Labour History, no. 111 (November 2016): 1–16. ISSN 0023-6942

Between Scylla and Charybdis: END and its Attempt to Overcome the Bipolar World Order in the 1980s

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This article deals with European Nuclear Disarmament's (END) difficult positioning in the Cold War of the 1980s. Its vision was for a humanistic socialism from below that would be capable of breaking up the Cold War and unite a divided Europe that in turn could act as a possible "third way" between the liberal capitalism of the USA and the orthodox Communism of the Soviet Union. However, it proved difficult to build these alliances across the Cold War divide without talking, at the same time, to representatives of the "official" peace movements of the Communist states. END found itself between the Scylla of having no dialogue at all with Eastern Europe or having a dialogue also with the Communist regimes which was seen sceptically by the dissidents. The article traces the difficulties of END of building humanistic socialist alliances for peace from below with special reference to END's Working Group on Germany.

"[A]ct as if a united, neutral and pacific Europe already exists. We must learn to be loyal, not to 'East' or 'West,' but to each other, and we must disregard the prohibitions and limitations imposed by any national state."[1] This rallying call for European unity transcending the Cold War division of the continent, was part of the foundational appeal of European Nuclear Disarmament (END), set up by a group of academics and intellectuals in April 1980, with the explicit aim to link the peace agenda of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) with human rights abuses on both sides of the Iron Curtain.[2] It quickly became a kind of intellectual wing of CND nicknamed "Ph.D. CND." Its foundational manifesto called for "détente from below" and put its hopes for nuclear disarmament on mass mobilisation on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The citizens rather than the statesmen of Europe would become the guarantors of a Cold War world in which the main competitors would no longer threaten each other with mutual annihilation. This would also be the beginning of a bloc-free Europe ranging from Britain to the western borders of the Soviet Union.

END worked very closely with CND and many of its leading members also played important roles in CND. Meg Beresford, for instance, jointly held the positions of END's organising secretary and general secretary of CND between 1985 and 1990. Another example is Dan Smith, who co-authored (with E. P. Thompson) *Protest and Survive* and (with Mary Kaldor) *Disarmament Europe*, two of the most important manifestoes of the British peace movement.[3] END also provided CND with its most

* The authors would like to thank *Labour History*'s two anonymous referees.

1. The Bertrand Russell Foundation, "European Nuclear Disarmament: An Appeal for Action," *Security Dialogue*, no. 11 (1980): 108.
2. On END generally, see the extremely informative work of Patrick D. M. Burke, "European Nuclear Disarmament: A Study of Transnational Social Movement Strategy" (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2004); also Patrick D. M. Burke, "'We Envisage a European-Wide Campaign in which Every Kind of Exchange Takes Place': European Nuclear Disarmament in the West European Peace Movements of the 1980s," in *Accidental Armageddons: Nuclear Threats, Nuclear Fears and the Cold War of the 1980s*, ed. Eckart Conze, Martin Klimke and Jeremy Varon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
3. E. P. Thompson and Dan Smith, *Protest and Survive* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1981); Mary

important public intellectuals, such as the historian E. P. Thompson and political scientist Mary Kaldor. The British peace movement underwent a meteoric rise in the early 1980s. Its main institutional anchor was CND. By the end of the 1970s, it had a mere 3,000 members, whilst in 1983 it organised 100,000 members nationally and around half a million members in over 1,000 local branches.[4] Its annual income rose from £461,000 in 1983 to £782,000 in 1985 by which time CND employed 40 full-time paid members of staff.[5] Its campaigns against the stationing of new Cruise and Pershing missiles, against NATO's twin track approach and for unilateral disarmament of the West got enormous media attention in the 1980s. CND and its intellectual wing END was thus one of the biggest mass social movements in Cold War history.[6]

Within a few months, END's Foundational Appeal had been signed by 60 Labour MPs in the House of Commons and the famous Soviet dissident Roy Medvedev. END's activities in the 1980s were aimed at building the envisioned Europe from below through publications, public interventions and a range of high-profile conventions and meetings between peace activists from both sides of the Iron Curtain. The key idea of such a nascent bloc-free Europe was to maintain equidistance between the two superpowers. The notion of equidistance had been popular in Eurocommunist and independent Left circles in the 1980s, and Enrico Berlinguer referred to it as a central strategy of overcoming the Cold War.[7] END intellectuals tended to concur. Yet, as will be seen below, END ultimately struggled to keep such equidistance because it failed to draw a rigid line between itself and the official Communist peace movement in Eastern Europe. This discredited END in the eyes of many dissidents behind the Iron Curtain. However, as we will argue, END kept channels of communication open with Communists behind the Iron Curtain in the hope that this might help to bring about change in the direction of a reformed Communism. We will demonstrate the difficulties this entailed with specific reference to END's Working Group on Germany, where many members attempted to walk a difficult line mediating between dissident and official Communist peace activists. In the West, the peace activists have often been accused of acting as a kind of fifth column to Moscow and of being stooges of or naïve tools of the machinations of Communist East European regimes. Using interviews with contemporary witnesses as well as material from East German archives, including the Stasi archives, this charge cannot be upheld. Conspiracy theories about Communist infiltration of the peace movement and the latter's functionalisation in the interest of the Soviet Union cannot be verified.

Kaldor and Dan Smith, *Disarmament Europe* (London: Merlin Press, 1982).

4. John Sandford, "Mutual (Mis-)Perceptions: The GDR and the British Peace Movement in the 1980s," in *Britain and the GDR: Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World*, ed. Arnd Bauerkämper (Berlin: Philo, 2002), 355; see also Bruce Kent, *Undiscovered Ends: An Autobiography* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 168–69.
5. L. Wittner, *The Struggle against the Bomb*, vol. 3, *Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 138.
6. Paul Byrne, *The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (London: Croom Helm, 1988); Oliver Buchholz, *"Ban the Bomb": Pacificism and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (Munich: Grin Verlag, 2001); April Carter, *Peace Movements: International Protest and World Politics since 1945* (London: Routledge, 1992).
7. Laura Fasanaro, "Neither in One Block nor in the Other: Enrico Berlinguer's Vision of the End of the Cold War," in *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe 1945–1990*, ed. Frédéric Bozo *et al.* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), 163–76, esp. 165.

END and the Idea of Equidistance between the Two Superpowers

The END founding appeal had been the work of the Nottingham-based Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, initially founded in 1963 to continue the work of Bertrand Russell for peace, human rights and social justice.[8] In the early 1980s, it was led by the Nottingham academic, Ken Coates, who later became a Labour Member of the European Parliament (1989–99).[9] Between 1982 and 1991, the Nottingham-based wing of END organised a convention movement that sought to bring together key players in the peace movements of East and West in different cities of Europe. The London-based wing of END, in which Thompson played a leading role, concentrated more on immediate contacts between East European dissidents and peace activists and their West European counterparts. One of the central aims was to publicise the opinions of East European dissident peace activists in the West.[10]

The first-ever END convention was held at the heart of the official Europe of the European Union, in Brussels, in 1982. It was supported by many left-wing European political parties and by many trade unions as well as many new social movements and it assembled West European peace activists from many countries. However, the invitations issued to dissident peace activists in Eastern Europe could not be taken up, as the Communist states behind the Iron Curtain did not provide them with passports to travel to Brussels.[11] Hence, from the start, END struggled with the fact that their vision of a peaceful Europe from below necessitated a democratic civil society in which such sentiments could be freely expressed and nourished. The preconditions for this were only available in the capitalist West and not in the communist East.

END's main interpretative framework of the Cold War was one of equidistance of Europe from the two superpowers. Both superpowers were denied the status of models for a European development. In the official discourse of West European governments during the Cold War, the USA was invariably perceived as a model for pluralism, democracy and "Western values" on which a close political and military alliance was forged. In the official discourse of East European governments, the USSR was equally portrayed as the motherland of the socialist revolution who provided a model for social, economic and political development.[12] Instead, END sought to revive the post-World War II idea of a "third way" Europe. It was based on the assumption that a third way between the capitalist USA and the communist

8. On Russell, see John Callaghan, "Bertrand Russell: The Committed Sceptic in Public Life," *Moving the Social: Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements* 51 (2014): 239–62.
9. John Palmer,"Ken Coates Obituary," *Guardian*, 30 June 2010, accessed August 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/jun/29/ken-coates-obituary; see also Ken Coates, *The Most Dangerous Decade: World Militarism and the New Non-Aligned Peace Movement* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1984).
10. Richard Taylor, "Thompson and the Peace Movement: From CND in the 1950s and 1960s to END in the 1980s," in *E. P. Thompson and English Radicalism*, ed. Roger Fieldhouse and Richard Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 181–201. A large number of Stasi documents provide highly ideologically constructed interpretations of Thompson's role and theoretical influence in END and draw on material supplied by the Czech and Soviet intelligence services; see the dossier of information, CND/END, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive, Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, Berlin.
11. For a detailed discussion of the convention process, see John Sandford, "The GDR and the British Peace Movement in the 1980s," in *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East-German Relations*, ed. Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte (Würzburg: Philo, 2005), 159–71.
12. Olav Njolstadt, ed., *The Last Decade of the Cold War: From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Transformation* (London: Frank Cass, 2004).

USSR was possible and desirable. This third way was a democratic socialist way that combined the ideas of socialism, underpinning the USSR, with the idea of democracy, underpinning the USA. Third way socialists had argued that capitalism in the USA had undermined democracy and turned it into a hollow shell, manipulated by big business interests. Socialism in the USSR had turned into a dictatorship suppressing the people and not allowing them to express their will freely. In 1945 and 1946 third-way socialists had been a prominent political force in many European countries. Yet the pressures of the Cold War proved too much for them. Whilst they were imprisoned, exiled and persecuted in the communist East, they were marginalised in the West, where mainstream social democracy transformed itself into a "Western" political force seeking no longer to transform capitalism but to humanise it.[13]

The united Europe that END imagined was a democratic socialist Europe following what E. P. Thompson had called "socialist humanism" after his break with Stalinism and the orthodoxies of Soviet communism.[14] Thompson was not content with the reformism of Western Social Democratic Parties and sought to develop a "New Left" that would steer a more revolutionary course, still aiming to transform rather than merely to humanise capitalism. Unlike some of his "New Left" allies, Thompson was never content with an intellectual movement seeking to provide ideas and discussion for an independent Left. Thompson's close collaboration with his friend Lawrence Daly, who had also broken with Communism in 1956, over the setting up of the Fife Socialist League, demonstrates Thompson's desire not to restrict the British New Left to an intellectual movement but to build political and institutional alliances with the working class.[15] After his attempts to help set up an alternative left-wing party had failed, he found in the peace movement an alternative platform for political action that went beyond mere theorizing. Peter Worsley, Dorothy Thompson and Stuart Hall remember that

> [w]ithin the new and rapidly-growing Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, what was now becoming known as the "New Left" played a major part. John Rex's pamphlet "NATO or Neutralism" linked the neutralism which had emerged in Europe as a response to the Cold War to the new mass movement.[16]

A neutral, bloc-free Europe was to provide the framework in which "socialist humanism" *a la* Thompson could develop.

END's worldview in the 1980s portrayed the Cold War as a conflict in which both the USA and the USSR were hegemonic superpowers who had pushed through their respective interests without regard for human rights and the will of the people. For END, 1956 symbolised this malignant dualism perfectly. Whilst the Western powers Britain and France sought to push their imperial ambitions in the Near East, the Soviet Union crushed a democratic socialist movement in Hungary.

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13. Darren Lilleker, *Against the Cold War: The History and Political Traditions of Pro-Sovietism in the British Labour Party 1945–1989* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); Jonathan Schneer, *Labour's Conscience: The Labour Left 1945–1950* (London: Unwin Hyman: 1988).
14. Edward P. Thompson, "Socialist Humanism," *The New Reasoner*, no. 1 (summer 1957): 105–43.
15. On the brief flowering of the Fife Socialist League, see Christos Efstathiou, "E. P. Thompson, the Early New Left and the Fife Socialist League," *Labour History Review* 81, no. 1 (2016): 25–48.
16. Peter Worsley, with Dorothy Thompson and Stuart Hall, "The New Reasoner: Introduction," April 2006, Amiel Melburn Trust Internet Archive, accessed September 2016, http://banmarchive.org.uk/collections/nr/index_frame.htm.

Subsequently the USA intervened against democratic socialist forces in Kenya and Chile, whilst the USSR again destroyed democratic socialism in Czechoslovakia and intervened in Afghanistan to protect its own sphere of influence. Overall then, according to END activists, both superpowers had time and again intervened against the will of the people and had committed human rights abuses in the name of socialism and freedom respectively.[17] Thompson perceived the two blocs during the Cold War as "two monstrous antagonistic structures,"[18] which were mutually constitutive. They not only impeded the realisation of his ideal type of humanist Marxism, they also threatened to destroy all human civilisation. The acceptance of the overriding concern for peace activism went alongside a ready acceptance that economic factors contributed to the dangers of "exterminism." Referring to work by the New Left economic historian Emma Rothschild, he accepted the argument that the military industries in the USA after World War II were just as important as the textile industries during the industrial revolution in Britain. He saw the arms sector as dominating the economy not only in the USA, but also in the Soviet Union.[19] This economic structure, combined with a political culture of fear and irrationality, would be the foundation for "exterminism" and "Cold War-ism" which would predetermine the "historical destination."

The only stance for a democratic socialist Europe from below was therefore one of equidistance from the two superpowers. Building a peaceful Europe from below involved a rejection of both superpowers and the political systems that they represented. Yet, as the convention movement demonstrated at its start in 1982, this was not possible in a communist Eastern Europe as its rulers did not allow the emergence of a public sphere that had even a modicum of independence from the official political regime. Yet END's solution to the Cold War conflict presupposed the existence of such a public sphere. In that sense, END's idea of equidistance underestimated a crucial difference between the two systems in the Cold War – the pluralism and democracy of the capitalist West allowed for a freer expression of opinion than was the case in the socialist people's democracies of the East. Western END activists were rudely awoken to this fact by the first convention in which the seats for East European delegates remained largely empty. How then did they react to this?

Outside of END, many peace activists argued that the issue of peace in Europe had to take precedence over the issue of supporting human rights and dissident behaviour in Eastern Europe. Bruce Kent, who had replaced Duncan Rees as General Secretary of CND in January 1980, argued, with an eye to END, that the peace movement should not double up as a human rights movement.[20] Franco Perna, a member of the Quaker's Friends World Committee, warned against the "extremists [who] want to rupture dialogue with the official East Bloc peace movements … in

17. A cursory glance at key publications of END, including the ones by Thompson, Kaldor and Smith cited above and the journal of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation in the early 1980s, all confirm this impression that END was built on the idea of equidistance from the two superpowers. Equidistance is also an underlying motif in Edward P. Thompson, *Beyond the Cold War: A New Approach to the Arms Race and Nuclear Annihilation* (London: Pantheon, 1982).
18. Edward P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 265.
19. Edward P. Thompson, *Exterminism and the Cold War* (London: NLB, 1982), 17–21.
20. Bruce Kent, For CND International Committee: A Personal View [of the] Perugia Convention END, 17–21 July 1984, 1 August 1984, International Committee, 1982–84, 1/5, CND Additions, London School of Economics (LSE) Archive, London.

favour of grassroots contacts."[21] In the political debates of the 1980s opponents of the peace movement in the West often charged its representatives with being crypto-Communists or Communist fellow travellers or at the very least politically naïve do-gooders who were in effect doing the Communist bidding in the West.[22] After the collapse of Communism, some scholars, using the East European archives, have repeated those accusations, pointing to the degree to which the Stasi had infiltrated the Western peace movement.[23] If one followed those scholars, the answer to the question of why END and sections of the British peace movement engaged in dialogue with the Communists, would be easy – they were sharing at least parts of their worldview. However, things were slightly more complicated. It is true that Communist Party members kept CND going throughout the détente years of the 1970s. But when CND became a mass social movement again in the early 1980s, their influence on the campaigns, programmes, ideas and actions of CND should not be overestimated. Many CND leaders (and certainly all END members) were critical of really-existing socialism and instead promoted a democratic socialism that was also often promoted by dissidents in Eastern Europe, but they did believe that the Communist regimes could be reformed in the direction of a democratic socialism, just as they believed that the liberal capitalism of the West could be transformed into a democratic socialist alternative.

CND activists and leaders, including Kent, had come to the conclusion that the Communist governments of Eastern Europe shared some platforms with the Western peace movement, including a test-ban treaty, a nuclear freeze and a no-first-strike policy, and they were also convinced that the Soviet Union was willing to accept United Nations resolutions on disarmament.[24] Hence Kent, as an example of other CND leaders, certainly valued dialogue with Eastern European Communists. In 1983, during the END Convention in West Berlin, Kent led a delegation of peace activists into East Berlin to hold talks with the Friedensrat.[25] His personal relations with Rümpel were good throughout the 1980s. With hindsight, Kent argued that the visit was meant as a demonstration that "not everybody in END had an implacable hatred towards the GDR."[26]

Kent's "one-world tour," a walk from Warsaw to Brussels, that he undertook in 1988 to call publicly for the dissolution of both military blocs, would not have been possible without the perception of Eastern European Communism that Kent belonged to those political forces in the West sympathetic to communism.[27] Indeed an internal Stasi report had identified Kent as early as December 1984 as being

21. Franco Perna, Friends' World Committee for Consultation, European and Near East Section, Limited Circulation, Third END Convention, Perugia, Italy, 17–21 July 1984, 23 July 1984, DZ 9/649/3003, 1–2, 2, SAPMO- Bundesarchiv (hereafter SAPMO-BArch), Berlin. The Quakers continued their good relations with the GDR, with Horst Brasch remaining in contact with Peter Jayman in the mid-1980s and Quaker youth groups travelling to the GDR. See Horst Brasch, Bericht über den Aufenthalt einer Abordnung der LfV, DZ 9/649/3003, 1–2, 2, SAPMO-BArch.
22. Holger Nehring, "Creating Security from Below: Peace Movements in East and West Germany in the 1980s," in *The 1989 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe: From Communism to Pluralism*, ed. Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 136–53.
23. Anthony Glees, *The Stasi Files: East Germany's Secret Operations against Britain* (London: Free Press, 2004).
24. Bruce Kent, interview with authors, 11 July 2002. On Kent's tactic of lobbying the United Nations, see Kent, *Undiscovered Ends*, 175–76.
25. The group comprised Jane Mayes, D Smith and Stephen Brown, see CND-Delegation in die DDR, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
26. Kent, interview.
27. *Ibid*. This is confirmed by the documentation in file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.

among those forces in CND close to the positions of East European Communism.[28] In unpublished talks with the Friedensrat of May 1983 Kent had criticised the position of END, especially END's insistence on linking the issue of peace with the issue of human rights.[29] The East German media published articles quoting Kent praising his warm reception and the regime's commitment to "peace."[30] In Britain, Kent praised the GDR in the *Guardian* for converting a SS-22 missile base into a holiday home. He also compared the GDR favourably with the capitalist FRG.[31] Representatives of the Friedensrat, visiting Britain in September 1986, felt confident about being understood by CND: "In all our meetings we could demonstrably see the growing recognition of the GDR due to its active policy of dialogue in the interest of peace, disarmament and détente."[32] Kent had certainly not forced upon them the idea that he was hostile to the Communist states in Eastern Europe.

In fact, several regional CND delegations travelled to East Berlin during the 1980s to visit the Friedensrat and hold talks with them about the "common aim" – peace in Europe.[33] In 1987, a CND report praised the SED for allegedly pursuing a reform socialist agenda: "Glasnost with a German Face." The authors of the report were particularly hopeful that the Communists in East Berlin had given up on spreading communism in the world and were genuinely willing to enter into dialogue with capitalist countries.[34] And a leading member of Labour Action for Peace (LAP), an organisation close to both the Labour Party and CND, Ernie Ross admired the socialist countries in Eastern Europe for their achievements, including granting everyone the right to study and work, while in his constituency at home, 20 per cent of the working people only had the "freedom" to be unemployed. William McKelvey, also of LAP, countered allegations of censorship in the GDR with insinuations that the British media coverage of the brutal use of the police in the miners' strike was itself highly restricted and selective.[35] Statements such as these made the British peace movement vulnerable to charges of pro-Sovietism, even of being in the pay of the Soviets with rumours of "Moscow gold" being discussed among those critical of Kent and his leadership of CND. They made it easy for the British government who started a campaign of disinformation, centring on the issue of Communist infiltration, in order to weaken CND.[36]

But CND as a whole was not a tool in the hand of Communism. Communists made up only 0.3 per cent of CND's members in 1985, and only one per cent favoured Communist candidates at elections for CND offices. In 1981 Joan Ruddock, a Labour Party supporter, soundly defeated its Communist rival for the chair of CND, and

28. Hausmitteilung Feist an Axen, 3 December 1984, 316, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
29. Gespräche Kent mit Friedensrat, Mai 1983, 145, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
30. Günter Bräuer, Bereich Arbeit in der DDR, Information über Bruce Kents Marsch "One World Walk," 10 August 1988, 189, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
31. Bruce Kent, "Into the Security-Conscious Frontline," *Guardian*, 1 August 1988; Bruce Kent, "Reflections in the Distorting Mirror of Propaganda," *Guardian*, 8 August 1988.
32. Schultz, Aufenthalt einer Delegation des Friedensrats in Groβbritannien, September 1986, 365, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
33. Information über den Aufenthalt der Delegation der Londoner Regionalgruppe der Kampagne für Nukleare Abrüstung, London Region CND, Groβbritannien, vom 13–18 December 1988, 6 February 1989, 2–5, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
34. CND-Delegation in die DDR, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
35. Delegation Labour Action for Peace, February 1987, 214–24, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive; Information über das Gespräch mit der Delegation der Labour Action for Peace am 12 Oktober 1984 im Berliner Rathaus, 15 October 1984, 2, file 246, series C Rep 122, Landesarchiv Berlin.
36. Wittner, *Toward Nuclear Abolition*, 276.

in 1985 the Communist candidate, Vic Allen, came a distant last in a field of five candidates for the chair.[37] With the objective of preserving the peace movement's unity, Kent tried to balance the pro- and anti-Soviet forces in CND and END by criticising aspects of Soviet policy, such as the invasion of Afghanistan, and the deployment of SS-20 missiles in central Europe, while praising others. He also supported conscientious objectors behind the Iron Curtain. Yet this was not what got media attention in Britain, where CND's hostility to American military bases in Britain and the "modernisation" of the country's "nuclear deterrent" were far more likely to catch the headlines. As Stasi reports on Kent make clear, this was also what made him persona grata in East Berlin.[38]

END, with its much more outspoken hostility to really-existing socialism behind the Iron Curtain, reacted to criticisms by Kent and others in CND by coming up with a compromise: dissident peace activists would remain involved in the organisation of future conventions and contact with these dissidents was to be maintained but END would now also talk to the official Communist peace movements in order to promote in dialogue their own views on building a peaceful Europe. Delegates from official Communist peace movements would also be invited to the planned conventions as "guests."[39]

Communist officials were happy enough with this suggestion, as it gave them a platform in the West on which to promote the socialist states as "peace states" opposing the stationing of new American missiles in Europe. But the dissidents in Eastern Europe were not prepared to play game. At the 1984 END convention in Perugia, those who had been allowed to attend by the Communist regimes, used the opportunity to remind their Western friends that they were talking to representatives of dictatorships who were silencing and imprisoning dissidents and violating human rights on a massive scale.[40]

END activists were divided on how to react to the demands of East European dissidents to cut all relations with official Communist peace movements. The Nottingham-based Bertrand Russell Foundation whose appeal initiated END in April 1980 had a difficult relationship with the East European communism. Bertrand Russell himself had accepted the GDR's Carl von Ossietzky Prize only to return it in protest over the imprisonment of Social Democrat Heinz Brandt in 1962. In the 1980s, the Foundation had close contacts to key GDR dissidents, including Robert Havemann and Rainer Eppelmann and kept its distance to official Communist circles.[41] The London-based END group had formed five "lateral groups" that had been developing contacts with dissident groups in the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the GDR. Three of those groups, the ones dealing with Soviet, Polish and Czechoslovak dissidents, decided to refuse all contacts with official Communists, whilst the Hungarian and GDR groups felt that it was beneficial

37. *Ibid*., 137.
38. This is made explicit in the Stasi files on the British peace movement, see, for example, Information über das Gespräch zwischen Vertretern des Friedensrates der DDR und Msg. Bruce Kent am 13 May 1983 im Friedensrat, 413–15, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
39. Gerhard Jordan, "European Nuclear Disarmament: Der ‚END-Prozeß' und sein Beitrag zum Ost-West-Dialog der unabhängigen Friedensbewegungen Europas in den 80er-Jahren" (Diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 1997).
40. Jane Mayes [1984], International Committee, 1982–84, 1/5, CND Additions, LSE Archive.
41. Letter from Ken Coates to the authors, 2 May 2003.

to retain contacts also with the official Communist peace movement.[42] In the Soviet, Polish and Czechoslovak groups many activists were exiled Russians, Poles and Czechoslovaks which might explain why they were more adamant only to maintain contacts with fellow dissidents behind the Iron Curtain and to uphold the strong link between peace and human rights that was behind the foundational appeal of END. Many dissidents behind the Iron Curtain had come to the conclusion that human rights needed to be prioritised over the state-sponsored peace rhetoric and this decision put them on a collision course with their Communist governments. Insofar as the Western groups shared this outlook, any cooperation with representatives of the official regimes in Eastern Europe was out of the question.[43] In what follows, we use the example of the GDR working group to demonstrate the difficulties of maintaining the compromise position that END as a whole had arrived at in order to maintain the convention movement after 1982.

The Working Group on Germany and its Difficulties with the Doctrine of Equidistance

The London-based END working group on Germany consisted mainly of British academics with a scholarly interest in the GDR. Prominent amongst them were John Sandford, Barbara Einhorn, Peter Findlay, John Theobald and Gwyneth Edwards. It also included the Canon of Coventry Cathedral, Paul Oestreicher. Its active core never comprised more than 12 members and its mailing list had a total of 50 addresses, but through its high-profile actions and its publications in the press of the peace movement and in other media it got a lot of public attention in the British peace movement. In February 1982, it held a first meeting at Bedford College in London to assemble those who had a special interest in the two Germanies and in promoting peace in Europe. Many of those attending would have agreed with Ian Wallace's statement that their scholarly interest in the GDR was also a way of promoting peace because they were providing the basis for a better understanding of Communist East Germany and thereby countering many of the Cold War images of the East that were prevalent in the West.[44] The group had strong contacts with the Green Party in West Germany, notably the peace activist Petra Kelly. Kelly shared a strong commitment to human rights with an equally strong commitment to peace and disarmament, which brought her position close to those of the East German dissidents and to END.[45] But it had also forged links to dissidents in East Germany, notably the authors of an appeal for disarmament in the East, Robert Havemann and Rainer Eppelmann. In their manifesto from January 1982, circulating clandestinely in East Germany, they had identified with the END appeal to build a peaceful Europe from below and had argued that the removal of all foreign troops from German soil would be an important first step in this direction.[46] The END working group on Germany

42. Operative Auskunft zur britischen Organisation, European Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, END, [December 1985], 208–14, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
43. Kacper Szulecki, "Hijacked Ideas: Human Rights, Peace and Environmentalism in Czechoslovak and Polish Dissident Discourses," *East European Politics and Society* 25, no. 2 (2011): 272–95.
44. Hans-Georg Golz, "Von East Germany zur DDR. DDR-Forschung in Grossbritannien vor 1990," *Deutschland Archiv* 36, no. 1 (2003): 22f.
45. Saskia Richter, *Die Aktivistin: das Leben der Petra Kelly* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2010).
46. Sandford, email interview with the authors, November 2004; Kelly was a co-initiator of the Bertrand Russell Campaign for a Nuclear-Free Europe and of the Krefelder Appell against the stationing of Pershing II missiles in Europe. The Krefeld Forums were among the most prominent peace forums in Germany during the early 1980s. On GDR studies see also Ian Wallace "GDR

decided to publish this manifesto in an English translation in Britain and raised the money for a quarter-page advert in *The Times*, in which many leading politicians and intellectuals expressed their solidarity with the dissident GDR appeal. Among the signatories were Tony Benn, Robin Cook, Neil Kinnock, Ken Loach and Salman Rushdie. END had circulated a translation of the GDR manifesto under the joint headings of END and "Swords into Ploughshares," the slogan of the dissident peace movement in the GDR. They hoped that the publication in Britain would give not only greater attention to the dissidents but also greater protection of its members from state harassment and persecution.[47]

The strong contacts of the END Working Group on Germany with dissidents in the GDR produced harsh reactions by the GDR authorities. In December 1983, Barbara Einhorn, a University of Sussex-based academic and the daughter of German Communists, who fled Nazi Germany and made a living in New Zealand, travelled to the GDR to meet with dissident women activists of the peace movement, a group called "Women for Peace." Tipped off by a Stasi informant in Britain, East German authorities arrested her at the border when she was trying to leave the country. The dissident material she was trying to smuggle out of East Berlin and which was to be the basis of an article Einhorn was planning to write in the West to publicise the activities of "Women for Peace," was confiscated. Interrogated at the famous Stasi prison in Berlin-Schönhausen, she was soon released and sent back to Britain following a strong lobbying campaign by END. However, the GDR put an entry ban on her and imprisoned key representatives of "Women for Peace," including Bärbel Bohley and Ulrike Poppe.[48] It was a clear sign that Communists in Eastern Europe had little sympathy for building a democratic socialist Europe from below.

There is plenty of evidence of the GDR authorities seeing END's concern with human rights as an unwanted intervention in their internal affairs and combating it wherever possible. As the dissidents in the GDR were increasingly linking the issue of peace with the issue of human rights,[49] the authorities in the GDR were particularly keen to avoid any such association. The END activist John Sandford was also faced with an entry ban to the GDR, following the publication of his END report on the GDR peace movement, entitled *The Sword and the Ploughshare*. In it, he provided an insightful account of how diverse peace groups found limited protection under the umbrella of the Protestant church in the GDR, criticised the heavy hand of the Communist state in its dealings with the dissidents, and denounced the official peace movement as an instrument of crude propaganda for the ruling Communist party. CND's International Committee tried to challenge those entry bans on several occasions by putting both Einhorn and Sandford on lists of CND delegates to meetings in the GDR. However GDR authorities made it very clear that, rather than accepting "unwanted" delegates into the country, they preferred

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Studies in Great Britain," *East Central Europe* 14/15 (1987/88): 17–30; John Theobald, "Cutting the Barbed Wire of Prejudice," *Journal of Area Studies* 9 (1984): 7–10.

47. Sandford, "Mutual (Mis-)Perceptions," 362–64.
48. Paul Oestreicher, interview with authors, 15 August 2000. From a perspective highly critical of Einhorn and END, see Glees, *Stasi Files*, 323f. Einhorn's and Sandford's ripostes to Glees can be found in "From a GDR Prison to a Cold War of Words," *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 6 January 2006, and "Scholar Bites Back at Stasi Innuendo," *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 4 November 2006. The events surrounding Einhorn's arrest are summarised in an untitled Stasi document, 261–64, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
49. Thomas Klein, *Frieden und Gerechtitkeit': Die Politisierung der Unabhängigen Friedensbewegung in Ostberlin während der 1980er Jahre* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007).

those CND meetings not to proceed.[50] The GDR could not tolerate any independent public sphere challenging the authority of the ruling Communist party and hence it could not accept the basis on which END was proposing to build a peaceful Europe.

Instead the Stasi had identified END as major enemy in the Cold War. When it was talking about the "growing pressure of anti-Communist and anti-Soviet forces [that] have weakened the anti-imperialist strategy" of CND, they were referring to END.[51] The Stasi believed that END was financially supported by the American government and that it operated in conjunction with the British secret service to strengthen "anti-socialist forces in the GDR."[52] Its strategy to combat END involved the use of CND activists more favourably inclined to disinvesting the issue of peace from the issue of human rights.[53] Furthermore, it also used informers inside END to update them on the latest plans and activities. In addition to reports on END by Irene Fick, the Stasi also received inside formation from Vic Alan and the Loughborough-based academic Gwyneth Edwards, who was a member of the GDR Working Group.[54]

In fact, representatives of the official East German peace movement, the Friedensrat, were keen to develop contacts with Western peace movements including the British one, if it would mean finding a platform in the West on which to promote their viewpoints on peace. A leading member of the Friedensrat, Werner Rümpel met with leading representatives of CND, including Bruce Kent, Joan Ruddock and Meg Beresford both at the East German embassy and at CND's national offices in London during 1981 and 1982.[55] Both sides could agree that the USA was the main culprit in accelerating the arms race. According to Rümpel, this should also be the basis for common action of the British and East German peace movements: "[F]or all our different points of view we are close allies in the main task of our time which is to prevent a nuclear world conflagration."[56] Official GDR representatives supported CND action, wherever it was directed against American missiles. Thus, for example, Günther Drehfahl, the President of the Friedensrat, sent a telegram expressing his "close solidarity" with the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in 1982, and one year later the GDR awarded the women's peace camp the Carl von Ossietzky peace medal.[57] The GDR's Deutscher Frauenbund (DFB) wooed groups such as Mothers for Peace and the International League for Peace and Freedom in Britain – always with the assumption that their struggle was a common one against potential American aggression.[58]

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50. Operative Auskunft zur britischen Organisation END, 214.
51. Information: Aktivitäten der britischen "Kampagne für nukleare Abrüstung, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, CND, im Sinne der blocküber greifenden Friedensbewegung [1985], 6f, file 18570, series HA II, Stasi Archive.
52. Einschätzung des tschecheslowakischen Geheimdienstes zur britischen Friedensbewegung und Entwurf eines Berichtes zu CND, 121, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
53. File 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
54. Their reports to the Stasi are contained in files AKG II and 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive. Also see, Glees, *Stasi Files*, 268–69.
55. See the reports in file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
56. Letter from Werner Rümpel to Bruce Kent, 24 November 1982, DZ 9/150/A 746, SAPMO-BArch.
57. Letter from Günter Drefahl to Dear Friends [Greenham Common], 1 December 1982, DZ 9/150/A 746, SAPMO-BArch; Letter from Günter Drefahl to Bruce Kent, 24 August 1981, DZ 9/406/2179, SAPMO-BArch.
58. Protokoll Nr. 9/1987 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des Bundesvorstandes des DFD vom 26 May 1987, 130–31, DY 31/484, SAPMO-BArch; Bundesvorstand des DFD, Sekretariat. Einschätzung der internationalen Arbeit des Bundesvorstandes und der Bezirksvorstände des DFD im Jahre 1987, 39–54, DY 31/484, SAPMO-BArch. The DFB had haphazard and intermittent contact with a variety of British women's organisations from the 1970s onwards, but it never appeared to have sought to develop these contacts in a more systematic way.

Despite the hostility of the GDR towards END, END activists, and in particular the END Working Group on Germany, tried to maintain contacts with the GDR's official peace movement. As Paul Oestreicher recalls:

> Even though we were very critical of the GDR and were suspected there, we still had an enormous amount of emotional attachment to it … We all had friends in Eastern Germany who dreamed of, I suppose, socialism with a human face.[59]

The assumptions that many END activists had about the importance of equidistance in the Cold War led them to acknowledge that really-existing socialism had at least attempted to create socialist societies. However mistaken, especially in their rejection of democracy, they had been in building socialism, the emotional attachment that Oestreicher talks about also comes from the feeling that these societies had taken steps in the right direction.

In the perception of members of the END Working Group on Germany, there was a real possibility of dialogue between the Communist state and the dissident peace groups. Sandford perceived the role of the Protestant church in the GDR as precisely being such a mediator for more dialogue. On both sides, he saw those who were willing to enter into a productive engagement with each other:

> What has been increasingly evident over the past year or so is that the authorities have been concerned to *embrace* grass-roots initiatives as far as possible, and to avoid criminalising them. The concern of the autonomous peace movement has been steadily but firmly to widen that embrace, to keep open and expand the space for dialogue and the breadth of argument.[60]

From what the archives tell us, we can say with hindsight that these were very rose-tinted spectacles that END members were wearing. A large part of the explanation of why they were wearing them has to do with the particular worldview that we describe here as the belief in the equidistance from the two superpowers and the ideal of a "third way" democratic-socialist Europe from below.

Interestingly this belief was reinforced by the dissident milieu in the GDR in which belief in a democratic socialism mingled with notions of equidistance from the two superpowers. The dissident worldview thus coincided with the worldview of END activists and arguably they mutually strengthened each other. This also explains why peace activists in Britain, thinking mistakenly that they could act as mediators, much as they believed the Protestant church did in the GDR, repeatedly called on official GDR representatives to open a dialogue with the dissidents. Thus, for example, CND activist, Stephen Brown, who had been a theology exchange student at Humboldt University in 1983–84,[61] asked Rümpel, as the head of an official delegation of the Friedensrat, at a meeting between the Friedensrat and CND in

59. Oestreicher, interview.
60. John Sandford, *Sword and the Ploughshare: Autonomous Peace Initiatives in East Germany* (London: Merlin Press, 1983), 77.
61. There he had extensive contacts with dissident peace activists, under the watchful eye of the Stasi. See Information zur Durchdringung der britischen Kampagne für Nukleare Abrüstung (CND) von Führungskräften der END, 25 November 1985, 216, file 854, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.

London in October 1985, to open up channels of communication with dissident peace activists in the GDR through the offices of the Association of Protestant Churches in the GDR.[62] It was one way of underlining that the British peace movement would not accept the Friedensrat as the sole legitimate representative of the GDR peace movement. But it was also one way of demonstrating that Western peace activists had not given up hope that ruling Communists behind the Iron Curtain could be brought to recognise and buy into the human rights discourse that had underpinned the Helsinki process from the mid-1970s. After all, "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" had been written into the Helsinki Accord of 1975.[63]

Those forces in END, like the Working Group on Germany, who attempted to keep channels of communication open with the official Communist peace movement, in the hope that it might also help the dissident peace movement, walked a delicate line. They embarked on it, because they believed that "really-existing socialism" in the GDR could be reformed and they hoped that moderate Communists in the SED might form a link to the dissidents and embark on such a reform course. However, time and time again, they were disappointed by the official Communist reaction to dissident protests. In January 1988, the Stasi arrested members of the autonomous peace group, "Initiative for Peace and Human Rights," Bärbel Bohley, Werner Fischer and Vera Wollenberger, who had been protesting at the annual Liebknecht-Luxemburg celebrations in East Berlin. They carried banners with quotations from Luxemburg such as "Freedom is always the freedom of those who have a different opinion." They were charged with protesting with "independent slogans" and deported to the West.[64] END activist Paul Oestreicher intervened and offered them a six-months stay in Britain as official guests of the Archbishop of Canterbury. During this period, the friendship between END members of the Working Group on Germany and the GDR dissidents deepened. Their discussions were always monitored by the Stasi, as the husband of Vera Wollenberger had been successfully recruited to report on the group.[65]

The Stasi also used recruits from within the peace movement to keep a close watch on developments in CND's National Council. Vic Allen, a professor from Leeds University, passed on information regularly to the East German embassy. So, for example, he warned them about plans to hold a protest meeting against the visit of Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, to Britain in March 1985. Allen also recommended that "the Peace Councils of the socialist states must continue discussions with regional divisions of CND" where pro-Soviet feeling was allegedly stronger.[66] Finally, he spent a great deal of time reporting about END, in particular their "unambiguous orientation towards strengthening contacts with the so-called independent peace movement in the socialist countries."[67]

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62. Operative Auskunft zur britischen Organisation END, 209.
63. "Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Aug. 1, 1975, 14 I.L.M. 1292 (Helsinki Declaration)," Human Rights Library, University of Minnesota, accessed August 2016, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/osce/basics/finact75.htm.
64. The group had built up contacts with Western peace movements over the last five years. It was the first autonomous group to come out from under the protective umbrella offered by the churches; see, W. Templin and R. Weißhuhn, "Die Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte," in *Opposition in der DDR von den 70er Jahren bis zum Zusammenbruch der SED-Herrschaft*. ed. Eberhard Kuhrt (Opladen: Leske, 1999), 171–211.
65. Sandford, email interview.
66. Information von VIC ALLEN, Soziologie Professor an der Universität Leeds, 1 February 1985, 3, file AKG II, series HA XX, Stasi Archive.
67. *Ibid*. On Allen, see also Glees, *Stasi Files*, 251 f., 268 f.

Conclusion

END activists were under no illusion about being watched by the Stasi. They were aware of the dark sides of really-existing socialism behind the Iron Curtain which is why they attempted to link the issue of peace with the issue of human rights. Yet they also were convinced of the dark sides of liberal capitalism that in many countries of the world was endorsing and even encouraging human rights abuses. Hence the original idea behind END was to forge an alliance of those on both sides of the Iron Curtain who shared democratic socialist convictions that could transform both liberal capitalism and really-existing socialism. Many Eastern European dissidents did indeed share this worldview, but they were faced with political regimes that, unlike their liberal capitalist adversaries, did not allow any form of independent civil society to emerge.[68] The Communist regimes in Eastern Europe consequently had no interest in promoting a dialogue involving those critical of their regimes. They had the power and the will to prevent dissidents from taking up the offer of a dialogue.

What the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe were, however, interested in was the promotion of their own "peace policies" in the West and the prevention of the planned stationing of American missiles in Western Europe.[69] Therefore, they did cultivate links with Western peace movements, including the British CND. Many CND activists were also willing to perceive the Communist states of Eastern Europe as genuine allies in the struggle for nuclear disarmament. There were those who argued that their joint efforts should focus on the issue of peace and not overburden the common struggle with the issue of human rights. That left END activists with a difficult choice. If they insisted on the link to human rights, they would have to avoid all contact with official Communist peace activists. They would invariably be banned from Eastern Europe and could at best only develop clandestine relations with dissidents behind the Iron Curtain. As we have seen, there were END working groups who went down this road. But there were also those in END who opted for what they saw as a compromise – maintaining relations with both the official Communist peace movement and the dissidents.

One of the most prominent groups to undertake such a tightrope walk was the END Working Group on Germany. The basis of their willingness to compromise was the firm belief that the GDR could be reformed. They thought they had identified those in the system who were willing to bring the GDR towards a "socialism with a human face." Hence they also understood their own role as one of mediating between the Communists and the dissidents. In their perception, they were doing what the Protestant church in the GDR was also doing: promoting dialogue between the dissidents and the representatives of the Communist state. They were, however, time and again, disappointed in the reactions of the Communist state. The banning of END activists from entering the GDR, the imprisonment and enforced exile of dissidents with close contacts to END activists, the constant monitoring of END by the Stasi – all of this underlines the hard-line positioning of the Communist state *vis-à-vis* everyone who had even the slightest criticism of that state. If there was,

68. On the ongoing problems caused by this weakness of civil society in Eastern Europe, see Marc Morjé Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
69. Günter Wernicke, "The Communist-Led World Peace Council and Western Peace Movements," *Peace and Change* 23, no. 3 (1998): 265–311.

during the 1980s, a reform faction in the SED and inside the Communist apparatus of functionaries, and much points to the existence of such a faction, it was far too weak and perhaps also far too fearful to make a real difference in the GDR. With hindsight, one might therefore charge the END activists with political naivety. Yet their basic idea of developing concepts that would transcend both really-existing socialism and liberal capitalism, was at the very least a courageous one. As really-existing socialism is a thing of the past, the only thing that stands between a shallow triumphalism of liberal capitalism and cynicism is the idea that the unmistakeable shortcomings of liberal capitalism can also be transcended.

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