

Die Republikaner

The ups and downs of a discorded party

While the NPD was slipping further and further into oblivion in the 1980s, dissatisfaction was building up on the right of the *Union* parties. Their open support for the process of European integration and hidden support for (or at least acceptance of) the so-called *Ostpolitik*, the normalisation of relations with the communist states initiated by former SPD premier Willy Brandt, led to much criticism in as well as outside the parties. Originally, the protest was voiced primarily within the CDU/CSU or through non-party political movements (Jaschke 1994). In 1983 CSU leader Franz Josef Strauß supported a credit of over ten billion DM to the German Democratic Republic (GDR), in complete breach with the party's long-term and radical opposition to any measures that might stabilise the GDR economy. Several members left the party in protest, among them two prominent Members of Parliament (MPs), Franz Handlos and Ekkehard Voigt. Together with Franz Schönhuber, a well-known Bavarian journalist, they founded a new political party on 17 November 1983: *Die Republikaner* (The Republicans, REP). Handlos became leader of the new party, Voigt and Schönhuber his deputies.

In the beginning the party considered itself and was treated by the media as a *Rechtsabspaltung* (right-wing breakaway) of the CSU (Pfahl-Traughber 1993). Handlos wanted to build the REP into what Strauß had always been threatening the CDU with, a *bundesweite* (federal) CSU, that is a right-wing conservative party that would contest elections in the whole FRG and not just in Bavaria. Schönhuber also wanted a federal party, but he wanted a more modern right-wing populist party, inspired by the electoral successes of the French FN. The two fought a fierce power struggle in which Handlos accused Schönhuber of wanting to put the REP on a right-wing extremist course. After a failed attempt to expel Schönhuber, Handlos stepped down as party chairman and left the party, followed a year later by Voigt. At the *Bundesparteitag* (federal party meeting) in June 1985 Schönhuber was elected chairman and Harald Neubauer, a former NPD member and Frey-journalist, party secretary. This strengthened the allegations in the

media that the REP was right-wing extremist instead of simply right-wing conservative.

Franz Schönhuber has become the personification of the third wave of German right-wing extremism.¹ Born 1923 in a small rural village in Upper Bavaria, he joined the NSDAP at the age of 18 and the *Waffen-SS* a year later. During the war he served for the most time as instructor in the French *Charlemagne* division. Even though Schönhuber fought only once in a real battle (very briefly in Crete) his *Waffen-SS* experience would remain important to him for the rest of his life (see Schönhuber 1989). After the war he became a journalist, initially as sport reporter for a communist (sympathising) newspaper and later becoming chief editor of the Munich tabloid *tz*. In the 1970s he changed to the *Bayerische Rundfunk* (BR), where he became deputy editor of the television department. Moreover, as presenter of the popular program *Jetzt red i* (Now I speak) Schönhuber became a famous personality in Bavaria. With his move to the CSU-dominated BR he became close to several leading party members (see Hirsch and Sarkowicz 1989: 20). In 1981 Schönhuber published an autobiography of his war-time experiences entitled *Ich war dabei* (I was there), which led to a storm of negative publicity.² Schönhuber was accused of trivialising the crimes of the (*Waffen-SS*) and the Nazi regime. As a consequence, he was fired by the BR in April 1982; it was this experience that led him to the CSU rivals REP.

At the beginning the REP could profit from dissatisfaction with the CSU, which was a consequence of this party's (alleged) abuse of power, patronage and limited internal democracy (Pfahl-Traughber 1993). The membership of the REP increased from 150 in November 1983 to 4,000 in February 1986,³ among them several local CSU-delegates. The party tried from the outset to establish the image of a federal party. Although the REP had established branches in all German states in 1987, except for Saarland, the majority of the members lived in the two southern states of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria. After German unification in 1990 the REP organisation was expanded by five new (and weak) state branches, though the situation did not change much in the sense that almost half of the 1994 membership (45 per cent) still lived in the two southern states, with 32 per cent in Bavaria.

The REP experienced its first electoral test in the Bavarian state election of October 1986. The election went surprisingly well for the party, even though it stayed under the 5 per cent hurdle. Nevertheless, the 3.1 per cent

¹ On Franz Schönhuber, see Hirsch and Sarkowicz (1989); Leggewie (1989: 108–29); Jaschke (1994: 94–103); Pfahl-Traughber (1993: 38–43); Dammann (1999).

² At the same time it became a bestseller; in 1989 it had sold already over 130,000 copies and was in its eleventh edition (Schönhuber 1989), while ten years later it was estimated to have sold some 220,000 copies (Klußmann 1998).

³ Unless indicated differently membership figures and electoral results of the REP used in the text are based on Backes and Moreau (1994: 77–103).

brought it not only national media coverage but also 1.28 million DM *Wahlkampfkostenrückerstattung* which it used mainly for the development of its organisational structure (Backes and Moreau 1994: 83). Following this successful electoral debut the party membership increased further, doubling from 4,000 to 8,000 between December 1986 and December 1988. The party failed to translate this upward trend in membership into votes, however. In September 1987 it gained 1.2 per cent in Bremen, in March 1988 1.0 per cent in Baden-Württemberg and in May 1988 just 0.6 per cent in Schleswig-Holstein. In all cases the REP remained behind the scores of 'other' extreme right parties that contested the elections, the DVU and the NPD. These electoral defeats intensified the general idea that the REP was, as its mother party the CSU, a Bavarian phenomenon.

The year 1989 marked the electoral breakthrough of the party. In January it won 7.8 per cent in the West Berlin Senate election, which brought it eleven seats. This result came as a total surprise to both party insiders and outsiders, as the REP never had a big membership in the Berlin area. Moreover, in the period before the election the local leadership had been so divided that it was even thought that the party would not contest the election at all. Commentators agreed that the massive media reaction to its electoral campaign had been the main reason for its electoral success (see Haller and Deiters 1989; Hartel 1989). Later that year the REP won 7.1 per cent in the European election. The support for the party was distributed unequal over Germany: in Baden-Württemberg it received 8.7 per cent, yet the absolute stronghold was Bavaria with 14.6 per cent. The REP entered the European Parliament with a six person parliamentary party, led by Schönhuber, and joined the French FN (eleven delegates) and the Belgian VB (one delegate) in the so-called 'Technical Group of the European Right' (see Fenema and Pollmann 1998), a coalition of convenience rather than ideology. Schönhuber had worked together with VB-leader Dillen to ease the FN away from the MSI, with which party (and the Greek *Ethniki Politiki Enosis*; National Political Union) the FN had constituted a full party group in the previous period. Neither the REP nor the VB wanted to form a group with the MSI, because of a territorial dispute over South Tyrol. Ironically, the FN chose the REP for purely opportunistic reasons, believing that it would be more successful than the MSI in the longer run.

The electoral successes were accompanied by an increase in membership, from 8,500 in January to 25,000 in December 1989. Moreover, they brought about a total REP mania in the German public opinion with hundreds of editorials, articles and books being written about the party (Backes 1990a). Some authors predicted that the REP would become the fifth party of the German party system and they saw themselves supported by voices within the right-wing of the CDU/CSU, which declared the REP a possible coalition partner (e.g. Müller 1989). Others were more sceptical, claiming that the REP had only a small chance of survival in the long turn (e.g. Lepszy

1989; Roth 1989). The successes also strengthened the debate on the character of the party: while some experts argued that it was still part of the democratic right-wing (e.g. Backes and Jesse 1989; Lepszy 1989), the majority considered the party to be part of the extreme right (e.g. Stöss 1991; Pfahl-Traughber 1993). Especially within (extreme) left-wing circles, a comparison between the Bonn Republic of the 1990s and the Weimar Republic of the 1930s became a topic of serious debate (e.g. Hirsch and Sarkowicz 1989).

As quickly as the successes of the REP had come, the defeats followed. In the fourteen elections the party contested in 1990 and 1991, it never surpassed the 5 per cent threshold. In the case of the Bavarian state election the party had been extremely close, gaining 4.9 per cent of the votes. The only other reasonable scores were in the state elections in Saarland (3.3 per cent) and the now united Berlin (3.1 per cent). In the first parliamentary election after the 1990 unification the REP gained only 2.1 per cent of the votes; 2.3 per cent in the former West and 1.3 per cent in the former East (Backes and Jesse 1993: 124). Even though the party was one of the first German (extreme right) parties to try and 'convert' the former East Germans, it never gained a real foothold (Pfahl-Traughber 1993). This might have been caused in part by the fact that the REP had been banned by the last *Volkskammer* (GDR parliament) between February and August 1990.

The ongoing defeats went hand in hand with a stream of quarrels, scandals and splits. In the summer of 1989, for instance, the leadership of two state branches, Berlin and North Rhine-Westphalia, were collectively discharged from their office (Pfahl-Traughber 1993). In 1990 the internal division climaxed in an open power struggle between the 'moderate' Schönhuber and the 'extremist' Neubauer.⁴ In May Schönhuber stepped down as party chairman as a result of ongoing criticism of his authoritarian style of leadership and populist style of politics by ('extremist' members of) the party executive. However, a majority of delegates at the party meeting reinstated him as party chairman two months later. In a later purge of extremists by the party leadership, Neubauer and various of his supporters were either expelled or discharged from their leading function. The symbol of the new leadership was the new vice-chairman Rolf Schlierer, a young and well-educated man with a national-conservative background. Schlierer had left the REP shortly in 1988 in protest at its radicalisation, but returned in 1989 to lead the council delegation in his hometown Stuttgart (Backes and Moreau 1994). All in all, the party had become more homogeneous but also smaller: its membership had dropped to 20,093 in December 1990 and 16,843 a year later. As a consequence of the ongoing electoral defeats, the

⁴ Neubauer was at that time MER, chairman of the Bavarian branch, federal vice-chairman, and was generally considered heir to Schönhuber (see Backes and Jesse 1993: 298–9).

defections to the *Deutsche Liga für Volk und Heimat* (German League for Ethnic Community and Heimat, DLVH),⁵ and the storm of negative publicity, the REP was considered doomed to disappear at the beginning of the 1990s (see Roth 1990).

Despite the gloomy predictions, the REP returned with a blast in the state election of Baden-Württemberg in April 1992. Under the leadership of Schlierer, the party gained 10.9 per cent of the votes and, with fifteen seats, became the third largest party in the state parliament. Again it was proven that the REP was primarily a southern phenomenon: on the same day it gained a mere 1.2 per cent in the state election of Schleswig-Holstein. The electoral success in Baden-Württemberg led to the same public reaction as in 1989. However, the expected REP-avalanche did not follow and the party was again doomed to die. The results in the following elections remained under the 5 per cent threshold, though the REP had been extremely close in the Hamburg *Bürgerschaftswahl* (state council election) in September 1993, gaining 4.8 per cent. The lack of electoral successes led to new internal disputes between 'moderates' and 'radicals', which were strengthened by the mounting pressure of the German state. In December 1992 the Federal Home Secretary had decided to put the party under the surveillance of the *Bundesverfassungsschutz* (Federal Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution) at the repeated request of states that already observed the REP (North Rhine-Westphalia and Hamburg in particular). The REP reacted furiously to the decision and tried to contest the decision in several courts (VSB 1994). Though the decision was more widely accused of being politically motivated (e.g. Jaschke 1994; More 1994), the REP was officially listed as right-wing extremist in 1994 (VSB 1995).⁶

During the *Superwahljahr* (super election year) 1994 the REP contested the parliamentary and European elections, eight state elections and local elections (*Kommunalwahlen*) in ten states (see VSB 1995: 144–8). It started rather well, gaining 3.7 per cent in the Lower Saxony state election (an increase of 2.2 per cent), but soon fell back to 3.2 per cent in the European election and between 1.0 and 1.5 per cent in various Eastern states. Even the

⁵ In January 1991 the Neubauer group had founded a new political party, the *Deutsche Allianz-Vereinigte Rechte* (German Alliance-United Right-Wing), which on 3 October that year changed into the DLVH. The goal of the party was the same as that of the NPD in 1964, to unite the scattered nationalist camp. The DLVH started well: it was supported by several non-party political groups within the extreme right, among them the influential journal *Nation [und] Europa*, and various delegates from the REP (as well as from the NPD and DVU) joined (Wagner 1992). Among these were three of the five former MEPs of the REP, which under the leadership of Neubauer became the German representative of the Technical Group of the European Right. Despite the good start, the party never posed a serious threat to the REP (or DVU).

⁶ In 1999 the REP is still officially registered as an extremist organisation, and is consequently observed by the Federal and all State Bureaux for the Protection of the Constitution, except for those in Berlin and Rhineland-Palatine (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, 27 March 1999).

state election in homeland Bavaria brought only 3.9 per cent. In October the REP gained a mere 1.9 per cent in the parliamentary election. In the simultaneous state elections in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Thüringen and Saarland it gained between 1.0 and 1.5 per cent. Only the regional elections in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate brought the party some minimal local successes.

Electoral fiascos and state monitoring were probably the reason for Schönhuber's remarkable rapprochement with his old enemy Frey. On 22 August 1994 the two party leaders issued a joint communique announcing a new cooperation between the REP and the DVU. The party leadership was totally bombshelled by Schönhuber's one-man show: had not both he and the party always distanced themselves openly from the 'extreme right DVU'? In a hastily convened meeting they dismissed Schönhuber as party leader. Even though not everybody supported the immediate dismissal of Schönhuber,⁷ the *Bundesparteitag* of December approved the step and elected Schlierer as new party chairman. He had to watch Schönhuber supporter and former CDU MP Rudolf Krause being elected convincingly as one of the five vice-chairmen however. Having been ruled in an authoritarian style for almost ten years by Schönhuber, the alleged *Führerpartei* had dismissed its *Führer*.

The next year revolved predominantly around the ongoing struggle between the camps of Schlierer and Schönhuber (see Backes 1996). Increasingly, it became a struggle between two different visions of party politics, i.e. a 'united right-wing' (Schönhuber) or an independent party with clear distance to the 'extremists' (Schlierer). Schönhuber's sudden retirement from the party in November 1995 meant that Schlierer had won a battle, but certainly not the war. The internal quarrels had cost the REP many seats and had reduced the membership to some 16,000 at the end of the year (VSB 1996). In addition, the series of unsuccessful state elections, in Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia the REP remained even under 1 per cent, did little to strengthen Schlierer's position.

The Baden-Württemberg state election of 24 March 1996 were the litmus test for Schlierer's power within the party. At various times he had stated that he would resign as party chairman if the REP would not be reelected to the state Parliament. Against most expectations, the party and its leader succeeded in their task, gaining 9.1 per cent of the vote and fourteen seats (VSB 1997: 124). This was also the only election that year in which the party was successful; though it did almost double its support in Rheinland-Phalantine (to 3.5 per cent). The Baden-Württemberg result did enough to keep

⁷ Schlierer said, in a interview with the author on 24 May 1995, that he had wanted Schönhuber to stay on until the parliamentary election to limit the electoral impact of the affair, as Schönhuber had already promised not to contest the election for party chairman at the party meeting.

Schlierer in power; at the first post-Schönhuber party meeting, in October 1996, he was reelected by 77 per cent of the delegates, and got his preferred team of vice-chairpersons approved (Nandlinger 1996).

The next year the REP was able to consolidate itself, most notably in terms of finances, during 1996 the party had received some 4.5 million DM from the state (Backes 1997: 138), and in terms of membership, which went slightly up from 15,000 in 1996 to 15,500 the next year (VSB 1998). At the same time, Schlierer's leadership remained disputed and electoral results remained disappointing – at the Hamburg state council election the REP dropped from 4.8 per cent in 1993 to just 1.8 per cent (VSB 1998). The next year the party remained again well below the 5 per cent threshold in various state elections. Particularly in the Bavarian 'homeland', where it had been polled above the 5 per cent benchmark before the election day, the actual result of 3.6 per cent meant a rude awakening, even more so because the party had not faced competition from the DVU. Still even more painful was the Saxony-Anhalt election, where the REP was completely overshadowed by the DVU's record 12.9 per cent.

The parliamentary election of 27 September did not end the losing streak either: the REP gained a mere 1.8 per cent. Schlierer tried to interpret the result in a positive vein, hailing the increase in the actual number of votes (from 875,000 to 905,000) and the fact that the Republicans remained the leading party in the right-wing spectre (as the DVU and NPD got even less votes). This notwithstanding, the electoral results meant that the criticism against Schlierer and his *Abgrenzungsstrategie* returned to the centre of the party discussion (e.g. Braasch 1998; Moreau and Backes 1998). Vice-chairman Christian Käs became Schlierer's most outspoken opponent, openly challenging him for the party leadership. But a few days before the party meeting of November 1998, Käs withdrew his candidature and Schlierer, the only remaining candidate, was reelected with 81 per cent (VSB 1999). Nevertheless, Schlierer had again to accept Käs as one of his five vice-chairpersons, and, probably under the great pressure of his challenge, met DVU leader Frey and agreed that the two parties should not unnecessarily compete with each other (Nandlinger 1998; Pfahl-Traugher 1999). Notwithstanding the DVU's absence, and despite the traditional optimistic predictions of the party leadership, the June 1999 European election turned out dramatically for the REP, as it gained just 1.7 per cent. In anticipation of inevitable new attacks on his leadership, Schlierer explained the disappointing outcome as the result of voter disception by the Union parties and of the (EU-wide) non-voting by Eurosceptics.

Throughout its existence, the REP has tried to build a strong and broad political organisation, including a variety of auxiliary organisations. Only on paper has the party succeeded. The official youth organisation, *Republikanische Jugend*, founded as an *Arbeitskreis* (working group) in 1990, is

organised in just five of the sixteen federal states. It includes all party members between the ages of sixteen and thirty, which is estimated at approximately 200 (Moreau and Backes 1998: 159). The student organisation, *Republikanische Hochschulverband*, has an even more limited reach. Except for the two seats it won in the Marburg university parliament in 1997, of which it lost one already the next year, very little has been heard of it (Moreau and Backes 1998: 160). The *Republikanischer Bund der öffentlich Bediensteten* or *Republikanischer Beamtenbund* (Republicans League of Civil Servants), was founded in October 1993 in reaction to the 1992 decision of the German state to officially register the REP as right-wing extremist. The initiative could not prevent the exodus of civil servants, most notably police officers, from the REP, however, and in 1998 its membership was estimated at a mere 150 (Moreau and Backes 1998: 160). The women organisation of the REP, the *Republikanischer Bund der Frauen* (Republicans League of Women), finally, is probably the smallest and least important. According to the webpage⁸ it was founded on 26 August 1995, became an official auxiliary organisation of the REP two months later, and has 'over 70 per cent female members'.

The REP has never been very active in establishing contacts with other parties in and outside of Germany. This was in part because it originally did not want to ally itself with 'contaminated' parties, i.e. parties officially registered as extreme right, whereas 'democratic' parties did not want to ally themselves with the contaminated REP. Within Germany the party has virtually always kept its distance from parties like the NPD and DVU. Internationally, it had a short alliance with the FN and VB, which ended after the 1990 'split' when these parties accepted the group-Neubauer instead of Schönhuber as member of the Technical Group of the European Right. Schönhuber has always looked favourably upon the FPÖ, especially when Jörg Haider took over, but the Austrians kept their distance. During the first years after the fall of communism the German Republikaner were the inspiration of several short-lived initiatives in countries such as Hungary, Ukraine and Latvia, with which Schönhuber was also in contact. The contacts with the only successful East European Republikaner, the Czechoslovak (and later Czech) *Sdruzeni pro Republiku – Republikanska strana Ceskoslovenska* (Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia), were terminated in 1993 due to the increasing anti-German rhetoric of its leader Miroslav Sladek⁹ (Dvoraková 2000; Kopecky 1999).

⁸ <http://www.republikaner.org/repfrauen/1rbf02.htm>

⁹ Schönhuber once described the leader of the Czech party, Miroslav Sladek, as a 'Deutschenhasser' (German hater). See his interview with Backes and Hertel (1996: 144).

Profiling the literature

Externally oriented: programmes

The so-called ‘party without a programme’ (Hirsch and Sarkowicz 1989: 23) has actually issued no less than seven national programmes in its first sixteen years of existence. Especially in its first years the programme was not only changed often, but also comprehensively. The programme of 1985 was a break with the original programme on several points, in part as a result of the succession of Handlos by Schönhuber. During these early years the self-image of the REP changed from being an ‘independent, conservative-liberal people’s party’ to that of a ‘society of German patriots, a freedom-loving [freiheitliche] and national party with high social and ecological obligations’ (since 1987).

The original programme, entitled *Grundsatzprogramm* (Party of Principle, REP 1983) was adopted at the first *Bundeskongreß* (federal congress) on 26 November 1983. It contained sixteen A4 pages in which seventeen themes were discussed. The programme opened with a preamble, stating the party’s democratic credentials, self-definition and (ten) main theses. At the Siegburg party meeting of June 1985, Schönhuber was elected party chairman and a new programme was accepted: *Das Siegburger Manifest* (The Siegburg Manifesto, REP 1985). It ran to just four pages, covering a total of nine points. Except for the difference in tone, which had radicalised, the new programme differed more in what was left out than in what was left in.

The 1987 *Programm der Republikaner* (Programme of the Republicans, REP 1987) was of similar size as the 1983 programme (fifteen pages), yet was more similar to the 1985 manifesto in tone. The structure was completely new, entailing seven basic principles and ten main points. Under the pressure of the rapid developments in the (former) communist states and their consequences for East–West relations the REP revised its programme again in January 1990. The theme of the *Parteiprogramm* (REP 1990) follows clearly from the text on the title page: ‘Our Adherence: Germany; Our Goal: Restoration of Germany; Our Demand: Berlin – Capital of Germany’. It entails a preamble, following the theme, and twelve chapters in which various topics are generously elaborated and well structured on the basis of various lists of demands. All together the programme runs to a total of fifty-seven pages (A5 format).

In 1993 the REP again adopted a new programme, entitled *Wir machen uns stark... für deutsche Interessen* (We do our best... for German interests, REP 1993). It is quite similar to the 1990 version, though almost twice as thick (100 A5 pages). It now contains eighteen chapters, primarily as a consequence of a restructuring of the themes. Some chapters are accompanied by the note ‘This chapter will be revised by the party council, according to the resolution at the federal party meeting of 26/27.06.1993, and will be put

before the next party meeting for decision-making.¹⁰ The new programme was a reaction to two different events: the unification of Germany and, even more important, the Maastricht Treaty. As a consequence of the latter, European politics has its own chapter. The preamble has been extensively rewritten by the late Hellmut Diwald and opens with a sentence that would become his legacy within the REP: 'He who does not take his right, gives it up' (REP 1993: 3).

The 1998 parliamentary election were contested with a 'short version' of the programme, conveniently called *Partei-programm (Kurzform)* (REP 1998).¹¹ This pamphlet had a similar form as the DVU-programmes, i.e. one A4 page, printed on both sides, and folded twice. Despite the radical change, i.e. from one hundred pages to some six page sections, the short programme did cover the main themes of the party. For the European election the next year the REP used a more professional programme, *Deutschland und Europa* (Germany and Europe, REP 1999). It entailed thirty-one A5 pages, in which the party discussed thirteen different topics with a special European focus.

Internally oriented: party paper

The official party paper of the REP was originally called *Der Republikanische Anzeiger* (Republican Informant, RA). It looked grim, appeared monthly, and originally contained four, later mostly eight pages (A3 format). Schönhuber started as chief editor, being succeeded by Neubauer in October 1985. In January 1986 the paper was renamed *Der Republikaner* (The Republican, *Rep*). Except for the new name, nothing substantial changed in content or style and also the counting of years of publication was maintained. After September 1988 the paper usually consisted of ten pages.

The power struggle between Schönhuber and Neubauer in 1990 had its resonance in the make-up of the editorial board of the paper. In May 1990 Schönhuber was listed as publisher and Ralph Lorenz as chief editor. The next issue named Hans Dorn and Johanna Grund (then MEP) as publishers and Karl Richter as chief editor; one issue later no publisher(s) was listed, though Richter was still chief editor. The address of the paper had changed from Munich to Landshut. The next journal which the various subscribers received had the same (unlisted) publisher and (listed) chief editor, but was named *Deutsche Rundschau* (German Review). It was presented as the successor to the *Rep*, including the same lay-out and counting. At the same time the REP leadership continued to publish the *Rep*, though through a new publishing company and with Schönhuber as both publisher and chief editor.

¹⁰ In fact, it would take until the federal party meeting of 6 October 1996 before these chapters were actually revised.

¹¹ Information provided by Jürgen Wirtz, webmaster of the REP web page, in an email communication to the author on 8 June 1999.

The *Deutsche Rundschau* would soon after become the official party paper of the DLVH, before being absorbed by *Nation [und] Europa* in 1994.

In April 1992 the *Rep* was enlarged in both format and size. The paper got an additional two pages, making a total of twelve, of which two were filled with advertisements for an increasing range of party products (such as banners and lighters with the party logo). In January 1994 the logo again contained the three colours of the German flag (yellow, red and black). Moreover, the whole paper was more colourful, thereby making it less sombre and more professional. After the struggle between Schlierer and Schönhuber in 1994, the party got into serious organisational and financial problems, which also had their impact on the party paper. While the appearance remained largely the same, from January 1995 the *Rep* appeared only as a bimonthly with just four pages. The setback was overcome already the next year, when the paper returned to its original format (i.e. a monthly of eight pages). In the summer of 1997 it was renamed *Der neue Republikaner* (The New Republican); barring some small details (such as the reintroduction of colors), it remained identical to its predecessor.

The *RA* had always been printed in an edition of some 30,000 copies. The *Rep*'s second issue already had a total claimed circulation of 80,000. This figure has been unstable though, fluctuating around 70,000 in the late 1980s and 85,000 in the early 1990s. As a consequence of the 1994 internal party struggle, the circulation of the *Rep* dropped sharply, stabilising at some 20,000 in 1997–8 (see the annual VSB). The party deemed the months before elections particularly important and the circulation was increased heavily. Before the Bavarian state election of 1986, for instance, the number of copies of the *Rep* rose from 100,000 in June to 650,000 in October (the election month). In the month of the 1987 Bremen state election the circulation was increased to 300,000. The all-time record was reached in the month of the parliamentary election of 1990: 4,000,000 copies were said to be printed. Except for the occasional increase in the circulation of the normal party paper, the *Rep* also published a few special issues concerning forthcoming elections.

From national-conservatism to extreme right

Nationalism

The primary ideological feature of the party literature is and always has been nationalism. It is telling for the political climate in post-war Germany and the cautiousness of the REP, that the party always denied being nationalist, rather calling itself 'national' or 'patriotic'. This notwithstanding, the REP can without any doubt be labelled nationalist. There are even strong indications of an ethnic nationalist outlook. For one, the REP believes that man is a *Gemeinschaftswesen* and can only develop fully within a community. It identifies various complementary communities, ranging from the smallest,

the family, to the largest, the *Volksgemeinschaft* (ethnic community). This latter is considered to be the most important and should decide over its own affairs. This is most clearly depicted in Diwald's introduction: 'The sovereign ethnic community finds its political will in the nation, which releases its internal and external form in the state' (REP 1993: 3).

However, the ethnic community is defined in a both ethnic and state nationalist manner. For instance, some contributors to the party paper argue that membership of the ethnic community is to be defined on the basis of the individual's adherence to the ethnic community (*Rep* 9/87), while others define this adherence in an almost *völkisch* (ethnic) way: 'The instinctive bond to the own ethnic community can develop in perfect form only when one is born into it, is raised in it and so from childhood on identifies with it, thus, so to speak, taking solidarity in with one's mother's milk' (*Rep* 11/87).

This stringent definition of nationality expresses the position of the party accurately. The REP often criticises the alleged ease with which German nationality is given to foreigners. To ensure successful assimilation it pleads for restricting German nationality to foreigners that are genuinely prepared to dedicate themselves to the German nation 'as if it was their own' (*Rep* 11/87). Among other elements, this includes renouncing the old nationality (REP 1993: 22). The most positive statement on (large-scale) assimilation was made by Schönhuber, who acknowledged that the ethnic communities in Central Europe have mixed and that good Germans have come from that (*Rep* 7/88).

The demand for German (re)unification has always featured prominently in the party literature. From the beginning the REP has defined German unification as its highest goal. The 1983 programme presented a three-phase plan for the realisation of German unification,¹² which would lead to a *Gesamtdeutschland* (All-Germany), by which the party at that time seemed to refer only to the FRG and GDR. Over the years the topic was voiced more impatiently and aggressively. The 1987 programme stated: 'The illegal, unnatural and violent crumbling of the German ethnic community and its country in the heart of Europe is a danger to world peace and a humiliation of the people' (REP 1987: 3). Though the party welcomed the 1990 unification it considered this only a first step in the process of full unification that would eventually lead to a Germany having the borders of 1937. Within this vision the 1990 merger was considered a 'small reunification' of West Germany and *Mitteldeutschland* (Central Germany).¹³ The real East Germany

¹² The three steps were: (1) elaboration of the German–German relations; (2) creation of a German *Bund* between the two German states; and (3) a free, secret and direct election for one national parliament (REP 1983: 11–12).

¹³ Before the German unification of 1990, the party generally used three terms in this respect: *Deutschland* for the whole German nation, *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* for West Germany (the FRG), and "DDR" for East Germany (the GDR); the quotation marks indicated the party's rejection of both the country and its name (especially the reference to its democratic nature).

are the parts of the ‘German Reich’ that lay behind the Oder-Neiße border, i.e. the so-called *Ostgebiete* in Poland, Russia, Ukraine and the Czech Republic. Hence, the REP continued its demand for unification and for new negotiations and treaties with the eastern neighbouring states ‘with the goal of a peaceful completion of German unity including East Germany’ (REP 1993: 9).

The claim to reinstate the ‘German Reich within its 1937 borders’ has always been based on legal rather than nationalist arguments. The REP argues that these are the borders that are (still) recognised by international law. It speaks of the ‘legally still existing German Reich’ (REP 1990: 10). Hence it considers the acceptance of the Oder-Neiße border by the German government, as part of the two-plus-four treaty that formed the legal basis of the German unification of 1990, a violation of international law. In its *Deutschlandpolitik* (Germany politics) the party ‘appeals to the directive of the constitution and to the ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court, which hold that everything should be done and nothing should be refrained from, that leads to the unity of Germany’ (REP 1990: 4).

Though the party at times uses nationalist arguments for German unification it is not consistent in its demand for *external exclusiveness*. According to the ethnic nationalist tenet, *all* nationals have to live within the state (Koch 1991). The REP regards various groups outside of the aspired German state as part of the German ethnic community and nation (Austrians, South Tyroleans and so-called *Siebenbuerger Sachsen* that live in Romania), yet does not strive for the inclusion of these people or their territories. In general, the party limits itself to arguing that the FRG should protect the German character of these groups, for example through the introduction of an autonomous area and by pressuring the state in which they live.

The party does strive consistently for *internal homogenisation*, aptly expressed in its slogan *Deutschland den Deutschen* (Germany for the Germans). Consequently, ‘Germany is not allowed to become an immigration country’ (REP 1985: 1), meaning that the multi-cultural society is rejected and foreign immigration is to be limited in both the number of people and the period of stay. The party supports the Swiss model of foreign labour, which is said to mean that ‘(f)oreign workers are allowed to take jobs that are impossible to employ by Germans and only according to a temporary contract and without family members’ (*Rep* 10/86). Originally, the party wanted the right to asylum to be reserved, under certain conditions, for real political asylum seekers (among whom it counted, for example, Afghans). In 1992, during the big asylum debate in Germany, the party reversed its position, stating that the fall of communism had made European asylum seekers impossible and, as refugees should be received in their own cultural environment, *de facto* excluded the possibility of legal asylum seekers in Germany (e.g. *Rep* 1/92). Even the civil war in Bosnia and the Kosovo ‘crisis’ did not lead to a change in the party’s situation, as in both cases the REP vehe-

mently opposed the (generous) adoption of refugees from the former Yugoslavia.

In exceptional cases foreigners are allowed to stay in Germany: first, foreigners who fully integrate (or better: assimilate) into the German society, though they thereby technically cease to be foreigners; second, temporary guest workers who have to leave after their contract expires; and, third, the occasional genuine refugees who have to leave as soon as the situation in their country of origin is safe again. During their stay in Germany all foreigners will be treated as guests, which means hospitably but without certain rights. Most notably, the party opposes the right to vote for foreigners, including those from other EU-countries.

The position of so-called *Aussiedler* – immigrants of German descent that lived in the ‘lost territories’ and who are by German law considered German citizens – causes the party an interesting nationalist dilemma. On the one hand, it considers them to be Germans, thus having the right to live within the German state. On the other hand, they have become fused with their *Heimat* (outside of the FRG) and, moreover, if all *Aussiedler* would leave, the territories might be really forever lost to Germany. Nevertheless, despite pressure from its electorate, which considered them as ‘normal’ asylum seekers (e.g. Betz 1990, 1994), the REP has generally championed the rights of the *Aussiedler* to settle in Germany and has often criticised the poor conditions under which they were received (blaming them on the fact that sham refugees take most of the budget).

In conclusion it is difficult to decide whether the REP is an ethnic or state nationalist party. As far as the party literature holds elaborations of the nationalist ideology they fit the ethnic nationalist tenet, emphasising the importance of the ethnic community and putting it over the state. Its nationalism is also mainly voiced in ethnic terms such as *Volksgemeinschaft* and *Heimat*. But at the same time the party accepts the possibility of successful large scale assimilation (at least in the past) and the fact that large parts of the German ethnic community live outside of the German state. So even though the REP adheres foremost to an ethnic nationalist ideology, it is neither elaborated nor applied rigidly.

Exclusionism

As the REP is almost exclusively centred on Germany and the German ethnic community, a feature like ethnopluralism is seldom openly present in the party literature. One of the few instances is a pseudo-scientific discussion on the naturalness of xenophobia and ethnopluralism, which referred to work of prominent representatives of the (inter)national new right, such as Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeld (a former student of Konrad Lorenz) and Alain de Benoist, intellectual head of the French *nouvelle droite* (Rep 10/88). In general, however, vague hints of an ethnopluralist view can be derived only from the desired model of Europe.

The first programme had fully supported the ongoing process of European integration, striving for 'a core Europe with one or more European countries, to become in the long term to one federal state' (REP 1983: 11). The party later changed to a more anti-EC course, however, distancing itself increasingly from the existing form of European cooperation. Instead of the alleged 'United States of Europe', a *Bundesstaat* (federal state), it supported a 'Europe of United States', a *Statenbund* (confederal state) (*Rep* 2/87). The ideal type of a future Europe is most often referred to in the famous term of De Gaulle, a 'Europe of Fatherlands' ending at the Ural and the Bosphorus (REP 1993: 3); some authors, most notably Neubauer, preferred the term 'Europe of Ethnic Communities' (Europa der Völker). As none of the authors actually bothered to elaborate the different concepts, the argumentation behind the desired concept(s) of Europe remains vague, although they are all supposed to refer to the same model of Europe, i.e. a limited degree of cooperation on a limited range of policy fields between sovereign nation-states.

Throughout its existence the REP has regularly been accused of racism and anti-Semitism. Despite this, explicit evidence of these features cannot be found in the literature, although the illegal nature and strict monitoring of these features by the German state might well have pressed them 'backstage'. Nevertheless, even these are hard to find, except perhaps circuitously, and there have been just a few vague indications of a possible racist vision in the paper, which were almost exclusively by one author.

The issue that has raised most dust is the alleged anti-Semitism. Given its past it is understandable that Germans are particularly sensitive to anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, this has led to a climate in which almost any criticism of Israel or Jewish organisations and representatives have led to suspicions of (at least latent) anti-Semitism, especially when the critique comes from alleged right-wing extremists. This was also how Schönhuber defended himself against accusations of anti-Semitism after a public argument with Heinz Galinski, then leader of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. After having listed a number of 'good Jews', he continued: 'However, I do not like to have to like mister Galinski. Next to the Berlin zealot Galinski, who permanently demeans our ethnic community, the Viennese Wiesenthal looks almost like Nathan the Wise' (*Rep* 12/88).

This notwithstanding, there are indications of at least a conspiracy thinking with respect to Jews in the party literature, which is one form of anti-Semitism, and there are regular attacks on Jewish organisations, which are accused of an anti-German attitude. There are also regular references to a very powerful Jewish lobby in the US, as well as to powerful pro-Israeli European and German politicians (mostly of Jewish descent). Regarding Israel the paper paints a picture in which Germany keeps paying the Jewish state, yet will never be forgiven. These themes featured prominently in articles on the Waldheim-affair and the Gulf War. In a discussion on the latter,

Israel was described as *Stichwortgeber* (provider of key words) and world opinion leader (*Rep* 3/91). Overall, there is some evidence of a latent anti-Semitic outlook in the literature, albeit not really prominent and very cautiously expressed.

Xenophobia

Throughout the years immigration has developed into one of the major topics in the party literature, and most notably in the party paper. Whereas the first programme had addressed the issue relatively calmly, claiming that the ‘foreigner issue’ had become a ‘foreigner problem’ (REP 1983: 16), the later programmes spoke of ‘the flood of foreigners’ (REP 1985: 1) and ‘migration of the ethnic communities’ (REP 1993: 22). This shift towards a xenophobic view on immigrants and immigration had already been visible in the party paper which under the leadership of Schönhuber and chief editor Neubauer had become more negative and radical. The paper changed its critical though generally constructive style of commenting on (primarily Bavarian) politics for a negative and pessimistic preaching of doom and damnation for future Germany:

Mass unemployment, problems with a flood of foreigners, left-wing extremism, increasing crime, decay of value-consciousness, and a constitutional state that is on the retreat, build the ingredients of a volatile mix, which could explode around our ears already tomorrow. Kreuzberg [a Berlin area with a lot of immigrants] may not be everywhere yet, though it might already be also there, where it has not burnt – yet. Only the spark is missing. (*Rep* 6/87)

Even though the tone became harsher the paper remained in general quite cautious, using writing tools such as rhetorical questions (e.g. ‘Is the FRG becoming oriental?’) and including articles in a neutral style which substantiate, on the basis of official figures, a trend which is deemed negative in perspective (e.g. ‘More and more asylum seekers’).

Xenophobia is most visible in the articles on asylum seekers. Already in the 1980s the REP paid attention to this topic, which at that time was of little importance to the broader political debate in Germany. During the 1990s the number of asylum seekers that came to Germany increased heavily and after several violent attacks on refugee shelters the topic dominated both the public and political debate for months (see Tränhardt 1995). After the major German parties had come to an agreement on a more strict law on asylum in December 1992 (the so-called *Asylkompromiß*), the topic disappeared from the political agenda. The REP tried to keep the issue alive, however, arguing that the new law should be implemented more strictly as still too many *Scheinasylanten* (sham refugees) were coming to Germany. Moreover, the issue was used to prove the political power and success of the REP, which argued that the tightening of the law had always been a key point of its political programme, and that the stricter law was the result of the party’s

growing support and the consequent fear for electoral defeat by the major parties. It also claimed that the issue proved that all accusations of right-wing extremism and racism against the party were false, since the established parties had actually enforced the programme of the REP.

The issue of the asylum seekers itself has always been presented in a blend of xenophobic, financial, legal and law and order argumentations, and is linked to almost every plague of modern society: crime, drugs, aids, unemployment, etc. (e.g. *Rep* 1/89). Moreover, practically all articles on the issue portray asylum seekers as imposters and criminals. The neutral term *Asylbewerber* (asylum seeker) is used only sporadically and the party favours the more derogative term *Asylant* or even *Scheinasylant* (see Cohn-Bendit and Schmid 1993: 239–40). The general picture that is drawn in the party paper is that of a ‘Storm on Europe’,¹⁴ i.e. millions of alien, criminal and lazy foreigners that come to Europe (most notably Germany) to enjoy the good life at the expense of the European people (e.g. *Rep* 6/90).

Xenophobia is also directed at particular groups of immigrants, most notably the Muslims. The latter are portrayed as not (willing to be) integrated and fundamentalist, creating their own sub-cultures from which they try to expand all over Europe. Xenophobia is also one of the reasons behind the party’s tough stand on naturalisation. A ‘subtle’ hint to Islam can be found in the elaboration to the demand to integrate, which includes ‘also giving up exaggerated national-religious behaviour, which disturbs the peaceful living together within our society’ (REP 1993: 23). Moreover, if the law on naturalisation is not toughened Germany could be containing an increasing number of ‘Germans’ that in case of an emergency would either flee or would defend foreign interests. This is, for instance, suggested by an article on the Gulf war in which the author points to the fact that the Palestinian foreign workers in Kuwait either fled the country or chose the Iraqi side (*Rep* 10/90).

Not only the foreigners that live in the country are seen as a (potential) danger to Germany; So are those living outside the country. The REP considers the international environment particularly hostile to Germany. This is in part a legacy of the Second World War, though the fact that certain limitations to the sovereignty of Germany are still not abolished proves (to the party) that the former allied countries (the US in particular) treat contemporary Germany with hostility too. It even suggests that the Allies had not been concerned that much with Europe’s liberation, but rather with fifty years of Germany’s occupation (e.g. *Rep* 10/87). A prime example of the international anti-German climate is the so-called ‘enemy state clause’, articles 53 and 107 of the United Nations (UN) charter, which according to the REP holds that the allied forces may still decide on the destiny of Germany.

¹⁴ This was also the title of a book by Manfred Ritter, former CSU member and long-term state prosecutor, to which the paper devoted a series of articles over several issues.

The supposed alliance of the Western Allies with Germany during the cold war has not changed this. According to the party they still limit Germany's sovereignty and are 'practising a partly open, partly hidden occupying law behind the shield of friendly partnership' (REP 1990: 2). The cold war is seen as the other main reason for the country's secondary status in the world.

We Germans are the muzzled dancing bears of the political world arena, which are one time rewarded with cinnamon bread and then the other time disciplined by the whip. The animal trainers are in New York and Moscow. (*Rep* 2/87)

It is because of this hostile international environment that Germany should take care of its own interests first. 'We Germans can safeguard our right to life only when we think of ourselves again on the principles of the protection of national interests' (REP 1985: 1). This credo is taken furthest in regard to agricultural policy, where the party argues that Germany should be wholly self-reliant in the production of its food. The party states repeatedly that looking out for the interests of one's own ethnic community does not mean threading on those of other countries. It simply means, as Schönhuber stated in his often quoted speech to the Siegburg party congress, '*Andere Völker achten wir, unseres aber lieben wir*' (We respect other ethnic communities, but we love our own; REP 1985: 1).

Since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty opposition to the EU has become one of the main themes of the party literature. The REP uses a wide variety of arguments to express its anti-EU sentiments. In accordance with its belief in a hostile international environment the REP refers to the Maastricht Treaty as 'Versailles without weapons', indicating that the treaty signified another capitulation of Germany. The financial arguments all come down to the big difference in the amount of money Germany pays to and receives from the EU. A strange blend of chauvinist and sanitary argumentation is used in the struggle against the deletion of the German *Reinheitsgebot* (purity injunction) and against the EU policy on environmental protection and food rights, the alleged sole purpose of which is to bring Germany to a lower level in these fields (*Rep-Sonderausgabe* I/89). The anti-EU repertoire of the REP has also been expanded by some mainstream arguments such as, for instance, the democratic deficit, EU centralism, the loss of German sovereignty, and the unequal representation in the EP (e.g. REP 1999).

Socio-economic policy

A topic on which the REP changed considerably during the years, at least in its rhetoric, is socio-economic policy. The party has taken its policies for a large part from its mother party CSU, supporting the so-called *soziale Marktwirtschaft* (social market economy). Socio-economic policy constitutes one of the most widely elaborated themes in the programmes. Under

several different headings the party applauds the advantages of the liberal economy in combination with state protection of special groups (families, persons with a disability, the elderly and pensioners). However, the social market economy can be preserved only by making several budget cuts, primarily limiting the size and thereby the costs of the bureaucracy and state subsidies (*inter alia*, to international organisations). Excluded from these austerity measures are the farmers, as Germany has to remain independent from other countries in its supply of food (REP 1983: 15).

In its early years the party paper devoted much attention to the theme of protecting the interests of the German farmers. Later it also started to champion the protection of the *Mittelstand* (middle class), in part to distinguish itself from (other) right-wing parties, the FDP in particular, which were accused of favouring big corporations. The programme called for the protection of German small businesses against foreign competition (especially from low-wage countries), big corporations and monopolisation (REP 1987: 11). According to the REP, small businesses are the backbone of the economy, providing for the bulk of the employment in Germany (e.g. *Rep* 3/86).

The socio-economic programme further called for a 'social order, which provides the individual with all opportunities for development, in which individual responsibility and self-help are the first commandments and in which communal support for the needy is secured' (REP 1987: 7). This social order will have overcome the class struggle and will result in social peace. However, this can only be realised by a change in consciousness, so that all working people regain the feeling of solidarity, and by the creation of a *Leistungsgemeinschaft* (achievement-oriented society). Finally, employment policy should combine 'the right to a job or state support' with 'the duty to work' (REP 1987: 11).

Throughout the years the REP started to address the interests of the lower classes more and more. At least two factors strengthened this in the 1990s.¹⁵ First, German unification created a pool of socially weak potential voters in the former Eastern states. Second, Klaus Zeitler, a former SPD mayor for twenty-two years in the Bavarian city of Würzburg, joined the REP and quickly became a prominent author in its paper. His articles principally stressed working-class interests, exposed social abuses, and charged the top of the SPD and labour unions with egocentrism at the expense of the working man. The new social image even touched Schönhuber, who argued that the fall of socialism should not mean the triumph of capitalism (*Rep* 6/92), though it nevertheless clashed with the neo-liberal rhetoric, which still existed on many other issues. Hence, in the 1990s the paper's socio-eco-

¹⁵ A third factor could have been the many demographic studies on the REP electorate that appeared in the early 1990s and indicated disproportionately large support among the working class (e.g. Roth 1989, 1990; Veen *et al.* 1993).

conomic politics became an amalgam of socialist policies and pleas for budget cuts and state subsidies, presented in a neo-liberal style.

The *Leitmotiv* of the socio-economic policy has become welfare chauvinism: German money should be used for German interests and German jobs should be taken by German workers. Everything non-German, including immigrants, the EU and most notably asylum seekers (not *Aussiedler*), was portrayed as taking much needed money away from the Germans. To protect its own people, especially the working class, the party therefore presented a welfare chauvinist programme in which budget cuts were made with respect to non-German causes and more money was to be invested in upholding a decent level of welfare and employment for the German people.

Ethical values

One of the favourite topics of Schönhuber has always been the decadence which prevails as a consequence of the ongoing liberalisation of society. In one of the first issues of the paper he named examples of the increasing decadence, such as AIDS, women wrestling and corruption, and then stated: ‘We Republicans call for resistance! It concerns the life of us and our children. We demand: Stop any further and deadly liberalisation!’ (RA 3/84). The general argument is that the process threatens the existence of the German ethnic community by decreasing the birth rate. The only way out is a return to traditional values, most notably family values:

Dear fellow-countrymen: Thank God wars no longer decide on the future of a nation, but birth rates. We can only restore our national and regional identity when we make the family the centre of our life again, support it morally and materially. (Rep 10/90)

The party rarely discusses ethical issues in detail, however, and, although they come up in every issue of the paper, they are mostly part of broader stories on immigration, *Umerziehung* (re-education) or on the established parties. The programmes mainly include demands on the issues of family politics and abortion. Though the number of demands was expanded throughout the years, the party neither changed its position nor radicalised. The basis for its family politics has always been a favouring of state protection of marriage and family (e.g. REP 1998). The concept of the family applies to heterosexual couples and should not be enlarged to include homosexual or lesbian couples (REP 1993: 27). To create a more family friendly climate the state should offer financial incentives. However, more important is a change in mentality, away from the materialist egoism towards communal solidarity (e.g. REP 1993: 68).

A relatively moderate position on ethical values is generally upheld. For instance, the REP calls for the protection of the unborn child through a ban on abortion, though it allows for abortion ‘in case of rape (criminological indication), hereditary damage (eugenic indication) and danger for mother

or child (clinical indication)' (REP 1993: 29). The section on media politics, which opens with a very liberal agenda (stressing support for freedom of speech and press, plurality, etc.), calls for enforcement of the few restrictions (i.e. contradictions to democracy, human dignity and the values of the ethnic community) mainly through media self-regulation (REP 1993: 79–81).

There are two issues on which the party holds a somewhat ambiguous position: religion and gender relations. Despite the fact that the REP originated as a 'CSU-split' the first two programmes did not once mention the issue of religion. The 1987 programme speaks of a system of upbringing and education that is rooted in German, Christian and *abendländische* (occidental) culture and history and which operates independently of confessional values (REP 1987: 2). The next programme includes a chapter on 'Church and Religion' that starts with the famous idiom of Johann-Gottfried Herder, 'ethnic communities are the thoughts of God' (REP 1990: 30), and calls for 'Christian patriotism', claiming that the preservation of Christian values and tradition is of paramount importance for the future of Germany. The 1993 programme is less explicit on Christian values, which now seem to have become fully integrated into the 'occidental culture' from which the party claims to have taken all its inspiration (REP 1993: 93).

This is not to say that the REP holds a particularly favourable position towards Christian institutions. On the basis of liberal convictions of the separation of Church and state and religious freedom, the party demands the abolition of Church tax (REP 1993: 93). Moreover, it considers the German Churches to have become infiltrated by left-wing and anti-national forces. The fact that various religious leaders have been engaged in actions against the REP has worsened the situation. The programme introduced the demand that '(t)he pulpit should not be misused for political propaganda and for a one-sided influence on religious voters' (REP 1990: 31).

The first programme also included a special section entitled 'Equal Rights for Man and Woman' in which the party pledged to dedicate itself to ensure that the law was put into practice. To send a signal it would award 'an appropriate number of political mandates within the party' to women (REP 1983: 5). The next programme, though more conservative in many respects, upheld the claim of equality and explicitly stated that 'equal work should get equal pay' (REP 1985: 4). In the 1987 programme the support for equal rights for women was combined with a traditional view of the woman as mother.

Under similar circumstances and demands, woman and man are, despite their difference in essence, of equal competence in life and work. However, it is in particular given to the woman to create by warmth and devotion the safety, in which family and children can prosper. Herein lies the exceptional vocation of the woman, which cannot be fulfilled by any 'househusband' or collective. (REP 1987: 8)

To keep women from getting swamped with responsibilities and work or frustrated from not having a family and children, the REP wants to strengthen the position of the housewife and mother. Among others, the party wants the state to actively support this policy by providing school girls with an education as woman, mother and housewife (REP 1987: 9). This position was later softened, though the REP kept opposing feminism and the *Gleichmacherei* (levelling) of man and woman. In political and social respects, man and woman should be treated equally in terms of rights, not in character. The party does accept working women, claiming equal pay for equal work as well as demanding more part-time jobs, job sharing and business kindergartens (REP 1993: 31). In addition, it calls for the introduction of the job of 'housewife and mother' (REP 1993: 31).

Strong state

A popular topic in the literature of the party is law and order. Except for the 1987 version, all programmes contain (large) sections on law and order policies. To stress the importance of the topic the 1990 programme stated: 'We Republicans are the party of law and order' (REP 1990: 13). It further includes demands for a better equipped police force, which has to be enlarged in both personnel and powers, and is to be supported openly by politicians. Sentences should be higher, especially for crimes relating to drugs and the environment, and the victim instead of the perpetrator should be at the centre of attention (e.g. REP 1993: 16–22). The party in general, and Schönhuber in particular, has always opposed the death penalty on ethical grounds. It also takes a tough stand on (primarily left-wing) terrorism, which is embedded in the official German state policy of *streitbare Demokratie* (militant democracy). According to the party terrorism is caused in part by the 'general lack of legal security and community spirit' (REP 1987: 15).

Crime always received a lot of attention in the party paper, although over time it became more and more a secondary theme, featuring in articles that dealt primarily with foreigners, asylum seekers or with (critique on) the established parties. In the 1990s the party shifted its focus to a new group, the non-organised left-wing extremists (or so-called *Autonomen*). As they often demonstrated against and even attacked meetings of the REP, the party demanded tough repression of these groups. After left-wing extremists had violently disturbed an official state ceremony, Schönhuber reacted partly with malicious joy, partly misunderstood: 'Now German top politicians have experienced personally what it means to underestimate the left-criminal scene. We have had to suffer this scene for years, and received support of neither the media nor the political establishment' (*Rep* 11/92).

The party position on defense has always been quite moderate. In the few articles on the topic the party showed no signs of a militarist outlook. The REP generally supports the army, arguing specifically for the upgrading of its

(low) status, yet at the same time takes a cautious approach to the expansion of weapons and armies. In relation to the Gulf war it rejected war as a means of politics, accusing the allied forces of not having exploited all diplomatic possibilities, and the media of covering the war too positively and clinically (e.g. *Rep* 1/91). Similar reactions were expressed during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo.¹⁶

In 1991 the question of a professional army was the topic of the party paper column entitled 'controversy'. Arguing in favour of a professional army was former General Reinhard Uhle-Wettler, while against it vice-chairman Schlierer claimed that the army would no longer be anchored in German society and might become a state-within-the-state (*Rep* 7/91). The REP sees military service as peace service though it has become more favourable to a general year of state service, of which military service is just one possibility (e.g. REP 1993: 10)

The issue of defense features only secondary in the programmes too, where it is linked mainly to the ever-changing position on NATO. In 1983 the programme pleaded for full incorporation of Germany into NATO as well as for more European cooperation in defense politics (albeit with close cooperation with the US). The next programme included no explicit references to either NATO or defense. In 1987 loyalty to NATO was made dependent upon the condition that its interests were similar to those of the German ethnic community (REP 1987: 3), and the 1990 programme added the demand for more German control over its own territory and people. After reunification little support for NATO seems to remain. The REP wants NATO to be converted into an 'all-European security structure, in which Germany keeps its sovereignty' (REP 1993: 9), even though the party is very sceptical about the current attempts at creating such a structure within the EU (REP 1999: 22).

Populist anti-party sentiment

A theme which clearly combines and guides all ideological themes is that constituted by the critique on the established parties and politicians. The REP criticises political parties extremely harshly, targeting all major parties alike, both government and opposition. However, the party does not reject parties per se and always presents itself as an alternative, which differs from the others in almost all possible ways, but which is nevertheless a political party. That said, the REP does reflect a wide variety of populist anti-party sentiments. Most notably, parties and politicians are portrayed as egocentric, corrupt and anti-national.

In the first years the REP predominantly attacked its Bavarian rival and mother party, the CSU, accusing this all-mighty party in Bavaria of despo-

¹⁶ The REP referred to the Kosovo war as 'the bombing war against Serbia that was started without clear thinking' (<http://www.rep.de/kosovo1.htm>).

tism and corruption. When the party began to contest elections outside of Bavaria, its main target was expanded to include the CDU. Lacking ideas, the CDU/CSU had first incriminated the REP, then stolen its ideas, and finally presented these ideas as their own. In the 1990s the party also increasingly aimed its arrows at the SPD and, to a lesser extent, at the FDP and the Greens. The SPD is portrayed as a party dominated by teachers and social scientists, which has betrayed the German working class. Moreover, its support for the multi-cultural society and the process of European integration is characterised as a betrayal of the legacy of its first post-war leader, Kurt Schumacher, a nationally oriented socialist who is seen as a hero by the REP.

A special place in the anti-party sentiments is reserved for the competitors on the extreme right. From the time when the REP competed with the DVU, this party and especially its leader Frey have been targets of many verbal attacks. Frey is accused of only being nationalist for the money and is referred to with descriptions like 'the Munich-based merchant in NS-devotional objects' and 'the property speculator' (e.g. *Rep* 2/89). In a reaction to the REP's defeat in the Bremen state election of 1987 the paper claimed that Frey's *Spalter-Liste* (splitter list) contested the election with the sole purpose of keeping the REP from success and so protecting the CDU, with the obvious approval of the latter (*Rep* 10/87).

At the beginning of the 1990s state monitoring was becoming more and more a reality for the REP. Consequently, allegations of extremism grew into one of the main issues in the party paper. These allegations were portrayed as part of a conspiracy of the established parties against the REP, out of fear of the latter's inevitable electoral success. It spoke of a 'pogrom mood against the Republicans' and claimed that a plan to morally destroy the party was ready, containing four phases: disinformation, monitoring, alleged proof, and a request for a ban on the party (*Rep* 11/92). However, it always felt assured that the 'decent Germans' would see right through this conspiracy and would support the party even more.

Most anti-party articles are accompanied by or end with a positive reference to the REP, the only viable alternative. Everything the other parties are accused of doing, the REP either does not do or can undo. It portrays itself as the only party that has the ideas and the people to govern the country through these ominous times and, more importantly, that has the confidence of the people. This is not that surprising, it argues, as most disasters are a consequence of the fact that the old parties have ignored the warnings of the REP. This line of reasoning was used particularly in its defense against allegations of providing ideological fuel to the arsonists of refugee homes in villages like Hoyerswerda in the early 1990s.

We Republicans are the only party in the new states which can master the historical task of keeping deluded young people from slipping to the radical and

violent scene. The established parties have lost their credit over there. Hoyer-swerda is an alarm signal. (*Rep* 10/91)

The paper also features many articles that exclusively contain (positive) references to the REP. Usually these articles are (based on) the quotations of outsiders, such as politicians of other parties and journalists, which state that the REP is not an extremist party. One of the most stunning aspects of the pro-REP articles are the many predictions of its bright future, again generally based on external sources.¹⁷ The party went furthest in blowing its own trumpet where (then party leader) Schönhuber was concerned. Numerous headlines and articles cheered his rhetorical talents and the fascination of the masses with his speeches. In fairness, many of these were (verbatim) citations from other newspapers, ranging from the left-wing *Frankfurter Rundschau* to the right-wing *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, though the party paper itself was by far the most jubilant. On his sixty-fifth birthday, it wrote:

Schönhuber has kept standing where others fell or left. What would kill the weaker was confirmation and reinforcement to him. There are no pauses for the man who runs from appointment to appointment, and as a rhetorical locomotive pulls whole election trains. (*Rep* 1/88)

The central tenet of the party's anti-party sentiments is the anti-national behaviour of German politicians, most notably the way they are seen to misuse German history against Germany and its people, but primarily against Schönhuber. In this respect, he still fights a war over the reactions to his book. A general feature of the many articles on this topic, most often written by Schönhuber, is the outing of the 'brown [Nazi] past' of people who have in the eyes of the party indulged in anti-national behaviour. They are generally not attacked because of their past actions, as they only did their duty, but because of their present denial or concealment of them. Two of his main targets were the then German President Richard Von Weizsäcker and the then Austrian President Kurt Waldheim. The articles are presented as a fight of the little man against the establishment: whereas the former has been punished too harshly during the process of denazification (like Schönhuber himself), the latter has escaped punishment. Schönhuber's favourite remark is related to the hypocrisy of the elite and holds that it is impossible that from 80 per cent of National Socialists under Hitler came 90 per cent of resistance fighters after Hitler.

¹⁷ Before almost every contested election the paper predicts extremely positive results, which are even higher than the best score they polled. One reason is that the party is convinced that the polls consistently and willingly present a lower support for the REP than is actually measured. The alleged reason behind this is that the polling agencies are financially dependent upon support from the established parties.

Democracy

Several authors have claimed that the REP is anti-democratic according to the German constitution (e.g. Jaschke 1994; Pfahl-Traugher 1993). This claim is difficult to substantiate on the basis of the party literature. Nowhere in the party paper, for example, can one find an open rejection of (German) democracy or fundamental aspects of it. One of the few possible indications of a suppressed extremist character is a remark by Schönhuber that contrary to sectarians like Neubauer and the NPD the REP 'has to consider the existence of a certain political environment, however, without thereby allowing that programmatic basic principles are abandoned. The Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution is – however one may judge its actions – a reality' (*Rep* 1/91). Still, this is hardly evidence to prove the party's extremist character. On top of that, the whole party literature is larded with statements in which the REP counters allegations of extremism and radicalism. A favourite slogan in this respect is 'We are radicals only in one aspect: In the defense against extremism of both left and right' (e.g. *Rep* 7/85). There are two examples that the party never fails to mention to prove its democratic credentials. First, double-membership of the REP and any extremist organisation, i.e. organisations officially listed as extremist by the *Bundesverfassungsschutz*, is illegal according to the party statute. Second, the REP has been purged of all extremists at the Ruhsdorf party meeting of 1990 – by which they refer to the expulsion of the Neubauer group.

The democratic credentials can, however, best be taken from the various concrete measures the party supports. Over and over again the REP stresses its democratic character in articles in the party paper and sections and introductions of the party programmes. The first thesis of the 1983 programme, entitled democracy, states:

We Republicans trace back our existence to the old-Roman 'res publica'. We want to serve the state and not to make money out of it. All thinking and actions are to be directed at a society of emancipated citizens in a republic, in which conservative and liberal principles complete each other. (REP 1983: 3)

All election programmes further include a variety of demands to strengthen the rights to political cooperation of the citizenry, such as the popular election of the Federal President and the introduction of referendums of different kinds, especially on topics concerning the sovereignty of the German state, i.e. German reunification and European integration (REP 1993: 5). The 1990 programme, which opens with an avowal to all aspects of the official definition of German democracy (as mentioned in the constitution), includes the new demand for a strict separation between private and public means and positions for politicians (REP 1990: 6). Moreover, the REP has always been favourable to compromises and power sharing, calling it a democratic virtue, not a sin: 'Our goal has to be and remain, to take part in the parliamentary expression of the will' (*Rep* 8/91).

Revisionism

One of the topics that regularly features in the party literature, most often in columns of Schönhuber, is the so-called *Umerziehung* (literally re-education) and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, the official dealing with the German Nazi past. According to the party these are aimed at keeping Germany small and silent, so that the superpowers can continue to dominate world politics. Even in the post-Schönhuber era the REP considered the issue important enough to address it in the introduction of the party programme. Linking past and present, the party proclaimed

The mental Babylonian imprisonment of the established parties and large parts of the society as a consequence of the stigmatisation and criminalisation of the German history has led to the situation that many important law proposals were not accepted or existing laws were not implemented. (REP 1998)

In the early years the last page of the party paper contained an overview of books recommended by Schönhuber (and available through the party), which mainly dealt with German history, the Second World War, and the 'lost territories'. In articles and book reviews the party presented a moderate and circuitous revisionist view on the Second World War. It rejects Germany's *Alleinschuld* (sole guilt), claiming that France and mainly the Soviet Union had forced the country to war. Believing that the latter country had been at the verge of invading Germany, the REP considers the German invasion of the Soviet-Union a *Präventivschlag* (preemptive strike) (e.g. *Rep* 7/91). It further vehemently rejects the thesis of the *Kollektivschuld* (collective guilt) of the German people, claiming that the typical German could not have known of the Nazi's atrocities. The fall of the Berlin wall and the consequent unification of Germany have strengthened the REP in demanding an immediate stop of the (legal) *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (e.g. REP 1990).

The favourite topic of Schönhuber in this respect has always been the defence of the German soldiers that served in the Second World War, particularly those of the *Waffen-SS*, like himself. Quoting several (former) politicians of the main parties Schönhuber argued over and over again that the *Waffen-SS* had been more similar to the regular German army, the *Wehrmacht*, than to the Nazi-loyal *SS*. Though in general condemning the NS regime and confirming its atrocities, Schönhuber at times sounded obligatory or reluctant. This notwithstanding, there are no indications that he (or the party) supports the NS regime or fundamental aspects of its ideology and actions. The only exception to this is perhaps the ideal of a Europe of Nations, which he claims to have experienced in the *Waffen-SS* (see also Schönhuber 1989).

Though Schönhuber was the main author of the moderately revisionist articles, he was certainly not the only high-ranking member of the REP that held these views. The earlier programmes had been very cautious in this respect, explicitly stating that the end of the legal *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*

would not mean that war criminals would no longer be punished (REP 1983: 12). The 1987 programme, however, openly rejected ‘the absurd thesis of the “collective guilt” of the German people over generations’ and demanded the complete opening of all archives ‘to clear the “single guilt”-thesis’ (REP 1987: 3). And the party deemed the (past) treatment of former German soldiers important enough to be addressed in the 1990 programme: ‘We demand the rehabilitation of 27,000 German soldiers, who were unjustly convicted as prisoners of war in short trials in the Soviet Union in 1949/50 (!)’ (REP 1990: 12). The underlying sentiment seems to be personal rather than political and can best be summarised as: ‘Our fathers were no criminals’ (*Rep* 7/91).

Conclusion

The REP originated as a conservative party, ideologically close to its mother party CSU. Its first programme contains a moderate nationalist outlook, allowing room for support of the EC, NATO and Third World countries. Its socio-economic policy entailed full support of the social market economy, combining a fairly open economy with the protection of specific groups (most notably farmers and elderly people). The programme is generally set in a very moderate and general tone and even the policy towards foreigners, though restrictive, is not presented in a xenophobic style.

The party radicalised shortly afterwards, with the take-over of Schönhuber as party leader and Neubauer as chief editor, expressing an increasingly nationalist and xenophobic outlook. However, both cautiousness and superficiality kept the party from a clear and elaborated ideology. Instead, the REP literature contains parts and often starts of a (mainly ethnic) nationalist ideology that is exclusively applied to the own situation. At the core is the nationalist demand for an independent and culturally homogeneous German state. This state is neither inhabited with only ‘ethnic’ Germans (as assimilation is accepted) nor all Germans (as some ‘ethnic’ Germans live in other countries, like Austria).

Xenophobic nationalism is at the core of almost all themes that are discussed regularly in the party literature. Its socio-economic outlook, for example, has the two ideological features combined in a welfare chauvinist programme, stating that the German state should take care of (the socio-economic needs of) its own people. Nationally this means work for the own people and internationally it means cooperation but without the loss of much sovereignty. The party holds an extremely xenophobic view on the world in which foreigners within and outside of the country are seen as a hostile threat. This is closely linked to the struggle for national revival and pride, leading to (moderate) revisionism and (intense) populist anti-party sentiments. Though the REP puts a lot of attention on the ongoing process of degeneration, its views on ethical values are moderately conservative.

Finally, the REP is a democratic party, in that it supports parliamentarianism, and even militant democracy, and strives for acceptance and power within the current German political system.