

Antifascist Humanism and the Politics of Cultural Renewal in Germany

Antifascism is usually described as either a political ideology of activists and intellectuals confronting the dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini, or as a cynical tool that justified the Stalinist expansion of communism in Europe. Andreas Agocs widens our understanding of antifascism by placing it in the context of twentieth-century movements of “cultural renewal.” He explores the concept of “antifascist humanism,” the attempt by communist and liberal intellectuals and artists to heal the divisions of Nazism by reviving the “other Germany” of classical Weimar. This project took intellectual shape in German exile communities in Europe and Latin America during World War II and found its institutional embodiment in the Cultural League for the Democratic Renewal of Germany in Soviet-occupied Berlin in 1945. During the emerging Cold War, antifascist humanism’s uneasy blend of twentieth-century mass politics and cultural nationalism became the focal point of new divisions in occupied Germany and the early German Democratic Republic. This study traces German traditions of cultural renewal from their beginnings in antifascist activism to their failure in the budding Cold War.

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction: Antifascist Humanism and the Dual Legacies of Weimar	1
 Part I Defending the “Other Germany”	
1 The “Humanist Front”: Antifascism and Culture Wars, 1934–1939	23
2 “Otra Alemanias”: Antifascist Humanism in the Diaspora, 1939–1944	37
3 The “Other Germany” from Below: Antifascist Committees and National Renewal in 1945	54
 Part II Contesting “Other Germanies”	
4 Antifascism as Renewal and Restoration: The Cultural League for the Democratic Renewal of Germany, 1945–1946	71
5 Humanism with a Socialist Face: Sovietization and “Ideological Coordination” of the Kulturbund, 1946–1947	107
6 The Limits of Humanism: Cultural Renewal and the Outbreak of the Cold War, 1947–1948	129

vi	Contents	
7	Mass Organization and Memory: Antifascist Humanism in Divided Germany, 1948 and Beyond	156
	Conclusion: From the Saar to Salmis	178
	<i>Bibliography</i>	187
	<i>Index</i>	201

Figures

1	Portrait of writer and KPD activist Alexander Abusch (1902–1982) in the 1950s	<i>page 34</i>
2	Anna Seghers (1900–1983) giving a speech after her return from Mexican exile, 1947	48
3	Expressionist poet Johannes R. Becher (1891–1958) in the 1920s	90
4	Kulturbund Poster, Oktober 1945	102
5	Vice Mayor of Berlin Ferdinand Friedensburg addresses the delegates at the First Federal Congress of the Kulturbund Berlin, May 20, 1947	113
6	Participants at the First German Writers' Congress approach the Kammerspiele building, Berlin, October 1947	138
7	Ricarda Huch (1864–1947) giving the opening speech at the First German Writers' Congress, Berlin, October 1947	142
8	Writer and resistance activist Günther Weisenborn (1902–1969) in 1947	166
9	Portrait of writer and philosopher Wolfgang Harich (1923–1995) in 1947	171

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Abbreviations

ACC	Allied Control Council
AdK Berlin	Akademie der Künste Berlin
Afa	Antifaschistisches Aktionskomitee
antifa	Antifascist Committee
BFD	Bewegung Freies Deutschland
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
Cominform	Communist Information Bureau
Comintern	Communist International
DSV	Deutscher Schriftstellerverband
DVV	Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung
FDKB	Freier Deutscher Kulturbund in Großbritannien (Free German Cultural League in Great Britain)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
KGF	Kampfgemeinschaft gegen den Faschismus
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
Kulturbund	Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands (Cultural League for the Democratic Renewal of Germany)
NKFD	Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland (National Committee Free Germany)
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party
Pg	Party member of the NSDAP
SAPMO - Barch	Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv
SBZ	Sowjetische Besatzungszone (Soviet Occupation Zone)

xii Abbreviations

SDA	Schutzverband deutscher Autoren (Association for the Protection of German Authors)
SDS	Schutzverband deutscher Schriftsteller (Association for the Protection of German Writers)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SMAD	Sowjetische Militäradministration Deutschlands (Soviet Military Administration in Germany)
SoPaDe	Sozialdemokratische Partei im Exil (Social Democratic Party in Exile)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party)