposing bloc.

- i) One’s own ethnic minorities can be used primarily propagandistically in order to prove the *supremacy* of one’s own ideology as regards questions on solutions to minority problems.
- ii) On the other hand, minorities of other blocs may be enlisted in order to show deficiencies in the treatment of minority issues and thereby prove the ideological *inferiority* of that other bloc.
- iii) Finally, minorities may be instrumentalized under the pretext of the East-West conflict for home-grown domestic political aims.

b) *Political destabilisation*

Ethnic minority conflicts in one bloc may be politically instrumentalized in order to cause *destabilisation* in the opposing bloc. The means to that end range from political propaganda to use of force.

2.2.) With the *subjective function of action*, in the context of which minorities are the subject and not the object, an essential question is: Which functions did ethnic minorities attribute to the Cold War in order to accomplish their own interests? Here, ethnic minorities may assume the ideology of the other bloc and side with that other bloc as an ally. They may also threaten to side with it in order to thereby obtain more easily their claims from their own government.

A specific problem with functions as well as options of action stems from the fact that they are possible only in a democratic system, and not in an authoritarian or totalitarian one. If, within the Soviet bloc, ethnic minorities had openly discussed options of action that would have been directed against the political system and thus against the Soviet system of alliances, the response would have been violent repression. Decisions to give precedence to one function of action or another, and their consequences, may therefore be analyzed only in ethnic minorities acting within democratic systems. This, however, does not exclude the possibility of violence being used against ethnic minorities also in democratic systems.

3. Bloc interests and political goals of the minorities

There are varying interests set against each other in both the objective and the subjective function of action. At times, common interests here may also play a role; for example, the common interest of each bloc in maintaining a specific 'status quo' in order not to provoke a snowball effect, which would clearly not bring any advantage to either side.

Furthermore, the significance of minority conflicts in the framework of the East-West conflict depends also on the political aims of the minorities and the consequences resulting from these aims. Ethnic minorities may pursue various goals:

- i) *Protection*: Protectionist parties call for safeguarding measures and for the further development of their cultural identity. Primarily they seek the recognition of their regional language as an official language of the region.
- ii) *Autonomy*: Autonomist parties accept a distribution of power between their region and the central authorities on the condition that they will be treated differently from other

territorial bodies in the country. They are autonomist, because they claim such special provisions for their own region only.

- iii) *Federalism*: Federalist parties seek self-government through the restructuring and reorganising of the unified states into a federalist state.
- iv) *Independence*: Independent parties demand complete national independence for their region.
- v) *Irredentism*: Irredentist parties demand the annexation of their region to another country with the same or with a similar cultural identity (De Winter 1998: 204-247).

The classification of its political role and importance and of the virulence of an ethnic conflict depends on the aims and the use of means (ranging from the use of democratic means to the use of violence).

A. The South Tyrolean minority under aspects of the order function

I. Theses

Two theses concerning the South Tyrolean conflict emanate from the aspects of the order function: (1) it is an “intra-bloc” conflict, and (2) the South Tyrolean minority may be considered a winner of the Cold War.

1. On the earlier history of the South Tyrolean conflict

From 1918 to 1920, soon, that is, after South Tyrol’s annexation to Italy, the South Tyrolean minority question took on international dimensions. Nationalist and democratic movements in Italy, Austria and Germany – but also in Great Britain – brushed up against each other on the question of South Tyrol.

In 1939 the permanent South Tyrolean bone of contention between the two dictatorships, Italy and Germany, were to be definitively resolved. Through a referendum – euphemistically called the ‘option’ – South Tyroleans were *either* to elect German citizenship and thereafter move to the Nazi-German Reich, *or* Italian citizenship and remain without entitlement to any minority protection (which they had not had before 1939, either).

This so-called ‘Options Policy’ led to intense ideological clashes between the ‘Stay-Behinders’ (*Dableiber*) and the ‘Opters’ (*Optanten*). Approximately 86 percent of the population decided to resettle in the Third Reich. Only the course of the Second World War prevented most of them from migrating (Stuhlpfarrer 1985).

In September 1943 Nazi-German troops occupied Italy, following the break-up of the Italo-German military alliance (*Stahlpakt*). As part of the ‘operational zone of the “*Alpenvorland*”’, South Tyrol was placed under Nazi-German administration, along with the provinces of Trento and Belluno. In this phase, despite the modest resistance against the Nazi-German regime, South Tyrol was sustained and supported by local National Socialists. In 1945, when the German Reich capitulated, representatives of the Italian resistance movement CLN assumed power in South Tyrol, though they were subordinate to US authority. Beginning on January 1st 1946, South Tyrol returned to Italian administration, despite the fact that in terms of international law, the future of the region had not yet been decided.

A definitive decision about South Tyrol’s national affiliation was reached by the signing of the 1946 Paris Treaty between Austria and Italy. Austria accepted the perpetuation of the Brenner border; in return, Italy guaranteed the concession of extensive autonomy of its South Tyrolean minority. The Paris Treaty also granted Austria a protective status under international law in favour of the minority in South Tyrol (Steininger 2006).

2. Thesis 1: The South Tyrolean conflict is an “intra-bloc” conflict

If we start from the assumption that the East-West conflict was a military, political-structural, ideological and economic conflict, then it may easily be demonstrated that the South Tyrolean conflict was an “intra-bloc” conflict between Italy and Austria. However, there were significant differences between the two countries.

Whereas Italy was a founding member of NATO (1949), Austria, because of its State Treaty as well as a law establishing its neutrality, is not even a member. As a neutral country, Austria had an observer status with the group of Non-Aligned Nations.

From the point of view of political-structural aspects, Italy and Austria ranked (and still rank) among the Western type of liberal democratic systems, as opposed to the communist types of

systems. Ideologically, Italy and Austria claimed to be part of the “free world” in a Western sense. Economically, as of 1948, Italy and Austria participated in the Marshall Plan as a programme of reconstruction, and they both cooperated in the framework of the OECD. Italy is a founding member of the EEC, whereas Austria joined only after the end of the East/West conflict (1995). Austria, in 1960, was a founding member of the free trade zone EFTA (European Free Trade Association).

Austria became sovereign again only in 1955, by the signing of the State Treaty. Up to that point, because of the four occupying powers, the Cold War had had a direct presence in Austria, whereas Italy’s sovereignty had never been reduced. In spite of the Soviet occupation in the Eastern part of the country, Austria had adopted a definite Western orientation after 1945. Italy and Austria may thus be considered two countries that in spite of all differences rank among the Western alliance of values. Their conflict on South Tyrol must therefore be regarded as an intra-bloc conflict.

3. Thesis 2: The South Tyrolean minority was a winner of the Cold War

As far as South Tyrol and the Cold War is concerned, Rolf Steininger at the Institute for Contemporary History at the University of Innsbruck introduced what for some years has become a widely accepted thesis, namely: ‘South Tyrol became prematurely caught up in the Cold War mill, and this – and only this – ultimately decided South Tyrol’s fate’ (Steininger 1997: 237). Thus according to Steininger’s thesis, South Tyrol was the ‘first victim of the Cold War’.

However, Steininger’s argument deals exclusively with the years 1945-1946 and South Tyrol’s national future. By contrast, our main thesis considers the entire Cold War era, 1945 to 1990, and sees South Tyrol as a political winner of both the Second World War and the Cold War.

3.1. ‘Operation Sunrise’: the Cold War begins in South Tyrol

By March 1945, the downfall of the Nazi regime and the military defeat of the Third Reich was just a matter of time. By then, the Allies’ most important goal was to end the war as quickly as possible. Despite the fact that the Americans and British on the one hand, and the

Soviets on the other hand, had agreed not to negotiate a special peace with the Nazis, the Americans started conferring with Nazi-German High Command in Italy; all of the German units in Italy were to capitulate at an opportune moment, thus decisively shortening the war. Both sides perceived advantages. The SS wanted to survive the war without punishment, and the western Allies wanted to shorten the war. The then American Secret Services (OSS) Director Allen Dulles wanted to halt the Red Army's advance on Austria and South Tyrol, and was therefore open to negotiations with the Nazis. South Tyrol played a central role in these talks, since this was where SS General Karl Wolff was headquartered. Many negotiations between Wolff and the OSS took place here (Pfanzer 2005).

Known as 'Operation Sunrise', these negotiations actually led to a special peace in the South Front between the Western powers and the German Reich, something Stalin had always dreaded. In a certain sense, given that the Soviet Union knew little, if anything, about these talks, one can contend that 'Operation Sunrise' was the very first Cold War operation (Steinacher 2003b: 136). And thus that South Tyrol was a 'birthplace' of the Cold War, even though this war had not yet really begun.

On May 2nd 1945, the Wehrmacht capitulated in Italy. And within just a week, so did the entire Third Reich, definitively. Because of the narrow timeframe, this meant that 'Operation Sunrise' had no military significance.

3.2. The Cold War merely confirms a geopolitical reality

In 1944, as the USA and the USSR fought side-by-side against Nazi Germany, they also began considering the post-war European order. This included the South Tyrolean question: the British Foreign Office did not exclude returning South Tyrol to Austria. And US President Franklin D. Roosevelt too spoke out for returning South Tyrol to Austria (Steurer 2000: 68). However, these were merely working hypotheses, and not political decisions. Moreover, after the conclusion of the war, the general political framework as well as the relationship between the Western powers and the Soviet Union changed, and with it, the general political framework for the South Tyrolean question. Already in May 1945, the newly established South Tyrolean People's Party (Südtiroler Volkspartei/SVP) demanded that South Tyrol be returned to Austria, and they made efforts to present arguments in favour of their claims to the Allies. South Tyrol's political representative found little sympathy, however, among the

victors. The initial attention given to South Tyrol's internal conditions, which eventually normalised, were overridden in favour of the Great Powers' new foreign policy perspectives, which included taking into account that the governments of Austria and Italy were still hardly viable (Pfanzer 2001: 69). Officially, the reasons for the lack of sympathy derived from the beginning of the East-West confrontation; actually, they were a consequence of the Second World War.

Austria and Italy confronted a specific situational context as regards their respective claims to keep or reintegrate South Tyrol:

- In 1945 Austria was occupied and thus hardly in the position of being able to act politically. That is, although Austria was a sovereign actor on the international stage, it could only act gradually and in no way sustainedly. Austria should become an independent state again, but mainly because Germany had to be weakened. Under these circumstances, South Tyrol was unnecessary for an independent Austria.
- Italy, by contrast, although it too was to be held to account for the war, was also to be given allowances for having fought with the Allies for almost two years. A tough peace treaty was unilaterally offered: Italy lost its fleet, all of its African colonies, some small border areas in the west, and all of Istria in the east, including the Dalmatian coast (Ritschel 1966: 213). These experiences resulted in Rome's defending its Brenner border all the more strongly against the claims of Austria and of South Tyrol. Indeed, all Italian parties were united in this defence (Othmerding 1984). Moreover, since 1944 Italy, in contrast to Austria, had regular diplomatic relations through the exchange of ambassadors with all four main Allies. On August 9th 1945, US President Truman declared his wish for Italy to become a full member of the United Nations. Austria at that time did not yet even have a viable government (Steurer 2000: 67).

According to a number of documents, which form the basis of the following argument, the western Allies' reservations about giving South Tyrol back to Austria were influenced by the consequences of the conflict with the Soviet Union as well as by the possibility that in both Austria and Italy the respective Communist parties might assume power. Indeed, communists in Austria as well as in Italy participated in the provisional governments. Furthermore, the Soviets had occupied eastern Austria.

The arguments put forward by Great Britain and the United States in favour of Italy and against Austria can be summarised thus (France, incidentally, did not participate):

- Given the risk that Austria might fall under the ‘totalitarian’ influence of the Communists, the Brenner border should remain as it is
- South Tyrol was not a vital necessity for a free and independent Austria
- Italy should be protected from communism; the loss of South Tyrol might lead to the downfall of the government and to a communist take-over
- Italy should become a useful member of the western European community of states, and thus it should be economically supported (Steininger 1997: 217-240).

As for the Soviets, the South Tyrolean question played only a minor role. It served Soviet diplomacy as a possible bargaining chip to be used against either Austria or Italy to gain their compliance with Yugoslavia’s territorial claims (Steurer 2000: 70).

Since the Austrian Communist party was unsuccessful in the first post-war parliamentary elections on November 25th 1945, Moscow obviously found no reason in the following spring to commit itself to a weak Austrian Communist party (KPÖ) over a strong Italian one (PCI). Moscow’s somewhat positive attitude towards Italy derived less from its sympathy vis-à-vis Rome than from its reaction against Austria, which had all-too-clearly bound itself to the Western alliance (Toscano 1968: 309).

Consequently, in September 1945, during the Foreign Ministers’ conference in London, none of the Allies proposed changing the Brenner border.

This then is the general historical context and sequence of events from which the historian Rolf Steininger derived his above-stated thesis – namely, that South Tyrol was the ‘first victim of the Cold War’. Without the East-West conflict, South Tyrol would have had a chance to return to Austria. But the West, according to Steininger, had to strengthen Italy and thus, in this context, had to guarantee the Brenner frontier.

This scenario appears convincing. Some of the Allies’ memoranda in 1944 foresaw the return of South Tyrol to Austria. Or at least it was not excluded as a conceivable variant. Yet from a realistic point of view, one must address the question as to the actual political weight of these memoranda. Moreover, during the war, the Americans did not come up with a detailed post-

war plan, since President Roosevelt wanted firstly to end the war and only then pursue his 'one world' vision in the framework of the United Nations, which itself had yet to be founded. The British, for their part, tended towards a detailed plan for the post-war situation, but they could not prevail against the wishes of the Americans. Under these circumstances, then, upon which Steininger's thesis is based, from the South Tyrolean perspective of 1945–1946, the Cold War had merely negative consequences.

Yet, if we compare the South Tyrolean problem with the situation of Germans altogether, and particularly with that of other German-speaking minorities in Europe after Nazi Germany's defeat, then a quite different conclusion may be drawn from the South Tyrolean situation.

Generally stated: in 1945, every individual or collective political actor who had some sort of 'German' connection in any way held a poor hand. In other words, there was at that time an incredibly high and uniform aversion to everything German. German minorities in particular stood out as one of the reasons for the National Socialist war offensive, since they had served Hitler time and again as an occasion to legitimise his bellicose incursions. A classic example for this is provided by the Sudeten German case where there were a majority of Nazi-German sympathisers – as were all other German-speaking minorities.

A post-war consequence of this development was reached at the Potsdam Conference, where the political actors agreed on the expulsion of Germans from the eastern territories. Subsequently, some 14 million Germans lost their homeland; roughly three million lost their lives. The policies of the eastern European governments was determined by the dream of creating homogenous nation-states. Why shouldn't South Tyroleans likewise have fallen into this 'logic of ethnic cleansing'?

The South Tyroleans were one of the few German minorities after the Second World War who were not expelled from their homeland, even though their situation did not differ significantly from that of other German minorities in the east. That is:

In 1939, 86 percent had elected to resettle in the Nazi-German Reich – which of course must not be confused with a one-to-one approval of National Socialism. Nevertheless, in 1945, in the light of the Nazi atrocities, the Allies did not have a particularly differentiated approach. Italy too equated 'Opters' with 'National Socialists' for propaganda purposes. And it should

not be forgotten that 1) a broad majority of South Tyrol's political elite openly endorsed National Socialism; 2) in 1943 National Socialism seized power in the area with the active assistance of local Nazis; and 3) local Nazis actually participated in Second World War atrocities (the extermination of Jews and of so-called 'life unworthy of life', atrocities in the Bolzano transit camp, persecution of dissidents, etc.).

In the light of these historical preconditions – above all, however, compared to the fate of other European German minorities – the chances of South Tyrol returning to Austria appear positively unrealistic.

The fact that the South Tyroleans, in spite of their sympathies for National Socialism, were not expelled from their ancestral homeland might be contrasted with the antithesis that in the East, the Soviet Union penetrated the West, whereas in the South it was the British and Americans who advanced. This antithesis, in turn, may be countered by the observation that among both big parties of Italy, there were definitely attempts to deny Italian citizenship to the more than eighty percent of 'Opters', or even to remove them from the country. This was true for high-ranking exponents of the Christian Democracy (De Gasperi) just as much as of the Italian Communist Party (Togliatti) (Gatterer 1968; Rieder 2007: 88-91).

My thesis, in other words, is that South Tyrol would have remained in Italy even without the Cold War. Although at the beginning of the Second World War Italy was in league with Germany, in 1943 the Italians at least superficially freed themselves from Fascism and fought on the Allies' side. This was their advantage, and it was also decisive for the Allies' attitude towards them. The subsequent Cold War did not create the conditions for the Allies to make their decision; rather, it facilitated this decision. That is, the Cold War provided the Western powers with an additional – not the decisive – argument. South Tyrol's real chance for self-determination did not exist then, even without the impending Cold War.

3.3. South Tyrol obtains autonomy through the Cold War

In the summer of 1945, Vienna's South Tyrolean policy appeared ruined (*'vor einem einzigen Scherbenhaufen'*) (Steininger 1987: 73). Austria had refrained from elaborating a 'Plan B' in the case that 'Plan A' (self-determination) should fail. And 'Plan A' had just failed.

However, although it was decided that South Tyrol would remain in Italy, the Allied attitude to South Tyrol now turned rather pro-Austrian. There is one simple reason for this, which is actually connected to the Cold War: everything possible should be done to keep Austria in the Western ideological camp. One person who guaranteed this was Austria's first post-war Foreign Minister Karl Gruber (of the Austrian People's Party/ÖVP), whom London wanted Austria to keep as Foreign Minister – since there was a possibility that should Gruber lose this post, he would be succeeded by a communist (Steurer 2000: 82). This was the central consideration in favour of South Tyrolean autonomy, and not anything along the lines of a fair settlement between the different linguistic groups. And the strings pulled to achieve this autonomy were located in London's Foreign Office. The British, in other words, applied the utmost pressure on both Italy and Austria to come up with an autonomist solution for South Tyrol. Without such British crisis management there may never have been the so-called Paris Agreement (*Pariser Vertrag*) (Steininger 1997: 363).

The British made clear to the Italians that it was in Rome's interest to have an Austria favourably disposed to Italy and that Italy would be confronted with negative consequences should Austria be driven into the arms of the Soviets.

The Western-oriented Austrian government needed a foreign policy success, which in turn could be used against the Communists. Great Britain wanted to support Austria in this, and the South Tyrolean question provided the outlet.

As for the Soviets' perspective on such a South Tyrolean agreement: they perceived it as an expression of Western interest – namely, to concede to English-American trade a high prerogative over the Austrian economy, paralleling the one they in fact already had over the Italian economy (*Arbeiterzeitung*: 16.9.1946).

Due to a British initiative, an Italo-Austrian understanding was reached a few weeks after a conference of deputy foreign ministers (in March 1946). On September 5th 1946, Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi and Austrian Foreign Minister Karl Gruber signed the agreement – later named after them – in Paris, wherein the foundation was laid for the survival of South Tyroleans in a foreign country. This 'Paris Agreement' became the 'Magna Charta' of South Tyrol and an integral component of the Peace Treaty signed in February 1947 between Italy and the Allied victors. Unlike the 1920s, South Tyrol from then on was no longer a domestic

Italian issue, but an international one, with Austria as the ‘protector’ of Italy’s South Tyrolean minority.

Whereas Germans in eastern Europe were expelled from their homelands, South Tyroleans could remain in theirs. Moreover, South Tyrol was even given special treatment by an international agreement to protect minorities. After twenty years of oppressive Fascist policies, this represented a huge success. Without the Cold War and the fear of communism, South Tyrol would probably never have obtained any autonomy – or at least not such a broad one.

3.4. Political disinterest in South Tyrol as a consequence of the Cold War

In 1947 the Truman Doctrine opened the way for the Cold War to become official US policy. But it was precisely in this phase – after the 1946 signing of the Paris Agreement and after the 1948 parliamentary adoption of the First Autonomy Statute – that South Tyrol disappeared from the Great Powers’ horizon. It also disappeared from both Italy’s and Austria’s public and journalistic interests. The start of the Cold War, but even more the looming economic and domestic problems accompanying the immediate post-war period, led to pushing bilateral relations problems into the margins. Italy was busy domestically with the confrontation between its Christian Democrats and Communists. Austria was busy pursuing the adoption of its State Treaty: only once it was signed would Austria again be permitted full sovereignty.

Moreover, a ‘South Tyrolean lull’ (*Südtirolflaute*) dominated in Austria: in part out of the disappointment in the failure to win the region back, and in part out of the political consideration not to distress the Italians and the Western powers, whom were needed as allies in the confrontations against the Soviets (Gatterer 1991: 210-211). When the linguistic group conflict in South Tyrol was addressed at all, it was not done so in the sense of a bilateral conflict between Italy and Austria, but rather in the context of the East-West confrontation (Berghold 1997: 183).

In 1953 there was a short-lived revival of the South Tyrolean debate when Italy’s Prime Minister Giuseppe Pella demanded a plebiscite for Trieste. Austria made use of the occasion to claim – unsuccessfully – the right of self-determination for all of South Tyrol in an official Note to Paris, London and Washington (Gatterer 1968: 1013).

Around this time Western military experts began investigating the question of the ‘neutral belt’ in the Alps. Neutral Austria, together with neutral Switzerland, created a wedge in the solid NATO front, thus dividing Italy from Germany. Italy became a member of NATO in 1949, of the Western European Union (WEU) in 1954 and a founding member of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. Since 1955 Austria was officially neutral; in 1960, Austria became a founding member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). For many, the 1955 Austrian State Treaty seemed almost to rip apart what the WEU had joined together the year before (Stearman 1962, Sell 1965).

B. The South Tyrolean minority under aspects of the objective order function

I. Theses

The objective action function concerns the analysis of the ethnic minority as an object of politics. As we have seen at the outset, there was a possibility for each bloc to make use of one’s own practiced minority protection in order to highlight the supremacy of its ideology, or vice versa, to denounce a minority conflict as a shortcoming of the adversarial ideology.

With regards to the South Tyrolean conflict, I will again start from two theses, according to which during a phase of political and military equilibrium between both blocs in the 1950s and early 1960s, the minority conflict around South Tyrol was not exploited by the East to destabilize a Western NATO country. Such was done only during a second phase, after the balance of forces had shifted in favour of the West, starting in the mid-1960s, but above all during the 1970s.

1. Thesis 1: During the phase of political and military equilibrium, the South Tyrolean question is not exploited propagandistically by the East

Austria’s foreign policy changed once the State Treaty was signed in 1955. Because Italy still lagged in implementing South Tyrol’s autonomy, Austria now began committing itself once again more forcefully on behalf of South Tyrolean rights. For its part, Italy continued to insist on its position that it had fulfilled its commitments as regards the Paris Agreement, whereas South Tyrol’s political representatives as well as Austria contended the opposite. In this way, the domestic political situation in South Tyrol increasingly worsened and became even more

drastic with the precarious economic situation of the local population. One consequence of this was that in 1956 the first bombs began to explode in South Tyrol.

In 1959 the Austrian government, especially thanks to Austrian Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky's instigation, decided to present the South Tyrolean problem to the UN General Assembly.

The step to the United Nations, at that time a Cold War stage, was by no means an easy decision for Austria. The Western bloc in the UN was dominated by the US, such that Italy, as a member of NATO, clearly held an advantage over neutral Austria. Moreover, the US Italo-American lobby was very powerful. An additional leverage Italy had was that it was ready to station NATO's nuclear weapons in South Tyrol. This required a politically stable area, which played into the Americans interest in preserving Italy's tight control of South Tyrol.

In addition, the Western powers feared that the Soviet Union would politically profit from a 'brotherly feud' within the Western camp. They asked Italy and Austria to resolve the problem bilaterally and to renounce the recourse to the UN. Kreisky was therefore subjected to tremendous pressure to halt Austria's undertaking in front of this world organisation – which he refused to do, however (Steininger 1997: 448; Steininger 1999 II. 167ff).

Kreisky attributed a comprehensive European dimension to the South Tyrolean problem at a time when the division of Europe was sealed not least by the Western integration and the re-arming of the Federal Republic of Germany. Austrian Social Democracy, by contrast, had advocated 'the peaceful reunification of Germany in freedom and the establishment of a European security system based on the restoration of freedom and self-determination for all European peoples' (Berchtold 1967: 290). Unless the forced division of Germany and the split of Europe was overcome, no real détente nor an enduring world peace would arise. It is in this spirit that Kreisky demanded the recognition and respect of the South Tyroleans' rights.

Great Britain was particularly active, since the Paris Agreement was substantially a consequence of its earlier involvement. The British at that time were the leading power within Efta – to which Austria also belonged. On the other hand, the Italians energetically claimed support from their British NATO partner. This turned the question into a dilemma out of which there was no clear exit.

Indeed, the South Tyrolean conflict could actually have turned into a big windfall for the Soviet Union. A NATO member-state was found failing to deliver its democratic duty vis-à-vis an ethnic minority. The East bloc could have exploited this situation propagandistically – which it did not do, however. Reasons for this political restraint are among the following:

- There were numerous ethnic minorities in the Soviet bloc, and the Soviets had no wish to draw attention to them.
- Since the German population in eastern Europe was expelled following the Second World War, the Soviet Union could not exactly stand up for a German minority. This would surely have given a boost to revanchist claims by the associations representing expelled German minorities in Germany and elsewhere.
- Moreover, the Soviet Union and the United States had other, more important geopolitical concerns.
- And above all, the Soviet bloc was not interested in a revision of national borders in western Europe, because this might have put East Germany's border into question. Thus in order to discredit both South Tyrolean terrorism and political demands for self-determination, they were presented by East Germany as being close to right-wing extremism (Mader 1964). The Austrian and Italian Communist parties took the same line (Othmerding 1984: 871).

Eventually, Italy and Austria were invited in two resolutions from 1960 and 1961 to take up bilateral negotiations in order to improve the South Tyrolean situation (von Egen 1997). However, this was less a result of pressure from the Western powers as from the urging by the non-aligned states, which included Ceylon [since 1972 known as Sri Lanka], Cyprus, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan and Cuba. Nevertheless, Austria succeeded in drawing the NATO member-state Denmark out of the Italian phalanx (Volgger 1984: 232). Ireland too, as a non-NATO state, played a decisive role in mobilising Third World countries.

2. Bombs in South Tyrol – but the world watches Berlin instead

Disappointed by the negotiation policies of the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP) and by the UN results, a group of South Tyroleans, supported by North Tyrol, seized the means of armed violence in order to 'bomb in' self-determination for South Tyrol (Baumgartner/Mayer/Mumelter 1992). On the night of June 11th to June 12th 1961, the group

struck, blowing up 37 electricity pylons located all over South Tyrol (Gehler/Ortner 2007, Peterlini 2005).

Through their attacks on highly symbolic Italian targets, these ‘bombers’ wanted to draw the ‘world public opinion’ to the South Tyrolean problem and thus put pressure on Italy. They succeeded only in part: naturally, the attacks hit the national press in Italy as well as Austria – and even the international press – but not to the extent that the ‘bombers’ had hoped. Even worse, world politics in this historical phase had a negative influence on their aims. On August 11th 1961 the Berlin wall was erected, which would symbolically divide the world in a definitive way into the West and the East. Thus in the summer of 1961 ‘the whole world’ was not watching Bolzano but Berlin. The South Tyrolean activists therefore – thanks to the Cold War – did not reach one of their key propagandistic goals.

The beginning of the 1960s had introduced the hottest phase of the Cold War. After Berlin in 1961, the world stood at the brink of a nuclear war with the 1962 Cuban crisis. The world powers really had more important concerns than bothering about South Tyrol.

Although Rome had sent 7,000 soldiers and carabinieri to South Tyrol after this first wave of terror, the political process of transformation and democratisation taking place in Italy in the early 1960s – with the transition from the governments at the centre of the political spectrum to those at the centre-left – led to seeking out a political rather than military solution. Italy set up the so-called ‘Commission of 19’, comprising federal, provincial Tyrolean and regional Trentino-South Tyrolean representatives, whose task it was to come up with a set or ‘package’ of measures which would concede far-reaching legislative and administrative autonomy to South Tyrol.

Of particular note is that in this early phase of South Tyrolean terrorism, just as the first professionally laid bombs in South Tyrol blew up, foreign secret services – though not the Italian secret services – were already quite well informed about the activities of the BAS, the ‘Liberation Committee of South Tyrol’. Indeed, right from the start the Austrian state police had compiled precise reports on the BAS, and Germany’s Federal Intelligence Service (BND) as well as the American CIA were actually present at its founding (Franceschini 2003: 223; Peterlini 2005).

3. Thesis 2; The 1960s. South Tyrol as a secret service playground – part one

‘World opinion’ was not reached by the so-called ‘night of fires’ (*Feuernacht*). Yet something the South Tyrolean activists of the first generation had not reckoned on was the fact that a number of East bloc and West bloc secret services had become active in South Tyrol. A political hot spot in the heart of Europe became a testing ground for the pursuit of a variety of goals – especially those following the logics of the Cold War.

From 1962-63 onwards, after the first wave of bombings by indigenous South Tyrolean activists, a wider circle of active groups got involved. Those perpetrators or *dinamitardi* of the first generation had taken care not to endanger human life. The second and third generation of terrorists no longer upheld this principle; they primarily comprised circles associated with right-wing extremism in Austria and Germany, and they carried out their attacks beyond the South Tyrolean borders.

Between 1961 and 1964 the Italian Armed Forces Intelligence Service – Sifar (Servizio Informazione Forze Armate) – succeeded in infiltrating the BAS. The Austrian State Police (StaPo) and Germany’s BND were also involved.

International diplomacy closely followed the developments in South Tyrol. For instance, the British consulate in Milan reported each month about the goings-on there (Franceschini 2003: 222), and the US State Department was constantly informed by its Bureau of European Affairs (Stuffer 1992).

The CIA too had a hand in it. Historian Leopold Steurer argues that the South Tyrolean activists were simply pawns of the Cold War. In 1960 the Italian government under Tambroni, who had been supported by the neo-Fascists of the MSI, fell. This circumstance opened up the possibility for Italy’s political left to enter the government, alarming the US secret services. The bombings in South Tyrol, then, were to prevent Italy’s left from gaining power. Fritz Molden became the link between the South Tyrolean activists and the CIA. This Austrian media tycoon, a relative of CIA Director Allen Dulles through marriage, financed the South Tyrolean attacks. The violent rebellion in South Tyrol was supposed to provide a new boost to Italy’s nationalist and conservative right-wing forces, thereby removing the left-

wing from government participation. However, because among other reasons the Brenner border was under NATO control, the South Tyrolean conflict was not supposed to escalate. The main objective was to politically exploit this situation in favour of the Italian anti-Communists (*il mattino*, June 22nd 2001: 6).

The involvement of German and Austrian neo-Nazis induced the Soviet Union to become active as well. Backed up by the secret services of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the USSR attempted to drive a wedge between NATO member-states Italy and Germany (Franceschini 2003: 222-224; <http://ondemand-mp3.dradio.de>) Up until the mid 1960s, exponents of the South Tyrolean terrorists were in fact contacted by the KGB. But due to their anti-Communist bias, the former refused the logistical assistance they were offered (*Alto Adige*, April 11th 1992 and Nov. 20th 1999: 14).

The Soviets were long aware of the tense relations between Germany and Italy regarding the South Tyrolean question. Italy did not trust the official German position, which claimed that South Tyroleans were ‘ethnically German’ but until 1918 had been Austrians and since then Italians. As regards their own position, Italy considered the South Tyrolean bombings in 1961 the ‘first German military action since the end of the war’. Indeed, the Italian media accused Germans of ‘anti-Italian rabble-rousing propaganda, revanchism and militarism’. Turin’s daily, *La Stampa*, wrote in 1963: ‘By carrying out the bombing attacks in Italy, German nationalists are stirring up public opinion in favour of a revision of lost territory in the East – namely: Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia and the Sudetenlands’(September 11th 1963). The South Tyrolean conflict began to weigh increasingly on German-Italian relations. Only in 1968 did the strained mood between the two countries start easing up. At this time, in the light of increasing international tensions – especially the Prague Spring and the Vietnam war – neither Rome nor Bonn had any interest in further burdening their relations on account of the South Tyrolean question (Steininger 1999 I: 798-866; Mumelter 1999: 13).

As the ‘Mitrokhin dossier’ demonstrates – notwithstanding the caution called for in its interpretation – the Soviets wanted to exploit the tension between these two NATO partners. According to this Dossier, the Soviet secret services in 1968 had worked out to the smallest detail a plan of attack: namely, blowing up the oil pipeline running through the German Lake Constance area, and laying the blame for the attack on Italian extremists. The bombing was to be interpreted as a response to the attacks in South Tyrol. In this way, the Soviets would kill

two birds with one stone: the tensions between Rome and Bonn would further accentuate and, at the same time, public opinion would be diverted from the events surrounding the Prague Spring (*il mattino*, October 15th 1999: 17).

An interesting anecdote arises in this context concerning Giangiacomo Feltrinelli's engagement for South Tyroleans. This eccentric millionaire, communist and friend of Fidel Castro's had become world-famous as the publisher of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*. In 1972, Feltrinelli died, apparently while attempting to explode an electricity pylon: the South Tyroleans had presumably brought him round to laying bombs. Feltrinelli had relatives in South Tyrol and thus was well informed about the strained situation there. He was in favour of self-determination for South Tyrol and rejected the Italian position. In his view, Tyroleans' tradition of resistance (going back to the anti-Napoleonic uprisings of 1809 and the Tyrolean Peasants' War of the 16th century) was to be linked to the concerns of the left. For these reasons, Feltrinelli wanted to create a guerrilla warfare unit in South Tyrol to fight against a right-wing coup d'état. As a start, he disseminated flyers calling for an anti-capitalist fight for the liberation of South Tyrol. Ultimately he failed, however, as did the BAS. Only a few people in South Tyrol were interested in an uprising – and even fewer, one headed by the left-wing. Feltrinelli fought a lone battle (Steinacher 2003a: 65-68).

In the 1960s South Tyrol served as a training camp for the Italian secret services, where all methods which would later be used in a subversive plan-of-action known as the '*strategia della tensione*' (tension strategy) could be tested. These methods included infiltration, attacks made to look like they were done by terrorists, kidnapping, disinformation and the assassination of political opponents (Franceschini 2003: 223). All this served as secret service 'training' for global confrontations with communism, which in Italy also included plans to carry out a coup that would bring right-wing extremists to power as a counterweight to the strong Communist left, as demonstrated by Carabinieri-General Giovanni de Lorenzo's failed coup of 1964.

4. The local and global détente in the 1970s

In 1969 the Italian government and the Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP) reached a provisional resolution of the South Tyrolean problem. Namely, elaborating a 'package' of 137 measures which would provide better protection to South Tyrol's German and Ladin minorities. In 1972 the Second Autonomy Statute was adopted, and the 'autonomy spring' started with reciprocal optimism of both the language groups and the neighbouring states, Italy and Austria (Gehler

2003). In this period there was also no use of force of any consequence worth noting. It appeared as if the (foreign) secret services had pulled out of South Tyrol. This political détente of the 1970s corresponded to that of the East-West conflict (arms limitations, the US diplomatic recognition of China, etc.). Italian domestic politics as well no longer appeared marked by the deep antagonism between the Christian Democrats and the Communists, since both parties were moving in the direction of the ‘historic compromise’.

However, in 1976, as the far-reaching autonomy stipulations such as ethnic proportional representation and compulsory bilingualism for all areas of public service took effect, a part of the Italian population in South Tyrol began to see these measures as infringing on their privileges. Moreover, an industrial crisis arose, which affected one of the classic occupational fields of Italian workers (Pallaver 2003). What had been a promising ‘autonomy spring’ soon evolved into a new struggle for autonomy. Many Italians spoke out against this type of autonomy. Some Germans thought the autonomy measures were proceeding too slowly. A few thought the measures were not far-reaching enough. And still others dreamed anew of the right to self-determination and of a return to Austria. All this led in 1978 to a new series of violence.

5. The 1980s. South Tyrol as a secret service playground – part two

The new wave of attacks lasted ten years and belonged to the well-established ‘tension strategy’ of the Italian secret services. Borderland South Tyrol was once again closely tied to secret service games of power and intrigue. Politically it was only a secondary theatre; but on the other hand, it was indeed a rewarding field of operation and testing ground. The interests of the Italian state coincided with those of the nationalist circles who wanted to ensure that the Brenner border remain within Italy to discredit the separatist movements which had become visible again in the early 1980s. This overlap in interests led to a privileged co-operation between the Italian secret services and their deviant branches, on the one hand, and the Italian right-wing extremist and neo-Fascist movements on the other hand.

Training camps for a potential guerrilla war that would defend against a communist invasion had already been established in South Tyrol in the early 1970s. These camps were arranged by the secret organisation ‘Gladio’, which emerged in the 1950s out of the co-operation between the then Italian secret services Sifar and the American CIA for the defence against

communism in Europe (Peterlini 2003: 203). Gladio was a top secret organisation – not even all of the Italian prime ministers knew of its existence (Bellu/D’Avanzo 1991; Serravalle 1991). One of Gladio’s special units – ‘Primula’ – was set up exclusively for South Tyrol. Austria’s counterpart to Italy’s Gladio was ‘Easeful’, which was to militarily ensure Austria’s integration into the West. Although Easeful was reportedly dissolved once the Austrian State Treaty was concluded, this allegation has been called into question by quite a few people (Pallaver 1993: 229). The attacks in the 1980s against Italian targets alternated with attacks against German targets. Later it could be proved that Gladio was still very much involved in these attacks, even though it too should have been disbanded long before (Peterlini 2003: 237, 2005: 319-343).

The situation in Austria, the neutral wedge dividing the NATO states along the North-South axis, gradually became in the early 1980s a greater factor of insecurity, particularly following the NATO decision to deploy more missiles or rather, as they claimed, ‘catch up with the Soviets’ (*Nachrüstungsbeschluß*), which produced a reaction by municipalities in countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the East-West quadrangle – that is, in Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia and Hungary – to declare themselves nuclear-free zones. Mutual cross-border initiatives, such as between North and South Tyrol, organised demonstrations in favour of closing NATO camps and missile bases, some of which were situated in South Tyrol (Pallaver 1993: 330).

In addition, in 1984, as North and South Tyrol celebrated the 175th anniversary of the Tyrolean uprising of 1809, a wave of terror began, perpetrated by an active Austrian splinter group called ‘One Tirol’ (*Ein Tirol*) which wanted to ‘bomb in’ South Tyrol’s self-determination (Peterlini 2003: 240, Peterlini 1992).

As the tensions between East and West newly approached their culmination, East Germany’s secret services (the Stasi) also reactivated in South Tyrol. Double agents working for both the Italian and East German secret services often participated in the activities. In such cases, it was simply a matter of convenient multiple use of agents pursuing a common goal. On the one hand, Italy’s and the West’s secret services, supported by the United States and infiltrated by right-wing extremists, fighting together against communism and, on the other hand, the Stasi, converged towards a common interest – manoeuvring the idea of self-determination into a right-wing extremist light (Peterlini 2003: 252). Italy was interested in the inviolability of

the Brenner border; East Germany was interested in the inviolability of its own border with West Germany. East Germany, in other words, was pursuing the same strategy it had pursued in the 1960s (Mader 1964).

6. The end of the Cold War leads to a positive resolution of the South Tyrolean conflict

In November 1989 the Berlin wall fell. In 1990 Germany was reunified. And in 1991 the Warsaw Pact disbanded. Even the Soviet Union disappeared from the maps. The Cold War had lasted over 40 years and had unexpectedly come to a close. In South Tyrol, various consequences of this process of dissolution and transformation from a bipolar to a multipolar system were carried over contemporaneously. One became surprised there how topical all of a sudden the question of the right of self-determination in Europe had become – something that South Tyrol has always been denied. The victors of the Second World War permitted not only German reunification but also the constitutional separation of some countries into new states. A series of nations which had been dependent regions of the ‘real socialist’ blocs now obtained their independence.

This development led to the attempt by one group within the predominant Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP) to pursue a ‘Slovenian’ way – to reunify South Tyrol with North and East Tyrol and thereby with Austria. The end of the Cold War was thought to enable changes in borders and thus South Tyrol’s self-determination.

However, realists in the SVP quickly gained the upper hand against these ‘utopianists’, who for example had organised the largest rally ever – on September 15th 1991 – near the Brenner Pass, with the slogan ‘Break off from Rome – regional unity now’ (*Los von Rom – Landeseinheit jetzt*) (Steininger 1997: 542).

Still, the end of the Cold War brought with it one final political advantage or win for South Tyrol. In order to take the wind out of the sails of both the demands for self-determination and the radical political movements in South Tyrol, everything was undertaken to finally end the conflict between Austria and Italy pending at the United Nations since 1960. This ‘declaration of the conclusion of the conflict’ (*Streitbeilegung*) was achieved in 1992 at the UN (De Michele/Palermo/Pallaver 2003). Once the global conflict drew to a close, so did that of South

Tyrol. In 1998 the European process of unification led to removing the frontier barriers between Italy and Austria at the Brenner Pass. Today, South Tyrol serves as a model case for how ethnic minority conflicts may be successfully resolved (Pallaver 2008).

C. The South Tyrolean minority under aspects of the subjective action function

I. Theses

As we have seen, ethnic minorities are analyzed in their role as subjects under aspects of their subjective action function. In this context, the question is addressed which function ethnic minorities attribute to the Cold War for the purpose of enforcing their interests. Minorities may join the bloc of their respective state and thus take advantage of their potentials of loyalty or blackmail. Here, too, the principle holds true that these variants are only applicable in democratic countries.

From the point of view of international relations, the Cold War had a strong impact on South Tyrolean politics. But the Cold War also had a strong bearing on South Tyrol's internal policies, particularly as regards the political behaviour and orientation of the Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP) – which since its founding in 1945 has been the dominating party of the region – and of its main political players.

In determining which effects the Cold War had on Südtiroler Volkspartei politics, it is my proposition that until the 1960s, the SVP and its political leadership were prepared to accept shortcomings vis-à-vis the autonomy question in the light of their anticommunist orientation. The rationale for this proposition is that the SVP strongly favoured an ideological front against communism together with the Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democrats/DC), when it would have been more relevant, regarding SVP's political interests, to decisively challenge the DC for having sabotaged their realization of autonomy.

In this first phase, between 1947 and 1963 or so, in other words, ideological primacy was clearly SVP's priority, and not ethnic issues. In the subsequent phase, ending around the mid 1980s, anticommunism was again employed – this time particularly as a mobilising factor against any political dissent whatsoever from within the South Tyrolean minority.

Until the beginning of the 1970s, there were two major components regarding the German-speaking and Ladin-speaking population: ethnicity and religion. The conservative Catholic population was headed in this phase by two elites: on the one hand, the secular (SVP), and the other hand, the confessional (the Catholic Church) (Goller 2008). Both elites promoted anticommunism for the same – and yet also, simultaneously, for different – reasons. The secular elites instrumentalized it to preserve their business interests, whereas the Church used it to safeguard confessional interests. Both united in the defence and maintenance of the “old order.” The ethnic cleavage (minority vs. majority) combined with the confessional one (Catholicism vs. atheism) and simultaneously overlapped.

Both ethnic and ideological identities marked SVP politics. Ethnic primacy was used in favour of minority protection and provincial autonomy; the conservative Christian ideology was used to offset the communist model of society. Ethnic elements constituted a political constant; ideological elements were subjected to strong political fluctuations.

1. The Südtiroler Volkspartei

The SVP, which was founded on 8 May 1945 (Holzer 1991, Pallaver 2006, 2007), is a catch-all ethnic party (*ethnische Sammelpartei*), and even today about 80 percent of the German-speaking and Ladin-speaking South Tyrolean minority identify with it. Since 1948, the SVP has consistently gained the absolute majority in provincial elections. At the most recent one, in 2003, the SVP obtained 55.6% of the votes (Pallaver 2004,:107).

The SVP describes itself in the 1947 Party programme as “the all-inclusive party for all South Tyroleans” (Volksbote 1947). In the 1972 programme one finds that the SVP is “the all-inclusive party for all German and Ladino South Tyroleans” (Dolomiten 1972). In the 1993 programme, which is the latest, the party is described as “the all-inclusive party of German and Ladino South Tyroleans of all social strata who profess their allegiance with a democratic sense of responsibility to freedom, people (*Volk*) and the homeland (*Heimat*). [The Party’s] political objective is to secure and foster the German and Ladino populations as well as to consolidate their majority in this, their ancestral homeland” (Südtiroler Volkspartei 1993).

What lies behind this all-inclusive party blueprint is an ideology of “ethnic politics” (*Volkstumspolitik*). In other words, the basis of SVP’s political identity is not primarily a specific ideology, but rather *Volkstum* – that is, ethnicity (Pallaver 2005).

The SVP is of course clearly an ethno-regional party. But according to its typology, the party resembles much more closely national parties [that is, parties which operate on a national scale]. With the SVP, this is expressed for example, in the way in which it is not organized in European umbrella associations of regional parties. Rather, the SVP’s reference point is in international party organizations, such as in the “European Democratic Union” and the “European People’s Party”, the faction the SVP belongs to in the European Parliament.

Despite this character of an all-inclusive party representing specifically all German-speaking and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans, it is its conservative (entrepreneurial) wing that dominates within the SVP. The SVP is opposed to secularist tendencies and favours the traditional family structure, the work ethic, and the protection of local communities. Moreover, it makes explicit reference to Christian tenets in its Party programme (SVP 1993). Despite a vigorous secularization process, the SVP upholds religious symbolism. The strongest written expression of this symbiosis with the Catholic Church can be found immediately after World War II, in the 1947 Party programme. There, in article 4, it is stated: “The SVP recognizes full freedom of religion and conscience. At the same time it beholds the Catholic faith handed down by our South Tyrolean people over generations – since the majority of South Tyroleans adhere to this faith – as the most valuable asset of its spiritual life, and of the precious inheritance of our fathers. The religious education of our youth has to be upheld in an ecclesiastical setting” (Südtiroler Volkspartei 1947: 34, 37).

This statement was hardly surprising, since in the SVP’s formative phase, after 1945, and well into the 1970s, South Tyrol’s population was strongly agrarian. In 1951, still, roughly 70% of the German-speaking population worked in agriculture (Atz 1991). Today too the proportion of agricultural workers in South Tyrol in relation to other Alpine regions is above average. In 2004 this amounted to a total of 8.1% – or if counting working men alone, 10.1% (Landesinstitut für Statistik 2005, 196). Economic subsidies in agriculture, compared to the number of people employed in the field, are higher than average (Giovanetti 2000), and they can also be seen as an ideological regulating influence. In contrast to their support for

agriculture, and out of historical-political reasons, the SVP has always been rather rejecting of industrialization.

Throughout its history, the SVP was able to successfully defend its political ambience not least because the process of social stratification, from a largely agrarian-based society into a largely service-oriented economy, succeeded directly without an enhanced industrialization detour. The similar structures in primary and tertiary sectors, such as family as well as small-scale businesses, low levels of union organization, a relatively high proportion of self-employed and so on (Holzer 1991, 102), supported a conservative and ethnocentric party's penetration into this segment of the society. The attempt to harmonize opposing interests within the party and within the German-speaking community was successful because of the establishment of various mechanisms to regulate such conflicts between party and interest groups, most of which were organized in strong business and professional associations (Pallaver 2003).

It is essential for the interpretation of their collective dealings to underline this conservative, highly (confessional and) Catholic political culture in which the SVP's policies agitated during the Cold War – because from the very beginning, this conservative Catholic background facilitated a strong anti-socialist and anticommunist course.

2. Anticommunist orientation

The onset of the Cold War provoked all bourgeois parties to form an anti-leftist front. As far as the SVP was concerned, this led to assuming an unequivocal, anticommunist stance. Whatever it was that was located somehow politically left of the centre was thrown into this anticommunist pot: socialists, just like social democrats, were mixed in with communists. A related aim was to ensure a bourgeois conservative hegemony at the provincial level, as well as at the national level. For this reason, against the background of political Catholicism, it was manifest that the SVP would ally itself with the DC for the entire First Republic (Südtiroler Volkspartei 1947, 34, 37).

The SVP may have emphasised their “Edelweiss Unity” (“*Einheit im Edelweiß*”) in the sense of their all-inclusive party concept, but it was understood that this excluded any “radical” wings from the left or the right. Primarily the left, however. And in this bulwark against the left, the SVP was strongly supported by the Catholic Church (Goller 2008). In the 1948

electoral campaign – the first parliamentary elections in the post-war period – the DC, together with other bourgeois parties, united against the “popular front” of the communists and socialists. The elections were considered a choice between “Christ and anti-Christ”, between “Rome and Moscow”, and between “Freedom and Bondage” (Alf 1982, 96), as stated by Bishop Johann Geisler in an article in the SVP’s *Volksbote*. Geisler, South Tyrol’s highest Catholic representative, declared here “that out of all the parties running in my Diocese, there are only two whose programmes conform to the demands of the Church authority: namely, the Südtiroler Volkspartei and Democrazia Cristiana. From a religious point of view, believers can – with a good conscience – cast their votes for either of these two parties” (Volksbote 1948).

In the 1948 parliamentary elections the SVP entered an alliance with the DC. Catholic personalities outside the SVP even attempted to convince the party not to put up any candidates at all and to provide their votes en bloc to the DC, so as to prevent the threatening takeover by communists (Pallaver 1998, 112). In this regard, the SVP chairman, Erich Ammon, declared during the second provincial SVP assembly in 1948: “We will fight the (Italian) government only in those places and at those times where our national interests may be harmed. We should not forget, however, that *this* Italian government has fought for the consolidation of the state as well as for the Christian and European spirit. Electoral campaigns notwithstanding, there should be no doubt whatsoever that in this battle we are on their side” (Volksbote 1948).

The SVP used anticommunism not only against communists and those socialists who were allied with the communists at that time, but also against anybody on the left: or, in the broadest sense of the word, against everybody positioned outside of the Südtiroler Volkspartei. Anticommunism was instrumentalized as an ideological tool for maintaining the “one party” for all South Tyroleans. And whoever questioned this ideology of ethnic unity was labelled a communist. Political dissent, even if it was not leftist, was generally discredited as communist dissent.

The first German-speaking opposition party to feel the force of the SVP in this regard was the Communist ticket “*Selbstverwaltung und Gerechtigkeit*” (“Self-Rule and Justice”), which ran in the 1952 provincial elections, and again in the 1953 parliamentary elections. In the daily newspaper *Dolomiten*, the semi-official SVP publication, their leading representatives were

labelled the “main pillars of [Tyrol’s] fifth column”. And further: “Next Sunday’s election for every voter (...) is a call to arms against a mortal enemy of order and of the Western Christian community. South Tyrol’s party of unity, the SVP, has closed ranks in this anti-Bolshevik defensive front; the SVP has become one of the parties of the centre, which has set forth as its aim defending Italy, Rome and Christendom from Bolshevism” (Dolomiten 1953).

The allusion to the “centre” parties referred to all parties which had joined the DC coalition as a result of the new 1953 electoral law – which concerned parliamentary elections and was introduced by the DC. This law stipulated that every party, as well as their aligned parties, which obtained more than half of the caste votes would receive as a bonus two-thirds of the parliamentary seats. This “*legge truffa*” (fraudulent law), as it was called by the opposition, only just barely failed to win the needed absolute majority to pass (Fusaro 1995).

In 1955, the anticommunist crusades by the Church in South Tyrol reached a new height. At this time, Bishop Josef Gargitter published a pastoral entitled “The dangers of communism in our country”. Among other things, he wrote: “Christendom and communism are opposites like heaven and hell, like God and the Devil. (...) all those belonging to the Communist party and their doctrine, and all those who encourage it, are excommunicated – that is, they will remain excluded from the community of the Church and from the graces of the Church’s sacraments. Communism completely destroys the dignity and the freedom of the human being. In the communist view, humans are equated with animals, lock, stock and barrel – and treated accordingly”. Gargitter pointed out as well the dangers to their ethnic way of life (*Volkstum*): “A leftist government with pro-communist tendencies in their politics, economics and cultural life is incompatible with political party programmes based on the bedrock of Christianity. Every connection with communism is a betrayal of the highest values of our ethnic way of life” (Katholisches Sonntagsblatt 1955). It was in 1955 that the Warsaw Pact was founded.

After the South Tyrolean Social Democrats practically dissolved as a result of their poor showing at the 1948 provincial elections, the SVP retained their ethnic monopoly position until 1964. At this point their claim of exclusive representation was breached by the German-speaking liberal “*Tiroler Heimatpartei*”, which won a seat in the provincial government for Josef Raffeiner, the SVP’s former General Secretary (Gatterer 1968, 1242). German-speaking parties of the centre or right-of-the-centre were opposed by the SVP with the argument that

they threatened “splitting up the South Tyrolean people”, which was denounced as weakening South Tyrol’s bargaining position vis-à-vis Italy.

Furthermore, German-speaking parties or German-speaking candidates on national tickets, which were positioned left of the centre, were attacked not only with the same “splitting up” argument, but also with anticommunist ones.

This two-fold accusation was used in 1966 against the South Tyrolean Social Democrats, who had newly organized around Egmont Jenny. Indeed, first the *Soziale Fortschrittspartei* (Social Progress Party) and then, at the beginning of the 1970s, the South Tyrolean Social Democrat Party, were constantly exposed to these two-fold reproaches.

The Italian Communist Party (PCI) experienced a significant political upswing particularly under the leadership of Enrico Berlinguer (1972-1984), which had begun with Italy’s May 1968 and the Students’ movement. The PCI distanced itself from the Soviet Union as a result of the Prague occupation by Warsaw Pact troops. They accepted the European integration process and NATO, and they prepared the grounds for the “Historic Compromise”. Especially in the mid 1970s, the PCI found its appeal growing with the secular as well as the Catholic left. This translated into increasing voter consensus, first at the regional level and then at the national level. The PCI reached its peak in the 1976 parliamentary elections, when they obtained 34.4% of the votes. For the first time in its history, diverse segments of the middle class as well as more youth (first-time voters) voted PCI (Mammarella 1995: 300-302).

South Tyrol’s PCI also found themselves riding the waves of this positive consensus. In 1969, the South Tyrolean PCI had already spoken up for the South Tyrolean “Package (*Paket*)” and in the course of the 1970s their political line had become increasingly favourable to minorities (Othmerding 1985: 926). This was evident in election results, such as the 1978 provincial elections, where the PCI obtained their best result ever, with 7.08% of the votes, translating into three provincial deputies. The following year the PCI obtained their best result in the parliamentary elections (8.38%). Thus the PCI had become South Tyrol’s strongest opposition party, and now had only one provincial representative less than the DC, the SVP’s traditional coalition party.

The increasing PCI consensus went along with increasing anticommunist propaganda. Although the détente process continued – with the signing in 1975 of the Helsinki Accords and the subsequent conferences in Belgrade, Madrid and Vienna – the confrontation between East and West intensified again after the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan. Moreover, an arms race began re-escalating, particularly with NATO’s decision to have Western Europe “catch up” in armaments. Confrontations in Germany concerning the instalment of mid-range missiles carried over politically also in Italy and South Tyrol, where protest rallies against NATO bases had also been held. It is no coincidence that in this phase the political slogan “Freedom, Not Socialism” (“*Freiheit statt Sozialismus*”) was imported from Germany to South Tyrol.

In August 1975, the SVP Senator Peter Brugger, apparently extremely irritated by the Communist electoral successes, stated in an interview, which then caused a stir – that the SVP would “demand the right of self-determination for South Tyrol, should Italy fall into the hands of Communism” (L’Adige 1975, 5, 8).

The polarization between communism and anticommunism led to an extent such that any political dissent was branded communist. This in turn led to a complete curbing of any type of political and cultural discussion in the province, evoking - between 1977 and 1983 - protests by intellectuals of all political persuasions. This objection found considerable international resonance as well, since individual SVP representatives were among the signatories of protest letters.

This climate of ideological and ethnic defamation of so-called dissents continued into the early 1980s, which is when Alexander Langer established his party “*Neue Linke/Nuova Sinistra*” (New Left). The arguments of the anticommunists gradually became less effective, however, under the impact of perestroika and glasnost, which began in 1985, along with, politically speaking, the unravelling of the Italian Communists.

3. The friend was on the left

Anticommunism was employed in the early phase to defend the Church’s confessional interests as well as the secular elite’s economic interests in order to ensure a “Christian world view”. Here, however, there was clearly a fundamental contradiction between the SVP’s political representation of interests and those of the parties it affiliated with ideologically.

The SVP was always oriented towards their sister parties, namely, Christian Democrat parties. In Italy's First Republic this clearly meant the all-dominating DC, with which the SVP felt connected through political Catholicism. Thus it seemed natural that the SVP on the regional as well as on the provincial level always sought out a coalition with the DC. In the province of Bozen/Bolzano, four of the six provincial governments between 1948 and 1973 were made up of a two-party SVP-DC coalition, and twice they included a small secular party (PRI and PSDI, respectively).

It took 15 years – that is, starting in 1963, with the formation in Italy of a centre-left government, which was built on the political axis DC-PSI – for the SVP to open up to the Socialists (1978). This coalition model continued, with one exception, until 1994, the end of the First Republic. Since 1993 there have been different coalitions with the successor parties of the DC and of the PCI (Pallaver 2003, :189).

The regional level has mirrored the provincial one. Only in the 1960s did the SVP (at the regional level) refuse to create a coalition with the DC's ideological sister party out of protest against their impediment to the implementation of provincial autonomy. But it was only a half-hearted protest, because the SVP continued its coalition with the DC at the provincial level (Gatterer 1968: 1027).

It was the same at the national level. The SVP has always refused – on principle – direct participation in any Italian government, despite its repeatedly being invited to take part. The SVP has wanted to demonstrate with this refusal – at least symbolically – its position of not legitimizing South Tyrol's constitutional affiliation to Italy. But if we look at its conduct with respect to “votes of no confidence” at the national parliament, over time and in various governments, then it becomes clear that the SVP was always essentially positively inclined towards every DC-led government: For the most part, the SVP supported them. Only now and again did they abstain or fail to appear for the vote-taking. And only on the rarest of occasions did the SVP vote against the government. Confirmation of the respective Italian government was refused especially during those periods when the DC relied on votes from the neo-Fascist MSI party: that is, votes from the outside (Sleiter 2000: 129).

Even though the DC in the first part of its governing phase, which was called “Centrismo” (1948-1960), pursued markedly nationalistic policies vis-à-vis South Tyrol, SVP confirmation of Christian Democrat-led governments continued. Italy’s Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi, who was the first as such to win in democratic elections, visibly lost interest in the South Tyrolean issue after the 1948 parliamentary elections. He considered it resolved with the adoption of the First Autonomy Statute. What’s more, DC factions in Trentino and Rome actually sabotaged the implementation of provincial autonomy within the Trentino-South Tyrol region. In South Tyrol itself, immigration policies – those very policies that had been initiated under Fascism – persisted. During these years Italy pursued a 51% policy, with which it aimed at a situation in which the German-speaking population would be outnumbered (Steininger 2002).

The SVP, in spite of these lasting negative experiences with the DC, seemed to unconditionally support the DC in a sort of true-to-*Niebelungen* way. It was a relationship characterized by a common Catholic matrix. In spite of the great contrasts in the conceptualization and implementation of autonomy, and in spite of the centre-periphery cleavage between both parties, the ideological bond was stronger than the national contradictions.

Only in the early 1960s, with DC-leftists’ ultimate assumption of leadership within the party, and finally in 1963, with the government coalitions reaching out to the PSI (the Socialists), towards the *Centro-Sinistra* (centre-left), did renewed autonomy negotiations start rolling. Before that there had been bombing attacks in South Tyrol.

Both Foreign Ministers, the Austrian Social Democrat Bruno Kreisky and the Italian Social Democrat Giuseppe Saragat, had completely different conceptions of the meaning of minority protection from those of the representatives of their country’s respective national conservative parties. A gradual and peaceful resolution to the conflict finally came about after the pending South Tyrolean issue was brought before the United Nations in 1960/61, through Kreisky’s initiative, and the subsequent appointment of the so-called “Commission of the 19” to elaborate a substantial autonomy. The results of this Commission’s work - the “*Südtirolpaket*” (South Tyrolean Package) of 1969 – were accepted by the SVP, leading in 1972 to the Second Autonomy Statute.

The Italian governments' attitude to South Tyrol may be understood, among other things, by an analysis of the implementation stipulations of autonomy. The most autonomy-friendly governments were the centre-left ones, whereas the least autonomy-friendly ones were the centre-right governments (Sleiter 2000: 144).

Although the centre-from-left parties were always more pro-minority and pro-autonomy than the DC governments, the SVP, especially in the first phase, or until 1963, kept looking right and never left. And this, despite the fact that their historical experience imparted a very different lesson. The Italian Socialists were the ones who in 1920 had voted in parliament against South Tyrol's annexation to Italy. And it was the Socialists around Filippo Turati and Giacomo Matteoti who after Italy's annexation claimed extensive provincial autonomy for South Tyrol, just as it was Communists in the 1930s who had reclaimed South Tyrol's right of self-determination (Oberkofler/Pallaver 1987). In 1946 it was Socialists once again, such as Gigino Battisti, who claimed South Tyrolean autonomy independent of Trentino in the constituent national assembly (Gatterer 1962; 1968: 965).

In the "Commission of the 19" it was Socialists from Trentino, such as Renato Ballardini, who played a leading role in the conceptual elaboration and realisation of the Second Autonomy Statute. This Statute could be adopted in 1971 thanks to the PCI's parliamentary support, because a qualified majority was necessary for making constitutional changes.

Already in the UN debates of 1960 and 1961, Third World countries who had just then freed themselves from (the chains of) colonialism, particularly the later members of the Non-Aligned Nations, supported the rights of the South Tyroleans, who in turn repaid the debt so to speak at this time by derogatorily speaking of "Nigger states", whose right of self-determination had been conceded to them, whereas it had been denied to the South Tyroleans. Kreisky had his hands full smoothing out such racist outbursts. Indeed, the SVP behaved sceptically even towards Kreisky, when he was Austrian Foreign Minister and playing such a key role in the realization of South Tyrolean autonomy, since he was a Social Democrat. Indeed, in 1964, the model for safeguarding minority rights, which Kreisky had worked out with the Italian Social Democrat Guisepe Saragat, was refused by the SVP, in agreement with the ÖVP-Tirol (Austrian People's Party of [North] Tyrol).

Would the SVP have had another political option? The SVP operated within a conservative and anticommunist world. A realisation of autonomy could have been expected only from

Italy's ever dominating governmental party, the DC, which shared the SVP's worldview – and not from the leftist opposition parties. The SVP never considered dealings even with other minorities or minority parties in Italy. And when it came to such, these contacts were viewed with suspicion. The South Tyrolean Alpine farmer (*Bergbauer*) felt closer to the Italian big landowner than to Southern Italian or Sardinian peasants, who were fighting for their rights against such big landowners. South Tyroleans preferred expressing solidarity with other anticommunists; they did not practice class solidarity. Indeed, there was never even any attempt to build with the Autonomists a protest coalition with any leftists. Though it should be said, too, that the fragmented left in the early phase, in terms of being a reliable ally, did not always have a lot to recommend it (Gatterer 1968: 1020-1021). In the first ten to fifteen years after 1945, the SVP clearly lacked the political antennas which would have facilitated a base of communication and cooperation with that very democratic camp of Italy, which gradually became aware that minority rights were also human rights.

Summary

The South Tyrolean conflict did not freeze because of the Cold War

In the preceding chapters I attempted to demonstrate that the South Tyrolean conflict was an “intra-bloc” conflict and that the South Tyrolean minority ranks among the winners of the Cold War. Whereas the German-speaking population in the eastern European countries were expelled from their homelands, in 1946 South Tyroleans received a protective status under international law.

For many years thereafter, Italy defaulted on their guarantees of minority protection and South Tyrolean autonomy, such that by the mid 1950s the minority conflict had intensified and, with Austria's intervention, become internationalized.

Although it would have seemed a likely turn of events – that during the pendency of the South Tyrolean dispute at the United Nations in 1960 and 1961, the East bloc would have exploited propagandistically the conflict between Italy and Austria – due to common interests between East and West, this did not take place.

In the mid 1960s, as South Tyrol started becoming a secret service playground, in particular for the Eastern European countries (the GDR, Czechoslovakia), which attempted to exploit the trouble spot South Tyrol as a means of destabilising a NATO member, the Südtiroler Volkspartei behaved loyally to the Italian state. It did this despite its negative experiences, and it even put up with the drawbacks. In this way, ethnical primacy as a fundament of the Südtiroler Volkspartei's organisational power was subordinated again and again to ideological primacy.

By contrast, anticommunism was employed as a propagandistic weapon against political dissidents within the ethnic minority. This is due to the fact that the South Tyrolean minority and their political representation were unequivocally anticommunist in outlook. Deficits in minority protection could not impair this common ideological matrix between the periphery (Südtiroler Volkspartei) and the center (Democrazia Cristiana). Anticommunism took precedence as a cross-cleavage over the other political fault lines.

Between the East-West conflict and the South Tyrol conflict there are parallels of (extreme) tension and (relative) détente.

- Between 1945 and 1948: Clearing the air on the lines of the Cold War divisions and principle political decisions regarding South Tyrol
- The 1950s: Communist hysteria in the United States and in South Tyrol
- The 1960s: High point in the Cold War (Berlin wall, Cuban crisis) and in the South Tyrolean conflict (bomb attacks)
- The 1970s: Détente in the Cold War (arms limitations agreements) and in South Tyrol (setting up the new autonomy)
- The 1980s: Intensification of the Cold War (arms race) and of the South Tyrolean conflict (new wave of attacks)
- Early 1990s: End of the Cold War and of the South Tyrolean conflict

After a review of the historical developments of the South Tyrolean minority in the context of the Cold War, it appears that Mark Mazowar's thesis can be disproved. Mazowar has argued that the Cold War froze ethnic conflicts in Europe. According to him, "On each side of the Iron Curtain, potentially destabilizing disputes were managed bilaterally, under the gaze of the presiding superpower. Neither Austro-Italian differences over South Tyrol nor Hungarian-

Romanian disputes over Transylvania were allowed to jeopardize bloc cohesion.” (Mazowar 1997: 59). Indeed, Mazowar pursues his thesis further, arguing that the rights of minorities after the Second World War, as compared to the interwar period, had diminished.

This thesis does not bear up in the case of South Tyrol. Despite the Cold War, despite the diverse political-military climaxes in East-West tensions, the South Tyrolean conflict did not remain deeply frozen. Instead, precisely in these intense years of the East-West conflict, it was discussed at the United Nations and, over a long development process, was resolved positively.

Another way in which Mazowar’s thesis does not hold up regards South Tyroleans being prevented from endangering bloc cohesion. When someone is not permitted to do something, some form of power must be applied. Indeed, structural violence against the South Tyrolean population was used up until the 1970s, because the actuality of the minority’s development as protected by an autonomy status did not live up to the potential.

However, structural violence on Italy’s part was never applied based on the argument of the danger posed by the opposing Soviet bloc, but rather out of inner/domestic political reasons. Additionally, and most importantly, the South Tyrolean population was not ready to try and extort concessions from Italy by arguing for an alliance with the East bloc or by destabilising a Nato member, from which the East bloc might have accrued various types of advantages. On the contrary, the SVP as representative of the South Tyrolean population opted very often for anticommunism in the balancing act between autonomy and anticommunism and thereby ultimately against the true interests of the minority.

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