Symbolic Homecoming of the «Hero-Father»: Realignment of National Memory in the Neue Deutsche Wochenschau Special Feature on Konrad Adenauer’s 1955 State Visit to Moscow

JAN UELZMANN
Georgia Institute of Technology

In September 1955, ten years after the defeat of Nazi Germany, the West German state-owned newsreel company Neue Deutsche Wochenschau (NDW) accompanied Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to Moscow to report on his much-anticipated state visit to the Soviet Union (September 8–14). In 1956 the NDW, in cooperation with the German Federal Government, produced a 34-minute black-and-white film chronicling Adenauer’s historic journey. Begegnung im Kreml was part of a series of longer, documentary-style films that the NDW created for the Government Press Office (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung) alongside its regular newsreel output. Made to the Adenauer administration’s exact specifications, these «special feature films» were intended to document Adenauer’s political successes by providing favorable filmic accounts of the Chancellor’s state visits, events surrounding the new capital Bonn, and, by the end of Adenauer’s chancellorship in 1963, his political legacy. Begegnung im Kreml celebrates what is possibly Adenauer’s greatest diplomatic achievement: the Soviet Union’s release of the last remaining German POWs, the so-called 10,000 ‹Spätheimkehrer,› in return for which Adenauer agreed that the Federal Republic would open diplomatic relations with the USSR. Upon their return from Moscow, Adenauer and his delegation were celebrated by a grateful population, since the Wehrmacht’s catastrophic defeat against the Red Army ten years earlier still loomed large in the public’s consciousness, as did the unresolved fate of the many German soldiers still in Soviet hands.

This essay will examine the narrative structure of Begegnung im Kreml in order to show how the film was constructed to deliberately manipulate the historic memory of its West German audience. The production is a telling example of the Adenauer administration’s conscious efforts to obtain ‹Deutungshoheit› on political decisions and events in the media at a time when West Germany, with the help of the Western Allies, had already established
the foundations for a functioning media democracy. In addition to providing pro-government propaganda, the film functions in complex ways as a psychological projection screen designed to aid West Germans in coming to terms with one of the great traumas of the German World War II experience: the defeat of and separation from their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers. As such, *Begegnung im Kreml* can be identified as an important filmic manifestation of the memory work of the early 1950s. This memory work sought to shift the image of World War II Germany from military aggressor and perpetrator of crimes against humanity towards war victim and sufferer of hardship (endured by a heroic community). Robert G. Moeller emphasizes the importance of this alternative «imagined community» for the West German nation building process at a time during which Germans were looking to «establish a sense of collectivity that did not draw on a nationalist rhetoric contaminated by its association with National Socialism» («Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims» 100):

> [...] selective memories of the war’s end also shaped the basis on which a new West Germany was erected. Shared values in the Federal Republic were not only created by celebrations of present prosperity and predictions of uninterrupted economic growth. One of the most powerful integrative myths of the 1950s emphasized not German well-being but German suffering; it stressed that Germany was a nation of victims, an «imagined community» defined by the lasting consequences of the devastation of the Second World War. («Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims» 100)

According to Moeller, «the stories of expellees and POWs in the Soviet Union became the stories of all West Germans; in the categories used by contemporaries, the fate of these groups came to represent the fate of postwar Germany» («Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims» 100). The new self-image of a «nation of victims» helped create a common West German identity, and in its quality as an «integrative myth» it was a crucial psychological foundation for the success of the ensuing Economic Miracle.

In order to gauge the role that *Begegnung im Kreml* played in this important memory work, I will first explore the central role that NDW special features – as distinguished from the regular NDW newsreels – played as a «government channel» in creating pro-government coverage in West Germany’s democratic media landscape. I will subsequently demonstrate how both visual language and voice-over narration in the film are used to create a decidedly positive image of Adenauer and his foreign politics in order to perform an act of healing on the West German collective memory. The narrative center of the film – Adenauer’s return from the Soviet Union to Bonn-Wahn airport during which the mother of a POW kisses Adenauer’s hand in a respectful ges-
ture of gratitude – will be crucial for this endeavor. I will analyze it in terms of its symbolic value as the successful homecoming of the parent generation from the old (and new) eastern enemy, a symbolic corrective for the catastrophic defeat of the fathers and sons ten years earlier. Finally, I will discuss the closing scenes of the film shot at the Friedland refugee reception center during the arrival of the last German POWs, scenes that suggest the closure of a traumatic past through evocative images of reunion and visual tropes alluding to the possibility of redemption and reciprocal forgiveness.

The lingering fate of German POWs still held in the Soviet Union «remained a national preoccupation» during the early 1950s (Moeller, «Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims» 96). Throughout the early years of his chancellorship Adenauer was approached with frequent appeals to address the question of the missing POWs, among them a petition containing the signatures of over seven million German women pleading to bring the POWs home. German youths organized a «Freiheitslauf» from Berlin to Bonn during the annual «Kriegsgefangenen-Gedenkwochen» (Ruge 145). In 1953, to remind the German public of the POW situation, the West German postal service issued stamps captioned «Gedenket unserer Gefangenen,» refashioning the former Wehrmacht soldiers into victims through the use of imagery usually reserved for the Holocaust (Moeller, «Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims» 97). Prior to his trip to Moscow, Adenauer received letters addressed to him personally by families of POWs with «concerns they wanted him to present to Soviet leaders» (Moeller, War Stories 93). In this climate of uncertainty and worry, it is understandable that the release of the last remaining POWs was a huge political success and subsequent popular triumph for Adenauer, one that played an important role in the CDU/CSU coalition gaining an absolute majority of 50.2 percent of votes in the 1957 Bundestag elections. Indeed, well into the 1970s, people in the Federal Republic best remembered Adenauer as the liberator of the prisoners (Kilian 11–12).

The trip to Moscow, which Adenauer undertook with great reluctance, became his most famous state visit (Berresheim), partly because the uncertain prospects of the negotiations made it different from the typical state visit among the Western Allies. In 1955, the notion of a summit-level state visit to Moscow still raised eyebrows in the West and, considering the horrific consequences of Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, such a Soviet-West German summit promised to be of an extremely precarious nature. Consequently, it was anxiously followed by West Germany’s Cold War allies and foes and subsequently exploited on both sides of the Iron Curtain for political and propaganda purposes.
While most contemporary West German news reports, including *Begegnung im Kreml*, portray the release of the POWs as the sole product of Adenauer’s diplomatic and political skill, it is now known that the Soviet Union had already planned to use the release of the POWs as leverage on Adenauer to achieve their goal of diplomatic relations with West Germany (Kilian 13). This, however, was not known to Adenauer and his delegation; they had no conclusive intelligence about Soviet intentions regarding the POWs (Kilian 84–85) since the Soviet Union, during the months leading up to the state visit, had conducted negotiations with the GDR leadership in secret (Ruge 136; Kilian 82–84). While the Soviets were already discussing the POWs’ release internally, Adenauer, on the other hand, prepared to travel to Moscow with the public expectation of finally achieving a breakthrough in the pressing POW question. However, as Werner Kilian has demonstrated, Adenauer’s delegation was deeply divided over the idea of potentially exchanging the POWs for diplomatic relations. The film’s coverage of the Moscow visit depicts this dynamic and contentious atmosphere and portrays the negotiations as a true diplomatic cliffhanger, skillfully navigated by Adenauer. The film then complements this impression by symbolically charged images of homecoming, triumph, and reunion in the state visit’s immediate aftermath. Portrayed as solely responsible for turning trauma into triumph, Adenauer towers as the heroic figure in this report.

With *Begegnung im Kreml*, the NDW turned diplomacy into pro-government propaganda. It may seem surprising that West German politicians of the post-World War II era would appropriate such an ‘undemocratic’ tool for their new democratic government, especially with the methods of Joseph Goebbels’s Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda (*Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*) still on everyone’s mind. However, propaganda had been part and parcel of the Allied reeducation and denazification initiatives in the Western occupation zones, and many German politicians had witnessed firsthand the lingering tenacity of Nazi beliefs during their involvement in the nascent West German self-administration under Allied tutelage between 1945 and 1949. With the rise in Cold War anti-Communism, propaganda was seen not as undemocratic in and of itself, but rather, in the right hands, as an effective tool to steer public opinion toward democracy, and this belief in the necessity of state involvement in the media landscape was a basic tenet of the media policies of Adenauer’s Federal Government (Daniel 72–73). Accordingly, Adenauer had strong reservations about the independent and decentralized media system that had been installed by the British and the Americans: «Die Medienpolitik der Adenauer-Regierungen war bestimmt von dem Versuch, Presse, Rund-
funk, Film und Fernsehen politisch zu kontrollieren. Die Auffassungen des Kanzlers zur Presse waren von der Gesinnungspresse der 1920er Jahre geprägt» (Schwarz 83). The Chancellor in particular saw the emerging West German broadcasting system as a «politisches Führungsmittel» of the Federal Government (Steininger 391, cf. Schwarz 83). Consequently, the first governments of the FRG had a «relativ ungebrochenes Verhältnis» toward «propagandapolitischen Aktivitäten jeder Art und auch zum Begriff ‹Propaganda›» (Daniel 73). Reportedly, Adenauer even wished for a «democratic Goebbels» as his government spokesperson (Küsters 24, qtd. in Schwarz 83). Thus, and for the more mundane reason of controlling the political process as much as democratic procedures would allow, Adenauer was highly concerned with his image in the news. Adenauer’s repeated efforts to take control of the West German media landscape are well documented and need not be reviewed here. Suffice it to say that the Chancellor’s concept of a complacent media, perhaps best embodied by the famous ‘Teegespräche’ with handpicked journalists (a format he preferred greatly to the official Federal Press Conference (Bundespressekonferenz) (Schwarz 83, Daniel 75)), were wholly inconsistent with the democratic media system established by the Western Allies in the Federal Republic.

In the face of the democratic checks and balances of the newly established West German broadcasting system, the newsreel medium was the most effective way for the Adenauer government to circumvent democratic media procedures and guarantee pro-government coverage. Consequently, newsreels played a central role in the media policies of the early Adenauer years, with Adenauer personally acknowledging the importance of the newsreel medium (Schwarz 83). Right from the beginning of his chancellorship, Adenauer tasked the newly created Government Press Office (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung) with organizing and orchestrating media relations. The authority, whose budget grew rapidly from 450,000 to 13 million DM between 1949 and 1959 (Walker 32), and which was occasionally referred to as ‘Manipulationsmaschinerie’ by journalists (Walker 14), was both the creator of a favorable government image and the means of relaying that image to the media. According to Uta Schwarz, the NDW was founded in December 1949 as a private enterprise that served as a front for the government, which in 1950 took over ownership of the company. This arrangement helped circumvent the Western Allies’ ‘Lex Ufi,’ which among other things precluded the government from intervening in the democratic media process. The Government Press Office immediately established close ties to the NDW, and Adenauer was personally involved in the process (Schwarz 76–80). Joachim Paschen agrees with Schwarz: «[D]ass die Neue Deutsche
Wochenschau (NDW) ein Regierungsorgan war, sollte nach außen hin nicht sichtbar werden» («Die unabhängigste Wochenschau der Welt?»). Despite its secretive beginnings, the NDW had an administrative board consisting of fifteen members who represented important public institutions as well as both government and opposition parties. It was chaired by the Hamburg Senator for Culture Heinrich Landahl (SPD) (Paschen, «Vor der ‹Tageschau›» 24). While this structure accounted for some democratic control, the NDW still «entsprach nicht den Regeln der sich in den 50er Jahren herausbildenden, vom Fernsehen geprägten Mediendemokratie» (Schwarz 19). In order to keep the NDW under tight government control, the Federal Government even had the NDW’s SPD-affiliated editor-in-chief Heinz Kuntze-Just fired in 1952, alleging that some of the NDW’s reporting was too critical of the government and overtly in favor of the Bundestag opposition (Paschen, «Vor der ‹Tagesschau›» 28–29). The influence of the SPD was thus curbed, and a politically reliable replacement was installed in Just’s place. Summing up the NDW’s role vis-à-vis the democratic media system of the early Federal Republic, Uta Schwarz characterizes the NDW as «das audiovisuelle Werbeinstrument des Bundes,» whose task it was «die Wahrnehmung von Politik und Gesellschaft durch dauerhaft wiederkehrende, glaubwürdige Inszenierung im Sinne der Auftraggeber zu steuern und zwischen der Politik mit ihren Repräsentanten und der Bevölkerung zu vermitteln» (19).

The NDW’s mission as «Werbeinstrument des Bundes» was realized in the special features created for the Government Press Office. These differed greatly in form and content from the ordinary newsreels that the NDW distributed to West German movie theaters every week. A regular NDW newsreel was ten to twelve minutes in length and consisted of about eight independent segments, offering the audience a light and entertaining mix of politics, sports, and «Sensationen» (Paschen, «Vor der ‹Tagesschau›» 25). The government-commissioned special features, on the other hand, were self-contained films that took the form of documentary narratives on a single topic of about twenty to forty minutes in length. The Government Press Office oversaw the creation of these films, received regular updates on the films’ progress from the NDW, and had the final say in all decisions pertaining to the films, such as scene selections, commentary, and title. The film under discussion, Begegung im Kreml, was produced in 1955/56 by the NDW for the Deutsche Reportagefilm GmbH, a government contractor that was part of the BPA’s propaganda apparatus («Presseamt: Große Lage» 41; Reimers 161; Reimers and Fleschhut 102). Begegung im Kreml is thus de facto «eine Produktion aus dem Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung» (Reimers 156).
Although this essay focuses on the construction of the film’s propagandistic narrative rather than on its reception, it is important to briefly examine the film’s screening history, as this will shed light on its intended addressees as well as inform the discussion of the narrative’s desired effect. Unfortunately, reliable data on the number of screenings and exact audience numbers of *Begegnung im Kreml* have not yet been established. So far, only a panel discussion led by Karl Friedrich Reimers in 1980 provides an idea of the film’s actual audience.\(^{10}\) Reimers argues that the film was not used much at all by the Adenauer administration: «In «seiner ersten Zeit», nach dem Winter 1955/6, also ziemlich schnell nach dem Geschehen von Moskau, ist dieser Film unterwartet selten verwendet worden. Konrad Adenauer selbst soll viel Zurückhaltung gegenüber diesem filmischen Situationszeugnis an den Tag gelegt haben» (167). Nevertheless, it is clear that the film was originally produced to rally public support during election campaigns, especially during the 1957 federal election; there were close ties between the film’s buyer Deutsche Reportagefilm GmbH and the Mobilwerbung GmbH, a CDU-founded propaganda company that owned twenty-four mobile screening trucks tasked with carrying out «Kanzler-Reklame» during elections campaigns («Presseamt: Große Lage» 41). It is even possible that special «Schnittfassungen für den Wahlkampf» existed (Reimers 166). At the same time, there is no conclusive evidence that *Begegnung in Moskau* was ever used by the CDU during the 1957 or 1961 elections (Reimers 167). At any rate, the film in its finished form seems to have ultimately not been viewed as an effective political campaign tool by the Government Press Office.\(^{11}\)

What were the reasons for Adenauer’s restraint? Reimers’s observations point to potential fears within the Adenauer administration that a campaign audience unfamiliar with the conventions of diplomatic protocol and international politics could misconstrue the film as a document of a West German-Soviet rapprochement that could potentially weaken the Western alliance. Scenes depicting everyday life in Moscow from a touristic perspective in particular seemed to lend the abstract Cold War enemy a human face. Considering the vehemence with which Adenauer worked to dispel any impression of such a rapprochement after the visit (for example, in emphasizing West Germany’s «Alleinvertretungsanspruch» during the ensuing parliamentary debate), the film might have seemed too «friendly» towards the Soviets to Adenauer’s cabinet. This would explain the film’s modest circulation among the general public and the emphasis placed on political education and cultural ambassadorship in its distribution (Reimers 167). According to Rudolf Hochsähs of the Government Press Office, special features such as *Begegnung im Kreml* were usually distributed through the official *Landesbildstellen* of the
Federal Republic and were shown or available for viewing in schools and universities, public libraries, or state sponsored cultural outlets abroad, such as the Goethe Institutes (Reimers 166). Reimers elaborates:

Nach etwa zwei Jahren, ab Winter 1957/8, wurde der Film engagierter und häufiger in der politischen Bildungsarbeit verwendet, auch international (zum Beispiel durch den Bund Europäischer Jugend/Junge Europäische Föderalisten in der Europa-Union). Die «Karriere-Adresse» für diesen Reportage-Film waren vor allem die […] Landesfilmdienste, die mit ihrem breiten Streukreis zwischen Jugend- und Erwachsenenbildung verschiedenste Zielgruppen erreichten. (167)

Even if it did not have the short-term effect of aiding the CDU in attracting votes as much as *Ein Mann wirbt für sein Volk* (1953), *Begegnung im Kreml*’s intended audience still represented potential current or future CDU voters. Such an audience was also ideally suited to what this essay identifies as the film’s long-term effect: to provide West Germans with a symbolic closure to the lingering POW question. To achieve this goal, the film recontextualizes visual tropes and imagery that its audience was already familiar with from the media and which in 1956 had already become part of public memory. Dramatic, emotionally rousing impressions of the return of the last POWs had been widely disseminated in contemporary newspapers, magazines, and even books. Even more importantly, the audience recognized many of the film’s most memorable visuals from regular newsreel reporting. During the 1950s, viewers flocked to movie theaters or the popular ‹Aktualitätenkinos› at train stations, where they saw newsreels such as the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau*, the second NDW newsreel *Welt im Bild*, or the competing *Fox*’ *Tönende Wochenschau*. 1956, the year that *Begegnung im Kreml* was made, marked the pinnacle of the NDW’s popularity with moviegoers, with its distribution network reaching around 9.4 million people per week (Paschen, «Vor der ‹Tagesschau›» 30). Therefore, the events and images of Adenauer’s trip to Moscow and the homecoming of the POWs were well known in 1956. Due to their ubiquity, viewers could easily identify with the recontextualized images presented in *Begegnung im Kreml* and relate them to a «collective memory»: «Bilder, mit denen man sich situativ oder gar existenziell – noch dazu kollektiv – identifizieren kann, finden leicht die besseren Plätze im Gedächtnis» (Reimers 167). By attaching its political and symbolic message to well-known images deeply anchored in the West German collective memory, the memory work embedded in *Begegnung im Kreml* became particularly effective. In the narrative logic of the film, this process revolves around Konrad Adenauer alone.

A shrewd manipulator of the press in general, and not least due to his close collaboration with the NDW, Adenauer became the first ‹Medienkanzler› of
the Federal Republic, a term used heavily some fifty years later in relation to Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (Schröder 149). In order to establish an effective connection to the audience, the NDW portrayed Adenauer as a paternalistic figure. In her groundbreaking study on West German newreels and gender, Uta Schwarz characterizes Adenauer’s media image as that of a ‘pater patriae’: the father of the nation, an elder statesman working tirelessly in the interest of his extended West German ‘family,’ who regularly gathered around him in the movie theaters (352–61). Moeller, who analyzed West German press coverage of the events surrounding Adenauer’s state visit, likewise concludes: ‘[A]s the POWs returned in 1955, this forceful political leader, the ‘good father of Germany,’ stood at the head of the national family’ (War Stories 89). In light of this personality cult, and considering the letters from West Germans about the POWs that were addressed to him as a ‘loving father,’ Adenauer even assumed the position of ‘father of our prisoners of war’ in the public eye (Moeller, War Stories 92–94). According to Schwarz, the ‘Wochenschau-Star’ Adenauer is the object of a projective relationship, ‘bei dem der Rezipient der öffentlichen Person solche Motive, Kräfte, Eigenschaften zuschreibt, die für das eigene Ich untersagt oder unerreichbar sind, so daß die öffentliche Person als passende Projektionsfläche für individuell unerfüllte Wünsche und Sehnsüchte von Vielen fungiert’ (352–53). It is precisely along these lines that Begegnung im Kreml employs Adenauer’s public image in order to perform compensatory work on the West German collective memory. Of all the lingering traumas of the war, the one most keenly felt by West Germans was that of the many German POWs still in Soviet hands, whose survival was often unknown to their families. With so many individual fates still unresolved in 1955, the invitation to Moscow provided Adenauer with a unique opportunity to negotiate directly with the Soviets in order to bring closure to many German families.

To exploit this achievement for political propaganda, Begegnung im Kreml stages both Adenauer’s return from Moscow to Bonn-Wahn airport and the subsequent reunion of the released POWs with their families in highly symbolic fashion. The footage surrounding the returning Chancellor, who stood his ground in Moscow against the old (Third Reich) and new (Cold War) enemy and who achieved an important political breakthrough in the POW question, is arranged in such a way that it suggest a ‘symbolic homecoming.’ This homecoming is intended to visually supersede and ultimately replace the images of German soldiers overrun, defeated, and taken prisoner by the Red Army, only to later return home in tatters. The editing of the footage of POWs arriving at the Friedland reception center at the film’s end suggests a demobilization of the POWs from soldier to civilian status and their restora-
tion to their families, and, in a symbolic sense, to the «extended family» of West Germany.

To achieve this purpose, Adenauer’s trip to Moscow is presented as a risky «expedition» into unknown territory, in Adenauer’s own words prior to departure, «eine Fahrt ins Blaue» (qtd. in Kilian 11). After all, this trip was the first summit-level meeting between West German and Soviet politicians after World War II, and its outcome was unclear. The film then goes to great length to show how, through Adenauer’s experience and political skill, the prisoners are released, thus establishing a chain of cause and effect between Adenauer’s negotiation efforts and the emotional reunion of the «Spätheimkehrer» with their families at the film’s end.

Divided into five major parts, the film chronicles the delegation’s departure from Bonn-Wahn airport, the difficult negotiations in Moscow, the subsequent return of Adenauer’s successful delegation to Bonn, the debate about diplomatic relations with the USSR in the German parliament, and the arrival of Germany’s last POWs in the Friedland reception center in West Germany. During the departure ceremony at Bonn-Wahn airport, the film portrays Adenauer as the undisputed center of attention, surrounded by a large and enthusiastic crowd. As his trademark black Mercedes announces the Chancellor’s arrival, the voice-over reports that Adenauer is receiving the good wishes of his cabinet, the assembled journalists, and the diplomatic corps, speaking to the extraordinary nature of this trip. In terms of the narrative structure of the film, the serious air of the departure ceremony, together with Adenauer’s statement that he would do everything «was in unseren Kräften steht, um dem Frieden in der Welt zu nützen,» underscores the precariousness of the state visit. The impact of this statement is amplified by canned applause and images of the applauding crowd. After Adenauer has ascended the stairs to the aircraft, he turns around to greet the crowd one last time, while an anxious, «extended Western family» waves good-bye to the Chancellor.

Several shots emphasize that Adenauer is traveling on one of two newly purchased Lufthansa Super Constellations, while omitting the fact that it is piloted by a US crew since the aircraft were still so new that Lufthansa pilots were not certified yet (Kilian 112). On screen, however, the ultra-modern West German Lufthansa aircraft, which had been allowed to travel internationally only since April 1955 as a result of the Paris Treaties (Kilian 53), was a powerful symbol of the country’s newly earned political sovereignty and newfound economic prosperity. This impression is further amplified by the film’s portrayal of the reception of the West German delegation at Moscow airport, which included full military honors and the playing of the national anthem. The journalist Gerd Ruge, who accompanied Adenauer’s delegation
to Moscow, remembers how impressed and stunned the West Germans were at the reception in Moscow: «Ich stand also dort und sah, wie Adenauer ankam, wie er die Front abschritt, wie das Deutschlandlied erklang, was für uns doch fast unvorstellbar war in Moskau» (Ruge 120). The images and sounds of this extraordinary reception must have triggered strong emotions among the visitors; emotions ranging from national pride all the way to feelings of remorse and redemption in the face of this demonstration of respect by a nation that had suffered terribly at the hands of the Wehrmacht. Adenauer is then shown being chauffeured to his hotel in his own black Mercedes, and a short sequence shows Moscow schoolboys admiring the «Mercedesstern,» a symbol of the West German economic miracle.16
These visual and aural references underline that Konrad Adenauer, and through him West Germany as a respected and sovereign nation, has arrived back on the world stage of politics.17

The second part of the film, set during the negotiations in Moscow, juxtaposes touristic sights and sounds of the city rendered in surprisingly neutral fashion with sequences about the political negotiations. The fate of the POWs is not mentioned until fifteen minutes into the film, when the ostensibly neutral tone of the commentary suddenly changes back to standard Western partiality. During a deadlock in the negotiations, the film describes an alleged shouting match between Adenauer and Khrushchev when the latter mentions German war guilt. Adenauer’s defiant words «Auch in Deutschland ist Furchtbares geschehen,» reported by the voice-over, are amplified by stock newsreel footage of the Red Army’s onslaught on Germany at the end of World War II, culminating in staged scenes of a lone woman standing in the rubble and of a mother and daughter lighting a candle for their missing husband/father.

Precisely these images of human suffering will be symbolically corrected by the staging of Adenauer’s homecoming later in the film. Catering to West German expectations in 1956, Begegnung im Kreml thus explicitly addresses the plight of German refugees and POWs, while ignoring the atrocities of the Wehrmacht and SS in the East. The montage of newsreel footage then continues to detail the waypoints of the escalating East-West division in the aftermath of World War II, such as the Berlin airlift of 1948/49 and the June 17 uprisings of 1953, from a Western point of view. The commentary places the responsibility for the growing political alienation solely on Soviet shoul-
ders and makes the argument that Adenauer’s policies of anti-Communism and Western integration were the only feasible approach to counteract the ostensibly hostile stance of the Soviet Union towards West Germany: «Westliche Bündnissysteme als Folge dieser Politik.» In thus conflating World War II with the Cold War, this sequence emphasizes the Soviet Union’s status as (West) Germany’s enemy both in the past (as the Third Reich) and in the present (as a NATO member).18 True to the general characteristic of NDW newsreel reporting on these issues, which tended to omit German guilt and portrayed the German POWs not as former soldiers, but solely as «Opfer sowjetischer Gewaltherrschaft» (Schwarz 197), this strategy effectively displaces the discourse of German perpetration and replaces it with a continuous narrative of German suffering at the hands of the Soviets.

After a commentary pointing out that most of the churches in the Soviet Union were either destroyed or turned into museums, a short sequence of the devout Catholic Adenauer praying in a small chapel in Moscow emphasizes the image of Adenauer as «Christian soldier» and juxtaposes this evocative visual trope with the secularist «godlessness» of Communism.

While the highly partial review of recent Cold War events argues that Adenauer is in the right politically, this sequence emphasizes that he also is morally right, since the West is fighting – in Bob Dylan’s famous words – quite literally «with God on [their] side» (Dylan). The historical fact that the wretched German POWs once came as part of a brutal invasion force that left millions dead in its wake is compartmentalized and cut off from the present humanitarian problem. By highlighting Adenauer’s Christian, moral high

Fig. 4: Deutsche Wochen- schau Filmarchiv, Hamburg
ground over the Soviet leaders, the film sets the stage for the presentation of Adenauer’s victorious return to Bonn. Rendered in suspenseful scenes that emphasize Adenauer’s diplomatic skill, *Begegnung im Kreml* goes on to detail the successful resolution of the negotiation deadlock in scenes many of which have made it into contemporary historical documentary films. While the political outcomes of the state visit were ultimately limited and of little effect on an international scale, in the West German public eye Adenauer had scored a decisive political victory for all Germans with Khrushchev’s promise that the last remaining POWs would be returned.

The remainder of the film capitalizes on this news that triggered a tremendous wave of emotions in West Germany, both publicly and privately. The third segment of *Begegnung im Kreml* opens with the return of Adenauer’s delegation to Germany, the news of the POWs’ release already having traveled ahead to Bonn. Focusing entirely on this humanitarian success, the film presents the arrival of the delegation at Bonn-Wahn airport in triumphant, yet serious tones that stress the impact of this diplomatic achievement on thousands of German families. Due to the visual parallelisms with the departure scene, this segment allows the film’s carefully constructed «expedition» narrative – the Chancellor travels to a «dangerous» place without knowing what to expect, he has to master various challenges and returns home victoriously – to come full circle. Just as at the beginning of the film, the viewer encounters the mighty Lufthansa Super Constellation airplane as a symbol of West Germany’s new economic prosperity and political sovereignty. A medium shot crosscut then reveals the «extended West German family» as «eine bewegte Menschenmenge» (voice-over) waiting for and waving at the Chancellor. The following medium long shot depicts Adenauer accompanied by a throng of aides and journalists, walking from the right of the frame (symbolically from the «East»), to the left («West»), towards an array of microphones on the tarmac, shaking the hand of Bundestag President Eugen Gerstenmaier. Framed in a medium long shot, the Chancellor then stands in front of the microphones, surrounded in a half circle by his delegation, journalists, and the welcoming party, leaving the view open for the cameras directly in front of him. A little girl with flowers curtsies while Adenauer awkwardly shakes her hand. The stage for the symbolic homecoming is set. As in the departure ceremony, Adenauer is the undisputed center of the event. While Vice Chancellor Franz Blücher thanks Adenauer for his efforts in the name of the German people, an emotional older woman clad in mourning approaches the Chancellor from the left of the frame («the West,» in this case «Germany»). She can clearly be identified as a «Mutter eines Kriegsgefangenen» from an official photograph of the event. She drops to her knees before the Chancellor
and in an apparent gesture of gratitude kisses Adenauer’s hand as if he were a sovereign king.

Strangely enough, this highly evocative scene remains without comment by the narrator (possibly because of Blücher’s still ongoing words of gratitude), but is exploited on visual terms by a cut to a perspective from a second camera in the crowd. This shot depicts the woman’s features in medium close up and thus lends a human face to the still ongoing suffering of the former German home front; a suffering now about to be remedied, the editing suggests, by Adenauer’s direct intervention.
This act by a grieving woman provided the material for an iconic image that instantly cast Adenauer in the role of liberator of the prisoners. Ruge comments on this scene: «Es gab gefühlsgeladene, rührende Szenen der Heimkehr und des Dankes an Adenauer. Jenes Bild einer alten Frau, die dem Kanzler als Dank für die Rückkehr ihres Sohnes die Hände küsst, symbolisierte den Augenblick: Die Befreiung der Kriegsgefangenen durch die Furchtlosigkeit und Verhandlungsstärke Adenauers» (142). The exploitation of the old woman in mourning for propagandistic purposes, an image that made the rounds widely in the regular NDW newsreels and the press, of course did not go unnoticed. For example, in its contemporary reporting on the event, government-critical media like the magazine Der Spiegel mocked the scene as «Empfang in Bonn mit altem Mütterchen und gerührten Politikern» («Kanzler-Besuch»). However, in spite of its overt sentimentalism, the symbolic and even iconic character of this image was recognized early on. Werner Backhaus, who in 1955 published a detailed account of the state visit under the title Begegnung im Kreml: So wurden die Gefangenen befreit, captioned a photograph of the event with the words: «Was Millionen deutscher Mütter empfanden, drückte diese Frau bei der Heimkehr des Bundeskanzlers auf dem Flugplatz Köln-Wahn aus» (93). Through this homecoming scene, Adenauer’s diplomacy has an immediate and highly emotional effect on the viewer. Adenauer’s announcement of the POWs’ release to the surrounding crowd – and, through the microphones, to West Germany and the rest of the world – elicits spontaneous «Bravos» from the crowd of journalists, diplomats, and politicians. Thanking his delegation, Adenauer emphasizes the sense of unity that had prevailed during the negotiations in spite of differences in party politics: «Wir alle haben dort gemeinsam gestanden, für unser Vaterland.» The German verb «stehen» in this context evokes the act of soldiering, a tough struggle fending off the onslaught of a strong opponent. Indeed, in light of the recent World War and present Cold War hostilities, martial rhetoric relating to the state visit and its results was far from uncommon. The West German-Soviet negotiations were often characterized as a «Kampf,» as for example in Backhaus’s contemporaneous account (29). Sharing his personal experience of the state visit, journalist Gerd Ruge commented upon the perception of the trip by the West German public. His recollections add a myth-like, time-transcending quality to the notion of «Kampf,» which is closely related to the «expedition» trope referred to earlier:

Ein Kollege hat mir einige Jahre nach diesem Ereignis einmal gesagt, diese Reise habe ja fast den Anschein einer Fortsetzung des Nibelungenliedes bekommen; hier werde sozusagen sagenhaft eine Reise des alten Bundeskanzlers gezeigt, der die deutschen Gefangenen unter schrecklichen Umständen freikämpft, eben ähn-
Symbolic Homecoming of the «Hero-Father»

lich der Fahrt zum Hunenkönig Etzel im Nibelungenlied – nur natürlich diesmal mit einem Happy End. Adenauer kämpft in der Hauptstadt der Sowjetunion die Gefangenen frei. Das war doch das, was die Deutschen in erster Linie von diesen Verhandlungen mitbekommen haben, was sie bewegte. (120)

With the associations of struggle about the negotiations ranging from an epic battle between the Burgundians and the Huns to the real-world conflict between the Western and the Communist world, it is hard to conceive that Adenauer’s choice of words about the struggle against the Soviet enemy of 1955, a mere ten years after cessation of hostilities, would fail to remind West Germans of the Wehrmacht’s fight against the Red Army. This time, however, the film provides images of Germans in triumph: Adenauer’s words returning from Moscow in 1955 emphasize that the German front had held together and that its unchanged enemy had been kept in check.

Besides its exploitation in the film for propagandistic purposes, the old woman’s kissing of Adenauer’s hand speaks volumes about generational and gender relations at the time. While on the surface merely showing a mother thanking a politician for negotiating her son’s return from some ten years of imprisonment in the Soviet Union, this scene has a doubly symbolic dimension since Adenauer and the woman perform a «family reunion» on two levels. Firstly, this moment can be read as the parent generation of the imprisoned Wehrmacht soldiers performing a symbolic homecoming of the «hero-father», an image intended to displace the memory of their sons’ defeat in the real war. In 1955, Adenauer, who in his own words had «stood» with his delegation in Russia «for our fatherland», returns to a hero’s welcome after struggling with the Soviets. On a symbolic level, he achieved what the Wehrmacht soldiers (including the woman’s son) had failed to do between 1941 and 1945. By presenting its audience with the image of the «hero-father» returning from the East, something that in reality happened all too rarely, this scene of Begegnung im Kreml performs important compensatory work on the West German collective memory of World War II.

Secondly, the scene points to an important shift in gender relations: while the woman emotionally greets Adenauer as the «father of the nation» returning from the East, she equally subjects herself to his male authority. The woman’s humble and submissive posture symbolically anticipates what is going to happen in the households into which the POWs are about to return. The women, many of whom until then had acted as family breadwinners and heads of household, would have to resign their position to the returning men as reflected in the conservative family politics of Adenauer’s Minister for Family Affairs Franz Josef Würmel (Schissler 361–62). Würmel’s politics were characterized by a highly traditional perspective on women
Jan Uelzmann

and the family. Consequently, and as much as the West German democracy would allow, Würmeling’s ministry was a bulwark against equal rights for women, instead emphasizing their fundamental “difference” from men and advocating for a gender politics centered on women as mothers and caregivers. Consequently, official family politics depicted women as the center of the private realm of the family. Erica Carter comments that under Würmeling’s leadership, “efforts were made to reestablish the family as the linchpin of sociosymbolic order at the national level” (35). Thus, Adenauer and the woman – unwittingly or not – are depicted as performing and symbolically reinforcing a key sociopolitical shift taking place in the West German social fabric of the Adenauer years.

In line with the film’s propagandistic purpose, the portrayal of Adenauer’s return to Bonn as a hero’s homecoming, carefully exploited in the cutting room for its multiple symbolisms and placed in prominent position in the narrative, downplays the group effort of the delegation and credits the release of Germany’s last POWs solely to the Chancellor, even though especially parliament member Carlo Schmidt (SPD) played a critical role in the negotiations (Ruge 137; Kilian 163–68; Backhaus 82). It also sets the stage for the film’s conclusion: this “symbolic homecoming” precedes the images of the actual homecoming of the POWs, and, in terms of the narrative logic of the film, visually counterbalances the images of the defeated ex-soldiers arriving at the Friedland reception center.

The film’s fourth part consists of a brief scene depicting Adenauer presiding over the parliamentary negotiations about diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union (the condition for the release of the prisoners) in the Bundestag. Introduced by shots of the Bonn Bundeshaus and the commentary “Dr. Adenauer erläutert dem Parlament die Ergebnisse,” the Chancellor is once again shown to be in control, this time of the democratic procedures in the Bundestag. After Adenauer insisted that the concession of diplomatic relations to the Soviets would be used to make the “Stimme des Westens” heard in Moscow, the leader of the SPD opposition, Erich Ollenhauer, usually in charge of verbal attacks on the Chancellor, thanks Adenauer submissively for his efforts: “Wir danken dem Herrn Bundeskanzler für sein beharrliches Ringen um die Freigabe der Gefangenen und Verschickten und wir hoffen, dass mit der Verwirklichung dieser Verabredung in Moskau eine der schmerzlichsten Wunden geschlossen wird, die der unselige Hitlerkrieg geschlagen hat.” Both Adenauer’s and Ollenauer’s statements are crosscut by images of the applauding plenary, casting the SPD opposition as politically compliant with Adenauer’s policy. After Ollenauer’s statement, the segment concludes with the parliament members unanimously accepting a motion to be presented for resolution at the 1955 Ge-
neva Conference (with the expectation that the question of German reunification take center stage during these talks), thus creating the impression of undivided support for Adenauer’s policies by the Bundestag.

After this parliamentary interlude, the film’s last part reveals the supposed effect of Adenauer’s policies by depicting the arrival of the POWs in West Germany and their reunion with their families. In terms of the film’s dramaturgy, this concludes the master narrative of Adenauer’s political and humanitarian heroism and charges it with maximum emotive force: the impact of Adenauer’s foreign policy on West Germany is rendered in the form of human drama.

The film’s dramatic conclusion is introduced by images of the first ‹Heimkehrer› dismounting the trains at the Herleshausen border station and being offered food and drink by Red Cross nurses.24 During a celebration in the festive town square, the veterans receive flowers from the waiting onlookers and are soon boarding buses to the Friedland reception center. The central segment opens with a shot of the Friedland tower bell and closes with a scene in which the former POWs and their families recite the Lord’s Prayer. This creates a thematic frame around the POWs’ return and imbues the images of homecoming with solemn and religious undertones that suggest the return of Germany’s «prodigal sons,» the remembrance and religious sublimation of their suffering, and the mourning for those who perished during the long ordeal in Soviet labor camps. It is a cathartic scene in which the assembled crowd collectively works through the suffering, the guilt, and the joy of reunification. In visual terms, it finally puts to rest a traumatic past.

Fig. 7: Deutsche Wochen- schau Filmarchiv, Hamburg
Sentimental, emotive music with decidedly «Eastern»-sounding harmonies accompanies the scenes in which the POWs leave the buses and meet their loved ones. Close-ups of women holding photos of their husbands and sons alternate with shots of men being reunited with their families.

The commentary «An dieser Straße der Wiedersehensfreude: viele, die vergebens warteten,» together with a shot of a crying, older woman and a younger woman intently scanning the crowd for her missing family member, reminds the viewer of the many men who did not come back, thereby once again stressing the German victim narrative consistently favored by the film.

The victim narrative continues after Federal President Theodor Heuss repatriated the POWs with the words «Liebe Landsleute, Heimkehrer aus dem fernen Osten.» A spokesman for the POWs addresses the former soldiers and their families who are assembled in front of a small stage:


In register and choice of topic, this ‹Heimkehrer› employs rhetorical traditions popular in public addresses during the Third Reich: the trope of the pounding heart to illustrate the gravity of the moment; the focus on defiance in the face of adversity; the notions of honor, loyalty, and faith. Two more things are important about this speech: Firstly, it stresses the German victim status; there is no mention of the preceding attack on the Soviet Union, of Soviet casualties. Secondly, it defiantly upholds and rehabilitates German soldierly virtues, the soldiers themselves, and their families: the POWs allegedly never cried, and their families, especially their wives, stood lovingly and faithfully behind them. The issue of «Treue,» in this context, carries a crucial double meaning: national loyalty to the cause of the POWs and, in the private realm, the sexual faithfulness of the wives. All in all, this scene reinforces the impression of a tight community between these men, their families, and West Germany. It recasts the POWs as honorable soldier-citizens and morally untainted individuals who doggedly lived through the ordeal of imprisonment.

As the camera pans over the assembled crowd, the men on the screen are not presented as perpetrators, but rather as victimized heroes, and they are recognized as such by a grateful nation. Through the crosscutting in this scene, which alternates between shots of the speaker, the POWs, and their families, the former soldiers are finally demobilized and symbolically repatriated.
The short sequence at the end of the central segment of the film’s conclusion, in which the assembled crowd, together with Federal President Theodor Heuss, recites the Lord’s Prayer, is of special interest in this context, for it imbues this «family reunion» with strong allegorical qualities. The sequence in question is a montage of three medium close-ups of two returning POWs and a civilian woman.

The former soldiers represent the Wehrmacht and thus Hitler’s war of aggression. At the same time, the POWs’ faces betray the enormous struggle of trying to stay alive in the Soviet labor camps. The woman symbolizes the German civilian population, which, like the former soldiers in the film, is cast into a double role: as potential perpetrator or at least passive ‹Mitläufer› of the Nazis, and as victim (of the war and as someone who was missing a family member for so many years). The allegorical effect arises from the placement of the montage in close proximity to the scene depicting the Federal President, various church leaders, and the ‹Heimkehrer› with their families uttering the words of the Lord’s Prayer: «Und vergib uns unsere Schuld/Wie auch wir vergeben unseren Schuldigern.» In this scene, if only through a vague allusion, German guilt is actually acknowledged, although balanced against the discourse of German suffering. Like the regular NDW newsreels, Begegnung im Kreml avoids explicit references as to how and why these ex-soldiers fell into the hands of the Soviet Union. Schwarz sums up her observations about the treatment of the POW question in the regular NDW newsreels as following: «Nationalsozialismus und Krieg, die der Gefangennahme vorausgegangen waren, blieben ausgeblyendet. […] Die Gewalt des Krieges erschien reduziert auf die Erfahrung in den sowjetischen Lagern» (197). Instead of the often
Fig. 9: Deutsche Wochenschau Filmarchiv, Hamburg

Fig. 10: Deutsche Wochenschau Filmarchiv, Hamburg

Fig. 11: Deutsche Wochenschau Filmarchiv, Hamburg
invoked «collective amnesia» of Germans, there actually existed a West German collective memory of the years of the Third Reich; however, it focused largely on German victimhood, while «widespread amnesia only applied to the crimes committed in the period between 1933 and 1945» (Wittlinger 64).

During the emotionally evocative end of the film, the crowd sings Bach’s choral «Nun danket alle Gott,» a song customarily intoned whenever a new transport of POWs arrived at Friedland («Spätheimkehrer: Den letzten Mann heimholen» 5). The sound of the communal singing accompanies further shots of emotional reunions between the ‹Heimkehrer› and their families. The editing of these scenes presents to the viewer a collective reworking of the German experience of the war against the Soviet Union: it aims to put to rest a traumatic past and suggests reciprocal forgiveness as embodied by the Lord’s Prayer as a path into the future. With these images, the film’s narrative of Konrad Adenauer’s «Fahrt ins Blaue,» framed as a dangerous expedition into the largely unknown territory of the old Bolshevik and present Communist enemy, is complete: «Adenauer kämpft in der Hauptstadt der Sowjetunion die Gefangenen frei» (Ruge 120) – this is the message that Begegnung im Kreml relays in elaborately edited and symbolically complex images.

Begegnung im Kreml lends itself well as a case study of the political function of NDW special feature films as «government channels» in West Germany’s otherwise democratic media landscape. By creating an unambiguously positive image of the Chancellor, the film helped cement Adenauer’s media image as the patriarchal elder statesman. Most of the scenes discussed deal with families, and by extension with Germany as a whole. While the film’s laudatory reporting on the negotiations in Moscow highlights Adenauer’s function as a politician whose policies are based on broad political consensus and executed in the best interest of West Germany, its images of homecoming and reunion symbolically close the book on the traumatic German experience in the aftermath of Operation Barbarossa. Presented as a direct result of Adenauer’s policies, these images allow mourning for those who perished, celebrate the return of the ones who survived and the reunion with their families, and serve as a sobering reminder that such a war must never happen again. By admitting guilt and balancing it against German victimhood, they aim to symbolically overcome the haunted past. During the onset of the Economic Miracle in 1956, this film offered its West German audience an opportunity to finally turn the page on a lingering and highly disturbing chapter of recent history. To the West German audience of 1956, the reunion images from Friedland represent a «symbolischer Schlüssestein des Krieges» (Schwarz 198). With the last of the remaining POWs back on German soil, the film suggests that West Germans now are ready to direct their attention fully to the future. In the
Jan Uelzmann

narrative logic of the film, this closure was given to West Germans solely by the political talent and diplomatic skill of their chancellor, Konrad Adenauer.

Notes

1 I am very grateful for the support I received from the Deutsche Wochenschau Filmarchiv in Hamburg for this project. I am particularly indebted to Susanne Serowiecki, Heike Meier, and Tankred Howe.

2 Ironically, several of the cameramen (Horst Grund, Erich Stoll) involved in the reporting on Adenauer’s trip had already covered the Wehrmacht’s war on the Soviet Union for the NDW’s Third Reich predecessor, Deutsche Wochenschau (Camera Operator Assignment List). Horst Grund «drehte für die ‹Deutsche Wochenschau› Berichte von Kriegsschauplätzen in Russland […]» (Heusterberg). Erich Stoll had been the head camera operator of the Nazi newsreels (Schwarz 89–90). Additional information on this subject can be found in Reimers 159. While a larger study on personal continuities and the similarities in style and register between the two newsreel companies is still needed, this essay shall take a different focus and look at the significance of the NDW’s reporting for West Germany at the time.

3 I use the English expression «special features» in order to indicate that these films were produced separately from the regular NDW newsreels. In December 1955, the NDW changed its name back to Deutsche Wochenschau. However, Begegnung im Kreml (1956) was still released under the name Neue Deutsche Wochenschau. Special features on Adenauer were made at least until 1976, when the Deutsche Wochenschau produced a film commemorating Adenauer’s one hundredth birthday, entitled 100 Jahre Adenauer.

4 My reading builds on research by Uta Schwarz on Adenauer’s screen persona in regular newsreels (352–53).

5 In Moeller’s analysis, «Germans, East and West, were able to say relatively little about their responsibility in the crimes of National Socialism, at least in part because they talked so loudly about their own status as victims. On both sides of the border, Germans made the transition from the racially defined «community of the people» of the Third Reich to the community of victims of a war for which they accepted no responsibility, to the community of survivors that gradually emerged from the ruins, ready to preserve and rebuild what remained of the «good» Germany» (Moeller, «The Politics of the Past» 38).

6 To give another example of this process: the heroic image of the «rubble women» (Trümmerfrauen) was instrumental in creating a West German postwar identity during the time of the Economic Miracle. See Heinemann (47) for details.

7 The leadership of Adenauer’s new Foreign Office, most importantly Foreign Minister Heinrich von Brentano, had serious reservations about the new diplomatic presence of the FRG alongside that of the GDR in Moscow. The two most important concerns were that such a presence would result in the FRG’s de-facto acknowledgement of Germany’s eastern border, and that it would threaten the FRG’s «Alleinvertretungsanspruch», the claim that the FRG alone represented the German people (Kilian 45–46). Even after the offer to exchange the POWs for diplomatic relations had been made by the Soviets and accepted by Adenauer after days of difficult negotiations, the representatives of the Foreign Office still insisted on postponing diplomatic relations, continuing the negotiations.
Symbolic Homecoming of the «Hero-Father»

on a lower level, and demanding a written agreement about the POWs’ release. The Soviets, on the other hand, declined to give such a written promise (Kilian 171, 176).

See, for example, Schwarz, Steininger, Brenner, and Daniel.

Kay Hoffmann speaks of a «Forschungslücke» in regard to newsreel production after 1945. Compared to the Third Reich newsreels especially, West German newsreels are clearly an under-researched field, and hard facts about distribution, audience size, and reception remain scant to this day. While even less research exists on the special features, Hans-Jürgen Schröder has recently offered an insightful discussion of two NDW special features reporting on Adenauer’s early state visits to the United States (Ein Mann wirbt für sein Volk (1953) and Partner der Freiheit (1957)) as CDU election propaganda. Schröder established that Ein Mann wirbt für sein Volk was the most important film in the CDU’s elaborate propaganda apparatus of 1953. Prior to the federal election that year, the film experienced over 1,600 showings per week and reached an estimated total of two to three million people through screenings in commercial cinemas and during «außergewerbliche[n] Filmvorführungen» (Schröder 143–44). Surprisingly, Begegnung im Kreml fared quite differently.

Since this essay is more concerned with the production rather than the reception of the film’s propagandistic narrative, Reimers’s preliminary data on the film’s reception sufficiently supports the argument. Precise audience numbers can only be determined by a larger study of the film’s reception that would need to include an assessment of the correspondence about Begegnung im Kreml from the Government Press Office, if such records still exist.

See in this context Moeller’s analysis of West German press coverage and public memory concerning Adenauer’s trip to Moscow and the release of the POWs (War Stories 88–122). See also «Kanzler-Besuch: Lesen Sie Karl Marx,» and Backhaus’s identification of the image of the returning POW as key symbol for the collective memory of Adenauer’s diplomatic achievement.

Welt im Bild existed from 1952 to 1956. The newsreel was the successor of the Allied newsreel Welt im Film, which was handed over to NDW in 1952. Starting in 1956, Welt im Bild appeared as Ufa-Wochenschau.

This number combines the viewers of the two NDW productions Neue Deutsche Wochenschau and Welt im Bild.

Cf. Schröder’s discussion of the term in relation to Adenauer (149).

According to Moeller, the German news magazine Der Stern «celebrated» the car as a «genuine tourist attraction in Moscow, carrying not only West German political leaders but dreams of West German economic prosperity as well» (War Stories 97).

See the discussion of the film in Reimers. One discussant observes that due to the methodical arrangement of images «[sich] ganz offenkundig wieder zwei ›Große Mächte‹ begegnen – wie sonst wäre es zu erklären, daß man in einem wohlkalkulierten Wechsel von sowjetischen/russischen und deutschen/bundesrepublikanischen Traditionsbildern vorgetht? [...] [M]an zeigt in der Freiheit eines ganz neuen Selbstverständnisses, daß dort ein Volk lebt, viele Völker leben, die über große Traditionen verfügen, die uns etwas zu sagen haben, die sich uns mitteilen wollen – und daß wir als demokratische Bundes-Deutsche nun dort bei diesen ›fremden‹ Völkern angekommen sind, bei ihnen Besuch machen, uns selbst erklären» (182).

The characterization of the Soviet Union as both an «old and new enemy» also appears in Moeller’s examination of contemporary press reporting on the POWs’ homecoming,
some of which recast Hitler’s soldiers as defenders against Cold War Communism (*War Stories* 113).

The cinematic rendering of these scenes, such as the legendary handshake between Adenauer and Bulganin at the Bolschoi theatre, and the banquet in the Kremlin, during which the Soviets took the German delegation by surprise by suddenly agreeing to release the POWs, deserves further scholarly attention. For more information on these events and their political and symbolic implications see Kilian and Ruge. For a very early account (1955) see Backhaus.

Most importantly, there was no progress on the question of German reunification, diplomatic relations were neglected by Adenauer from the start, and Adenauer’s declaration that West Germany alone represented the German people remained unilateral.

Cf. Schwarz’s discussion of narrative patterns in regular NDW newsreels (361–64). Schwarz uses Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz’s typology of «contest,» «conquest,» and «coronation» in relation to the broadcasting of historical events. I suggest that for the special feature films on Adenauer’s state visits like *Begegnung im Kreml*, which feature longer narrative patterns than a regular newsreel segment of one to two minutes, a more comprehensive narrative typology such as the proposed «expedition narrative» makes more sense. The «expedition» pattern allows for a combination of all three situations described in Dayan and Katz’s typology, and thus more adequately reflects the different scenes and corresponding situations depicted in the longer special feature films.

Bundesarchiv Bildarchiv B 145 Bild-P107546. The corresponding caption on the picture archive website reads: «Die Mutter eines Kriegsgefangenen dankt Bundeskanzler Dr. Konrad Adenauer nach seiner Rückkehr aus Moskau am 14.9.1955 auf dem Flughafen Köln/Bonn für den erfolgreichen Abschluß seiner Verhandlungen mit der sowjetischen Führung. Dr. Adenauer hatte erreicht, daß bis Ende 1955 über 15.000 Kriegsgefangene, Internierte und Zivilverschleppte in die Bundesrepublik Deutschland entlassen wurden.»

For a detailed account see Schissler (359–75). See also Uelzmann (184–86). Franz Josef Würmeling was Minister of Family Affairs under Konrad Adenauer from 1953 to 1962 and belonged to the conservative wing of the CDU.

The POWs had the choice to return either to the GDR or to the Federal Republic. According to contemporary accounts, POWs slated for a return to the GDR received preferential treatment and new clothing. However, many of these POWs still opted to go to the Federal Republic instead and insisted on their right to choose their destination (Schmidt 16). Accounts of earlier ‹Spätheimkehrer› repatriations from 1953 suggest that GDR and Soviet officials tried to convince selected individuals to stay in the GDR, while the trains stopped there before they went on to Friedland («Spätheimkehrer: Den letzten Mann heimholen» 9).

Examining a regular NDW newsreel about the Friedland reunion event, which must have featured many similar shots, Schwarz calls attention to the «dramaturgisch ausgefeilte Inszenierung einer ‹Familienzusammenführung›» and argues that the montage of individual shots of a couple with two adolescent children created the sense of a «zum Happy End führenden ‹family reunion›-Geschichte» (200).
Symbolic Homecoming of the «Hero-Father»

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