

STAYING CIVIL
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN WEST GERMANY,
1956-1966

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

In the years following WWII, the West German peace movement emerged from its dormancy, developed into a popular movement, rose to challenge the policy of the government, and changed the character of West German society. The development of peace activism in postwar West Germany was a process that required the efforts of people willing to push the boundaries of the normal spheres of political life. The training ground for many of these peace activists was the West German conscientious objection (CO) movement. By studying their learning process as they rediscovered pacifist traditions as well as the organizations and the transnational networks they cultivated, we can learn a great deal about the foundations of the protest movements of the late 1960s.

This dissertation examines the origins and activities of the early West German CO protest groups and problematizes the role of these groups in the early West German peace movement. The groups were an integral part of the broader German peace movement and frequently participated in peace demonstrations both nationally and internationally. The organizational development of the CO groups in the 1950s and early 1960s laid the groundwork for the emergence of larger and more popular protest movements that played major roles in the turbulent late 1960s.

The individual actors who were the catalysts of change and growth for the conscientious objection movement and the peace movement as a whole are an essential element of my dissertation. The contacts they made, the relationships they developed, the philosophical teachings they (re-)discovered, and the protest culture they cultivated

are fundamental to understanding how the peace movement left its mark on West German society. Often dismissed as a ‘single issue’ campaign, I argue that although CO groups primarily focused on conscientious objection, they also promoted a complex set of issues regarding political legitimacy, the role of the postwar state, and challenged the right of an older generation over the use of their bodies. My work challenges the traditional understanding of the conscientious objection movement in West Germany and elucidates the early development of extra-parliamentary opposition.

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NOMENCLATURE

AG	Action Group for Nonviolence (<i>Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit</i>)
APO	Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (<i>außerparlamentarische opposition</i>)
BKV	Union of Military Service Objectors (<i>Bund der Kriegsdienstverweigerer</i>)
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany (<i>Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands</i>)
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CNVA	Committee for Nonviolent Action
CO	Conscientious Objection
CSU	Christian Social Union in Bavaria (<i>Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern</i>)
DAC	Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War
DDR	German Democratic Republic (<i>Deutsche Demokratische Republik</i>)
DFG	German Peace Society (<i>Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft</i>)
DGB	German Trade Union Federation (<i>Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</i>)
DP	German Party (<i>Deutsche Partei</i>)
EDC	Pan-European Defense Community

EKD	West Germany's Protestant Church (<i>Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland</i>)
FDP	Free Democratic Party (<i>Freie Demokratische Partei</i>)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GdW	Group of Military Service Objectors (<i>Gruppe der Wehrdienstverweigerer</i>)
HIS	Hamburg Institute for Social Research (<i>Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung</i>)
IdK	German Branch of the War Resisters' International (<i>Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner</i>)
IfZM	Institute for Contemporary History in Munich (<i>Institut für Zeitgeschichte München</i>)
IISG	International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam (<i>Internationaal Instituut voor sociale Geschiedenis</i>)
KdA	Fight Atomic Death (<i>Kampf dem Atomtod</i>)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ND	Nuclear Disarmament
SCPC	Swarthmore College Peace Collection
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany (<i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</i>)
SJD	Socialist Youth of Germany (<i>Sozialistische Jugend Deutschlands</i>)

SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany (<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i>)
UN	United Nations
VK	Association of Military Service Objectors (<i>Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer</i>)
WRI	War Resisters' International

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
NOMENCLATURE.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II REARMAMENT AND CONSCRIPTION DEBATE.....	26
CHAPTER III REFORM	62
CHAPTER IV BROADENING THE SCOPE OF THE PROTESTS, 1958-1960	111
CHAPTER V MARCH FOR PEACE: THE WEST GERMAN CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION MOVEMENT AND THE CREATION OF THE <i>OSTERMARSCH</i>	148
CHAPTER VI THROUGH THE IRON CURTAIN: WEST GERMAN ACTIVISTS AND THE 1961 SAN FRANCISCO TO MOSCOW WALK FOR PEACE	196
CHAPTER VII CONCLUSION	239
REFERENCES.....	255

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany on May 23, 1949, the West Germans were faced with the difficult task of building a new democratic society; one that ensured the basic rights of its people and promoted participation in the new parliamentary system. Burdened by the legacy and remnants of National Socialism, Germans had to find within themselves the building blocks for a civil society to transform into a “civilized” nation. This multilevel process required political, economic, and social reform to reverse the barbarization of society that occurred during the Third Reich. This dissertation, ultimately, studies this recivilizing process in West Germany by examining the early protest movements and positioning them in history of how Germany became a “civilized” society after the Second World War.

Konrad Jarausch in his 2006 book *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* wrote, “The idea of a sphere of *societas civilis* outside of one’s own house but still below the purview of the state was understood...above all as a demarcation from nature and barbarism.”¹ An important feature of civil society, as described by Jürgen Kocka, is social self-organization of free citizens for the pursuit of collective interests in the public sphere.² Jarausch provided a useful definition of the concept of civil society that includes

¹ Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12.

² Jürgen Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship in Modern German History* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2010).

nonviolent sociability, a relationship between states that is not marked by militarism, religious tolerance, civic courage, a sense of responsibility for the community, and perhaps most importantly, "...civil society entails civic involvement in both local self-government and national rights of democratic participation."³ Jarausich presents the concept of civilized society as an alternative to the *Sonderweg* thesis and the idea of westernization in measuring the development of states.⁴

The civil society concept allows for a more cultural approach to the development of German society after the Second World War. Jarausich contends that such an approach can bring together high politics and the grassroots experience. This dissertation focuses on the point where the spheres of politics and society intersect. By studying the conscientious objection movement and a number of key activists during the latter half of the 1950s and early 1960s this dissertation illustrates how West Germans navigated the undefined extra-parliamentary space and learned to participate in the new democracy. Through their actions, which were driven by strongly held convictions and sense of morality, these individuals helped create a place in their society that allowed for the peaceful but resolute expression of political opinion.

The earliest mass protest movements in the Federal Republic of Germany were those against West German rearmament and military conscription in the 1950s. Fifteen

³ Jarausich, *After Hitler*, 12.

⁴ However, the importance of the decidedly westward development of postwar Germany should not be dismissed as Heinrich August Winkler argued in his work on the history of modern Germany. Heinrich August Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

years later the next generation erupted in protest over a wide range of issues as part of the larger 1968 protests. These two separate periods of protest, characterized by the belief that citizens are obligated to speak out against the policies of their government, shared the common themes of being anti-military and anti-conscription. By 1968 opposition to the military and compulsory military service were common elements in any protest movement and more immediate concerns such as nuclear weapons, American involvement in Vietnam, and the reform of the universities and society as a whole became the primary focus. The protest movements of the late 1960s are not often associated with the rearmament and conscription protests of the 1950s and historians have approached them as completely separate events. However, there was a clear connection between the two forged by the resistance to military conscription that began in the mid-1950s and continued through the 1960s. My dissertation investigates the conscientious objection movement as a bridge between the people who protested in the 1950s, the activist cohort that emerged in the early 1960s, and the student movements of the late 1960s. Furthermore, it will challenge the traditional understanding of the conscientious objection movement in West Germany. This dissertation will be a starting point for future study on the issue of conscription and society in the Federal Republic. It will also help to uncover the beginnings of extra-parliamentary protest in West Germany by exploring the continuities between the postwar generation of protesters and the 1968-generation and investigating the organizational legacy of some of the first protest groups in the Federal Republic.

This study focuses on a ten-year period from 1956 to 1966, which corresponds with the establishment of conscription in 1956 and the forming of the grand coalition between the Social Democrats and the CDU in 1966. This period of German history is marked with many significant events that influenced West German society and the development of democratic protest. The creation of the Bundeswehr in 1955 and the concurrent acceptance of the Federal Republic into NATO cemented the bond between West Germany and the Western powers that had been forming for the past decade.⁵ Up to this point, the peace movement in Germany was just beginning to rebuild and many Germans were still focused on rebuilding their lives after the destruction of the Second World War. The return of the last German prisoners of war from the Soviet Union in 1955 and 1956 brought a measure of closure while simultaneously further entrenching West Germany into the Western alliance.⁶

The two major movements at the center of this dissertation are the conscientious objection movement and the antinuclear movement. I describe both as peace movements and part of the larger West German and European peace movement that emerged after the Second World War. A useful definition of peace movements is that they are “...social movements that aim to protest against the perceived dangers of political

⁵ David Clay Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 233.

⁶ Frank Beiss, “Survivors of Totalitarianism: Returning POWs and the Reconstruction of Masculine Citizenship in West Germany, 1945-1955,” in Hannah Schissler (ed.) *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

decision-making about armaments.”⁷ Sociologist Charles Tilly defines a social movement as a series of continuous performances, displays, and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others. Social movements, according to Tilly, are a major vehicle for ordinary people’s participation in public politics.⁸ Similarly, sociologist Sidney Tarrow describes social movements as “collective challenges [to elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes] by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents, and authorities.”⁹ I argue that the conscientious objection organizations in West Germany, the German Branch of the War Resisters’ International (*Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner*, IdK) and the Association of Military Service Objectors (*Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer*, VK) along with the individual activists involved in the organizations, represented a collective challenge to authorities by people with common purpose, namely disarmament, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities, specifically the West German government and the political elite. Through their involvement in the conscientious objection movement, West Germans participated in the recivilizing of their society. Holger Nehring noted, “[J]oining the campaign was very often also an

⁷ Benjamin Ziemann, “A Quantum of Solace? European Peace Movements during the Cold War and their Elective Affinities,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 49 (2009): 351-389, 388.

⁸ Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768-2004* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004).

⁹ Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4-5.

exercise in actively expressing their democratic credentials and civility by actively producing structures of a self-consciously civilian society.”¹⁰

A key component to my study is the connection between the “45ers” and the “68ers.” The 45ers were the generation that had lived through the War and had experienced National Socialism first hand. They participated in the creation of the Federal Republic and the emergence of democracy in West Germany.¹¹ The 68ers were the generation that grew up in a period of economic boom and political stability. As in other countries, they criticized the government and rebelled against society that they believed was too strict, too old fashioned, and most importantly, in the case of West Germany, too close to its Nazi past. The conflict between the generations is a defining aspect of the protest movements of the 1960s, however little is made of the connections between them. I propose that the anti-conscription and conscientious objection organizations that began in the 1950s and continued through the 1960s are some of the connections. Many of the people involved in the founding of the IdK and VK participated in the rearmament protests in the mid- to late-1950s when the Adenauer government created the Bundeswehr and subsequently instituted conscription.

¹⁰ Holger Nehring, *Politics of Security: British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War, 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 73.

¹¹ A. D. Moses, “The Forty-Fivers: A Generation Between Fascism and Democracy,” *German Politics and Society*, no. 50 (1999): 94-126; Konrad Jarausch, “1945 and the Continuities of German History: Reflections on Memory, Historiography, and Politics,” in Geoffrey J. Giles, ed., *Stunde Null: The End and the Beginning Fifty Years Ago* (Washington, D.C., 1997), 9-24.

German historiography has tended to see the conscientious objection (CO) movement as one that focused solely on conscientious objection. In categorizing the CO movement as a single-issue campaign, historians miss the real character of the organizations. I argue that although these groups primarily focused on conscientious objection, they also promoted a complex set of issues regarding political legitimacy, the role of the postwar state, and challenged the right of an older generation over the use of their bodies. The CO movement helped establish the postwar German peace movement and propelled it into the 1960s. A major contribution that the CO movement made to the development of the peace movement in West Germany was the initiation of the antinuclear movement in the 1950s.

My work supports the argument that the antinuclear campaign known as the *Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner* (Easter March of Atomic Weapons Opponents) was the first sustained campaign of protest and thus the first extra-parliamentary opposition movement.¹² This is a widely accepted view as the Easter March was one of the largest and most active protest movements of the early 1960s and played a very important role in the development of the extra-parliamentary opposition (*außerparlamentarische opposition*, APO). However, most historians neglect the fact that the West German conscientious objection movement was instrumental in the forming of the Easter Marches as it served as a training ground for the key individuals who initiated the antinuclear campaign. In fact, I argue that it was through the international connections

¹² Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 40.

and organizational development of the IdK and VK, along with the knowledge gained from several years of active protest, that the Easter Marches were able to emerge and grow into one of the most powerful protest movements in Germany. By focusing on the IdK and VK in the late 1950s and early 1960s my dissertation will provide an essential component to the pre-history of 1968 that will help explain how a powerful protest movement like the Easter Marches came into existence.

Research for this dissertation included material from archives in Germany and the United States as well as interviews with key members of the West German peace movement, published primary sources, and news media. The archives at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research (*Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung*, HIS) provided a great deal of information on the West German conscientious objection movement and antinuclear movement. The HIS hold the collections of important conscientious objection activists such as Theodor Michaltschef, founder of the post war IdK, and Konrad Tempel, founding member of the VK, founding member of the Action Group for Nonviolence (*Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit*, AG), and the initiator of the West German antinuclear movement the Easter March of Atomic Weapons Opponents. These collections extend beyond the personal papers of Michaltschef and Tempel to include much of the literature, internal communications, external publications, and news clippings relating to the IdK, VK, AG, and Easter Marches. The Active Archive (*Archiv Aktiv*) in Hamburg is a small private archive that maintains a large collection of material donated by peace activists from throughout Germany. The holdings include a great deal

of published material such as protest event flyers, monthly newsletters, and informational pamphlets.

The Institute for Contemporary History in Munich (*Institut für Zeitgeschichte München*, IfZM) has an extensive collection of material relating to the VK as well as the papers of Horst Maurer who was the International Secretary for the organization. Maurer was also the editor of several of the group's periodical publications including the monthly newsletters "*Zivil*" and "*Kontakte für Kriegsdienstverweigerer*". The State Archive of Hamburg (*Staatsarchiv Hamburg*) is the repository for the papers of Karl-Heinz Stahnke, who was the head of the VK's documentation office. The office collected a variety of printed material about conscientious objection and peace protest from around the world and these documents are part of the collection at the State Archive of Hamburg. The Swarthmore College Peace Collection (SCPC) in Swarthmore, PA holds the papers of the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA) as well as a number of collections concerning conscientious objection in the United States and Europe. The CNVA organized an international peace walk that crossed the United States and Europe on its way to Moscow in 1961. The CNVA worked closely with West German peace activists and this interaction was a very fruitful experience for all involved.

The War Resisters' International (WRI), an international conscientious objection organization based in Britain, played an important role in the development of the West German conscientious objection movement and the organization's papers are held at the

International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam (*Internationaal Instituut voor sociale Geschiedenis*, IISG). The WRI collection at the IISG contains the papers for every aspect of the organization including meeting minutes, secretary's reports, conference reports, publications, as well as correspondence between the WRI and its affiliated groups. An especially significant aspect of the collection is the correspondence between the WRI leadership and individual members from around the world.

An important and original source are the oral history interviews I conducted with a number of key activists in Germany. The interviews with Helga Tempel (née Stolle) and Konrad Tempel, as well as Dr. Andreas Buro and Werner Böwing, allow the voices of these actors to be part of this incredible story.¹³ Helga Tempel and Konrad Tempel were peace activists from Hamburg who were the initiators of one of the biggest anti-nuclear protest movements of the 1960s, the Easter March. They both survived the war as children and it was this experience that drove them to peace activism. Their first involvement in peace work was in the IdK and as they developed as peace activists, they founded the Action Group for Nonviolence, which provided the platform for the initiation of the Easter Marches. Dr. Andreas Buro joined the IdK in the late 1950s and took part in organizing the Easter Marches and the CNVA peace walk to Moscow. Buro was an influential figure in the intellectual development of the Easter Marches and stayed involved with the movement into the later 1960s. Werner Böwing was a founding member of the VK and participated in the organization of the early Easter Marches. He

¹³ Helga Stolle married Konrad Tempel in 1962.

became the Chairman of the VK in the mid-1960s and eventually left the organization at the end of the 1960s when the student movements took over the movement. These interviews provide a wealth of first hand information about the development of the conscientious objection movement and the interpersonal relationships that influenced the trajectory of the organizations. The interviews offer unique perspectives that cannot be found in written sources and allow me to provide the personal experiences of several key individuals.

The scholarship on the late 1960s protest movements in Germany is vast. Historians have given a great amount of attention to the events, people involved, and the significance of this period in German history. In German, the research is extensive with much of the new scholarship focusing on the international aspects of 1968 as well as the social impact of the movement in Germany.¹⁴ Until recently, however, far less attention has been paid to the forerunners of the late 1960s protest movements; the peace movements of the late 1950s and early 1960s. There has also not yet been a thorough study of conscription and conscientious objection in the Federal Republic of Germany. In most cases, the topic only receives a cursory overview with little to no analysis of its complexities and significance. Furthermore, it is common to have contemporaries of the protest movements participate in academic debates in peace historiography. While their

¹⁴Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, *1968: vom Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried, and Karl Christian Lammers, *Dynamische Zeiten: die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften* (Hamburger Beiträge zur Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte, Bd. 37. Hamburg: Christians, 2000); Christina von Hodenberg and Detlef Siegfried, *Wo "1968" liegt: Reform und Revolte in der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Norbert Frei, *1968: Jugendrevolte und globaler Protest* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008).

first hand experiences can be very useful, historians much approach them with the caution required of any historical source.

Perhaps the most complete study of conscientious objection in West Germany is Guido Grünewald's *Die Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner (IdK): ihre Geschichte 1945 bis 1968*.¹⁵ While a useful history of the IdK, its utility is limited because it is more a narrative written by a current member of the IdK than an objective analysis of a German protest movement. It does not explore the connections the group had with other protest movements or analyze its role in the emergence of the APO. Furthermore, the work does not really engage larger historiographical issues such as the legacy of the protest movements in Germany or the deep generational divides that are so central to understanding them.

German historian Hans Karl Rupp did a very thorough examination of the 1950s protests in his 1970 work *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer*.¹⁶ Rupp's work is foundational to any study of the anti-military and antinuclear protests of the 1950s. He retroactively applies the term extra-parliamentary opposition to the SPD antinuclear campaign Fight Atomic Death (*Kampf dem Atomtod*, KdA) that peaked in

¹⁵Guido Grünewald, *Die Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner (IdK): ihre Geschichte 1945 bis 1968* (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1982).

¹⁶ Hans Karl Rupp, *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer: Der Kampfe gegen die Atombewaffnung in den fünfziger Jahren; eine Studie zur innenpolitischen Entwicklung der BRD* (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1970).

1958. Rupp uses the term extra-parliamentary opposition to mean any organized opposition to an established parliamentary position.¹⁷

German activist and sociologist Karl A. Otto saw the rise of extra-parliamentary opposition first hand and wrote about it in his foundational 1977 work *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO: Geschichte der ausserparlamentarischen Opposition in der Bundesrepublik 1960-1970*.¹⁸ Otto uses the term APO to describe a more restricted collection of groups that opposed established party politics in the late 1960s. His book *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO* details the creation of the Easter Marches and the transition from protest to extra-parliamentary opposition. I use APO to describe protest groups or individuals who opposed established parliamentary positions after the SPD shifted to a more mainstream position on defense and nuclear policy. At that point, many protest organizations were left without representation in the Bundestag and were compelled to voice their opposition outside of the political sphere in a new space where society and politics intersected in an effort to influence government policy. Both Rupp and Otto discuss the conscientious objection movement but neither really draws the connections with the development of APO or the creation of transnational protest networks.

In English most of the research focuses on the transatlantic and transnational aspects of 1968 and conscientious objection is hardly mentioned.¹⁹ In fact, there are only

¹⁷ Rupp, *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer*, 21.

¹⁸ Karl A. Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO: Geschichte der ausserparlamentarischen Opposition in der Bundesrepublik 1960-1970* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus-Verlag, 1977).

¹⁹ Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010); Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert,

a few histories of the West German protest movements in English and these works typically marginalize groups like the IdK and VK. One is Nick Thomas' *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany* and his work, while quite informative, completely ignores conscientious objection.²⁰ Thomas does engage, to some extent, the previously mentioned historiographical issues about the legacy of the protest movements, particularly the political legacy, and sees the generational and international aspects as essential to understanding the protests and their historical legacy. Thomas does not investigate the character and influence of the conscientious objection movement and consequently his narrative of the origins of the APO (the pre-history of 1968) is incomplete.

Holger Nehring's recent work, *Politics of Security: British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War, 1945-1970*, is an exception to this trend as he draws the links between the British and West German peace movements and clearly establishes the connection between the Easter Marches and the West German conscientious objection movement.²¹ I draw on Nehring's understanding of the development of protests movements, especially his explanation of transnational networks and their use in creating a transnational community of activists that aid the

and Detlef Junker, *1968, the World Transformed* (Publications of the German Historical Institute. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Belinda J. Davis, *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003).

²⁰ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*.

²¹ Nehring, *Politics of Security*.

transfer of protest methods and philosophies. The concept of transnational social space is a useful way to study the international cooperation, exchange of ideas, formulation of protest strategies, and spirit of united purpose of the various “national” activists.²² Many West German peace activists developed and maintained a network of likeminded activists from around the world. These networks are better understood as transnational social spaces. I use the term transnational because they transcend national borders and sovereign states themselves are not part of the network. The social spaces are the links between activists who are in different places geographically, yet share common interests, beliefs, moral values, and expectations and ascribe to commonly held codes of conduct. At the same time, these transnational social spaces are uniquely influenced by the cultures of the people who create them.²³

Historians have done a good deal of work on the rearmament protests as part of the larger rearmament debates during the Adenauer era.²⁴ Most historians recognize that

²² Thomas Faist, and Eyüp Özveren, *Transnational Social Spaces: Agents, Networks, and Institutions* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004).

²³ Holger Nehring, “Americanized Protests? The British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons and the Pacifist Roots of the West German New Left, 1957-1964,” in Jessica Gienow-Hecht (ed.), *Decentering America* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007, 210-251) 226.

²⁴ David Clay Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Gordon D. Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition, 1949-1960: The Case against Rearmament* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982); Charles Robert Naef, *The Politics of West German Rearmament, 1950-1956*, (Thesis (Ph. D.)--Rutgers University, 1979); Montecue J. Lowry, *The Forge of West German Rearmament: Theodor Blank and the Amt Blank* (New York: P. Lang, 1990); Wilhelm Deist, *The Wehrmacht and German Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); David F. Patton, *Cold War Politics in Postwar Germany* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Alaric Searle, *Wehrmacht Generals, West German Society, and the Debate on Rearmament, 1949-1959* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2003).

the rearmament protests played an important role in the development of democracy in West Germany; it was the first time since the rise of National Socialism that the people had exercised their right to voice their political opinion in a public setting without fear of repression. However, the continuities between the two periods of protest (and resulting democratic development) are not as well established. There is little published on this topic in German or in English and my dissertation will build on the work of other historians and take another direction in the study of continuities in German history by examining the emergence of the APO through the lens of two protest organizations that spanned the gap between the 45er and 68er generations.

The secondary material on the rearmament process in West Germany is substantial. While the interest shown in the Bundeswehr and its creation has increased since the collapse of the Soviet Union and German reunification, it is still thoroughly overshadowed by the continuing attention enjoyed by its predecessor, the Wehrmacht. This, however, is a trend that will likely continue for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, works on the Bundeswehr continue to be published and contribute to a growing scholarship that remains influential. There are a number of significant books, in both English and German, that have influenced the field. Most notable among these is the multi-volume set produced by the *Militär-geschichtliches Forschungsamt* (the Historical Research Office of the German Ministry of Defense) titled *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik, 1945-1956*. This collection, authored by a group of accomplished German historians, provides an all-encompassing look at West German rearmament that is a standard in the field. For a more manageable work, David Clay

Large's *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* is excellent. Large attempts to bring together the key issues of German rearmament in an easily accessible work that is both broad and complete. However, Large misses the cultural and social effects of rearmament as he focuses primarily on the high politics and parliamentary process.²⁵

To assess the extent that protest movements influenced the politicians in Bonn it is essential to know what was discussed on the floor of the German parliament, the Bundestag. This is made possible by reading the Bundestag minutes in the *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages* (Minutes of the German Parliament). Some useful resources for a study like this are the public opinion polls that were conducted at the time. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Erich Peter Neumann founded the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach in 1947 and it is regarded as one of the best polling organizations in Germany.²⁶ Allensbach has been under contract by the government of the Federal Republic since 1950 to carry out monthly public opinion polls and was the first to measure the former level of public support for the Nazi regime after the war. As well as providing the government with detailed public opinion data, Allensbach published their findings in a number of venues including news articles, pamphlets, and

²⁵Federal Republic of Germany, *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik, 1945-1956* vol, 1-4, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1982-1993); Large, *Germans to the Front Front*.

²⁶ Allensbach is the name of the town where the Institute is based in southwestern Germany.

books. This study utilized the data collected by Allensbach to help determine the West German public opinion of military policies and nuclear weapons policies.

Chapter II details the beginnings of protest in the Federal Republic. The first major protests were against rearmament in the early 1950s. The rearmament debate, according to Large, “did much to define the political culture of the Federal Republic in the crucial formative years of its history.”²⁷ As the Federal Republic moved toward full sovereignty and participation in NATO it became increasingly clear that not only would a significant West German force need to be assembled, the Federal Republic would have to turn to conscription to fill the ranks of the new military. The rearmament and conscription debates went beyond the halls of the Bundestag and many West Germans took to the streets in protest. This chapter will discuss the politics of rearmament in the Federal Republic, the reaction of West German society, and the response of conscientious objection groups and the West German peace movement as a whole.

The protests against rearmament were unorganized and sporadic. Some simply stated they would not involve themselves in whatever the government decided. The *Ohne Mich!* movement, if it can be called such, characterized this sentiment and was primarily made up of young men who claimed the government could rearm Germany but it would have to do so without them. They wore buttons with the slogan *Ohne Mich!* (Without me!) and went about their daily lives in an expression of their lack of interest in political action. Unsurprisingly their opinions went largely unnoticed. Perhaps the

²⁷ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 6.

most organized and best-known protest occurred in Frankfurt at the famous *Paulskirche* where thousands of people, supported by the Social Democratic Party, demonstrated against the signing of the Paris Accords in 1955. The Adenauer government, in a move that the government would later use repeatedly against extra-parliamentary opposition movements, insinuated that the protests were communist influenced intending to destroy the credibility of the protesters in the public consciousness.²⁸

The West German conscientious objection organizations rallied in opposition to the government's military policies but were not successful in building a significant resistance effort. After the Federal Republic established compulsory military service in 1956, the conscientious objection organizations focused on providing support for conscientious objectors. The debates over rearmament and conscription forced the peace movement out of its latency and into action. Crippled by the loss of German pacifists during the Nazi regime, the conscientious objection groups worked to raise support from other parts of society, particularly from the West German youth.

After rearmament and the establishment of conscription, the conscientious objection movement struggled to find its identity. Chapter III explores this period of reorganization and reform within the movement. Many of the issues facing the conscientious objection groups such as communism, growing generational divides,

²⁸ Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany: Extra-Parliamentary Opposition and the Democratic Agenda* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 9.

understanding the democratic process, and Cold War angst, were some of the same issues that faced West German Society as a whole.

The IdK, as the German branch of the War Resisters' International, was the organization most traditional pacifists belonged to, many of whom were older and had been involved in peace work since before the Second World War, and it reflected their generational values, particularly in how the IdK approached protest. The IdK often took an analytical approach to issues and wanted to connect with people intellectually. The *Gruppe der Wehrdienstverweigerer* (Group of Military Service Objectors, GdW), the forerunner of the VK, was formed in the mid-1950s by Wehrmacht veterans and young men who opposed military service because they were anti-military rather than strictly pacifists. As a younger group overall, the GdW was much more confrontational in their approach to issues and was interested in engaging people emotionally. The two organizations also dealt with the communism issue very differently. The IdK was generally unconcerned about a person's political ideology, as long as they supported the WRI's anti-war message the IdK was comfortable with members who had communist sympathies. The GdW was much more concerned with communists and were outspoken in their distrust of people with communist sympathies. These issues, along with several others, created such a divide between the IdK and GdW that despite their common mission they were unable to fuse the two organizations in an effort to be more effective.

Chapter IV examines the period from 1958 to 1960 when the conscientious objection movement broadened its scope of protest and became involved in nuclear

weapons opposition. These years represented a transitional step in which former anti-conscription activists learned to both broaden the scope of their activism and to develop, in a transnational context, tools that would be important in their future direction. Specifically, this period featured the development and implementation of new protest tactics such as nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience. Another major element that this chapter engages is the creation of a transnational social space that was essential to the development of West German and international protest movements. It also furthers the argument that the movement helped establish the organizational and operational framework for the emergence of extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany.

The two major events discussed in this chapter are the shift towards antinuclear activism and the impact of the SPD's Godesberg Program. During the late 1950s, nuclear weapons and their potential danger became increasingly central to the protest efforts of peace activists. The Social Democrats opposed arming the Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons or allowing NATO to station nuclear weapons on West German soil. Adenauer's government warned that the Soviet threat necessitated nuclear capabilities for defense and the ensuing debate spilled out of the parliament into the public sphere. The SPD mobilized the popular campaign Fight Atomic Death in 1958 to pressure the government to reconsider its position on nuclear weapons. The SPD sponsored movement was very active and popular for several months before fizzling out by the end of the year. In 1959, the Social Democrats adopted the Godesberg Program which indicated a significant shift in the political course of the Party towards a more

mainstream platform in order to challenge the CDU for control of the government.²⁹ These were wrenching decisions that badly divided the party and led many activists to abandon the SPD and seek another kind of leftist political space. Many conscientious objection activists participated in the KdA rallies and some even organized their own antinuclear protest events as they expanded their protest repertoire. When the KdA failed and the SPD adopted the Godesberg Program, a number of activists began to create their own antinuclear movement to fill the void. This is the point, I argue, where extra-parliamentary opposition began to emerge in West Germany and people who were previously affiliated with the SPD found themselves truly in opposition to established parliamentary positions.

Chapter V studies the creation of the Easter Marches Against Atomic Weapons and the formulation of extra-parliamentary opposition. This chapter shows how key peace activists from the conscientious objection movement initiated the Easter Marches and turned them into the first sustained, popular protest movement. As the Easter Marches grew and increasingly took the place of the Fight Atomic Death campaign as the primary organization for antinuclear action in West Germany it carved out space between the spheres of traditional party politics and public life. The SPD's resistance and opposition to the movement served to illustrate the fact that the party no longer represented many on the left and extra-parliamentary opposition, in the form of the Easter Marches, was the only alternative. The Cold War seemed to be drawing closer to

²⁹ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition, 1949-1960*, 260-263.

an armed conflict and the absence of political representation in the Bundestag forced peace activists to take matters into their own hands.

Historians often describe the Easter March founders as “a small group of religious pacifists,” and describe the Easter March as a continuation of the 1950s’ protests against nuclear weapons.³⁰ However, the initiators of the Easter March were much more than just religious pacifists, and the Easter March was a product of a much broader network of activists and organizations, which dated back to the debates over rearmament and conscription in the 1950s. I argue that key activists built the Easter Marches on the foundations laid by the conscientious objection movement and mark the beginning of extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany. Furthermore, this chapter examines how the West German public received the Easter March movement and how its leadership navigated the complex and often contradictory Cold War East West rhetoric. This chapter will also look at how the Easter Marches developed as a distinctly West German protest movement as a result of the experiences of the activists and the unique geopolitical position of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Chapter VI looks at how the conscientious objection activists built and relied on a transnational social space that connected them with likeminded activists from around the world. The event at the center of this chapter, 1960-1961 San Francisco to Moscow

³⁰Lawrence S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954-1970* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997), 220; Alice Holmes Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace: German Peace Movements Since 1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 98.; Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO*, 70.

Walk for Peace, is the perfect illustration of the implementation of the transnational social space. Formed by the American Committee for Nonviolent Action, the peace walk was a truly transnational protest that involved peace activists from the U.S. and Europe. The West German activists provided essential support to the march and shared their accumulated protest knowledge with the American activists. The Germans also had the opportunity to see nonviolent direct action tactics such as civil disobedience first hand. By examining the cooperation between the organizers of the Committee for Nonviolent Action's 1960-1961 American-European March for Peace, I demonstrate how the West German, British, and American activists coordinated and developed non-violent protest strategies. While the West German activists learned from and adopted some of the protest methods of peace organizations in Great Britain and the United States, they created their own culture of protest and with it developed a distinct set of tactics and "rules of engagement" for their organizations.³¹

The multinational character of the march led to communication problems that highlighted the difficulty of navigating the rhetoric of the Cold War. One of the primary issues was the lack of a common discourse about nuclear disarmament and peace. The communication issues that arose during the development and implementation of the

³¹ The influence of American forms of protest on the protest movements in the Federal Republic of Germany has been a topic of discussion among German historians. See Klimke, *The Other Alliance*; Nehring, "Americanized Protests?"; Philipp Gassert "Atlantic Alliances: Cross-Cultural Communication and the 1960s Student Revolution," in *Culture and International History* (eds. Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher, New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 135-156; Wolfgang Kraushaar, "Die transatlantische Protestkultur: Der zivile Ungehorsam als amerikanisches Exempel und als bundesdeutsche Adaption," in *Westbindungen: Amerika in der Bundesrepublik* (eds. Heinz Bude and Bernd Greiner, Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 257-284.

peace walk were a common feature of international protest actions. Because of the multitude of national activists involved and the states being crossed during the peace walk it was difficult, if not impossible, to develop a common discourse. Every activist brought with them the specific domestic and national concerns that made up their protest agenda and political discourse.³² Activists can never really escape the political realities of their respective countries. However, these struggles illustrate the protest culture of the West German peace movement and offer a window into the unique character and immediate concerns of the movement. Ultimately, the march highlights the development of the peace movement in West Germany, from the early opposition to rearmament and conscription in the mid-1950s to the major national and transnational protests against nuclear weapons and war in the 1960s, and illustrates how the movement became a force in West German society.

³² Nehring, "National Internationalists: British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons, the Politics of Transnational Communications and the Social History of the Cold War, 1957–1964," *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (2005).

CHAPTER II

REARMAMENT AND CONSCRIPTION DEBATE

On the evening of January 29, 1955 nearly 1,000 West Germans gathered in the famous Paulskirche in Frankfurt to protest West Germany's decision to rearm for the first time since the end of the war. The Paulskirche was the site of many democratic protests in German history and the protesters were very aware of the church's symbolic nature.¹ They signed a manifesto that stated: "Out of grave concern for the reunification of Germany, we are convinced that the hour has come to solemnly call upon the people and the government to resolutely oppose the ever stronger tendency toward the permanent division of our nation."² The reason for their "grave concern" was not only the imminent rearmament of the Federal Republic of Germany, but those present believed that without drastic and immediate intervention by the West German people, Germany would be permanently divided. The Paulskirche movement is significant because it blurred the lines between official party politics and political activism outside of the core.

The peace movement in West Germany, nearly nonexistent in the first few years after the Second World War, was resurrected in the 1950s by several salient issues:

¹ The Paulskirche in Frankfurt was where the Frankfurt Assembly met to write the Frankfurt Constitution during the failed 1848 revolution. The aim of the Frankfurt Assembly and their constitution was a unified Germany based on a parliamentary democracy. It was therefore fitting that the Paulskirche movement, which was concerned about the prospects of German reunification, called for opposition to rearmament. For more on the Frankfurt Parliament see Brian E. Vick, *Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002).

² Manifest der Paulskirchenkundgebung January 29, 1955, reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung. Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1955* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 484-485.

rearmament and conscription, membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and nuclear weapons.³ The experience of war was enough to keep the West Germans away from militarism for the immediate postwar years although this aversion to militarism was not linked to a newfound sense of pacifism; the German people were simply exhausted by war. When the Federal Republic rearmed in 1955 and established conscription in 1956, the members of the quiescent West German peace movement, particularly those in conscientious objection organizations, felt they had no choice but to take action.⁴ The corresponding debates over nuclear weapons on West German soil further incited the peace movement and West German activists began to fight to influence government policy from the public sphere.

This chapter will discuss the politics of rearmament in the Federal Republic, the reaction of West German society, and the response of conscientious objection groups and the West German peace movement as a whole. A major hurdle for the early protests was the accusation of communist influence and the complicated rhetoric of peace during the early stages of the Cold War. The conservative government easily brought serious challenges to the movement's credibility by suggesting it was connected to communism. These challenges handicapped conscientious objection groups and the peace movement for some time but became the catalyst for internal change. The failure of the West

³ Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 31-33.

⁴ H.G. Friedrich, "The Peace Movement in West Germany," Background Paper, WRI Study Conference Breidablik, Denmark August, 1962, Horst Maurer Collection, ED 718/17, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich (hereafter IfZM); Theodor Michaltscheff, "The Struggle for Peace in the German Federal Republic," WRI Study Conference Offenbach/Main, Germany August, 1964, Horst Maurer Collection, ED 718/17, IfZM.

German peace movement to have a significant influence on the civil-military policies of the Federal Republic during rearmament initiated a period of reform and introspection within the peace movement that led to the development of more effective protest organizations that created and sustained long-term protest movements.

Soon after the end of the war the Allied Powers, the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, began demilitarizing the country to thoroughly cleanse the German people of the “Prussian militarism” that some believed had plagued them for centuries. They attempted to demilitarize Germany in such a way that it would “never again be able to disturb the peace of the world.”⁵ The demilitarization process required, to some degree, the participation of the German people and many were willing pupils eager to distance themselves from war. The horrific personal experiences and collective trauma the war inflicted on German society effectively broke the allure of military glory. Jarausch considers this rejection of militarism in the immediate postwar period as, “[T]he first important result of the collective learning process that transformed Germany after 1945.”⁶

Along with demilitarization, the Allied Powers began a process known as denazification, which was designed to reeducate the German population and remove any evidence of the Nazi regime in Germany.⁷ Denazification initially consisted of

⁵ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition, 1949-1960*, 34.

⁶ Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 45.

⁷ For more discussion of denazification see Alexander Perry Biddiscombe, *The Denazification of Germany: A History 1945-1950* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007) and Constantine FitzGibbon, *Denazification* (London: Joseph, 1969).

dissolving Nazi organizations, the dismissal of Nazi from administrative positions, and the roundup and internment of the Nazi elite. The Allies then turned to the German population, which carried the collective guilt of the Nazi regime, and attempted to classify Germans in a five-category system from chief Nazi to exonerated. After filling out a lengthy questionnaire, every German age 18 and older went before a review board and was subject to judicial proceedings. While many high-level Nazi functionaries were tried as war criminals, some committed suicide or went into hiding. The vast majority of mid- and low-level Nazis were whitewashed or given amnesty by the Allies in order to streamline the denazification process. The process was incomplete, somewhat erratic, and at times illogical, a view held by many Germans at the time, but it was successful in eliminating high-level Nazis from public life and erasing Nazism as a political force. Jarausch argues that even with all the shortcomings, through denazification, [T]he foundation for fundamental change in the political culture was laid.”⁸

The occupation of Germany by the four Allied victors quickly turned into the frontlines of the Cold War as East and West Germany became the armed camps of the two superpowers. In June 1948, the Soviet Union blocked all access to the western sectors of Berlin in an attempt to gain complete control of the city.⁹ The eleven-month Soviet blockade of Berlin failed in the end because of the success of a massive campaign by the Western powers to airlift supplies into the western zones of the city. While this

⁸ Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 54.

⁹ This was also retaliation on the part of the Soviets for the West German Currency Reform in June of 1948, Dennis Bark and David Gress, *From Shadow to Substance 1945-1963* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1989), 210.

was a victory for the Western powers, it also made clear the vulnerability of Central Europe to Soviet pressure. It became clear to some that West German soldiers would be required to help secure Western Europe from the threat of Soviet aggression.¹⁰ As the Western Allies were drawing down their militaries the newly formed NATO indicated that West Germany would soon need to provide troops for its own protection.¹¹

The situation continued to deteriorate when war broke out in Korea in the spring of 1950. Soldiers of communist North Korea drove across the 38th parallel into South Korea in an invasion that took the American-led United Nations (UN) troops by surprise. The UN forces were quickly overwhelmed and pushed south, down the Korean peninsula, in a matter of weeks. Many in the West saw this as a thinly veiled attempt by the Soviets to expand their sphere of influence into the other parts of the free world and some believed that Western Europe would be next. As the United States deployed more and more troops to Korea, American military leaders soon realized that without help from the Federal Republic the United States would not be able to maintain sufficient troop levels in Western Europe. The Allied powers quickly recognized that a West German contribution to the defense of Western Europe was essential to counter-balance the perceived Soviet threat.¹² The Chancellor of the Federal Republic, Konrad Adenauer

¹⁰ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 36; Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 35; for more discussion of the Berlin Airlift see Gerhard Keiderling, "Rosinenbomber" über Berlin: *Währungsreform, Blockade, Luftbrücke, Teilung : die schicksalsvollen Jahre 1948/49* (Berlin: Dietz, 1998) and Ann Tusa and John Tusa, *The Berlin Airlift* (New York: Atheneum, 1988).

¹¹ Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *After Hitler: recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 37-38.

¹² For a discussion about the effect of the Korean War on the West German rearmament debate see Christian Griener, "Die alliierten militärstrategischen Planungen zur Verteidigung Westeuropas, 1947-

(Christian Democratic Union or CDU), realized in this situation a unique opportunity for the Federal Republic. Adenauer hoped that in return for a West German contribution to the defense of Western Europe he would be able to secure full sovereignty for the Federal Republic. With this in mind, Adenauer became a strong proponent of West German rearmament.¹³ However, the West German people were by no means united in support for rearmament.

In fact, most West Germans bitterly opposed rearmament in any form. The Social Democrat (SPD) Carlo Schmidt told a party rally in 1946 that, while other nations “may continue to rearm, never again do we want to send our sons into the barracks. If the madness of war should break out again somewhere, ...then we would rather perish, knowing that it was not we who committed the crime.”¹⁴ Writing under the pseudonym Jens Daniel, *Der Spiegel* publisher Rudolf Augstein argued that the German people were not ready, neither psychologically nor physically, to rearm. He wrote that even if Germany were to rearm it would be too little too late to make a real difference if war broke out in Central Europe between the Allies and the Soviet Union. Augstein concluded, “Hang yourself or not - you’ll regret either.”¹⁵ Paul Sethe, another prominent

1950,” in *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik, vol. I: Von der Kapitulation bis zum Pelven Plan* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1982).

¹³ Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer: A German Politician and Statesman in a Period of War, Revolution, and Reconstruction* vol. 1 (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), 624-625; Charles Williams, *Adenauer: The Father of the New Germany* (New York: Wiley, 2000), 356, 365.

¹⁴ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 35.

¹⁵ “Hänge Dich oder hänge Dich nicht – bereuen wirst Du beides.” Jens Daniel, “Soll man die Deutschen bewaffnen,” *Der Spiegel*, 2 October, 1948, 5; see also Roland G. Foerster, “Innenpolitische Aspekte der Sicherheit Westdeutschlands,” in *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik*, 431.

journalist in the Federal Republic who was an editor for the *FAZ*, wrote an article for the *Frankfurter Hefte* titled “The Decision on Life and Death” (*Die Entscheidung auf Leben und Tod*) where he described the paradoxes of West German rearmament. In order to rearm, Sethe wrote, the West German population would have to forget the previous five years of Allied denazification and demilitarization programs. They would also have to reverse the dismantling of the German war industry and soldiers would have to forget the implications of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial. Not only would the Federal Republic have to forget the recent past, but so would the rest of the world. Sethe wrote, “One arms the Germans, although they are still regarded as untrustworthy, in the hope that they already fight on the right side and will remain in the fight.”¹⁶

In the early 1950s a common sentiment among West German youth in response to Adenauer’s rearmament agenda was the phrase “*Ohne mich!*” (Without me!). Their opinion was that if the West German government wanted to rearm they would have to find someone else to fill the ranks.¹⁷ These young men had grown up during the National Socialist regime and many had been indoctrinated in the military of the Third Reich; they were not interested in participating in a new German military. The *Ohne mich!* movement was characterized by a lack of interest in political participation. The supporters wore buttons and occasionally painted signs, often an army boot with the

¹⁶The *Franfurter Hefte* was an important and widely read periodical that focused on cultural and political issues in the Federal Republic. “*Man bewaffnet die Deutschen, obgleich sie weiterhin als unzuverlässig gelten, in der Hoffnung, das sie schon auf der richtigen Seite kämpfen und im Kampf bleiben werden.*” Paul Sethe, “Die Entscheidung auf Leben und Tod” *Frankfurter Hefte*, 5 (1950), 907-913, quote from page 911.

¹⁷ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 54-55.

slogan “*Ohne mich!*” written on it, but they really only practiced passive resistance. They preferred to simply abstain from any involvement in rearmament rather than actively work to change policy.¹⁸

Not long after the First World War in 1921, a group of European pacifists, many of who had been involved in war resistance during the Great War, founded an international pacifist organization called the War Resisters' International. The founders adopted the following declaration that has remained unchanged: “War is a crime against humanity. I am therefore determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war.” National branches formed across Western Europe and in many other places such as India and South Africa. Based in England the WRI coordinated with the various branches and kept them in touch with one another through regular newsletters and reports.¹⁹ German pacifists formed the *Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner* (IdK), the German branch of the WRI, when the WRI was founded in 1921. During the interwar period, the IdK membership resisted the rise of nationalist political organizations but were forced to flee or go underground when the Nazis rose to power in 1933.²⁰

¹⁸ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 76-77.

¹⁹ For more on the WRI see Devi Prasad, *War Is a Crime against Humanity: The Story of War Resisters' International* (London: published by War Resisters' International, 2005).

²⁰ Björn Marnau, “Wir, die wir am Feuer von Chevreuse die Hand erhoben haben...,” Beirat für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung und Demokratie in Schleswig-Holstein. *Demokratische Geschichte*, 10. Kiel: Neuer Malik Verlag, 1996; Prasad, *War Is a Crime against Humanity*, 235.

The German pacifists who survived the war reformed the IdK in 1947. Letters between the German pacifists and the WRI offices in England illustrate the uncertainty and turmoil of the immediate postwar period as WRI members struggled to make contact with friends in Germany.²¹ The German pacifists were battered and traumatized by their war experiences but their resolve to prevent war and remove all causes of war was strengthened. The IdK believed the German people were pacified by the horrors of the war and were fairly confident they did not have to worry about German militarism resurfacing for a long time. By 1949 as tensions rose between the East and the West the IdK realized, much to their shock, that Germans could once again be headed to war. The WRI also recognized the rising threat of a global, nuclear war and worked to rally national branches around the world in resistance to militarism.²²

During this period, the IdK focused on mobilizing the West German youth against rearmament. It was the West German youth, after all, who had the most to lose if the country rearmed. In their leaflets and banners the IdK equated rearmament with war and emphasized the call for peace. In one demonstration in Nuremberg young people affiliated with the IdK marched with signs that declared “Youth Demand Peace!”²³ They

²¹ Letter from WRI Secretary Grace Beaton to Chris Lewis, October 18, 1945; Letter from Theodor Michaltscheff to WRI Secretary Grace Beaton, May 26, 1945, Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (hereafter HIS), Theodor Michaltscheff File.

²² WRI Secretary’s Report to the 7th International Conference in Brunswick, Germany, July, 1951, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters’ International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

²³ “Jugend fordert Frieden!” Wolfgang Kraushaar, *Die Protest-Chronik 1949-1959: eine illustrierte Geschichte von Bewegung, Widerstand und Utopie* (Hamburg: Rogner & Bernhard, 1996), 1:589.

would not support West German rearmament and they most certainly would not allow the government to conscript them to fight.

While the West Germans were not ready to talk about the possibility of a new German military, the United States had already begun considering West German rearmament in 1949, and the discussion heightened among the Allied Powers with the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany on May 23, 1949.²⁴ American congressmen believed that West Germany should make a contribution to its own defense, not just because of military necessity but also to lighten the load on the Western Powers.²⁵ The discussion soon reached the West German public where it became apparent that many West Germans did not approve.

A 1950 poll by the West German opinion polling organization Allensbach asked about 2,000 participants, “Would you be in favor of Germany being invited, in connexion with the Atlantic Treaty and within the framework of a European Army, to build up her armed forces again?” Of the participants fifty-eight percent responded against rearmament, thirty-three percent were in favor, and fifteen percent were undecided.²⁶ Nevertheless, despite of the sentiments of the population it soon became

²⁴ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁶ The *Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach* was founded in 1947 by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Erich Peter Neumann and is regarded as one of the best polling organizations in Germany. The typical number of people who participated in Allensbach polls was 2000. Elisabeth Noelle and Erich Peter Neumann, *The Germans: Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966* (Allensbach: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1967), 436.

clear that international pressures would press the Federal Republic to rearm. The real question became how and when.

As West German rearmament became an increasingly real possibility, the question was how the Federal Republic would fill the ranks of the new military. The Federal Republic decided to create a military comprised of volunteers and draftees, but the path that led to that decision was beset with difficulties that came from the full spectrum of West German society. The West German public had mixed feelings about the draft throughout the course of the debate. Awakened by the specter of rearmament and military conscription, West German pacifists became vocal in opposition.²⁷ The major political parties also had a voice in the debate, as did trade unions and the clergy. This level of involvement was to be expected as the question of conscription was inextricably tied to a number of issues that were just as contentious as conscription itself.

For example, the West German business community and agricultural interests were very worried about the economic implications of a 500,000 man army that would be made up of young volunteers and conscripts. These concerns were well founded as the unemployment numbers indicated that a draft would further tax the already tight labor supply. Because of the *Wirtschaftswunder* or economic miracle experienced by West Germany in the early 1950s the number of unemployed in the Federal Republic had been steadily declining since 1950 and by September 1955 only 2.7 percent of the work pool was unemployed. Of the male work pool only 225,100, or 1.8 percent, were

²⁷ “*Wir Wollen Frieden!*” Bund der Kriegsdienstverweigerer in Deutschland, Bundesarchiv Koblenz B137/1355.

unemployed. Therefore, the proposed number of 500,000 soldiers, of which a large majority would be conscripts, caused great alarm among the businesses and industries in the Federal Republic.²⁸

From the outset of the conscription debate the topic of conscientious objection was at the forefront. The right of an individual to refuse military service based on principle was enshrined in the *Grundgesetz*, the Basic Law, when West Germany was founded in 1949. The fact that the right of conscientious objection was written into the constitution caused many proponents of conscription to believe that the men who drafted it foresaw the need to institute compulsory military service.²⁹ Conscientious objection further complicated an already divisive issue as the rearmament debate began to dominate the public and political spheres of West German society.

Even though many believed that the Federal Republic would have to rearm itself in the near future, the idea was not universally accepted. With wounds still fresh from the most devastating war in modern history and caught between two superpowers who faced each other with nuclear weapons, many thought that West German rearmament was nothing short of madness.

Championing this cause, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD) was the most adamant voice of

²⁸ Federal Republic of Germany, *Statistisches Bundesamt. Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1959*, "Beschäftigte und Arbeitslose," (European official statistical series on microfiche. Bishops Stortford, Herts: Chadwyck-Healey, 1974), 121 Table 5a. Microfiche.

²⁹ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 71.

opposition to the government.³⁰ The Social Democratic Party in Germany is the oldest political party in Germany with roots as far back as the 1850s. Traditionally made up of the working class as an *Arbeiterpartei* (workers party), the SPD has sought to speak for workers and trade unions from the left of the political spectrum.³¹ Decidedly anti-war after 1945, the Social Democrats went as far as to pass an anti-war resolution in 1947 stating that war should be banished “from the minds and hearts of men.”³² Central to the Social Democrats’ argument against rearmament, and later conscription, was the fear that a remilitarized Federal Republic would further divide West Germany from its Eastern counterpart, the German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, DDR). The reunification of East and West Germany was at this point still seen as a possibility and many saw reunification as the primary issue facing the Federal Republic.

Those supporting rearmament included a number of center-right political parties such as the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*, CDU), the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (*Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern*, CSU), the Free Democratic Party (*Freie Demokratische Partei*, FDP), and the German Party (*Deutsche Partei*, DP). Early on the CDU and CSU had become sister parties and formed a common faction where they have often been referred to as the

³⁰ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 27.

³¹ The SPD began to shift from an *Arbeiterpartei* to a *Volkspartei* in the 1960s to broaden its appeal to voters, a change that Gordon Drummond attributes to the rearmament debate of the 1950s, *Ibid.*, 4.

³² *Ibid.*, 35.

CDU/CSU faction. The CDU/CSU, FDP, and DP created a coalition government after the 1949 and 1953 Federal elections with Konrad Adenauer as Federal Chancellor.

Founded in 1945, the CDU brought Catholics and Protestants together in a common conservative party. Made up of former *Deutsche Zentrumspartei* (German Center Party, the Catholic political party) members as well as other conservatives, the CDU bridged the gap between the two main Christian faiths—Catholic and Lutheran—to make one of the most powerful political parties in post-war Germany.³³ From the beginning, Konrad Adenauer was key to the organization of the CDU. Born in the Rhineland city of Cologne on January 5, 1876, Adenauer entered politics in the early 1900s. A devout Roman Catholic, Adenauer had been a member of the Center party and was elected mayor of his home city of Cologne in 1917. Adenauer's time as mayor was cut short in 1933 when the Nazis came to power and because he refused to work with the party, he spent most of the Nazi regime in hiding.

After the war, the Allies noticed Adenauer as one of the few remaining German politicians who had not cooperated with the Nazis and tabbed him to serve again as mayor of Cologne for a short time. He emerged as a dominant political figure in the British Occupation Zone and worked hard to create a space for conservative German politics in the wake of National Socialism.³⁴ Adenauer played a central role in the

³³ For more on the early years of the CDU see Noel D. Cary, *The Path to Christian Democracy: German Catholics and the Party System from Windthorst to Adenauer* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996).

³⁴ For more on how the CDU dealt with the legacy of National Socialism see Maria Mitchell, "Materialism and Secularism: CDU Politicians and National Socialism, 1945- 1949," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Jun., 1995), pp. 278-308.

founding of the CDU and led the young party into the first democratic elections in 1949. As the leader of the CDU Adenauer was elected the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic in the 1949 Federal election, a position he would hold until 1963. As Federal Chancellor, Adenauer fought to strengthen West German ties with the western powers since he was convinced that the Federal Republic had to turn to the west and become more democratic and socially responsible. For a significant portion of his time as Federal Chancellor, Adenauer worked to secure full sovereignty for the Federal Republic.³⁵

Initially focused on simply building the new republic, the CDU/CSU soon strongly favored rearmament based on the belief that the Federal Republic could not gain full sovereignty without a military to defend it. There was also a real concern with the Soviet threat. The CDU/CSU was alarmed by the seemingly aggressive moves being taken by the Soviet Union, most notably the Berlin Blockade, the violent suppression of the East German Uprising June 17, 1953, and overall increased Soviet troop levels in East Germany. The party wanted to be sure that the Federal Republic would be able to defend itself. Concerned that the Allied governments would abandon West Germany if the Soviets attacked, the party believed the Federal Republic would be better served with

³⁵ For more on Adenauer see Terrence Prittie, *Konrad Adenauer, 1876-1967* (Chicago: Cowles Book Co, 1971); Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer: A German Politician and Statesman in a Period of War, Revolution, and Reconstruction* (2 vols, Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995-1997); Adenauer also wrote an excellent set of memoirs in the final years of his life that are insightful, see Konrad Adenauer, *Erinnerungen, vols. 1-4*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1965-1968).

a military of its own.³⁶ West German pacifists saw the government's stance as alarmingly militaristic and a serious threat to any chance of German reconciliation.³⁷

The IdK, very concerned by the events of the late 1940s and early 1950s and the direction the West German government was taking, worked to rally the West German population against rearmament politics. The IdK focused on highlighting the threat of war if West Germany rearmed. The IdK distributed leaflets claiming that rearmament would not help secure the West German state, but bring the Federal Republic closer to war. The IdK leaflets called for "Resistance of the whole Nation!" against rearmament and warned the government that the German people would not be pushed into a *Bruderkrieg* (literally fratricidal war) with East Germany.³⁸ By bringing up the specter of a war with East Germany the IdK underscored a major concern many West Germans had about rearmament: if West Germany established an army the division between east and west would become more permanent and, even more frightening, when the new West German army went to war it would fight East Germans. This was a very real fear in the Federal Republic during the 1950s because there were many West Germans who had recently fled East Germany or had family in East Germany.

One of the first steps towards West German rearmament were taken in October of 1950 when Theodor Blank, a loyal Adenauer supporter, was appointed as the first

³⁶ Large, *Germans to the Front*.

³⁷ Theodor Michaltscheff, "The Struggle for Peace in the German Federal Republic," WRI Study Conference Offenbach/Main, Germany August, 1964, Horst Maurer Collection, ED 718/17, IfZM.

³⁸ "Widerstand des ganzen Volkes!" Kraushaar, *Die Protest-Chronik 1949-1959*, 1:743.

Defense Minister. The Chancellor charged Blank with quietly preparing the way for rearmament. His office, known as the *Amt Blank* (Blank Office), was officially responsible for affairs relating to Allied occupation troops. However, as time progressed the primary focus became the re-establishment of the military. The Blank Office was responsible for many rearmament issues, including the thorny problem of conscription (*Wehrpflicht*).³⁹

In 1950, the French Prime Minister René Pleven proposed a plan to create a pan-European defense community (EDC) that would include military contributions from a number of Western European nations, including West Germany. This proposal, the Pleven Plan, was meant to prevent the Federal Republic from joining NATO and, consequently, would have allowed the Western Powers to control any West German military force. Pleven's own government in 1952 eventually torpedoed the plan as some in the French parliament believed that such an arrangement would threaten France's national sovereignty. Despite its failure, the plan helped pave the way for discussion, both internationally and domestically, about West German rearmament.⁴⁰

The Allensbach Institute polled the West German population in March 1950 about their opinion of conscription. The results indicated that most Germans, just five years since the end of World War II, were against the draft. The question posed by

³⁹ "Der härteste Schädel in Bonn," *Der Spiegel*, 10 December 1952, 6-13; Christian Greiner, "Die Dienststelle Blank," *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 17 (1975): 99-124; For an excellent study of the *Amt Blank* see Dieter Krüger, *Das Amt Blank: die schwierige Gründung des Bundesministeriums für Verteidigung*, Einzelschriften zur Militärgeschichte, 38. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1993).

⁴⁰ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 130.

Allensbach was “Are you, in principle, for or against compulsory military service?” Of the participants, fifty-five percent said that they were against conscription and thirty percent said that they were for it. The remaining fifteen percent were undecided about the matter.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the Adenauer government continued to move towards rearmament and conscription.

The first time conscription was publicly discussed was in October 1950 when Blank’s predecessor, Count Gerhard Schwerin who was in charge of the unofficial Ministry of Defense, told reporters in Bonn that he believed the Federal Republic would have to introduce conscription to staff the military adequately. This statement, while accurate, was a clear breach of policy and was not well received within the government or in the public sphere. This blatant political misstep was one of the reasons for Count Schwerin’s quick dismissal and Blank’s appointment.⁴² Blank made the first official statement about conscription in January 1952 when Bonn felt that the time had come to introduce the draft. In a discussion with Allied officials, Blank estimated that the German contribution to a European army might consist of more than a million drafted soldiers. The West German press received this information with some skepticism as some were unsure of how the government would be able to call up so many men for service. The Social Democrats were quite vocal in their opposition to this proposal as they believed that any discussion about rearmament and conscription at that point was

⁴¹ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans: Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 443.

⁴² “Bundesregierung plant ‘Wehrgesetz’ mit allgemeiner Wehrpflicht,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, October 25, 1950, 1; “Allgemeine Wehrpflicht,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 30, 1950, 1 (hereafter *FAZ*); On Chancellor Adenauer’s reaction to Count Schwerin’s statement see *Die Welt*, October 28, 1950, 1.

premature and out of line. There first had to be laws regarding the rights of soldiers and, most importantly, the right to establish a military, before any discussion of conscription could occur.⁴³

To the IdK and likeminded individuals, the right to object to military service for reasons of conscience was a central democratic principle, particularly in Germany where the legacy of the Nazi regime was so immediate. All the major political parties in the Federal Republic supported the draftees' right to refuse military service to varying degrees. The Social Democrats fought hard for a very broad interpretation of the law while the CDU/CSU were very specific about exactly who should be able to object and for what reasons. Adenauer's government believed that the law should only apply to conscientious objectors who refused to perform military service because they were either fundamentally opposed to war in any situation or objected for religious reasons.⁴⁴ The more liberal SPD thought that every individual had the right to refuse based on his conscience for a greater number of reasons. For example, some Germans, the SPD maintained, might object to military service because of life circumstances: a person in a divided Germany might refuse to perform military service when they would be required to fight against other Germans, or they might object if they had family still living in the Soviet zone. Others might resent the military if they lost family because of the war or because of Nazi persecution. Some Germans might object to military service because of

⁴³ "1,2 Million Rekruten sollen eingezogen werden," *FAZ*, January 7, 1952, 2; "Blank kündigt die Auslese-Dienstplicht an," *FAZ*, January 21, 1952, 1.

⁴⁴ Jaeger, *Verhandlungen*, July 6, 1956, 31:8848D; "Erlebnis auf dem Heuberg," *Der Spiegel*, July 18, 1956, 9.

the use of nuclear weapons. The Social Democrats felt that the right of conscientious objection was applicable to anyone who refused to perform military service for reasons of conscience.⁴⁵

The West German population was also in disagreement about the right of conscientious objection. When polled by Allensbach in December 1953 West Germans were asked, “It will also have to be decided whether it should be permissible to object to military service. Do you think those called up should, or should not, be allowed to object to military service?” Of the participants, fifty-one percent thought that a person should be allowed to object to military service and thirty-one percent thought that a person should not be allowed to object. The remaining eighteen percent responded saying that they did not know.⁴⁶

Some West Germans became more involved in resisting rearmament and conscription through joining a conscientious objection organization. In addition to the IdK several anti-military and anti-conscription groups formed in the early 1950s. Founded in 1953, the Group of Military Service Objectors (GdW) was originally an anti-military and anti-conscription organization that protested against rearmament and military conscription in West Germany during the rearmament debates in the early 1950s. Unlike the IdK, the GdW originally existed solely to resist rearmament and

⁴⁵ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 71.

⁴⁶ Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966*, 449.

compulsory military service in the Federal Republic of Germany.⁴⁷ Co-founder Werner Böwing explained that they created GdW because of their experiences in World War II, “We didn’t want a new German army because we were afraid that the horrors of the war would return (if West Germany rearmed).” For that reason, the GdW was absolutely against rearmament in East and West Germany from its founding.⁴⁸ However, they were not fundamentally pacifist or Christian as an organization.⁴⁹ The leadership of the GdW stated succinctly, “We are nothing more than an association of people who have made their decision... and no longer want to shoot other people.”⁵⁰ The GdW was a very pragmatic organization that focused on helping COs, no matter the reason they had for objecting.

The conscientious objection organizations continued to weigh in on the public debate. Along with the standard leaflets and posters protesting rearmament, the GdW sponsored a number of informational talks and gatherings. In Chancellor Adenauer’s hometown of Cologne the GdW held an anti-military motorcade. The cars in the motorcade carried signs with anti-rearmament slogans such as “The joke of the day: Peace through Cannons!” and “Barracks drill is no education!” and drove around the city for hours.⁵¹ The leader of the GdW, Hans Herman Köper, explained why the group

⁴⁷ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

⁴⁸ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013.

⁴⁹ “Die Gruppe der Wehrdienstverweigerer,” (IfZM) Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/15.

⁵⁰ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

⁵¹ Kraushaar, *Die Protest-Chronik 1949-1959*, 1:1046-1047.

chose to use a motorcade to spread their message, “Cars are more impressive than a small group of a hundred protesters. The impression is reinforced by the police vehicles.”⁵² The goal was to point out to the West German public, particularly to the young men, the contradictions the GdW saw in West German rearmament. The GdW activists believed the idea that peace could be ensured in Central Europe by the creation of a West German military was preposterous. Furthermore, the GdW disagreed with the government in Bonn when Adenauer suggested that military service was a “school of the nation.”⁵³

Members of the GdW also wrote to their local newspapers against rearmament.⁵⁴

One 20 year old young man wrote to a Frankfurt paper about why he was against rearmament,

I will tell you why I do not want to be a soldier. My whole family was at the front in the last war, a brother, a brother-in-law, a cousin. What is left? My brother-in-law comes home with one arm, my brother with malaria, my cousin does not come back. Our family is totally bombed out. Now I ask: Why should I go to the front? I cannot defend my family at all. My parents are dead, my family is dead. I have no power as a soldier to fight against atomic bombs.⁵⁵

This 20 year old pointed out a number of the issues young men his age faced in West Germany. They remembered the war and still lived with the effect it had on their

⁵² “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

⁵³ “Wozu Dient Eine Bundeswehr,” *Der Spiegel*, July 18, 1956, 29.

⁵⁴ Kraushaar, *Die Protest-Chronik 1949-1959*, 1:1064-1065.

⁵⁵ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, November 13, 1954.

families. If West Germany rearmed and went to war they could face a nuclear armed Soviet Union and many potential conscripts in West Germany wanted no part of it.

A decision on the rearmament issue was ultimately in the hands of the West German legislature. The 1954 Paris Accords that formally ended the Allied occupation of West Germany and conferred sovereignty on the Federal Republic were debated in the Bundestag in early 1955. The treaties also meant the acceptance of German membership in NATO (along with a military force of 500,000) and the possibility of nuclear weapons. To many Germans the ratification of the Paris Accords by the West German Bundestag would threaten German reunification. In fact, many believed that the confirmation of West German sovereignty and the establishment of a West German military would make reunification impossible and doom Europe and the two German states to perpetual tension and conflict.

The Social Democrats bitterly opposed the Paris Accords and initiated a public campaign to protest their ratification in the Bundestag. The SPD leadership, working with local party leaders, peace activists, trade unions, and antinuclear supporters, organized a large anti-rearmament campaign to raise public opposition to the treaties with the intent to demonstrate to the Adenauer government that the West German people opposed the direction Bonn was taking the country.⁵⁶ In their first foray into grassroots political action the campaign organizers gave speeches, held rallies, handed out pamphlets, and set up information booths to inform the people about the treaties. One

⁵⁶ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition, 1949-1960*, 135.

SPD leader told West Germans at a rally in Hesse that the fate of Germany depended on the ratification or rejection of the Paris Accords.⁵⁷

The highpoint of the campaign was a rally at the Frankfurt Paulskirche on January 29, 1955 organized by the SPD, the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (German Trade Union Federation, DGB), and peace activists. Under the banner “Save Unity, Peace and Freedom! Against Communism and Nationalism!” the SPD chairman Erich Ollenhauer, distinguished academics and church leaders, and trade union leaders gave speeches to a crowd of nearly 1,000 that included members of the West German press.⁵⁸ At the rally the German Manifesto was drawn up to state the demands of the movement. The manifesto highlighted that the policies of the CDU government in Bonn would threaten the possibility of German reunification; “Out of grave concern for the reunification of Germany, we are convinced that the hour has come to solemnly call upon the people and the government to resolutely oppose the ever stronger tendency toward the permanent division of our nation.”⁵⁹

The speakers at the Paulskirche rally stressed the ugly prospect of a politically divided Germany if the Paris Accords were ratified. The manifesto stated “The answer to the fateful German question of the present day—whether our nation can be reunited in peace and freedom or whether it must live in the unnatural condition of political division and progressive human alienation—depends today primarily on the decision about the

⁵⁷ *Die Welt*, January 17, 1955.

⁵⁸ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 84-85.

⁵⁹ Manifest der Paulskirchenkundgebung January 29, 1955, reprinted in Kleßmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung*, 484-485.

Paris Treaties.”⁶⁰ Furthermore, the manifesto called attention to an even greater, more disturbing consequence if the Paris Accords were ratified, German armies facing each other across the border between East and West Germany.

The stationing of German military forces in the Federal Republic and the Soviet zone will invariably eradicate the chances for reunification in the foreseeable future and reinforce the tension between East and West. Such a measure would increase the moral distress of large segments of our people to an unbearable degree. A terrible fate would become reality: with weapons in hand, siblings from one family would face off against each other in opposing armies.⁶¹

Since the Social Democrats could not stop the ratification in the Bundestag they recognized the need for popular sentiment against the Paris Accords. The SPD leaders and Paulskirche organizers implored the German people to speak out against the policy of the Adenauer government, hoping that a ground swell of public opposition would cause the CDU to reconsider ratifying the Paris Accords. The manifesto pleaded, “At this hour, every voice that is capable of speaking out freely must issue an unmistakable warning against this development. Immeasurable will be the responsibility of those who failed to see the danger of ratifying the Paris Treaties, which will slam the door on Four-Power negotiations on the restoration of German unity in freedom.”⁶²

After the rally at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt, the campaign became known as the Paulskirche movement. The Paulskirche movement was one of the largest organized protests against West German rearmament and its popular appeal was due in part to the

⁶⁰ Manifest der Paulskirchenkundgebung January 29, 1955, reprinted in Kleßmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung*, 484-485.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

support of the Social Democrats and the cooperation of groups outside of mainstream politics. The strength and organizational capabilities of the party allowed the movement to spread its message across West Germany. Coupled with the cooperation of the trade unions, churches, members of the intelligentsia, and peace activists, the movement gained significant popular support. In fact, after many more rallies and speeches the Paulskirche movement acquired hundreds of thousands of signatures from all over West Germany.⁶³ The protest rallies, demonstrations, and profuse leafleting successfully raised awareness to the issue and built strong public opposition against the ratification of the Paris Accords.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the movement prepared the ground for future extra-parliamentary protest. For the first time a major political party joined with organizations and activists on the periphery of the political sphere in pursuit of a common goal. This experience would prove invaluable as the SPD collaborated with the same groups and organizations once again in a united effort to take on the Adenauer government over the issue of nuclear weapons.⁶⁵

Despite the efforts of the Paulskirche movement, the Bundestag ratified the Paris Accords February 27, 1955.⁶⁶ Adenauer criticized the movement, claiming that it was an attempt to transfer the decision-making powers from the Bundestag to the voice of

⁶³ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 84.

⁶⁴ Theodor Michaltscheff, "The Struggle for Peace in the German Federal Republic," WRI Study Conference Offenbach/Main, Germany August, 1964, Horst Maurer Collection, ED 718/17, IfZM.

⁶⁵ Theodor Michaltscheff, "The Struggle for Peace in the German Federal Republic," WRI Study Conference Offenbach/Main, Germany August, 1964, Horst Maurer Collection, ED 718/17, IfZM; Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 84.

⁶⁶ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 232-233.

streets and going as far as to suggest that the SPD tactics were similar to those of the Communists.⁶⁷ The SPD angrily responded to the accusations saying that the SPD and the Paulskirche movement had nothing to do with the Communists.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the campaign was not a threat to the Parliament's authority but an expression of each citizen's right to state their opinion on a critical national issue.⁶⁹ The damage was done, however, and even though the Paulskirche movement built a significant amount of public opposition it was not enough to influence Adenauer's policy or the majority of the West German population. The response of the Adenauer government would become Bonn's standard answer to extra-parliamentary movements in the 1950s. All the government had to do was claim the extra-parliamentary movements were connected to the Communists and they would lose any chance of seriously influencing the West German public. Historians Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will summed up the situation succinctly writing, "Thus, all the various extra-parliamentary campaigns of the 1950s...were seriously handicapped by the relative ease with which Adenauer was able to tar them with the brush of communism."⁷⁰

On May 5, 1955 the Allied High Commission formally dissolved the Occupation Statute and the Federal Republic became a sovereign nation and was admitted to NATO

⁶⁷ Theodor Michaltscheff, "The Struggle for Peace in the German Federal Republic," WRI Study Conference Offenbach/Main, Germany August, 1964, Horst Maurer Collection, ED 718/17, IfZM; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 7, 1955.

⁶⁸ *Die Welt*, February 7, 1955.

⁶⁹ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition, 1949-1960*, 137.

⁷⁰ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 9.

as a full member.⁷¹ After a heated debate in the Bundestag, the Bundeswehr was established and Federal Defense Minister Blank commissioned its first soldiers on November 12, 1955.⁷² The date coincided with the 200th birthday of the great Prussian military reformer of the early nineteenth-century, Gerhard von Scharnhorst, whose ideals and traditions the Bundeswehr had chosen to embrace as its own.⁷³ With the Bundeswehr established, the debate over conscription became increasingly contentious as West Germans realized that sufficient troop levels could not be reached with volunteers alone.

Elements of West Germany's Protestant Church, the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD), strongly opposed rearmament and felt that conscientious objection was a moral Christian duty.⁷⁴ The EKD leadership declared "The world needs love, not violence; it needs peace, not war."⁷⁵ The EKD Council called war a sin against God's will and therefore conscientious objection was a legitimate Christian position that the state must respect and protect.⁷⁶ However the EKD was deeply divided about the issue

⁷¹ Bark and Gress, *From Shadow to Substance 1945-1963*, 345.

⁷² Large, *Germans to the Front*, 243.

⁷³ This concurrence was intended as the *Bundeswehr* wished to establish connections with the Prussian reformers of the early nineteenth-century. By reaching to the early 19th century the Federal Republic gave the Bundeswehr traditions to build upon that were not tainted by extreme nationalism and Nazism. For an excellent discussion of the military traditions of the Bundeswehr, see Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 166.

⁷⁴ For more on the West German Protestant Church and rearmament see Johanna Vogel, *Kirche und Wiederbewaffnung. Die Haltung der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland in den Auseinandersetzungen um die Wiederbewaffnung der Bundesrepublik 1949-1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷⁶ Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 46-47.

and many saw rearmament and participation in NATO as the only way to protect West Germany from the Soviet threat and ensure that the Federal Republic stayed free. In the end, because of this internal division, the EKD chose not to make any official statements on political issues.⁷⁷

Following the establishment of the Bundeswehr in November 1955 the conscription debate became one of the primary political issues in West Germany. Now part of NATO the Federal Republic, as feared by many West Germans, was obligated to make a military contribution to the defense of Western Europe. Their portion consisted of twelve divisions totaling around 500,000 men. Having had little success in recruiting a sufficient number of volunteers, Federal Defense Minister Blank soon realized that conscription would be necessary if the Federal Republic were to meet its obligation to NATO. This knowledge only heightened the controversy about conscription as people from all aspects of West German society voiced their opinions about the draft in the hopes that they would be able to influence the outcome of the debate in parliament. Rudolf Augstein in *Der Spiegel* later criticized the rearmament plan for being incompatible with the political atmosphere. Augstein wrote “In such a situation, to insist on the 500,000 men, too little to protect us, sufficient to obstruct all political possibilities, is Quixotic.”⁷⁸ While many of the arguments for and against conscription

⁷⁷ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 232.

⁷⁸ “In solch einer Situation auf den 500 000 Mann zu beharren - zu wenig, uns zu schützen, genug, uns alle politischen Möglichkeiten zu verbauen -, ist Don-Quichotterie.” Jens Daniel, “Krieg Auf Der Falschen Seite?” *Der Spiegel* August 1, 1956, 8.

had already been voiced, several new ones were articulated in the months leading to the Bundestag debate.⁷⁹

Similar concerns over conscientious objection were raised in the Bundestag and the general public. The Adenauer government was willing to honor the right of conscientious objection to military service but only with strictly defined conditions. While the Social Democrats agreed that the right of conscientious objection should be upheld, they vehemently disagreed with the conditions put forth by the government. The Social Democrats maintained that anyone should have the right to object based on their conscience, whatever that may be. They believed that the state had no right to determine the validity of anyone's conscience, once an individual stated his conscience he should not have to prove that "he was not a *Schweinehund*."⁸⁰

The CDU/CSU faction responded that while Parliament should acknowledge the rights of the conscientious objectors, it also had to be concerned about national security and therefore could not allow conscientious objection for any number of reasons. Each citizen also had duties as well as rights and these duties included defending the nation. Any state that would allow any of its citizens the right to refuse military service would effectively be committing suicide.⁸¹ The CDU coalition did, however, change the conditions for conscientious objection to exempt men who had close relatives in the East

⁷⁹ Large, *Germans to the Front*, 220, 260.

⁸⁰ Literally a "Swine-Dog" but basically an "Asshole," Arndt, *Verhandlungen* July 4, 1956, 31:8594A.

⁸¹ Jaeger, *Verhandlungen*, July 6, 1956, 31:8848D; "Erlebnis auf dem Heuberg," *Der Spiegel*, July 18, 1956, 9.

or who had lost immediate family (parents or siblings) in World War II. This change was aligned with public opinion on the issue. When polled by Allensbach a few months earlier, participants were asked if young men with family in the Soviet zone should have the right to refuse to do military service. Of the participants, fifty-four percent said that the young men should have the right to refuse, twenty-two percent said that no allowances should be made, and twenty-four percent were undecided.⁸²

With leaflets and local meetings the West German conscientious objection organizations worked to influence potential draftees. The *Bund der Kriegsdienstverweigerer* (BKV) called on young men to object to military service to preserve peace. They reminded the potential draftees that only peace ensured success and happiness in life; military service was slavery. Furthermore, the BKV called attention to the fact that conscientious objection was the right of every West German citizen and it was a right that young men should exercise.⁸³

Once the conscription law was passed portions of the West German population reacted predictably. Some young West Germans refused to register for the draft and the local draft boards were unsure of what to do. In an article printed in *The Nation*, correspondent John Dornberg described the situation in Germany. Titled “Defying the Draft: German Youth Rebels” Dornberg wrote that many draft boards throughout West Germany reported that the nineteen year olds who were required to register for the draft

⁸² Noelle and Neumann, *The Germans*, 449; “Wozu Dient Eine Bundeswehr,” *Der Spiegel*, July 18, 1956, 29.

⁸³ “*Wir Wollen Frieden!*” Bund der Kriegsdienstverweigerer in Deutschland, Bundesarchiv Koblenz B137/1355.

were not reporting. In fact, in a number of large cities only a small portion of eligible young men reported. For example in Nuremberg less than twenty-five percent registered by the deadline, in Munich less than ten percent reported, and in Cologne barely half of those eligible showed up to their draft board. Dornberg also reported that a number of city officials also refused to participate in draft registration. In the city of Dortmund, fifteen city officials who had been assigned to the draft board refused to go to work. Dornberg quotes the representative of the group saying, “We’re not going to send our own kids to the army. Our conscience would bother us if we had to register those boys.”⁸⁴

Resistance to the draft among the West German population was illustrated when a number of local grassroots conscientious objection organizations sprang up in the Federal Republic in the fall of 1956. In addition to the older conscientious objection organizations such as the IdK and GdW, these groups often provided information about the right to conscientious objection for young men who wished to object to military service as well as free legal counsel. Many West Germans who conscientiously objected to military service but who were not eligible for the draft joined conscientious objection groups. These people would never be called to serve in the Bundeswehr yet they organized to protest conscription because they saw it as their responsibility as members of a civil society.

Many conscientious objection activists were war veterans who, because of their own experiences, wanted to make sure that the young men of the Federal Republic

⁸⁴ John Dornberg “Defying the Draft,” *The Nation*, December 8, 1956, 494.

would never have to experience the horrors of war. Along with war veterans these groups counted among their members people from other parts of West German society such as university professors, clergy, trade unionists, pacifists, and housewives. Voicing the opinion of many, a leader of the GdW Hans Nickel stated,

I'm a product of your American reeducation program. I was drafted into the German Army as a teenager and served until the Hitler regime collapsed. In 1945 you Americans told us that we should never again have an army. In 1950 your reeducation officers all packed their bags and went home. Coming in behind them were your generals and politicians who told us to get busy on rearmament. I'm sticking to the original lesson. It appeals to me, and besides I'm getting tired of being reeducated.⁸⁵

Many West Germans could relate to Hans Nickel's experiences, they had lived through the devastation of World War II and the occupation that followed. They were devoid of any militaristic feelings and were unwilling to see German youth forced to serve in a new German army. In addition to providing legal counsel, these groups actively lobbied for the rights of conscientious objectors in the courts.⁸⁶

The law guaranteeing conscientious objection states, "No one may be compelled against his conscience to perform military service under arms."⁸⁷ Conscientious objection was included in the Basic Law primarily to prevent the reemergence of a military that conscripted young men who were morally opposed to military service. The West German government determined that a young man could object to military service for a few specific reasons. Those who were opposed to military service for religious

⁸⁵ Since Dornberg was an American Hans Nickel addressed the U.S. in his statement. Dornberg "Defying the Draft," 495.

⁸⁶ "Macht es wie Adenauer," *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1956, 14.

⁸⁷ Federal Republic of Germany, *White Paper 1970* (Bonn: Federal Minister of Defense, 1970), 82.

reasons, such as Jehovah's Witnesses or Quakers, were allowed to do so. The young men who objected to military service on personal moral grounds—a pacifist—could also make a case for conscientious objection. However, one had to be against all military service in principle, not just on a conditional basis. This was because of the government's concern that those who objected to a war with nuclear weapons or a fratricidal war with East Germany would make up a large portion of the population and therefore significantly reduce the capabilities of the Bundeswehr.⁸⁸

Interestingly, with all the activity and publicity concerning the right of conscientious objection, a very small percentage of the men called up actually claimed the right. In fact, of the 100,000 men mustered for the first draft in April 1957 (those inspected by the draft boards but not actually drafted), only 328 (0.3 percent) exercised the right of conscientious objection.⁸⁹ Of those mustered only 10,000 were actually called up for service in the first draft. This indicates that while many of the West German population were aware of the right to conscientious objection only a small portion of young men actually exercised this right. This may have been because the government had been able to convince many of the young men that the Bundeswehr was actually a very different military from the Wehrmacht of Nazi Germany. One could also make the argument that the young men eligible for the draft believed that the rights granted to them as soldiers were indeed as progressive and democratic as the government had said they were and therefore military service would not be as oppressive

⁸⁸ Jaeger, *Verhandlungen*, July 6, 1956, 31:8848A.

⁸⁹ Federal Republic of Germany, *White Paper 1970*, 265.

as they had once believed. Or perhaps the number of conscientious objectors was small because a social stigma existed, possibly involving questions of patriotism or manhood, that prevented young men from objecting to military service.⁹⁰ It is most probable that choosing to conscientiously object to military service was not acceptable in the conservative society of 1950s West Germany. To most West Germans conscientious objection was “abnormal and a bad exception to a good rule.”⁹¹

This conclusion points to one of the major failures of the West German conscientious objection organizations and the peace movement as a whole during this period, they were not able to make a major impact on the public conscience during the rearmament debate. The young men called up were not convinced that objection was the only right choice if they wanted peace. Furthermore, even though the West German peace movement worked with the clergy, trade unions, intelligentsia, youth, and even the Social Democrats, they had little to no influence on government policy. While the SPD put up a stiff fight in the Bundestag against the ratification of the Paris Accords, rearmament, and the establishment of conscription, the CDU-led majority easily passed each measure. In fact, as a testament of how ineffectual the peace movement was during the rearmament and conscription debates, Adenauer and the CDU/CSU won an outright majority in the 1957 Federal Elections for the first and only time in the history of the

⁹⁰ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1956, 14; Wilhelm Meier-Dörnberg, “Die Auseinandersetzung um die Einführung der Wehrpflicht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” 107; In fact the percentage of conscientious objectors in the Federal Republic stayed at a very low level until the late 1960s, Federal Republic of Germany, *White Paper 1970*, 265.

⁹¹ Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 273.

Federal Republic.⁹² Even though there was significant participation in the various protest events and the polling data show a fairly divided public opinion over the issues of rearmament and military conscription, when it came time to vote the West German people voted overwhelmingly in favor of the CDU/CSU and Adenauer's Westward leaning, pro-military policies.

Nevertheless, the West German peace movement did see growth during this period. The debates over rearmament and conscription forced the peace movement out of its latency and into action. Crippled by the loss of German pacifists during the Nazi regime, the conscientious objection groups tried to raise support from other parts of society, particularly from the West German youth. The cooperation with the Social Democrats, trade unions, churches, and other prominent members of West German society during the Paulskirche action gave the movement some momentum and hope. Much of this progress was lost when the CDU easily pushed the ratification of the Paris Accords through the Bundestag. The next year military conscription was established despite the efforts of the various conscientious objection organizations and other elements of the peace movement. For the peace movement in West Germany, the experience of extra-parliamentary protest during the rearmament and conscription debates of the mid-1950s emphasized the need for substantial, coordinated public support. Furthermore, the conscientious objection groups, and the West German peace movement as a whole, had to find a way to operate outside of the political sphere without being so easily painted with the brush of communism by the government.

⁹² Bark and Gress, *From Shadow to Substance 1945-1963*, 398.

CHAPTER III

REFORM

After failing to make a significant impact on the course of the rearmament and conscription debates, the IdK and GdW were forced to reassess their position in West German society. The period was one of intense growth and organizational change for both groups. Through this process, we can see the various generational and ideological elements that these groups were comprised of and uncover the issues that divided, and united, these early West German activists. The issues facing the IdK and GdW, communism, growing generational divides, understanding the democratic process, and Cold War angst, were some of the same issues that faced West German society as a whole.

Recognizing that they could not reverse rearmament or conscription, the CO groups focused on educating potential conscripts about their legal right to conscientious objection and supporting COs during the rigorous review process. They also worked to reform their organizations to better represent their goals and the political environment of the late 1950s. This chapter focuses on several key events for the West German conscientious objection movement such as the Göttingen Declaration, the rise and fall of Kampf dem Atomtod, and the attempted merger of the two German conscientious objection organizations. It examines how the conscientious objection organizations transformed themselves after their failure to block rearmament and conscription with particular interest in the growing generational divide that began to define these groups

during this period and their struggle with communism. At this time, the conscientious objection organizations and the activists in leadership positions reorganized to develop a dynamic and multifaceted protest movement that centered on conscientious objection. The work of West German peace activists during this period helped create the organizational and intellectual space that allowed for the emergence of an extra-parliamentary opposition movement in the Federal Republic.

Many key activists got their start in peace activism during this period. Two people in particular were central to the development of the movements; Konrad and Helga Tempel. Konrad Tempel, born 1932 in Hamburg experienced the National Socialist regime and the war as a child. His biological father was absent for much of his childhood and he was quite close to his mother. As a young child in the late 1930s, Tempel was deeply affected by the ideology of National Socialism. He distinctly remembers standing at attention and giving the Hitler salute while in his home whenever the Horst Wessel song came on the radio. He had absorbed so much Nazi ideology that as a young child he adopted the violent anti-Semitism that characterized Nazism. Tempel recalls encountering an old Jewish woman on the street while walking with his mother in Hamburg. As a child under the age of 10, Tempel crossed the street and physically attacked the woman. He was not a particularly aggressive or violent boy but he committed violence for a system of belief he did not fully understand. After the war, he reflected on the power of the fascist ideology; how could a society reach the point where children saw violence as a socially acceptable action? Tempel resolved to eschew violence and find a way to change his society. These memories stayed with him and,

along with his wartime experiences, were part of what prompted him to become involved in peace work.¹

After the war, Tempel studied education and became a schoolteacher in the early 1950s. Drawn to pacifism, he joined the IdK in 1952 and quickly became a very active member. Tempel's staunch pacifism was grounded in his Quaker faith, which he was introduced to through international contacts made in the IdK.² Tempel studied the theory and practice of nonviolence and read everything he could get his hands on, including books and papers about the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Henry David Thoreau. He worked to make many of these writings accessible in German.³ Tempel's dedication to pacifism and relationships with peace activists in Britain put him in position to assume leadership roles in the IdK and later the VK.⁴

Helga Tempel, born 1932 in Hamburg, spent the war years away from Hamburg, along with Konrad, as part of the *Kinderlandverschickung*, which was a relocation program for children to protect them from the bombings. Helga was also a schoolteacher and had become a Quaker after being introduced to the faith by international IdK members.⁵ Helga joined the IdK in 1954, where she met Konrad, and counseled conscientious objectors as they went through the review process. Helga was also very

¹Interview with Konrad Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

² Ibid.

³ Letter from Konrad Tempel to Gene Sharp December 12, 1956. HIS, TEM 100,01-06.

⁴ Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zu APO*, 70.

⁵ Interview with Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

interested in nonviolence, particularly the practice of nonviolent direct action. Along with Konrad, Helga built relationships with peace activists in Britain and emerged as a leader on the national level for the IdK and later the VK.⁶

When Konrad and Helga joined the IdK in the early 1950s, they joined an organization that was led by older pacifists who had been involved in peace work in Germany for decades. These older pacifists provided them a great deal of instruction and guidance as Konrad and Helga learned about pacifism and peace work. However, the life experience and philosophical approach to activism that characterized their generations became a point of contention as the younger members matured as peace activists.

The Chairman of the IdK, Dr. Theodor Michaltscheff, was born in Bulgaria in 1899 and had been involved in peace work in Europe since he refused to perform military service in 1920. He was imprisoned in Bulgaria for refusing to perform military service and in 1924 he immigrated to England where he became involved with the newly formed War Resisters' International. Michaltscheff then moved to Hamburg, Germany where he studied philosophy and earned his doctorate in 1937.⁷ After World War II, he reestablished contact with the WRI and took up a leadership role in the German branch of the WRI, the IdK.⁸ Theodor Michaltscheff was dedicated to pacifism and wrote a great deal about pacifism and the peace movement in Germany. Konrad Tempel

⁶ Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zu APO*, 70.

⁷ "Macht es wie Adenauer," *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

⁸ Letter from Theodor Michaltscheff to Brown, May 26, 1945. HIS, Sammlung Michaltscheff; Theodor Michaltscheff, *20 Jahre Friedensrundschau: 20 Jahre Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner (1947 - 1966); persönliche Erinnerungen* (Hamburg: Archiv Aktiv, 1996).

remembered Michaltscheff as a person who was, “Very warm hearted but also narrow minded in some respects. He didn’t like discussions. He had his own opinions and they were always right.”⁹ Tempel recalled that Michaltscheff was not very flexible when it came to the direction of the IdK or how protest actions should be undertaken.

Michaltscheff was the only paid person in the IdK leadership in the mid-1950s and ran the organization from his home in Hamburg. It was his leadership and personality that the IdK developed around during this period.¹⁰ Michaltscheff wielded a substantial amount of control over the IdK and this influenced the character of the IdK a great deal.

Many of the other elder statesmen of the IdK had similar life stories. Dr. Fritz Wenzel, past President and Chairman of the IdK, was born in Prussian Breslau in 1910 and was a doctor of theology and philosophy.¹¹ He was a prominent evangelical pastor and after the war was one of the many expellees from the German territories in the East. Dr. Wenzel was also an SPD politician in the early 1950s and president of the German Peace Society (*Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft*, DFG) for much of the 1950s.¹² Dr. Wenzel as a very inspiring speaker and IdK members were proud to have a pacifist, one of their own, in the Bundestag.¹³ Rosel Lohse-Link, born 1905 in Baden-Württemberg, was a Quaker and the daughter of one of the founders of the IdK. She was a dedicated

⁹ Interview with Konrad Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

¹⁰ Interview with Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

¹¹ Grünewald, *Die Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner (IdK)*, 554-558.

¹² “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

¹³ Interview with Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

pacifist and had served in many leadership roles, including as Vice-Chairman of the national council, in both the local IdK chapter and the national leadership council.¹⁴

Heinz Kraschutzki, born 1891 in Prussian Danzig, served in the Imperial Navy during World War I with Martin Niemöller and had participated in the November Revolution in 1918.¹⁵ During the 1920s and early 1930s, Kraschutzki was very active in the German peace movement and actively worked against the NSDAP and other nationalist political organizations.¹⁶ When the Nazis came to power, Kraschutzki immigrated to Majorca but was arrested and thrown in prison by Franco's government after the Spanish Civil War. Because of his international pacifist connections, the WRI was able to secure his release from prison in 1943 and he spent the rest of the war in Gibraltar.¹⁷ After World War II Kraschutzki returned to Germany and worked as a social worker in the West Berlin prison system. He served in a number of roles in the national leadership of the IdK—he also served on the International Committee of the WRI—and from his home in West Berlin, he actively worked for an East-West détente.¹⁸

Heinz Kraschutzki was a very able person who inspired a number of IdK members with his passion and commitment to pacifism. At the same time, many did not

¹⁴Grünewald, *Die Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner (IdK)*, 554-558.

¹⁵Helmut Donat and Karl Holl, *Die Friedensbewegung: organisierter Pazifismus in Deutschland, Österreich und in der Schweiz* (Düsseldorf: Econ TaschenbuchVerlag, 1983), 232-233.

¹⁶Marnau, "Wir, die wir am Feuer von Chevreuse die Hand erhoben haben...".

¹⁷Prasad, *War Is a Crime against Humanity*, 235.

¹⁸Grünewald, *Die Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner (IdK)*, 554-558.

understand his open mindedness about communism.¹⁹ While not a communist himself, he believed that a person's pacifism transcended their political affiliation and was not very concerned about IdK members with communist sympathies. Because of his experiences during the interwar period, Kraschutzki was not threatened by communism; he knew many pacifists in the DDR and believed they held just as strongly to their pacifist ideals as he did. Kraschutzki was concerned, however, about the specter of communism furthering the divide between East and West Germany and therefore refused to allow the IdK to make an issue of it.²⁰

Nearly all of the IdK's senior leadership had founded the postwar IdK in 1947.²¹ They were all dedicated pacifists who had extensive experience in peace work in Germany and had been involved in other peace organizations as well. When they faced the challenge of the IdK-GdW fusion, they were unwilling to allow the IdK to change to incorporate the relatively new and somewhat radical GdW. They believed the GdW's strong anti-communist position was not compatible with the spirit of the IdK and would damage the character of the organization.²²

The GdW leadership was primarily made up of younger activists, some had served in the Wehrmacht during WWII but most had experienced the war as children

¹⁹ Interview with Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

²⁰ "Berlin Situation," Report to the WRI by Heinz Kraschutzki, April 7, 1950, Internationaal Instituut voor sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam (hereafter IISG) War Resisters' International Records, WRI-241.

²¹ Grünewald, *Die Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner (IdK)*, 554-558.

²² Interview with Konrad Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

and had little memory of the Weimar Republic. For the original GdW leadership the war played a defining role when they were in their teens. Hans Nickel, born 1930 in Bielsko Poland, was assigned to the signal corps of the Wehrmacht in the last phase of the war at the age of 15. He experienced the bombing of Dresden and lost his two brothers in the war. After the war, he dedicated himself to pacifism. Nickel became a journalist and worked for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Rundschau*. He applied his experience in publishing and journalism to his work in the GdW, of which he was a co-founder, when he started publishing the organization's monthly magazine *ZIVIL*. Nickel had a penchant for mockery and in the mid-1950s he also founded the satirical magazine *PARDON*.²³

Werner Böwing, born 1928 near Leipzig, served in the Wehrmacht during the last months of the war until he was captured by the British Army in April 1945. He then spent three years in prisoner of war camps, first in Belgium then in Scotland and England. Böwing's time in the UK was instrumental in his political development as he learned some English and was introduced to democracy.²⁴ In 1948, the British Government sent him back to East Germany and soon after he encountered trouble with the East German authorities. Böwing lived and worked in the town of Lychen, north of Berlin, and while there, he and some friends formed a little group that spoke out against the government. On some nights, they would paint a white F for *Freiheit* (freedom) on

²³ "Wir sind Sisyphe," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, February 23, 2010. Letter from Gerhard Grüning to Arlo Tatum, June 25, 1958. IfZM Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

²⁴ Werner Böwing, *Erinnerungen an den Versuch, mit einer Luftpumpe die Windrichtung zu ändern* (Solingen: Manfred Krause/Solinger Geschichtswerkstatt, 1997), 82-86.

municipal buildings to protest the communist regime. The authorities soon identified Böwing as a ringleader of the group responsible for the seditious graffiti and he was forced to flee to West Berlin to escape the police.²⁵ After the Federal Republic gave him political asylum, Böwing immigrated to West Germany in 1949 as a political refugee.²⁶ Werner Böwing relocated to the West German capital of Bonn and found work as a carpenter. While in Bonn he joined *Sozialistische Jugend Deutschlands* (Socialist Youth of Germany, SJD), also known as *Die Falken*, and met other conscientious objection activists at an anti-rearmament protest in Cologne.²⁷

The leader and cofounder of the GdW, Hans Hermann Köper, born 1925, was a Wehrmacht veteran as well. He served in as a paratrooper in a battalion that held the bridgehead at Stettin during the final months of the war. During this engagement, he was wounded by shrapnel and captured by the Red Army. After a brief time in Soviet captivity, he returned to Cologne in 1946 where he studied music and lived on a medical pension.²⁸ His contemporaries described Köper as a left-wing social democrat who was an anti-militarist rather than a pacifist.²⁹ Because of his pension, Köper had both the time and resources to dedicate a great deal of his efforts to protest activism.³⁰ Köper, like

²⁵Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013; Werner Böwing, *Erinnerungen an den Versuch, mit einer Luftpumpe die Windrichtung zu ändern* (Solingen: Manfred Krause/Solinger Geschichtswerkstatt, 1997), 94-98.

²⁶ Letter from Gerhard Grüning to Arlo Tatum, June 25, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

²⁷ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013.

²⁸ "Macht es wie Adenauer," *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

²⁹ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013.

³⁰ Letter from Gerhard Grüning to Arlo Tatum, June 30, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

most in the GdW had strong feelings about communism and did not allow communists in their organization. The IdK, on the other hand, accepted communists as long as their politics did not interfere with their pacifism.

The difference in how the two groups approached communism is in part a product of the differences in the ideology of the leadership and membership of the two groups. Within the conscientious objection movement, there were two kinds of activists: pacifists and anti-militarists.³¹ These two positions were not mutually exclusive but they often dictated how a person conceptualized their activism and how they approached various issues, such as communism. The pacifists often came to conscientious objection from a position that was characterized by a strongly held moral opposition to violence. The anti-militarists often came to conscientious objection because they were against the idea of a remilitarized Germany and were motivated by current events, such as the establishment of conscription, as opposed to believing in nonviolence and pacifism. The GdW leadership and most of its membership were anti-militarists and the IdK leadership and many of its members were generally pacifists, with some exceptions.³²

One of the major reasons for the failure of the conscientious objection organizations and the West German peace movement as a whole during the rearmament and conscription debates was their inability to decisively separate themselves from the perception of communist influence. Even at the pinnacle of the peace movement during

³¹ Interview with Andreas Buro, Grävenwiesbach, Germany, July 16, 2013.

³² Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013

the Paulskirche action Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer easily dismissed the campaign by claiming their message was similar to communist propaganda. No matter how frequently and vehemently organizations within the peace movement denied any communist influence or involvement, once painted with the brush of communism, their legitimacy was continually challenged in the public sphere.³³ Much like McCarthyism in the United States in the early to mid-1950s once an organization or person was labeled a communist, regardless of the truth of the matter, they were suspect and politically doomed.

The conscientious objection organizations found it difficult to distance themselves from communism for a number of reasons. The fact that their primary reason for existing was to promote conscientious objection and to support young men who refused to participate in the defense of the Federal Republic of Germany was often problematic for them. Since the Soviet Union constituted the main threat to West Germany it was easy for some West Germans to assume that if a young man was not willing to fight to defend their country against a Soviet invasion then he must be a communist or at least sympathize with communism. In fact many West Germans believed that the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED), the governing party of Communist East Germany, had infiltrated

³³ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 9.

many West German peace organizations to influence them to promote a pro-communist agenda.³⁴

The main reason they struggled to separate themselves from communism was that the DDR also had a peace movement; one that highlighted the aggressive nature of the West and targeted Western governments, particularly the United States and the Federal Republic, as the source of Cold War tension. A major difference was that in the DDR, the government sponsored, and controlled, the peace movement and therefore the official peace organization, the Peace Council, enjoyed significant financial and organizational support.³⁵ The cluttered and conflicting rhetoric about peace in central Europe made it difficult to distinguish the motives of various peace groups and, inevitably, many West German groups were marked with a communist label.

West German peace activists found themselves in a particularly difficult situation when it came to their rhetoric. Historian Holger Nehring explained that in the Federal Republic, “more than in other countries, ‘peace’ had the reputation of being a term of communist propaganda.” This was because the DDR and the Soviet Union had characterized Adenauer and his policies as militaristic and had portrayed the Eastern

³⁴ Letter to Arlo Tatum June 14, 1958, IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2; while there does not seem to be any evidence of communist infiltration in the conscientious objection groups it was in fact an issue that faced the West German peace movement. For more information see Dirk Mellies, *Trojanische Pferde der DDR?: das neutralistisch-pazifistische Netzwerk der frühen Bundesrepublik und die Deutsche Volkszeitung 1953-1973* (Frankfurt, M.: Lang, 2007).

³⁵ Stefan Berger and Norman Laporte, *Friendly Enemies: Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 14.

Bloc as the peace camp in their propaganda.³⁶ This meant that every time West German peace activists called for peace they had to be very specific with what they meant and to try to differentiate their message from the message coming from the East.

In addition, many West German pacifists were willing to give up any claims to the Eastern territories that used to be part of Germany to avoid tension in Central Europe. Since those territories were now under communist control, these people were often accused of being pro-communist.³⁷ Pacifists also had to deal with accusations that they were either naïve about the tenuous position of West Germany on the front lines of the Cold War or apathetic about national security. Their pleas for unilateral disarmament and peace were often met with skepticism in West Germany, particularly during this period when the Soviet Union seemed increasingly aggressive.³⁸

The development of tactical nuclear weapons and the possibility of their deployment by the United States and NATO in Western Europe, specifically West Germany, became a flashpoint for the conscientious objection organizations in West Germany. Already opposed to war and military service, these groups believed that the deployment of nuclear weapons in West Germany would exacerbate an already tense geopolitical environment in Central Europe. The conscientious objection organizations

³⁶ Nehring, "Americanized Protests?" 218.

³⁷ H.G. Friedrich, "The Peace Movement in West Germany," Background Paper, WRI Study Conference Bredablik, Denmark August, 1962, IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/17.

³⁸ "Unser Kommentar: Ostermaschierer," *Altmühl-Bote*, March 29, 1961; Victor Petit, "Sie liefen sich Blasen," *Deutsche Tagespost*, April 4, 1961.

and many in the West German peace movement became vocal in their opposition to nuclear war believing it was their social responsibility to prevent nuclear war at all costs.

Chancellor Adenauer announced in April 1957 that the Bundeswehr should be given American-made tactical nuclear weapons. These weapons, Adenauer claimed, were “basically nothing but the further development of artillery” and “practically normal weapons” that the Bundeswehr needed to have.³⁹ Furthermore, Adenauer believed that a unilateral renunciation of all nuclear weapons would be unwise and would not contribute to the growth of peace in Europe.⁴⁰ Because of their inflammatory nature, Adenauer’s statements were ill advised for an election year and immediately ignited controversy.⁴¹ This announcement appalled many West Germans and their reaction was swift.

Immediately after Adenauer’s statement, eighteen leading West German nuclear scientists, including four Nobel laureates, wrote a declaration against arming the Bundeswehr with tactical nuclear weapons and against the policy of nuclear deterrence in general. Their prestige and positions in academia gave their message a great deal of weight in West German society and because of this the press gave them plenty of coverage.⁴² The “Göttingen 18”, as they became known, felt that the public was being misled about the nature of tactical nuclear weapons and wanted to inform the West

³⁹ “Wasserstoff-Waffen auch für die Bundesrepublik?” *Die Welt*, April 6, 1957.

⁴⁰Mark Cioc, *Pax Atomica: The Nuclear Defense Debate in West Germany During the Adenauer Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 42-43.

⁴¹ Michael Geyer, “Cold War Angst: The Case of West-German Opposition to Rearmament and Nuclear Weapons,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, edited by Hanna Schissler, 376-408, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 392.

⁴² Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 62.

German public about the potential dangers of the tactical nuclear weapons proposed by the Adenauer government and about the danger of using nuclear weapons as a deterrent.⁴³ The “Göttingen Manifesto” stated,

Tactical nuclear weapons have the same destructive effect as normal atomic bombs. They are “tactical” only insofar as they are applied not only to civilian residences, but also to ground troops. Every single tactical nuclear weapon has a similar effect to the first atom bomb which destroyed Hiroshima. Since tactical nuclear weapons are available in significant numbers their destructive effect is on the whole much larger. They are only “small” in comparison to recently developed bombs, principally the hydrogen bomb.⁴⁴

In addition, the Göttingen 18 explained that the development of nuclear weapons had reached the point where no one would be safe should these weapons be used in war.

There is no natural limit for the development of life-threatening effects of strategic nuclear weapons. Today a tactical nuclear weapon can destroy a small city, and a hydrogen bomb can render an entire region such as the Ruhr Valley uninhabitable. Already today, one can probably wipe out the entire population of West Germany with the radioactivity from H-bombs. We know of no technical means to protect a large population from this threat.⁴⁵

The scientists emphasized that they understood the political difficulties facing the government but maintained that they could not remain silent on the issue. They aligned themselves “with the freedom that the Western world represents against Communism” and recognized that “the fear of the H-bomb contributes to the maintenance of peace in

⁴³*Die Welt*, April 13, 1957

⁴⁴ Rupp, *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer*, 74-75.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 75.

the whole world, and freedom in part of the world.”⁴⁶ However the Göttingen 18 believed, along with many other Germans, that peace guaranteed by nuclear weapons was unsustainable in the long term and should it fail, the results would be deadly. Their solution was a peace without nuclear weapons, “a small country such as West Germany is best protected, and world peace most assisted when nuclear weapons of any type are banned.”⁴⁷

As the West German population absorbed the warning of the Göttingen 18 the Adenauer government reacted by claiming the scientists were “meddling in politics.” Furthermore, Adenauer accused the 18 scientists and their Göttingen Manifesto of needlessly rousing public fears of an atomic war that only aided the Soviet position.⁴⁸ The SPD quickly rallied behind the scientists and commended their “act of conscience.”⁴⁹ With widespread support for the Göttingen 18 in the West German press and public, the Social Democrats recognized the opportunity to get ahead on their federal election campaign and made a push in the Bundestag. In the May 1957 Bundestag debates the SPD called for a non-proliferation treaty, a test ban, and a nuclear weapon-free Central Europe. Deputy Chairman of the SPD faction, Fritz Erler, declared during a debate in the Bundestag “...in any conflict with these weapons there is no victor and vanquished, there is only the vanquished.” He pointed out that West German

⁴⁶ Rupp, *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer*, 75.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Die Welt*, April 15, 1957.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

participation the nuclear arms race was useless, “The balance-of-terror, which today keeps the peace, will continue to exist whether the Bundeswehr receives nuclear warheads or not.”⁵⁰ The Social Democrats received support from the FDP who claimed “Every German now knows what tactical nuclear weapons mean for the densely populated Central European realm, namely to turn every city into a thousand-fold Auschwitz.”⁵¹

The CDU responded by arguing that the SPD and their allies were blowing the issue out of proportion. Federal Defense Minister, Franz Josef Strauß, stated that the government had not officially requested, nor been offered, nuclear weapons of any kind from the United States.⁵² Adenauer downplayed the whole nuclear issue claiming that it was *nicht aktuell* (not current, not newsworthy) and certainly not something the public needed to be worried about.⁵³ Along with downplaying the issue, Adenauer continually side-stepped the nuclear question while campaigning and instead asked voters if they felt safer with the CDU/CSU and NATO or with the SPD and no Western military support.⁵⁴

The declaration of the Göttingen nuclear scientists and its widespread acceptance among the West German population were indications that German politics had changed. Previously, political critique by cultural elites and members of the universities was

⁵⁰Erler, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 2. Wahlperiode, 10. Mai 1957, 12073.

⁵¹Mende, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 2. Wahlperiode, 10. Mai 1957, 12099.

⁵²Strauß, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 2. Wahlperiode, 10. Mai 1957, 12073.

⁵³ Adenauer, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 2. Wahlperiode, 10. Mai 1957, 12073.

⁵⁴ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 209.

unheard of; these cultural elites preferred not to politicize the intellectual sphere and often remained aloof from politics.⁵⁵ With the April 1957 declaration, the Göttingen 18 changed the borders of German political life, allowing the critique and protest of government policy to emerge from other spheres of German society. IdK member and peace activist Helga Tempel remembered feeling encouraged by the actions of the Göttingen scientists. Their willingness to speak out against dangerous government policy gave her and other activists hope that the leadership in Bonn would abandon their attempts to acquire nuclear weapons.⁵⁶

The 1957 federal elections were a smashing victory for the CDU/CSU. For the first and only time in the history of the Federal Republic, one party captured the absolute majority.⁵⁷ This was a huge defeat for the SPD. The public seemed to support the CDU/CSU even though the data show that they were very concerned about nuclear weapons.⁵⁸ It has been argued that since there was not yet any real outlet in which to voice antimilitary concerns separate from the existing political structure, antimilitary protests were limited and ineffective.⁵⁹ This absence of sustained, organized antimilitary

⁵⁵ Geyer, "Cold War Angst," 392.

⁵⁶ Interview with Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013; Letter from Heinz Kraschutzki to Arlo Tatum, April 14, 1957, IISG, War Resisters' International Records, WRI-241.

⁵⁷ The CDU/CSU won an absolute majority of the vote with 50.2 percent. That meant that the CDU/CSU could govern alone. Bark and Gress, *From Shadow to Substance*, 398.

⁵⁸In fact, in 1957 more than sixty percent of West Germans were against equipping the *Bundeswehr* with nuclear weapons. Noelle-Neumann and Neumann, *The Germans*, 441. For an excellent study of this paradox see Geyer, "Cold War Angst."

⁵⁹ Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 81.

protest on a national scale, combined with a strong economy, seems to have aided the 1957 CDU/CSU election campaign.

Another significant factor in the CDU victory was the violent Soviet suppression of Hungarian Revolution in the fall of 1956. For many West Germans the brutal Soviet intervention in Hungary validated the rearmament and nuclear weapons policies of the Adenauer government.⁶⁰ During the 1957 federal elections the Soviet threat loomed in the minds of the West German voters, many of whom felt Adenauer and the CDU/CSU would be the best prepared to protect the country.⁶¹

Following their defeat in the 1957 federal elections, the Social Democrats again turned to the West German public to keep the antinuclear issue alive. The SPD joined forces with opponents of nuclear weapons to form Fight Atomic Death (KdA), a popular protest campaign that operated on the edges of traditional politics. The KdA campaign began at a meeting of SPD leadership in Bonn on January 20, 1958 and during the next few months, the Social Democrats developed an antinuclear campaign that became part of their defense policy platform and a major public protest movement.⁶² The campaign centered on four major concerns: first, a stop to all atomic weapons tests; second, no atomic weapons for the Bundeswehr or any other army that did not already possess them; third, no German scientists involved in the development of atomic weapons; the

⁶⁰Geyer, "Cold War Angst," 380.

⁶¹ About half of the West German population felt the country was menaced by Russia. Noelle-Neumann and Neumann, *The Germans*, 553.

⁶² Rupp, *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer*, 127-135.

final demand was for atomic weapons and missile bases to be kept out of Germany.⁶³ The goal of the KdA campaign was to compel the Adenauer government to cease their efforts to equip the Bundeswehr with atomic weapons and pursue a diplomatic agenda of disarmament and reunification.⁶⁴ Since they had been unable to stop Adenauer and Strauß's efforts in the Bundestag, the SPD leadership proposed a nationwide referendum (*Volksbefragung*) on whether the Bundeswehr should be equipped with nuclear weapons and if nuclear missiles should be allowed on West German soil.⁶⁵ They believed a question of that magnitude should be put before the West German people and the KdA campaign was their platform to raise awareness of the nuclear threat and raise support for the referendum.⁶⁶

A portion of the West German public responded positively to the SPD initiative and, much like the antinuclear movement that had erupted Great Britain in 1957, the Fight Atomic Death campaign quickly developed a strong local element. Many of the same people who had joined in the Paulskriche movement in 1955 to protest rearmament and supported the Göttingen 18 in 1957—pacifists, scientists, clergy, writers, students, trade unionists, and peace activists from all walks of life—formed local KdA committees all over West Germany.⁶⁷ More than a hundred protest rallies were held all across the

⁶³ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 223.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 65; Bark and Gress, *From Shadow to Substance*, 407.

⁶⁶ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 224.

⁶⁷For the antinuclear movement in Great Britain Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 44-51; Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 223.

Federal Republic that spring and summer and many were joined by thousands of participants. In Hamburg, the local labor movement organized a work stoppage an hour before closing time to allow workers to join the protest rally on 17 April and largely because of this, around 150,000 people demonstrated against nuclear weapons.⁶⁸

The KdA campaign peaked during April and May of 1958. Even though the campaign received significant support from the SPD rank and file as well as many of the clergy, trade unions, pacifists, and scientists, it was by no means supported by the broader society. Conservatives—many Catholics, big business, the CDU/CSU, and most of the press—opposed the antinuclear movement. Furthermore, international developments did not work in the movement’s favor. The West German population was once again reminded of the Soviet threat when the Soviet-installed Hungarian government secretly tried, found guilty, and executed by hanging in June 1958 the leader of the Hungarian Revolution, Imre Nagy.⁶⁹ In July the Federal Constitutional Court announced its decision that state referenda on the nuclear weapons issue—the primary goal of the KdA campaign—was unconstitutional.⁷⁰ This ruling effectively ended the Fight Atomic Death campaign and the number of participants in the protest rallies, which had been in decline since May, dropped drastically. The SPD recognized they had lost the battle and ceased their efforts to use the campaign as a political weapon against the Adenauer government.

⁶⁸ Rupp, *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer*, 182-184, 289-296.

⁶⁹“War es Mord?,” *Der Spiegel*, July 2, 1958. 27/1958.

⁷⁰ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 66.

The Fight Atomic Death campaign continued to exist with passive support from the SPD, primarily so the party could use it as a rhetorical tool, but it was an ineffective shell of what it had been at its height.⁷¹ The SPD began to recognize that a more realistic stance on national defense was necessary if they were ever going to seriously challenge the Christian Democrats in the polls. In November 1959 the Social Democrats ratified the Godesberg Program and made a significant change to their political course. They abandoned many Marxist ideas and instead of being a workers' party they rebranded themselves as a *Volkspartei* or a party of the people. They accepted Ludwig Erhard's social market economy and advocated a reasonable national defense policy.⁷² However, the SPD maintained its support of the right of conscientious objection.

Many antinuclear activists and peace activists learned a hard lesson from the KdA campaign about the pitfalls of aligning themselves with, and relying on, major political parties. Once the SPD no longer had a political use for the KdA, they dropped their active support for the program and since the SPD and many of their members were so instrumental in the organization and promotion of the campaign, it quickly faded away. This left antinuclear activists without a platform to voice their concerns about the government's nuclear weapons policy. The new direction of the SPD's political program after the adoption of the Godesberg Program left many peace activists without support in the Bundestag. Having no left-wing political party willing to stand against the

⁷¹ Shelley Rose, "Transnational Identities In National Politics: The SPD and the German Peace Movements, 1921-1966", dissertation, (Binghamton State University of New York), 2010, 192.

⁷² Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 260-263.

government's defense agenda forced many activists to look for other ways to have a voice in their country's political course. Konrad Tempel explained that because of the decline of the KdA peace activists, he "learned to not rely on traditional structures and to not rely on mass organizations." For Konrad Tempel, this development stressed the importance of the individual and grassroots activism.⁷³ Some activists maintained their personal affiliation with the Social Democrats but many left the party that they felt had abandoned them. Realizing that they could not rely on mainstream political groups for support, West German peace activists created their own protest organizations apart from political influence.⁷⁴

In the midst of this turmoil the conscientious objection groups were in a state of flux. As the political environment continued to change these organizations were also forced to adapt to stay relevant in the rapidly shifting West German culture of the late 1950s. While not yet embroiled in the social turmoil of the 1960s, West Germany underwent a period of significant cultural change in the 1950s as society adjusted to the realities of the postwar world.⁷⁵

The IdK focused on providing support for young men considering conscientious objection by hosting information sessions and providing legal advice. This difficult legal

⁷³ Interview with Konrad Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁷⁴ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013; Andreas Buro, *Gewaltlos gegen Krieg: Lebenserinnerungen eines streitbaren Pazifisten*, (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2011), 87-91; Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 99.

⁷⁵ Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*. (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2000).

process was also emotionally challenging for COs. First, one had to submit paperwork detailing their request for the West German government to consider them a conscientious objector. Then, if their application had passed the initial inspection, the government would call the applicant to appear personally before a board who would question them about their beliefs in an attempt to determine if their reasons for not wishing to perform military service were legitimate. The West German government was concerned that too many people would use conscientious objection as an excuse not to serve simply to avoid having to fulfill their civic duty.⁷⁶ To determine if the applicant's reasons for objecting were sufficient to be granted objector status, the review board would ask difficult moral questions and pose horrifying hypothetical scenarios such as "If your mother and sisters were attacked and about to be assaulted by a group of thugs would you use a weapon to protect them?" If the young man answered yes then he could be denied objector status because he was not truly a pacifist in the eyes of the audit board.⁷⁷

The IdK created some forty *Beratungsstellen* or counseling services all over West Germany to help young men navigate the difficult conscientious objection process.⁷⁸ The regional IdK chapters would also hold training sessions where the IdK members would play the role of the conscientious objection Audit Committee and the young people in attendance would play the role of the objectors.⁷⁹ Through the

⁷⁶ Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks*, 267-268.

⁷⁷ Interview with Harald Münz, Munich, Germany, June 14, 2011.

⁷⁸ *The War Resister*, no. 76, 3rd Quarter, 1957, 8. WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

⁷⁹ "Macht es wie Adenauer," *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

counseling service and practice sessions, the IdK hoped to prepare young men for the Audit Committees and put them in the best position to be recognized as conscientious objectors. However, the IdK did not change their protest tactics much after 1956. Their protest actions were fairly limited in scope and they had not yet developed a plan for reaching people outside of their philosophical sphere. Furthermore, while the IdK remained fundamentally pacifist they lacked concrete political goals.⁸⁰

At the same time, the IdK, as part of the WRI, continued to work to prevent war all over the world. While the IdK was unable to prevent West German rearmament or conscription these events did provide a boost to the organization, particularly in terms of membership, as the IdK tripled in size during this period from just a few groups in each state to as many as thirty-three in a state like Bavaria.⁸¹ Rearmament and conscription also made the IdK more attractive to the young people in West Germany. In the IdK section report to the War Resisters' International quarterly publication *The War Resister*, Michaltscheff reported, "The reintroduction of conscription produced such a shock especially among the younger generation, it awakened so many lazy, sleepy consciences, that an active opposition and revolt were inevitable. This state of mind made the younger generation very responsive to our ideas and this gave a tremendous impulse to our work."⁸²

⁸⁰ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁸¹ *The War Resister*, no. 76, 3rd Quarter, 1957, 7. WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

⁸² *Ibid.*

This new growth forced the IdK to reconsider their organizational structure and hire a paid staff to help run the group. They created *Landesverbände* or state unions that subdivided the national organization by region. These regional groups had considerable autonomy within the IdK and were administered by their own executive councils. This structural reorganization allowed the IdK to handle the growth of the membership and maintain the grassroots work that was so important to their mission.⁸³

The GdW also underwent significant reform during this period. Founded in 1953, the GdW was originally an anti-military and anti-conscription organization that protested against rearmament and military conscription in West Germany during the rearmament debates in the early 1950s. Unlike the IdK, the GdW originally existed solely to resist rearmament and compulsory military service in the Federal Republic of Germany.⁸⁴ Co-founder Werner Böwing explained that they created GdW because of their experiences in World War II. “We didn’t want a new German army because we were afraid that the horrors of the war would return (if West Germany rearmed).” For that reason, the GdW was absolutely against rearmament in East and West Germany from its founding.⁸⁵ They founders also recognized that the SPD was no longer representing their

⁸³ *The War Resister*, no. 76, 3rd Quarter, 1957, 7-8. WRI, Archives of the War Resisters’ International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

⁸⁴ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

⁸⁵ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013.

anti-military views and to counter this development sought a new way to influence government defense policy.⁸⁶

However, they were not fundamentally pacifist or Christian as an organization.⁸⁷ The leadership of the GdW stated, “We are nothing more than an association of people who have made their decision... and no longer want to shoot other people.”⁸⁸ The GdW was a very pragmatic organization that focused on helping COs, no matter the reason they had for objecting. In contrast, the IdK insisted that the COs’ reason for objecting to military service came from pacifist feelings and a real moral objection to war.⁸⁹ The GdW was also more adept at addressing the political problems that faced the Federal Republic. They came up with new ideas for atomic weapons policies like European nuclear neutral zones. Unlike the IdK, Hans Hermann Köper and Wilhelm Keller, along with the rest of the GdW leadership, were interested in operating on a more political level. They were also very suspicious of communists, which reflected the prevailing sentiment in West German society, and did not want any communists in their organization.⁹⁰

Hans Hermann Köper was a polarizing figure as the head of the GdW. Köper was a Wehrmacht veteran and had been wounded at the end of the war. After a brief time in

⁸⁶ Böwing, *Erinnerungen an den Versuch*, 147.

⁸⁷ “Die Gruppe der Wehrdienstverweigerer,” IFZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/15.

⁸⁸ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

⁸⁹ Interview with Konrad Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁹⁰ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

Soviet captivity he returned to Cologne and studied music. While in Cologne in the late 1940s Köper joined the Socialist Youth of Germany and became an active member participating in early anti-rearmament demonstrations.⁹¹ By the early 1950s, Köper was handicapped by complications from the injuries he received during the war and he lived off his pension from the government. In 1954, he became the chairman of the newly founded GdW and led the group in their opposition to West German military conscription.⁹²

After the establishment of conscription in 1956, the identity of the organization moved towards that of the IdK, one that primarily provided information and support for conscientious objectors and protested against the government's military policies but increasingly moved towards a much broader peace agenda. From 1956 to 1958, the idea of a merger between the IdK and GdW had been discussed since it was clear that there was a duplication of efforts between the two groups. Much like the IdK, the GdW also went to great lengths to inform potential conscripts of their rights. For example, in early January 1957 the GdW sent out hundreds of thousands of leaflets warning young men born in 1937 to send in their requests for conscientious objector status before the deadline.⁹³ On a few occasions, the GdW and IdK even worked together on the same

⁹¹ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013.

⁹² "Macht es wie Adenauer," *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

events.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the GdW also established a number of *Beratungsstellen* in coordination with the IdK to support conscientious objectors.⁹⁵

At the 1957 IdK Annual Meeting in Bremen, the leadership decided to pursue a merger with the GdW. As a result, they called a special meeting in Frankfurt in May 1958 to take the steps to join the two German conscientious objection organizations.⁹⁶ While it seemed obvious that the two groups should merge to become more effective in their common effort to resist the government's military policies, it quickly became evident that the IdK and GdW were two very different organizations.⁹⁷

Almost immediately, the attempt to combine the groups encountered trouble. It seems that the GdW Chairman, Hans Hermann Köper, was not well liked or trusted by some of the IdK leadership and rank and file. Köper was called a witch hunter and a SPD stooge by his enemies.⁹⁸ While he was a member, as were many in the IdK, he was not an official in the SPD.⁹⁹ His anticommunist stance was so strong that Heinz Kraschutzki confided to WRI Secretary Arlo Tatum "He [Köper] was like a little

⁹⁴ Arlo Tatum, "German Situation," IFZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/16.

⁹⁵ *The War Resister*, no. 76, 3rd Quarter, 1957, 8. WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

⁹⁶ Minutes, WRI International Council Meeting, 17-20 June 1958, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

⁹⁷ Letter from Heinz Kraschutzki to Arlo Tatum, January 20, 1958, IISG, War Resisters' International Records, 241.

⁹⁸ Letter from Rüdiger Frank to Arlo Tatum, June 23, 1958, IFZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

⁹⁹ Arlo Tatum, "German Situation," IFZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/16.

MacCarthy [*sic*] within the German peace movement.”¹⁰⁰ Some in the IdK felt that merging with the GdW would negatively affect the ability of the IdK to remain apart from party politics. Kraschutzki warned if Köper were given a leadership position in the organization after the merger, “We should be entirely under the control of the SPD.”¹⁰¹ On the other side of the issue were members of the GdW and the IdK that felt that a fusion should be made as soon as possible to bring an end to the duplication of effort by the two conscientious objection organizations.¹⁰²

A representative of the WRI Executive Committee attended the meeting and the proposed merger and constitution of the merged groups were discussed. The merger stalled over the “Independence Clause” that had been written into the constitution and was supported by the GdW members and a number of IdK members. The clause was part of the GdW constitution and stated,

In the sense of this obligation (that is our international declaration) the member has to support his National Committee in fulfilling his tasks and to strive that the independence of the organization will ever be maintained from all interest-groups and political parties who are one-sided fixed in the cold war as Communist and militant anti-Communist circles and the corresponding camouflage-organizations.¹⁰³

The clause was bitterly resented by a minority of the IdK members and some of the IdK leadership who felt it provided a constitutional basis for witch hunting of communists or

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Heinz Kraschutzki to Arlo Tatum, January 20, 1958, IISG, War Resisters’ International Records, 241.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Theodor Michaltscheff, “Ich kann nicht mehr schweigen,” Hamburg Staatsarchiv, Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer, 614-2/12.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

communist supporters in the group.¹⁰⁴ They believed that a member's personal political affiliation was not a concern as long as they were a dedicated pacifist and they kept their politics separate from the organization's activities.¹⁰⁵ The disagreement over this clause halted the merger attempt between the IdK and GdW and created a divide within the IdK membership.

It was clear to many that the difference of opinion over the independence clause could not be resolved. As a result, the GdW leadership met, disbanded, and reformed as the *Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer* under the proposed merger constitution, which included the disputed independence clause. Wilhelm Keller resigned his position as acting chairman of the IdK and, along with Hans Köper, became a co-chairman of the new VK. Nearly all of the leadership of the new VK - Wilhem Keller, Gerhard Grüning, Rüdiger Frank, Detlev Dahlke, and Harm Westendorf - maintained their membership in the IdK in an effort to bridge the gap between the two organizations and facilitate an eventual merger. The IdK also met and elected new officers to replace those who had resigned to join the VK. Both reorganization meetings went smoothly so it seems each side was happy with their situation.¹⁰⁶ However, the sense that there was a duplication of efforts continued to exist and merger talks would surface from time to time over the next decade.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Heinz Kraschutzki to Hilda von Klenze, February 17, 1958, IISG, War Resisters' International Records, 241.

¹⁰⁵ Arlo Tatum, "German Situation," IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/16.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

The newly formed *Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer* immediately added the words “*in der WRI*” to their name. In fact, this raised some concern with the WRI since it was done before the group had officially become part of the WRI.¹⁰⁷ The VK changed the wording to say, *angemeldet* (applied to) to appease the WRI leadership. The reason the VK was so quick to put their WRI affiliation in their official name was to avoid being seen as an appendage of the SPD or a left-wing political organization. By putting their affiliation with the WRI in their name the VK was trying to make it clear to all that they were not part of any political party or political interest group.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, this helped legitimize the VK and put them on the same level with the IdK which had been a section of the WRI since the 1920s. This is an indication that the contentious merger process affected the GdW leadership and made them consider their position in the West German peace movement. It was clear some in the IdK considered the GdW under the influence of the SPD and this concerned the GdW who saw their political independence as a crucial part of their organizational character.

There was significant concern among the WRI leadership as well as among the leadership of the IdK and VK over the risk of infighting or division within the German groups because of the failed fusion attempt and the subsequent reorganization. Gerhard Grüning believed that many of the members from both groups could work together in harmony but warned that conflicts between the two would only serve to help “Adenauer

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Arlo Tatum to Gerhard Grüning, May 22, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2; Letter from Arlo Tatum to Heinz Kraschutzki, May 22, 1958, IISG, War Resisters’ International Records, 241.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Gerhard Grüning to Arlo Tatum, May 29, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

and Ulbricht.”¹⁰⁹ Disgruntled activists made harsh statements about “left-wing radical groups” or “communist influence” in regards to the IdK, which fueled hostilities between the CO groups. At the formation meeting of the VK it was made clear by the newly elected leadership that defamation of the IdK in anyway was out of the question.¹¹⁰ Most of the VK leadership hoped to merge with the IdK in the near future and wanted to prevent dissension as much as possible.

After this realignment/reformation, a number of IdK groups and members left the IdK and joined the VK. This caused some hurt feelings among the IdK membership who felt those who had left for the VK had abandoned them. At the same time, rumors abounded within the IdK that the VK was just a front organization of the SPD or that the GdW had been paid off to make sure the merger failed. Some disgruntled IdK members even went so far as to claim that some of the VK leadership received funds from the SPD.¹¹¹ This claim was in part aimed at Hans Hermann Köper who received a full disability pension that allowed him to dedicate all his time to the GdW and travel frequently, thus appearing to have received illicit funding to some who were not familiar with his personal situation.¹¹²

The Hamburg IdK chapter created some controversy during this reforming period. The Hamburg IdK executive committee all joined the VK and encouraged all

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Gerhard Grüning to Arlo Tatum, May 29, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Rüdiger Frank to Arlo Tatum, June 11, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

¹¹¹ Letter from Arlo Tatum to Gerhard Grüning, June 30, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

¹¹² Letter from Gerhard Grüning to Arlo Tatum, July 7, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

IdK members to do the same.¹¹³ In early June, 1958 Harm Westendorf, member of the Hamburg IdK chapter and member of the VK leadership, was quoted in the press saying that the Hamburg chapter of the IdK had come under communist influence and been dissolved. The chairman of the IdK, Theodor Michaltscheff, called the WRI secretary, Arlo Tatum, to inform him of the event and asked that the WRI respond with a statement denying the accusations. The WRI released a statement that strongly denied the allegations of communist influence within the Hamburg chapter and declared that the chapter had not been dissolved.¹¹⁴ Leaders of the Hamburg IdK chapter, Konrad and Helga Tempel, who were also part of the national leadership of the VK, claimed that the suggestion of communist influence was untrue. However, they explained that the Hamburg IdK chapter had in fact been disbanded.¹¹⁵ The elected leaders of the chapter had called a membership meeting and by a legal majority of three-fourths of the members present decided to dissolve the chapter and join the VK.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Harm Westendorf issued a second statement to the press declaring that he had been misquoted and that he did not say the chapter was under communist influence nor was that his opinion.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Many who joined the VK maintained their membership with the IdK. Arlo Tatum, "German Situation," IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/16.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Letter from Hans-Konrad Tempel to Arlo Tatum, May 8, 1958, IISG, War Resisters' International Records, 249.

¹¹⁶ Arlo Tatum, "German Situation," IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/16.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.; Letter from Hans-Konrad Tempel to Arlo Tatum, June 8, 1958, IISG, War Resisters' International Records, 249.

The IdK national leadership, on the recommendation of Chairman Theodor Michaltscheff, expelled these IdK members and appointed a temporary Executive Council for the Hamburg IdK chapter. They declared that the meeting to dissolve the Hamburg chapter was unofficial and that the local leadership did not have the power to make any official decision. The WRI Executive Council disapproved of this move by the IdK leadership and was unhappy with the whole situation.¹¹⁸

At the annual War Resisters' International Meeting in Sonderholm, Denmark that July, the Executive Council addressed the situation at length. The West German representative on the Executive Council, Heinz Kraschutzki, was a long time IdK member and prominent peace activist. Kraschutzki provided the IdK's position and their perception of the events that unfolded. The Executive Council received the VK's formal letter of application for membership in the WRI from Konrad Tempel, a supplementary letter from Hans Hermann Köper, a memorandum about the developments in the IdK prepared by Wilhelm Keller on behalf of the VK Executive, and an oral report by Hilda von Klenze on the merger meetings in Bremen and Frankfurt. After a lengthy discussion, the council decided that the best course of action was to reprimand both organizations for getting into the situation and to suggest that the two groups take the time to resolve their differences:

The Council has carefully considered the application for affiliation of the V.K. It recognizes that the responsibility for the present situation in the German pacifist movement must be shared by both V.K. and I.d.K. and sincerely hopes that the members of both organizations will seek every

¹¹⁸ Arlo Tatum, "German Situation," IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/16.

opportunity of reconciliation. The Council has therefore decided to postpone any decision until its meeting in July 1959.¹¹⁹

The Council encouraged both organizations to keep their common goals in mind. The reason the WRI Executive Council postponed any decision on the membership of the VK was that they hoped the dispute would be resolved over the following year and the organizations could conclude a successful merger, thus rendering the VK membership application moot. The Council also agreed that if any members were invited to speak in West Germany they should make a point to visit both groups in order to avoid alienating either group.¹²⁰

Interestingly it appears that Michaltscheff requested that the Council ask the VK to not use the WRI declaration. The declaration was adopted at the founding of the WRI and simply states “War is a crime against humanity. I am therefore determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all cause of war.”¹²¹ The Council unanimously disapproved of the curious request but there is no mention of why Michaltscheff thought it should be a concern. Perhaps he believed that if the VK was allowed to use the WRI declaration they would gain more legitimacy than they deserved. Up until that point the IdK was the only German organization affiliated with the WRI

¹¹⁹ Minutes, WRI International Council Meeting, 17-20 June 1958, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Prasad, *War Is a Crime against Humanity*, 453.

and it could be that Michaltscheff was trying to preserve the IdK's position as the primary conscientious objection organization in West Germany.¹²²

This complicated and contentious series of events that marked the creation of the VK highlighted the importance these organizations placed on their character and image. The IdK had traditionally avoided using the words “communist” or “anticommunist” and simply referred to the opposing sides in the Cold War as “east” or “west” oriented. Their claim was that “we do not want to cooperate with either organizations that are west oriented working against the east, or organizations that are east oriented working against the west.”¹²³ They did this because they wanted to stay as politically neutral as possible—what they called “staying above party politics” or “*Überparteilich*”—so that their message and support for conscientious objectors would remain free of any political stigma and so that they could stay true to their pacifist principles.¹²⁴

However, the IdK acknowledged that there was “an ever present but not serious problem” of communists in the IdK that the IdK leadership constantly monitored.¹²⁵ In what they described as the “(Heinz) Kratschutzki position,” Helga and Konrad Tempel explained that most of the IdK leadership believed that the IdK should not exclude

¹²² Minutes, WRI International Council Meeting, 17-20 June 1958, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

¹²³ Theodor Michaltscheff, “Ich kann nicht mehr schweigen,” Hamburg Staatsarchiv, Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer, 614-2/12.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Letter from Arlo Tatum to Gerhard Grüning, June 30, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

pacifists who held other political beliefs.¹²⁶ Aware of the fact that a number of their members were communists, the IdK chose to focus on its message and work with conscientious objectors and, as long as all members left their political affiliations at the door and adhered to pacifist principles, the IdK did not feel having communist members was a serious concern. With this in mind it is easy to see how many in the IdK, including most of the senior leadership, resisted the inclusion of the Independence Clause that could open the door to communist witch hunts and needlessly divide their membership.

The GdW/VK, also very concerned about their image and character, felt the independence clause was necessary to establish their position as an anti-military, anti-conscription organization that was clearly unencumbered by any communist influence. Furthermore, they believed that the independence clause reinforced their existence as an organization without political, religious, or philosophical affiliation. Unlike the IdK, the VK was not necessarily bound to pacifist principles and were much more pragmatic with the character of their organization. When asked about the reason the VK insisted on the Independence Clause, Helga Tempel reflected that it would have been difficult for the VK to be accepted by society in the Cold War atmosphere of the late 1950s if communists were allowed to be members.¹²⁷

The difference in how the two groups approached this communism issue is in part a product of the differences in the ideology of the leadership and membership of the

¹²⁶ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

¹²⁷ Interview with Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

two groups. The two kinds of activists, pacifists and anti-militarists, were not mutually exclusive but they often dictated how a person conceptualized their activism and how they approached various issues, such as communism.¹²⁸ The pacifists were conscientious objection activists because they wanted to prevent war and remove all causes for war. The anti-militarists rejected military service because they did not want to see a rearmed Germany and were heavily influenced by their wartime experiences, as opposed to believing in nonviolence and pacifism. The GdW leadership and most of its membership were anti-militarists and the IdK leadership and many of its members were generally pacifists, with some exceptions. Prior to and during the merger attempt, many IdK members hoped to bring in the younger antimilitarist and encourage them to take up pacifist beliefs. Heinz Kraschutzki wrote to Arlo Tatum, “[W]hen I first heard about the plan to merge, ...I was in principle in agreement with it, as it would give us the chance to make real pacifists out of the many good young people of [the] GdW, who had no proper ideology at all.”¹²⁹

These ideological differences often meant that the two groups did not always see eye to eye, particularly in regards to communism. Because much of the GdW leadership was anti-militarist they were not as open-minded about pacifists with communist sympathies whereas the IdK leadership was more understanding about the issue. In many cases age was a common denominator with pacifists and anti-militarists and the

¹²⁸ Interview with Andreas Buro, Grävenwiesbach, Germany, July 16, 2013.

¹²⁹ Letter from Heinz Kraschutzki to Arlo Tatum, January 20, 1958, IISG, War Resisters' International Records, 241.

leadership of the two organizations reflected this. Werner Böwing recalled, “The younger people, more or less, were anti-militarists. The older people were more pacifists and not so anti-military. There was a difference between the younger and the older (activists).”¹³⁰

The contentious fusion attempt also highlighted the generational and ideological differences that had begun to emerge within the West German conscientious objection movement. The IdK was the older, more traditional organization that was led by a cohort of men and women who had been peace activists for decades. Many of them had been part of the German peace movement since the Weimar Republic. While the younger activists recognized the experience and commitment of their elders, some simply did not like working with them. Gerhard Grüning, one of the younger IdK members who later joined the VK, explained, “Personally...I dislike – I cannot help [it], that may be a generation question – Mrs. Lohse-Link and Heinz Kraschutzki.”¹³¹

Many of those who were in the IdK originally but joined the VK when it was created immediately after the failed merger were also of the younger generation. Konrad and Helga Tempel were involved in the leadership of the Hamburg IdK chapter. During the fusion discussions, they explained that most of the Hamburg IdK wanted to merge with the GdW because the Hamburg IdK members wanted to create a stronger, more powerful organization. An organization “that was not ruled from the desk of Theodor

¹³⁰ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013.

¹³¹ Letter from Gerhard Grüning to Arlo Tatum, July 7, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

Michaltscheff.”¹³² In their opinion, resistance to war, conscription, and the military required much more than just a hardened conscience and impassioned writing. Real activism “required action, winning people, and changing social structures.”¹³³ In their experience, most IdK members preferred to engage the issues on their own rather than with a coordinated group action. In the case of the Hamburg IdK section, the members wanted “a more sophisticated and dynamic group that was much more interested in changing the structures and changing society. They wanted to bring about change in German society instead of just satisfying their own conscience.”¹³⁴ Therefore, the opportunity to merge with a young, dynamic organization that was willing to conceptualize protest actions on a larger scale was very attractive to many of the younger activists in the IdK.¹³⁵ Konrad Tempel recalled, “I think we felt younger than Theodor Michaltscheff. We were in fact younger but were we aware that most IdK members were older and not very active.” Helga Tempel explained, “They had an old fashioned way of thinking,” and while they respected the convictions of Michaltscheff and the others they wanted to do more.¹³⁶

The general membership of the IdK and GdW also reflected the generational disparity. The GdW was mostly made up of concerned young people who came to

¹³² Interview with Helga and Konrad Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Letter from Arlo Tatum to Gerhard Grüning, June 30, 1958. IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2.

¹³⁶ Interview with Helga and Konrad Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013

conscientious objection as anti-militarists. The bulk of the IdK membership consisted mostly of older fundamental pacifists. Konrad and Helga Tempel reflected that the younger GdW was very vibrant, not always thoughtful but always lively; while the older IdK was more moderate and reflective.¹³⁷

From the founding of the GdW the generational and ideological differences with the IdK were apparent. Not only were they more hard-line about communists in the group, they were also more radical and provocative in their approach to protest, and interested in a new kind of activism. They were clearly aware of the divide between their generation and the generation before them. In a 1957 article in the influential weekly magazine *Der Spiegel*, the founding members of the GdW stated that they believed that peace activists today could no longer be successful with the pathos of the pacifists of 1920. In their view, German society had changed and the peace movement needed to change with it.¹³⁸ Even in their meetings, they established their own culture of protest. Köper explained, “We’re neither big time serious nor impertinent. We try to do things quickly. No lectures on basic principles during events, no event ceremonies with opening, welcome, speaker introduction and so on.”¹³⁹ Furthermore, the GdW identified with younger generation. Köper stated “The conscience of a working-class boy” should not count for less than “the conscience of a moral theologian.”¹⁴⁰ Köper took the

¹³⁷ Interview with Helga and Konrad Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013

¹³⁸ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

generational issue a step further pointing out that Konrad Adenauer, an octogenarian when the conscription law was passed, was sending young men to the military but had himself never served, the “Chancellor’s turned 80 years old, without ever having been a soldier.”¹⁴¹

The generational and ideological divide was also often reflected in the way that the two groups approached the issues. The IdK often presented a rational message when engaging an issue to connect with people on an intellectual level. Their slogans were practical and direct so that they maintained a respectful tenor. The GdW, however, was much more willing to engage people on an emotional level. The protest messages of the GdW were considered somewhat aggressive and controversial by some.¹⁴² Their slogans often poked fun at the government’s policies and they frequently used gallows humor in their messages. The GdW motorcade in Cologne during the rearmament debate, mentioned earlier, is a good example. The motorcade was led by a man who mocked the state’s militarism by wearing a paper helmet and the cars in the motorcade carried signs with anti-rearmament slogans such as “The joke of the day: Peace through Cannons!” and “Barracks drill is no education!” and drove around the city for hours.¹⁴³ Hans Herman Köper explained that the group chose to use a motorcade to spread their

¹⁴¹ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ “Presseschau,” *IfZM, Sammlung Maurer*, ED 718/15; Kraushaar, *Die Protest-Chronik 1949-1959*, 1:1046-1047.

message to draw more attention while the accompanying police vehicles maximized the drama of the event.¹⁴⁴

The GdW also chose to use evocative slogans that undoubtedly angered many older peace activists. For example several slogans drew parallels with the militarism of the Kaiser Reich and the Nazi regime, “Whether Kaiser, Führer, or Adenauer, the general does not care!” and “It started 18 years ago!” a 1957 slogan referencing the beginning of the Second World War in 1939.¹⁴⁵ They even suggested that parts of the government’s public campaign to raise support for their military policies were so much like the propaganda of the Third Reich that they wondered “does Goebbels still live?”¹⁴⁶

The former president of the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (German Peace Society, DFG) and IdK Chairman, Fritz Wenzel, was shocked when he heard the GdW slogan “Head off for prayer!” – insinuating that support for Adenauer’s military policies from religious circles, such as political Catholics, required a person to forget their intelligence – “The road leads through the barracks gate into the mass grave!” – eliciting images of World War II – “The coward advances to barracks, the bold says: No!” – a particularly inflammatory slogan that turned what many considered a patriotic duty into a cowardly act.¹⁴⁷ If these slogans angered other peace activists, one can imagine how

¹⁴⁴ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

¹⁴⁵ “Antimilitaristische Aktion 1957,” *Hamburger Stasatsarchiv*, 614-2/12, Paket 5.

¹⁴⁶ “Kompanie Herhören!” *IfZM*, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/15.

¹⁴⁷ “Antimilitaristische Aktion 1957,” *Hamburger Stasatsarchiv*, 614-2/12, Paket 5; “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

the general public received them, particularly those who were already leaning towards the right. Wenzel saw the GdW slogans as reckless attempts to draw the attention of the press rather than constructive messages that would help their cause.¹⁴⁸

However, not all of the GdW slogans were so inflammatory. In addressing the potential for nuclear warfare in Europe, one slogan called for people to be “active rather than radioactive.”¹⁴⁹ The GdW also demanded that resources be used for social advancement with the slogan “Schools instead of barracks, apprenticeships instead of military sites” and made pleas for the future of humanity stating, “Abolish the war, or it abolishes us!”¹⁵⁰ Helga Tempel described the GdW as an organization that was much more pragmatic than the IdK. She explained, “They (the GdW) saw something was wrong. They wanted to do something about it so they went out and protested. They were not very sensitive to the possibility of offending people; they were not very thoughtful about how their message was received.”¹⁵¹

After the GdW reformed as the VK, their national presence grew even larger. The new name was indicative of this growth. The name *Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer* (Association of Military Service Objectors) reflected a much

¹⁴⁸ “Macht es wie Adenauer,” *Der Spiegel*, January 16, 1957. 3/1957.

¹⁴⁹ “Antimilitaristische Aktion 1957,” *Hamburger Staatsarchiv*, 614-2/12, Paket 5.

¹⁵⁰ Many of these slogans, as with most sayings, sound the best in their original language. For example, the slogan about schools instead of barracks reads “Schulen statt Kasernen, Lehrstellen statt Wehrstellen.” “Antimilitaristische Aktion 1957,” *Hamburger Staatsarchiv*, 614-2/12, Paket 5.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

bigger idea than *Gruppe der Wehrdienstgegner* (Group of Military Service Objectors).¹⁵² They became more aggressive with their protest efforts and took on larger projects that operated on a national level. With the influx of IdK members the organization dramatically grew in size but also gained experienced activists who were familiar with working with regional sections and excited about coordinating protest events and information campaigns on a regional and national level. This increased exposure helped the VK develop into an efficient, nationally recognized protest organization. In fact, this growth may very well have removed any chance of a merger between the IdK and VK.

In its first year of existence, the VK initiated a nationwide campaign aimed at increasing awareness of the right conscientious objection. What separated this campaign from previous efforts by the GdW and IdK to inform West Germans about the right of conscientious objection was how it equated refusing military service with preventing nuclear war yet at the same time clearly distancing the message from any implication of communism. Called “*Aktion 4/3*” in reference to Article 4, Section 3 of the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law), the right of conscientious objection, the campaign consisted of information meetings and a national leaflet campaign. The leaflet was printed in color, distributed by mail, and passed out in cities and towns all over West Germany.¹⁵³

Aktion 4/3 is also an example of how the VK was conscious of the changing West German society. On the front page of the four page leaflet the colorful text reads

¹⁵² Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013.

¹⁵³ *Aktion 4/3*, WRI Sektionen, Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer, HIS, THM.

“*Aktion 4/3* Do not worry: we are not offering a new detergent or other products of the economic miracle; our product cannot be bought or sold: it is already in possession of all citizens of the Federal Republic! We mean Article 4, Section 3 of the Constitution.”¹⁵⁴ It then gave the wording of the law and explained that every citizen has the right to refuse to perform military service for reasons of conscience; no one can be forced into military service against their principles.

The same time *Aktion 4/3* was running, the Fight Atomic Death campaign was just coming down from its peak and the nation was very familiar with the anti-nuclear rhetoric. The VK used this period of heightened public awareness to present an alternate solution to the atomic weapon issue. The leaflet raised the specter of atomic war and asked the reader “Could you now, in good conscience, provide military service in the age of missiles and nuclear weapons which have finally exposed war as madness and criminal? Could you explain the willingness to drop atomic bombs on cities in which millions of women and children live?”¹⁵⁵ The reader is then reminded, “Everyone who participates, also bears the responsibility for all possible consequences of nuclear policy.”¹⁵⁶ However, there was a solution; the VK declared that without soldiers there could be no atomic war so the best way to prevent a nuclear catastrophe is to object to military service.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Aktion 4/3, WRI Sektionen, Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer, HIS, THM.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

The pamphlet also addresses the difficult issue of communism and conscientious objection. Questioning the government's claims that nuclear weapons were necessary to prevent a Russian invasion and communist takeover of West Germany, the VK points out that nuclear war is not a good solution. The "Threat from the East" must be countered by means other than total mutual annihilation. Instead, the leaflet declares, "Anyone who seriously wants to fight against communism and other hazards must renounce the unfit means of mutual mass destruction. The first step to a better solution is personal *yes* to the unconditional respect for life, ...and the associated *no* to military service."¹⁵⁸ *Aktion 4/3* presented the perfect solution, "Help us to make the *Action 4/3* of an ongoing awareness campaign about the noblest of all basic democratic rights, the right to refuse military service for reasons of conscience. Our solutions must be: 'Neither Communism nor war!' 'fight of atomic death-through conscientious objection!'"

Interestingly, the VK makes the point that they did not want communism or war. Implying that some people suggested that to avoid war is to welcome communism. The VK clearly stated that they did not think it was a zero sum game; it was possible to avoid war and resist communism at the same time. In addition, in the wake of the failing KdA, they proposed an alternative to the antinuclear campaign with their slogan "fight atomic death - through conscientious objection!" The VK believed that conscientious objection would have a similar effect in halting the war machine and preventing atomic warfare.

¹⁵⁸Aktion 4/3, WRI Sektionen, Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer, HIS, THM.

This move towards protesting against nuclear weapons was a sign of things to come for the conscientious objection movement. As the organizations developed their protest strategies and became more dynamic, they began to expand their protests to include other issues. The turn towards anti-nuclear protests also reflects a shift in the concerns of the West German society as rearmament and conscription gained a degree of acceptance among the public.

After failing to make a significant impact on the course of the rearmament and conscription debates, the IdK and GdW were forced to reassess their position in West German society. The period was one of intense growth and organizational change for both groups. Through this process, we can see the various generational and ideological elements that these groups were comprised of and uncover the issues that divided, and united, these early West German activists. The issues facing the IdK and GdW, communism, growing generational divides, understanding the democratic process, and Cold War angst, were some of the same issues that faced West German society as a whole.

CHAPTER IV

BROADENING THE SCOPE OF THE PROTESTS, 1958-1960

In late April 1958, a handful of activists from the Hamburg chapter of the IdK protested in front of the Hamburg *Rathaus* with a sign that warned against nuclear weapons. Whenever an opportunity presented itself, they engaged passersby in a discussion about the Federal Republic's nuclear weapons policy. These conscientious objection activists spent two weeks in the *Rathausmarkt* protesting nuclear weapons and while their antinuclear message was certainly something peace activists agreed with, it was not part of the conscientious objection movement's traditional platform.

This chapter investigates the ways in which conscientious objection organizations and activists broadened the scope of their protests and developed new methods of protest in the late 1950s. These years represented a transitional step in which former anti-conscription activists learned to both broaden the scope of their activism and to develop, in a transnational context, tools that would be important in their future direction. Specifically, this period featured the development and implementation of new protest tactics such as nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience. Another major element that this chapter engages is the creation of a transnational social space that was essential to the development of West German and international protest movements. It also furthers the argument that the movement helped establish the organizational and operational framework for the emergence of extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany.

The two major events discussed in this chapter are the shift towards antinuclear activism and the impact of the SPD's Godesberg Program. During the late 1950s, nuclear weapons and their potential danger became increasingly central to the protest efforts of peace activists. The Social Democrats opposed arming the Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons or allowing NATO to station nuclear weapons on West German soil. Adenauer's government warned that the Soviet threat necessitated nuclear capabilities for defense and the ensuing debate spilled out of the parliament into the public sphere. The SPD mobilized the popular Fight Atomic Death campaign in 1958 to pressure the government to reconsider its position on nuclear weapons. The IdK and VK also shifted towards antinuclear protest after the period of reform and reorganization that followed rearmament in the mid-1950s. The threat of nuclear war came to the forefront of the West German conscientious objection movement in the late 1950s and, in fact, West German society as a whole.

In 1959, the Social Democrats adopted a new party program, known as the Godesberg Program, which indicated a significant shift in the political course of the Party towards a more mainstream platform in order to challenge the CDU for control of the government.¹ These were wrenching decisions that badly divided the party and led many activists to abandon the SPD and seek another kind of leftist political space. Many conscientious objection activists participated in the KdA rallies and some even organized their own antinuclear protest events as they expanded their protest repertoire. When the KdA failed and the SPD adopted the Godesberg Program, a number of activists began to

¹ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 260-263.

create their own antinuclear movement to fill the void. This is the point, I argue, where extra-parliamentary opposition began to emerge in West Germany and people who were previously affiliated with the SPD found themselves truly in opposition to established parliamentary positions.

This chapter explores how the conscientious objection movement was often much more than a single-issue campaign by examining the creation and activities of the Action Group for Nonviolence (AG), the involvement with the WRI and its network of activists, and the influence of the British Aldermaston Marches against nuclear weapons. The importance of the War Resisters' International to the development of the West German conscientious objection movement is considerable. Established along traditions of radical pacifism, the WRI was based in Enfield, England, and provided much needed organizational and logistical support to its chapters all over the world, including Germany.² With the formation of the VK in 1958, the WRI found itself supporting, and at times mediating between, two West German chapters. Nevertheless, the WRI helped the West German organizations develop their respective memberships and focused a great deal on the issues facing conscientious objectors in the Federal Republic.³

²There is not yet an academic history of the WRI but for some more information see Prasad, *War Is a Crime against Humanity*, 2005; "Germany," *The War Resister*, No. 67 Spring, 1955, 20-21, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

³ "Remilitarisation of Germany," *The War Resister*, No. 67, Spring, 1955, 6-7, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977); "Visit to Divided Germany," *The War Resister*, No. 85, Fourth Quarter, 1959, 3-7, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

The WRI allowed the West German conscientious objection organizations to branch out from their immediate concerns in the Federal Republic and support peace efforts throughout the world. During the Suez Crisis in the fall of 1956, the IdK sent funds totaling 1,000 DM to the WRI to help the British section's "[C]ampaign against British Government policy in Egypt."⁴ In 1960, the German branches of the WRI participated in a boycott of South African products organized by the WRI as a protest against apartheid. The IdK chapter in Cologne staged a protest demonstration with about 2,000 participants and for their efforts, through WRI channels, the West German conscientious objection organizations received a message of thanks from the South African activists fighting to end apartheid.⁵ Not only were they made aware of the activities of conscientious objection and peace groups from around the world, they were also often able to support protest campaigns in various parts of the world.

The WRI even served to connect the conscientious objection activists in the Federal Republic with their counterparts in East Germany.⁶ Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, the WRI maintained frequent correspondence with the German Peace Council the official East German peace organization.⁷ The WRI often invited the German Peace Council to provide background papers and attend their international

⁴ Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, November 18, 1956, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

⁵ "Apartheid," *The War Resister*, No. 88 Third Quarter, 1960, 8, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

⁶ "Visit to Divided Germany," *The War Resister*, No. 85 Fourth Quarter, 1959, 3-7, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

⁷ See IISG, Amsterdam, War Resisters' International Records, WRI-222.

meetings. The Peace Council eagerly sent information, most of it blatant DDR propaganda, but was often unable to attend conferences because the host nation would not issue them visas.⁸

In 1959, the WRI sent a delegation to Berlin to meet with the Peace Council where they gave several radio interviews and even dined with the North Korean Ambassador to East Germany who invited a WRI delegation to visit North Korea. The delegation did not accept the invitation but did attempt to create a common declaration with the East German Peace Council stating basic goals of disarmament and recognition of conscientious objection.⁹ Both the IdK and the VK strongly criticized the common declaration and the Executive Committee decided to refrain from issuing statements with the Peace Council.¹⁰ The West German CO groups were not very interested in working with the East German Peace Council because of their difficult position in West German society. A press report of the groups meeting with the official East German peace organization would have damaged their democratic credentials and made them look sympathetic to communism. When the WRI planned a reciprocal meeting with the Peace Council in London and asked both German groups to send delegates, the IdK and VK

⁸ Report in "War Resistance," WRI 11th Triennial Conference, Stavengar, Norway, July 26-31, 1963, IISG, Amsterdam, War Resisters' International Records, WRI-11.

⁹ Minutes, WRI Executive Committee Meeting, 18 October, 1959, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

¹⁰ Ibid.

stated it was not their policy to meet officially with the Peace Council and were reluctant to send anyone.¹¹

The WRI was often critical of the German Peace Council and held it accountable for the actions of the East German government. When the DDR introduced conscription in 1962, the WRI contacted the Peace Council to urge that objectors be treated with understanding and sympathy. The WRI leadership protested to the East German government and demanded an explanation from the Peace Council.¹² However, their continual contact and frequent efforts to hear the East German's position illustrates the WRI's commitment to international peace work.

By the 1950s, the WRI had become a forum for peace activists from West Germany and around the world. Nehring explained that the WRI in the 1950s and 1960s was "...the central place for exchanging ideas about non-violent civil disobedience and nonviolent direct action. And it proved an important forum in which European peace movements could rediscover their own traditions of nonviolent protest."¹³ The importance of the WRI to the creation of the transnational social space that West German activists occupied is significant.

¹¹ Minutes, WRI Executive Committee Meeting, 23 April, 1961, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

¹² Minutes, WRI Executive Committee Meeting, 6 May, 1962, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters' International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

¹³ Nehring, "Americanized Protests?" 226.

The WRI facilitated the personal contacts that formed the basis for this transnational social space that Konrad and Helga worked within along other West German conscientious objection activists. The WRI often served as the meeting point for a great many European and international peace activists. The WRI organized study conferences, workshops, and seminars where many activists made personal contacts and networked with people they would otherwise never meet because of their geographic differences.¹⁴ At these WRI events, the West German activists exchanged ideas and discussed protest methods with a wide range of people. It was through the WRI that West German conscientious objection activists Konrad and Helga Tempel met British activists April Carter, Pat Arrowsmith, Chris Farley, and Hugh Brock as well as American activists A.J. Muste, Gene Sharp, and Bayard Rustin; all people who were essential to the development of the West German conscientious objection and antinuclear movements.¹⁵ In fact, they believed they were inspired much more by the people they met at WRI conferences rather than the West German activists they interacted with within their own organization.¹⁶

During their first few years with the IdK in the early 1950s, Konrad and Helga Tempel learned about pacifism, peace activism, and got a taste of organized protest actions. However, they both felt they were not doing enough to protest against the

¹⁴“Report to the Eighth Triennial Conference Paris (France),” *The War Resister*, No. 67 Spring, 1955, 3-6, WRI, Archives of the War Resisters’ International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

¹⁵ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

government's military policies: Konrad believed the IdK protests started with "wonderful intentions but were undertaken with little understanding of political processes, with little analysis and with little thought given to how to reach and engage people."¹⁷ However, Helga believed this was not limited to the IdK, "In the whole society there was very little experience in public relations and how to bring an opinion from the grass-roots to the general population."¹⁸ In fact, Konrad stated that in West Germany at the time there was "very little civil society conscientiousness."¹⁹

After West German rearmament in 1955 and the establishment of conscription in 1956, the Tempels, along with other like-minded IdK members, looked for ways to be more effective in voicing their beliefs. They formed the Action Group for Nonviolence, in Hamburg in 1956 with about 20 people from the local IdK chapter.²⁰ Konrad recalled in a later interview that he "wanted to be more engaged in dealing with the causes of war, with the structures in society that cause war, and be much more involved in nonviolent action."²¹

The impetus for the Action Group for Nonviolence was not from the pacifist writings of Michaltscheff and other IdK leaders but from articles, which Konrad and Helga read in the British pacifist magazine *Peace News*. Konrad and Helga were

¹⁷ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, 24 July 2013.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Letter from Konrad Tempel to Gene Sharp 12 December 1956. Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit, HIS, TEM 100, 01; Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zu APO*, 70-71.

²¹ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

acquainted with the editor, Hugh Brock, through the WRI conferences they attended and from reading *Peace News* they realized that pacifism was a much more public act than they had experienced in Germany. At that time, very few people in Germany subscribed to *Peace News*, and nonviolent action as a protest strategy was almost nonexistent. They were among the few who had learned about nonviolent protest in international activities, and were very inspired to employ the strategy in the West German conscientious objection movement.²²

The AG met weekly to study the literature on nonviolent protest and discuss how it could be applied to the conscientious objection movement in West Germany.²³ To facilitate their discussions and to make information about nonviolence available to other West German peace activists the AG published a series titled *Texte zur Gewaltlosigkeit* or Texts on Nonviolence. Their first publication was a German translation of a collection of writings about nonviolence, published by American peace activist Gene Sharp who was a co-editor of *Peace News*.²⁴ They also published excerpts of writings from Henry David Thoreau and other writers who focused on the principles of nonviolent action.²⁵ The Tempels worked ceaselessly to become familiar with the literature and principles of

²² Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

²³ Letter from Konrad Tempel to Gene Sharp, December 12, 1956. Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit, HIS, TEM 100, 01.

²⁴ Gene Sharp, *Auf Andern Wegen*, in *Texte Zur Gewaltlosigkeit* no. 1, (Hamburg: Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit, 1958), Konrad Tempel, *Texte Zur Gewaltlosigkeit*, HIS, TEM 100,03.

²⁵ Henry David Thoreau, *Widerstand Gegen Die Regierung*, in *Texte Zur Gewaltlosigkeit* no. 2, (Hamburg: Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit, 1959), Konrad Tempel, *Texte Zur Gewaltlosigkeit*, HIS, TEM 100,03.

nonviolent action and soon became among the leading authorities in the West German peace movement.²⁶

Another focus of the Action Group for Nonviolence in its first few years of existence was practical training in nonviolence and nonviolent action. Having studied the literature on nonviolence and nonviolent action Konrad Tempel organized training sessions for West German conscientious objection activists. For these conscientious objection activists Konrad emphasized the importance of nonviolent behavior, particularly in difficult situations. His classes, called “Training in Reasonable Behavior in Situations of Conflict,” were perhaps the first training sessions on nonviolence for West German activists.²⁷ They would soon have opportunities to employ their training.

In the late 1950s, one of the biggest issues for the West German peace movement was the threat of nuclear weapons on German soil. A little more than a decade had passed since the end of the Second World War and in many ways, the Federal Republic of Germany was still recovering from its destruction.²⁸ A significant portion of the West German population opposed the idea of nuclear weapons on German soil, either in the hands of NATO or the West German Bundeswehr.²⁹ In fact, from April, 1957 to June, 1958 the Allensbach Institute polled the West German population five times and each

²⁶ Letter from Christopher Farley to Helga Stolle, March 12, 1958, Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit, HIS, TEM 100, 01; Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

²⁷ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

²⁸ For an excellent study of how West German society dealt with the legacy of the war in the 1950s see Schissler, *The Miracle Years*.

²⁹ Geyer, “Cold War Angst,” 392-398.

time more than sixty percent were against equipping the Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons.³⁰ The devastating power of nuclear weapons, proven at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945, could turn Germany into a wasteland and the public was quite aware of that danger.

The Protestant Church in Germany sought to draft a resolution about Evangelical Christians' position on atomic weapons and atomic war. Predictably, after several years of meetings and heated discussion, they were unable to agree on a statement that encompassed the complex issue of nuclear weapons but the leadership and membership of the Evangelical Church were in agreement of the danger nuclear weapons posed. Each proposed resolution contained strong statements about the immorality of nuclear war. For example the "The Brethren's Ten Theses" from 1958 stated, "Nuclear war entails the mutual destruction of the populations involved, as well as countless other uninvolved people."³¹ The "Heidelberg Theses" from 1959 declared, "In the past, the 'just war' doctrine has guided Christians. But this principle cannot be applied to nuclear war. It destroys what it claims to preserve."³² In the end, the Evangelical Church took a position where it tolerated nuclear weapons but supported those who opposed them.³³

However, the fear of Soviet aggression and the very tense political climate in Central Europe convinced the Christian Democrats and many West Germans that their

³⁰ Noelle-Neumann and Neumann, *The Germans*, 441

³¹ Cioc, *Pax Atomica*, 108.

³² *Ibid.*, 112.

³³ *Ibid.*, 115.

only hope for survival was in nuclear weapons. They believed, like many in the Western World, that the possession of nuclear weapons was a powerful, effective, and perhaps only deterrent to war. The exigency of nuclear weapons for defense was confirmed for many Germans when the Soviet Union issued an ultimatum about the status of Berlin in November of 1958.³⁴ Khrushchev demanded that the U.S. demilitarize West Berlin in six months or face dire consequences. The Soviets claimed the time was long past to settle the “abnormal” status of a divided Berlin and allow it to become a normal, whole city; a city that would undoubtedly fall under Soviet control.³⁵ The danger of a nuclear conflict between the super powers was particularly disturbing for West Germans, as most believed that if a nuclear war did break out between the United States and the Soviet Union it would be fought in Germany.³⁶

The opposition party in the West German parliament was the left-wing Social Democratic Party of Germany. The SPD opposed nuclear weapons, much as they had opposed West German rearmament and conscription, and had initiated the public opposition campaign Fight Atomic Death in 1958.³⁷ KdA reached out to the previously untapped antinuclear sentiment outside of the political sphere. The grassroots campaign connected with the fears of many in the Federal Republic and raised impressive numbers

³⁴ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 66.

³⁵ Jack M. Schick, *The Berlin Crisis, 1958-1962* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 12-17.

³⁶ Geyer, “Cold War Angst,” 398.

³⁷ Rupp, *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer*, 182-184, 289-296.

at KdA rallies around the country.³⁸ The campaign was successful in raising popular support for a brief period but within a year, it had faded into obscurity. The SPD was unable to leverage the power of the popular KdA campaign in the Bundestag to support their opposition to the CDU on the nuclear weapons issue.³⁹ Consequently, the SPD allowed the KdA to decline, only maintaining its continued existence as a façade to support their latent opposition to nuclear weapons after 1959.⁴⁰

The SPD changed directions politically and in 1959 the party adopted a new political program, known as the Bad Godesberg program, in which they gave tacit approval to the idea of a nuclear armed Bundeswehr.⁴¹ The Godesberg program indicated a significant shift in the political course of the Party towards a more mainstream platform in order challenge the CDU for control of the government.⁴² These were wrenching decisions that badly divided the party and led many activists to abandon the SPD and seek another kind of leftist political space. Many peace activists believed this shift left them without representation in the West German political sphere and therefore forced them to begin extra-parliamentary efforts.⁴³

³⁸ Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in Bremen, Hanover, Frankfurt, Munich, and Dortmund. Over one hundred thousand demonstrated in Hamburg. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 66.

³⁹ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 240.

⁴⁰ Rose, "Transnational Identities In National Politics," 222.

⁴¹ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 219-220; for more on the Bad Godesberg program see Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition, 1949-1960*, 260-263.

⁴² Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 260-263.

⁴³ Buro, *Gewaltlos gegen Krieg: Lebenserinnerungen eines streitbaren Pazifisten*, 87; Rose, "Transnational Identities In National Politics," 214-216.

Some West German activists began working outside the political sphere before the SPD dropped the nuclear issue. In fact, at the height of the Fight Atomic Death movement in April 1958, the Action Group for Nonviolence staged a dramatic protest demonstration in Hamburg without the assistance of the SPD or the Fight Atomic Death campaign organizers. The event was called a “*Mahnwache*” or “vigil,” a term invented by a young master glazier, Jürgen Grimm, who was a member of the AG.⁴⁴ The *Mahnwache* was the first major action undertaken by West German conscientious objection activists outside of their traditional scope of protest.

With their Action Group for Nonviolence and the support of the IdK Konrad and Helga organized and led the vigil against nuclear weapons in front of the Hamburg city hall. The *Mahnwache* began on April 17 at the end of a massive Fight Atomic Death protest rally in Hamburg that had drawn over 100,000 participants. Rather than host an event for an afternoon, the AG organized a protest action that was held around the clock for two weeks. Konrad and Helga wrote that they started the *Mahnwache* at the end of the big Fight Atomic Death rally because they felt that saying one’s opinion in an afternoon demonstration was not enough, that more steps were necessary. They also believed that a single protest rally was not enough to raise awareness of the danger posed by nuclear weapons. They wanted their vigil to serve to keep the public’s conscience awake to the fact that they live in mortal danger of nuclear weapons.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁴⁵“Mahn-Wache,” HIS, TEM 100,01.

Furthermore, Konrad and Helga felt it was critical to prove that public concern over this issue was not simply a temporary product of a massive protest campaign supported by a major political party. They wanted to show that ordinary people, without the support of a national campaign, were willing and able to show persistence and speak out against government nuclear policy.⁴⁶ To the leadership of the AG, many people involved in the Fight Atomic Death campaign followed and participated because their political leaders told them to, not because of their conscience.⁴⁷ The *Mahnwache* was their rebuttal to this kind of activism; a person should not need to be told by their political party to protest against something they believed was wrong.

Members of the Action Group for Nonviolence and the IdK quietly demonstrated in the *Rathausmarkt* around the clock and kept count of how many hours the *Mahnwache* had been going. Day and night two members of the Action Group wearing armbands with the words “Mahn-Wache” stood in front of the Hamburg *Rathaus* with a sign that read “*Wer die Atombombe nimmt, wird durch die Atombombe umkommen,*” (“Whoever takes the Atomic Bomb will perish by the Atomic Bomb”).⁴⁸ Every two hours another pair of activists would relieve the first pair and they would then spend some time walking around talking and discussing the issue of nuclear armament with people in the square.⁴⁹ The coordinators of the *Mahnwache* carefully orchestrated the

⁴⁶ “Mahn-Wache,” HIS, TEM 100,01

⁴⁷ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁴⁸ “Mahn-Wache,” HIS, TEM 100,01

⁴⁹ Letter to local press, May 11, 1958. HIS, TEM 100,01

schedule so that a fresh pair relieved each pair of activists, no matter the hour, every two hours. They also made sure that the activist pairs that stood the vigil during the night had torches, which had been supplied by the Hamburg IdK chapter, for added drama and to light the sign.⁵⁰

The AG issued specific instructions for the conduct of the activists and insisted that each participant follow a strict code of nonviolence. They wanted to ensure that the *Mahnwache* maintained a courteous and peaceful presence in order to avoid giving the impression that they were weird types or anarchists against the state.⁵¹ Participants were instructed that if they were met with hostility the best course of action was to remain calm and silent. If the activists felt they were in danger they were to call for the police. Maintaining proper behavior was an essential element of the *Mahnwache* if the protest was to have legitimacy in the public sphere. As soon as the event crossed the line into what could be considered rowdy or irresponsible action the activists and their message would lose credibility and be dismissed as out of hand.

The *Mahnwache* organizers also emphasized the necessity of staying within the law while at the same time preserving the character of the protest. In the case that the police asked them to leave the square, the participants were told to ask why they were being told to leave and, if possible, they were to try to remain at their post. If the police confiscated the sign and the torches, the activists were to remain calm and courteous and

⁵⁰ Fire torches (*Fackeln*), “Mahn-Wache,” HIS, TEM 100,01

⁵¹ “Mahn-Wache,” HIS, TEM 100,01

to stay in the square if possible. The *Mahnwache* organizers went so far as to provide the participants with the passage from the constitution that protected their right to express their conscience. The AG leadership told the activists that as long as they were not disturbing the peace, obstructing traffic, or endangering people, they had every right to be in the square. In fact, the *Mahnwache* organizers specifically used only two activists to stand vigil with the sign because “A collection of two people is not illegal if you do not have the intent to disrupt the general order.”⁵² However, if a pair of activists was forced to leave the *Rathausmarkt* it was up to the replacement pair to decide what to do— the goal was that the new pair would be able to continue the vigil.⁵³

As it turns out the *Mahnwache* was not interrupted by the Hamburg police and as the hours went by the participants became more comfortable with the protest demonstration. Several days into the *Mahnwache* the Action Group for Nonviolence leaders and *Mahnwache* organizers, Konrad and Helga, sent out letters to the members of the IdK, calling on them to join the demonstration. They wrote that major West German newspapers such as *Die Welt*, the *Hamburger Morgenpost*, and the *Bildzeitung* had already reported widely on the *Mahnwache* and that members could help in a number of ways such as volunteering to be part of a pair with the sign or helping with providing information to the press.⁵⁴ The fact that the press had reported on the

⁵² “Mahn-Wache,” HIS, TEM 100,01

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Zehntägiger Atomprotest vor dem Rathaus,” *Hamburger Morgenpost*, April 19, 1958; “Betrifft Mahnwache auf dem Rathausmarkt,” HIS, TEM 100,01

Mahnwache and the authorities were not bothering the activists was evidence that their protest was working.

The protest *Mahnwache* received media attention throughout the two-week demonstration but the highlight of the *Mahnwache*, for the media and the organizers, was when international activists joined the demonstration. The first international visitors were the most exciting. Coming all the way from Japan two young Japanese activists, 25 year old seamstress Yoshiko Murato and 23 year old student Hayao Shimizu, joined the *Mahnwache* in front of the Hamburg *Rathaus* eight days into the demonstration, April 24, 1958.⁵⁵ The two young Japanese activists were on a trip to Europe representing their Japanese antinuclear protest movement. Yoshiko Murato brought the reality of nuclear war to the forefront of the Hamburg protest demonstration because she had actually experienced firsthand the devastation of the atomic bomb as a survivor of the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.⁵⁶

The papers told her story of survival in ghastly detail and always included her photograph in every article. The *Hamburger Morgenpost* reported that her face was covered with scars and that because of her unresolved medical issues she was only able to stand the *Mahnwache* for one hour that day. The detailed description of her survival told how even though she was some distance from the center of the blast her face and upper body were covered with burn scars, so much so that her parents were unable to

⁵⁵“Hiroshima-Opfer hielt Atomwache,” *Bildzeitung* April 25, 1958.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

recognize her. The news reported that even after her hospital recovery Murato was still broken physically and mentally. More frightening was the fact that even after 13 years of recovery she was still at risk of dying from “the dreaded ‘atomic disease’ that has already carried off nearly 80,000 survivors of August 6, 1945. Against this disease,” the *Hamburger Morgenpost* despairingly reported, “there is no medicine.”⁵⁷

The two young Japanese activists told the West Germans about the Japanese people’s movement against nuclear armament and in particular wanted to share their message with the young people of West Germany. They coordinated with the Action Group for Nonviolence and in conjunction with the *Mahnwache* the Japanese activists showed a documentary about the devastating effect of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki later that evening. The film showed the horrors the atomic bombs visited on the Japanese cities and the paper reported that the images of overcrowded hospitals, the burned and distorted bodies of children, and the overwhelming human suffering was “a ballad of terror and grief.”⁵⁸ At the end of the film, Yoshiko Murato once again described her experience as a child in the bombing of Hiroshima. The media reported that Yoshiko Murato’s “life has only one purpose: to warn the world, ‘Let our misery be enough! There must be no more Hiroshimas, no more Nagasakis!’”⁵⁹

The other international participants came from the United States and Great Britain. While they did not have the dramatic appeal that Hiroshima survivors had, the

⁵⁷ “Yoshiko hielt in Hamburg Atomwache,” *Hamburger Morgenpost*, April 25, 1958.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Yoshiko hielt in Hamburg Atomwache,” *Hamburger Morgenpost*, April 25, 1958.

participation of these activists was just as important to the *Mahnwache* and the long-term development of extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany. April Carter was from Great Britain and she, along with American peace and civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, joined the vigil on April 27, 1958.⁶⁰ April Carter was very involved in the British “Ban the Bomb” movement and was part of the leadership of the burgeoning Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).⁶¹ In fact, she was part of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War (DAC) that organized the first Aldermaston March against nuclear weapons just two weeks prior to her visit to Hamburg.⁶² While in Hamburg for the *Mahnwache*, April Carter further strengthened her relationship with the West German peace activists, particularly with Konrad and Helga Tempel. This is important to note because the close connections built between British and West German activists played a crucial role in the development of the West German antinuclear movement.

The other major international participant in the *Mahnwache* was American peace and civil rights activist Bayard Rustin.⁶³ Rustin, whom Konrad and Helga had also met through WRI networks, was a World War II conscientious objector and in the first Aldermaston march two weeks earlier, he gave a rousing speech to a crowd of 8,000.⁶⁴ His presence at the Hamburg *Mahnwache*, much like Carter and Arrowsmith’s,

⁶⁰ “Heute schon 250 Stunden,” *Hamburger Morgenpost*, April 28, 1958.

⁶¹ For the antinuclear movement in Great Britain see Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁶³ “Heute schon 250 Stunden,” *Hamburger Morgenpost*, April 28, 1958; Bayard Rustin was a major figure in the American civil rights movement. For more on Rustin see: Daniel Levine, *Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

⁶⁴ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 49.

highlights the significance of the antinuclear protest to international peace activists and the strength of the transnational network of activists to which Konrad and Helga belonged. Furthermore, Rustin's participation also helped develop his relationship with the West German members of the Action Group for Nonviolence. He too would maintain his contacts with the West German activists and form an integral part of the transnational network that was so important to the development of extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany.

The *Mahnwache* came to an end on May 1, after 14 days of maintaining a 24-hour presence in front of the Hamburg *Rathaus* with slogans warning the public about the danger of atomic weapons.⁶⁵ The *Mahnwache* illustrated the power of the memory of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The West German activists had plenty of information about the deadly effects of nuclear weapons—blast strength, fallout range, and immediate and long term effects—but all they had to do to empathetically point out the dangers of nuclear weapons was to show photos of the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They were always able to reach people on a visceral level with images of the atomic bomb victims but when Yoshiko Murato joined the *Mahnwache* she took the reality of the danger that atomic weapons posed to a whole new level. Her personal story of physical and emotional devastation from the atomic

⁶⁵ Kraushaar, *Die Protest-Chronik 1949-1959*, 3:1851.

bomb added an element to the antinuclear protest that no amount of statistics, photographs, or scientific reports could ever provide – the human element.⁶⁶

It is hard to measure the immediate effect of the *Mahnwache* on the West Germans who saw it in the *Rathaus* square. The news reported on the protest event and people were clearly impressed with the determination of the activists but it is unlikely that many people were strongly affected by it. When a survivor of the bombing of Hiroshima was added to the mix, the public took notice. The news media, which had already reported on the *Mahnwache*, printed long articles with photos of Yoshiko Murato that clearly showed the scars on her face and told her story in ghastly detail.⁶⁷ Murato's participation brought the memory of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to life and at the same time added significant weight to the *Mahnwache*'s warnings about the dangers of nuclear weapons.

The long-term effect of the *Mahnwache*, and the West German peace movement as a whole, was also impacted by the participation of international peace activists. April Carter and Bayard Rustin added legitimacy to the *Mahnwache* by simply being there but their presence, along with the presence of Yoshiko Murato and Hayao Shimizu, highlighted the international importance of the issue. Furthermore, the West German activists, particularly the Action Group for Nonviolence organizers, strengthened their relationship with April Carter and Bayard Rustin. These relationships were essential to

⁶⁶ "Yoshiko hielt in Hamburg Atomwache," *Hamburger Morgenpost*, April 25, 1958.

⁶⁷ "Hiroshima-Opfer hielt Atomwache," *Bildzeitung* April 25, 1958.

the emergence and development of extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany because the transnational social space that these relationships facilitated enabled peace activists from all over the world to share ideas and build networks that were critical for the peace movement in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The concept of transnational social spaces is quite useful when attempting to describe the networks and connections that precluded the organization of international and transnational protest movements because it allows historians to approach these movements without being restricted by national boundaries. Commonly held goals and values that transcended state borders united peace activists and allowed them to coordinate protest efforts. During the Cold War environment of the late 1950s and early 1960s, people around the world could sympathize with the message of peace and nuclear disarmament because the super power confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States affected everyone. Many of the actors in the West German conscientious objection movement developed and maintained a network of likeminded activists from around the world and these networks had a powerful effect on the growth of extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany.

The conscientious objection activists in the AG members created their own transnational social space in the late 1950s and developed it further through the *Mahnwache*. The event reinforced their commonly held political goals and moral beliefs through the participation and affirmation of international peace activists like Murato, Rustin, and Carter. The *Mahnwache* also helped develop the activists' respective protest

cultures because they were able to see strategies and methods of protest in action. The lack of action by the IdK leadership continually disappointed the AG members. Konrad complained of “[N]o real leadership...no inspiration from above...no dynamic power! No inspiring call for active resistance.”⁶⁸ Through the engagement with leading activists from outside West Germany, the AG found inspiration, calls for action, and the energy they needed.

The *Mahnwache* gave the AG the experience and the momentum they needed to initiate a more active protest culture. The strict code of nonviolence and orderly execution of every aspect of the *Mahnwache* clearly contributed to its success and while most future protest actions would be characterized by mass participation, the organizational effort to pull off a 24-hour presence for several weeks was as impressive as it was educational. Helga Tempel recalled, “We encouraged people by our example to go into the street with signs, to do something, to set up models of action and overcome the hindrances that are always inside us and to take unusual steps.”⁶⁹ The *Mahnwache* also proved to the conscientious objection organizations that Konrad and Helga, along with the other AG members, were capable of successfully organizing major protest actions. Konrad recalled, “These experiences were indirect preparation for the Easter March. The big conscientious objection organizations got the impression that we could

⁶⁸ Letter to Arlo Tatum from Konrad Tempel, May 8, 1958, IISG, War Resisters’ International Records, WRI-249.

⁶⁹ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

do it. So when we published the call for the Easter March we had some legitimacy and they believed that we could do it.”⁷⁰

Signs and policy discussions can only go so far and the Action Group for Nonviolence members recognized this. It was, however, in their opinion, the first major, internationally represented, antinuclear protest action undertaken by the conscientious objection movement in West Germany.⁷¹ The event also proved the activists could publically voice their opposition to a political issue outside of the realm of politics; all the while remaining within the boundaries of the law and societal norms. The event must be recognized as an important transitional step towards establishing the extra-parliamentary opposition movement in West Germany.

The British nuclear disarmament movement provided West German activists with a guidance and inspiration, particularly in regards to examples of protest actions. The British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) formed January 27, 1958.⁷² The CND’s first public event was a large rally at Westminster Central Hall in London that February. Around 5,000 people heard prominent speakers such as noted historian A.J.P. Taylor call on the British government to change its nuclear weapons policy.⁷³ At this meeting in Central Hall, a policy statement was drawn up. It stated:

⁷⁰ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 47.

⁷³ April Carter, *Peace Movements: International Protest and World Politics Since 1945* (London: Longman, 1992), 48.

The purpose of the Campaign is to press for a British initiative to reduce the nuclear peril and to stop the armaments race. We shall seek to persuade the British people that Britain must:

- a. Renounce unconditionally the use or production of nuclear weapons and refuse to allow their use by others in her defense;
- b. Use her utmost endeavor to bring about negotiations at all levels for agreement to end the armaments race and to lead to a general disarmament convention;
- c. Invite the cooperation of other nations, particularly non-nuclear powers, in her renunciation of nuclear weapons.⁷⁴

The campaign, from the beginning, drew a number of well-known intellectuals, political figures, and religious leaders. Taylor believed his participation was the “worthiest activity I ever undertook.”⁷⁵ To Taylor the argument was simple, “In my opinion we had a watertight case. The bomb was wicked. It was idiotic. It was dangerous.”⁷⁶ His speeches at the mass public rallies were very well received and his involvement in the leadership of the campaign brought it some legitimacy. Another founding member and the first Chairman of the CND, John Collins, was an Anglican Priest who was a canon at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. At the February rally at Westminster Central Hall Canon Collins declared, “I stand here, and I accepted the Chairmanship of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament because I believe the question of whether we arm ourselves with nuclear is, perhaps, the supreme moral question of our

⁷⁴ Peggy Duff, *Left, Left, Left: a Personal Account of Six Protest Campaigns, 1945-65* (London: Allison and Busby, 1971), 125.

⁷⁵ A. J. P. Taylor, *A Personal History* (New York: Atheneum, 1983), 225.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *A Personal History*, 227.

day.”⁷⁷ To him, and many other CND activists, the nuclear weapons issue was a very moral one; a sentiment that was shared by many West German activists as well.

The AG found its counterpart in the British Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War (DAC). The goal of the DAC was to confront the issue of nuclear war head on with nonviolent, direct action. Their first protest action targeted the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston, a small town in Berkshire about fifty miles west of London. The DAC planned a protest march to the facility in Aldermaston that would take place over the 1958 Easter holiday.⁷⁸ Joined by the newly created CND, the British antinuclear activists proposed to hold a rally in Trafalgar Square in London and then march to Aldermaston over the next four days.

The DAC took a leadership role in the development of the Aldermaston marches and had significant influence on the character of the campaign. This was because they brought with them a commitment to nonviolence and an understanding of nonviolent protest tactics that helped create an atmosphere of nonviolent protest that shaped the character of the march for many years. Contemporaries identified several key actors of the DAC contingent such as High Brock, April Carter, Pat Arrowsmith, and Michael Randle.⁷⁹ These same people played pivotal roles in the creation of the transnational social space they shared with the West German conscientious objection activists.

⁷⁷ L. John Collins, *Faith Under Fire* (London: Frewin, 1966), 296.

⁷⁸ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 45-50.

⁷⁹ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, 128.

The CND created the now ubiquitous peace symbol during the early days of the organization. Gerald Holtom, the CND activist who designed it, explained meaning of the symbol “First, the semaphore for the initials, ND (nuclear disarmament). Second, the broken cross meant the death of man, the circle the unborn child. It represented the threat of nuclear weapons to all mankind, and, because this was new, the threat to the unborn child.”⁸⁰ Antinuclear organizations all over Europe and the world quickly adopted this symbol. It also became a unifying symbol for peace activists everywhere.

When the West German activists heard the reports of the first Aldermaston march, they were impressed and inspired. That Easter, more than 5,000 people attended the rally in Trafalgar Square and by the time the march reached Aldermaston the crowd had reached 8,000. The march successfully attracted a large number of people from the general population. Historian Thomas Wittner noted, “Although pointless on the face of it, this four-day march through the chilling rain by large numbers of well-dressed, earnest citizens—many bearing the nuclear disarmament symbol, in its stark, funereal black and white—provided a powerful demonstration of public resolve to halt the nuclear arms race.”⁸¹

The success of the 1958 Aldermaston march immediately changed the character of the CND and the antinuclear movement. April Carter recalled that the “CND’s original aim to act as a liberal pressure group was, however, challenged almost

⁸⁰ Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, 115.

⁸¹ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 48-49.

immediately, when the Aldermaston march began to transform it into a popular movement flowing out onto the streets.”⁸² This shift to a popular protest movement was a process that was transmitted through the transnational social space to activists in West Germany. When the Action Group for Nonviolence heard about the plans for the first Aldermaston March in 1958, they contacted Pat Arrowsmith and April Carter. They were interested in coming to London to support the CND at the protest event but when Konrad and Helga asked about joining the march and they were told “Stay where you are, it’s just a protest action like all our other protests. There is no need to come.”⁸³ Unbeknownst to Carter and Arrowsmith, the Aldermaston march would inspire thousands of ordinary people to publically protest against government nuclear policy. Not just in Britain but on the Continent as well.

The following year the AG was determined to be represented at the Aldermaston march. Konrad made the trip to London from Hamburg to join the march that April at the invitation of Carter and Arrowsmith. For the 1959 Aldermaston march the CND changed the direction of the march so that it began in Aldermaston and ended in London. This shifted the point of emphasis from the development and production of nuclear weapons to the center of political power that was directing nuclear weapons policy.⁸⁴ The fact that the final rally was held in London also made mass attendance much more

⁸² Carter, *Peace Movements*, 48.

⁸³ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁸⁴ Carter, *Peace Movements*, 48.

possible; it was estimated that around 20,000 people attended.⁸⁵ The impressive turnout and passionate efforts of the CND activists had a powerful impact on Konrad.

The Aldermaston March inspired Konrad to advance the antinuclear activism of the conscientious objection movement and after he returned to Germany, he looked for more opportunities to engage the West German public. To commemorate the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Konrad, as part of the leadership of the newly formed VK, gave a speech at the “World Peace Day” event that August about nonviolence and the dangers of atomic war.⁸⁶

The AG also organized a protest demonstration during the month of December in 1959 at the French consulate in Hamburg to protest against France’s nuclear weapons development.⁸⁷ For four weeks, members of the AG held nightly vigils in front of the French consulate. They specifically directed their protests against French plans to test a nuclear weapon in the Sahara desert.⁸⁸ Much like the *Mahnwache* the previous year, the goal of the demonstration was to educate people about the dangers of nuclear weapons and to engage West Germans in conversations about nuclear weapons policies. However, the event elicited a limited response and did not seem effective enough to really draw attention to the issue.

⁸⁵ Carter, *Peace Movements*, 48.

⁸⁶ “Zwischen Atomkrieg und Gewaltlosigkeit,” *Freiburger Zeitung*, August 13, 1959.

⁸⁷ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁸⁸ Letter to *Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit* mailing list, October 1960, HIS, TEM 100,01.

Konrad Tempel and the members of the AG hoped to do more to bring the dangers of nuclear weapons to the forefront of West German society and to encourage the Federal Republic to abandon its nuclear weapons policy. After Konrad returned from the 1959 Aldermaston march he and the AG looked for a nuclear weapons site to demonstrate at in West Germany. The group spent several months looking for a suitable location for an antinuclear march, such as a missile base or testing center, but were unable to find one. Their luck changed in December when the *Hamburger Morgenpost* reported that NATO was testing Honest John missiles at the military base in Bergen-Hohne.⁸⁹ This was a perfect location for a protest march; it was about 60 miles (or 95km) from Hamburg and Bremen and about 45 miles (or 70km) from Hannover and Brunswick, close enough to walk to but far enough that it would take several days. Convinced that Bergen-Hohne was the best target for their antinuclear activism the AG chose to initiate a protest march the following Easter to the site.⁹⁰ Eager to take action against nuclear armaments Konrad declared, “I will march to Bergen-Hohne even if I have to go alone.”⁹¹ Konrad Tempel and the AG did not have to march to Bergen-Hohne alone. As they began organizing the march for the next Easter the group reached out to their network of conscientious objectors for support.⁹² Unbeknownst to them at the time,

⁸⁹ *Hamburger Morgenpost*, December 6, 1959; Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁹⁰ Press Release, January 16, 1960, Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

⁹¹ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁹² Letter from Konrad Tempel to VK membership, January 16, 1960, Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

the AG was embarking on a protest campaign that would prove to be foundation of extra-parliamentary opposition in the Federal Republic of Germany.

By this point, the SPD's KdA campaign was no longer a force of any consequence and no real outlet existed for antinuclear protest. The German Easter Marches mark the beginning of true extra-parliamentary opposition because another political party did not fill the void left by the SPD. Essentially, no group within the political sphere took an antinuclear position, therefore this forced West German activists to operate in and learn to navigate the undefined extra-parliamentary space left open to them.

Along with their opposition to nuclear weapons, the AG identified specific government activities that they believed posed a danger to society and formulated protest campaigns to counter them. In October of 1960 the *Hamburger Morgenpost* reported that the West German government planned to build a nuclear fallout shelter, an "Atomschutzbunker," in Altona, a Western borough of Hamburg. The AG immediately reacted to this announcement and quickly organized a protest event against the construction of the nuclear shelter. The AG undertook a protest campaign named *Aktion Maulwurf*, or Action Mole, complete with flyers, meetings, and vigils at the construction site.⁹³

⁹³ Letter to *Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit* mailing list about Aktion Maulwurf, October 20, 1960, HIS, TEM 100,01.

The rhetoric of the protest action by the AG focused on the futility of building nuclear shelters. The group explained that even if the shelters were able to protect the citizens of Hamburg from a nuclear attack, the immediate destruction of the city would be so complete and the long-term effects of the nuclear fallout would be so devastating as to make the city and the region a nuclear wasteland. All one had to do was look at the destruction of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs in 1945. The AG detailed in their flyers the loss of life at Hiroshima, 86,000 immediately killed and another 150,000 dead from radiation in the 15 years prior to 1960. As if that was not chilling enough, the AG pointed out that the destructive capabilities of the modern nuclear weapons were seven times greater than the combined power of the bombs dropped on Japan in 1945.⁹⁴

Furthermore, the members of the AG believed that the fallout shelters would give people a false sense of security from atomic weapons.⁹⁵ This was problematic for several reasons. If people felt fallout shelters would protect them from a nuclear attack then some might not take the nuclear threat as seriously. One of the goals of the 1958 *Mahnwache* and the Easter March was to raise public awareness of the great danger nuclear weapons posed to humankind. The nuclear issue was not simply a concern of the government or military strategists; it was a concern of the everyman. In addition, the building of fallout shelters was perceived by the AG to be an attempt by the West

⁹⁴ Aktion Maulwurf, HIS, TEM 100,01.

⁹⁵ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

German government to trick its citizens into believing that it could protect them in the event of a nuclear war.

In reality, in the event of a nuclear attack people would be required to live underground for years because of the radiation threat. Konrad Tempel explained that the idea of living in fallout shelters for extended periods had become common in the late 1950s and early 1960s in West Germany. He specifically remembered the writings of University of Hamburg physicist Pascual Jordan who wrote in the late 1950s that mankind should get used to living underground because the nuclear threat was so great.⁹⁶ In fact, he recommended that each person, if they are able, should have their own bunker.

Both Konrad and Helga were opposed to the very concept of nuclear fallout shelters. Simply accepting the idea and being willing to spend enormous amounts of time and money on a shelter was seen as a betrayal of their cause. Building a personal fallout shelter was paramount to defeatism and an abandonment of all the AG stood for. Konrad remembered that it was rumored Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, one of the scientists who signed the Göttingen Declaration in 1958, had a fallout shelter built for his family at his home in Starnberg. Many AG members felt that, if true, this was a

⁹⁶ See Pascual Jordan, *Atom und Weltall; Einführung in den Gedankeninhalt der modernen Physik* (Braunschweig: F. Vieweg, 1960).

stinging act of unfaithfulness from one of the intellectual leaders of the nuclear disarmament movement in Germany.⁹⁷

This illustrates that this issue was much more serious than building shelters for public safety. To the members of the AG fallout shelters were not the answer. If the West German government was concerned about protecting its citizens from a nuclear attack, it should focus its efforts on nuclear disarmament and nonviolent confliction resolution strategies.

As the West German conscientious objection activists began expanding the scope of their involvement in the late 1950s to include the atomic weapons issue they also started exploring different methods of protest. They were influenced by the British anti-war group known as the Committee of 100 set up in October 1960 by Bertrand Russell, Hugh Brock, and April Carter among others. West German activists, namely Konrad and Helga, worked with the Committee of 100 and learned a great deal about direct action and civil disobedience. April Carter wrote, “The Committee of 100 was founded in an attempt to increase the numbers of people taking part in civil disobedience, so that direct action was moved away from the image of individual witness and into the stage of mass resistance.”⁹⁸ West German activists also gained a better understanding of an important aspect of direct action, its media appeal. Carter recalled, “The most popular reason for favoring direct action—especially among its

⁹⁷ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁹⁸ Carter, *Direct Action and Liberal Democracy*, 65.

sympathizers in the ranks of the CND—was that it gained wide press and media coverage.”⁹⁹ The broader the media coverage a protest event attracted the more people were informed about the message the protesters were try to communicate.

The ideas and protest tactics that West German peace activists such as Konrad and Helga Tempel learned from The Committee of 100 were soon applied to West German protest actions. However, the West Germans did not copy the British methods completely. Rather, they used what they learned from their British counterparts in the Committee of 100 to inform the development of their own style of direct action. This is because the legal and social environments in Britain and West Germany were quite different from one another and this fact necessitated different approaches to direct action protest tactics, but this is covered in a later chapter.

By the early 1960s, the West German conscientious objection movement had undergone a great deal of change. It was much more involved in issues and protest campaigns from all over the world, the most prominent being the antinuclear campaign. A shift in focus emerged as the organizations and individual activists moved away from the original singular focus on anti-military and anti-conscription in West Germany and broadened their protest agenda to include antinuclear, anti-racism, and peace in a global perspective.

The West German conscientious objection organizations and the activists belonging to them were connected to a network of likeminded groups and individuals

⁹⁹ Carter, *Direct Action and Liberal Democracy*, 62.

facilitated by the War Resisters' International. This transnational network furthered the development of both the West German peace organizations and activists. Because of this transnational social space, the West Germans gained access to new ideas, strategies, and tactics as they worked to create a society that embraced nonviolence and peaceful conflict resolution. They also utilized a forum in which they learned about the successes and failures of various protest events from around the world. Through their interaction with other actors in the transnational social space they occupied, the West Germans gained firsthand knowledge about the application of new protest techniques and found support for the implementation of their own tactics and ideas. This wealth of knowledge and experience was invaluable to the West Germans as they worked to create a protest culture of their own in order to effectively participate in West German politics from the undefined space outside of the traditional party structure. In short, the transnational social space engineered by the West German conscientious objection activists alongside their counterparts around the world provided the building blocks for the foundation on which extra-parliamentary opposition would emerge in the Federal Republic of Germany.

CHAPTER V

MARCH FOR PEACE: THE WEST GERMAN CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

MOVEMENT AND THE CREATION OF THE *OSTERMARSCH*

On a cold, rainy Easter Sunday in April 1960, peace activists from Bremen, Hannover, Hamburg, and Brunswick gathered at the British rocket installation at Bergen-Hohne in Northern West Germany. They had just completed a four-day march to protest the deployment of nuclear weapons on West German soil in the first Easter March Against Atomic Weapons. The Easter March, or *Ostermarsch*, started with perhaps 1,000 participants and was the first antinuclear protest action of its kind in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Easter March continues to this day, and it is considered by many historians to have been the first sustained protest movement of extra-parliamentary opposition in the Federal Republic of Germany.¹ As it grew from about 1,000 participants to tens of thousands during the mid-1960s, the Easter Marches laid the foundation for extra-parliamentary opposition and inspired a generation of activists that challenged the authority of the West German state.

The Easter March was founded by Konrad Tempel, Helga Tempel, and several likeminded West German peace activists in 1960. Historians point to the Social Democratic Party's antinuclear campaign Fight Atomic Death and the antinuclear movement in Great Britain as the primary factors in the creation of the Easter March.

¹ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 92-93; Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 37-38; Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 111; Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO*.

While both certainly played an important role, historians often neglect the influence of the West German conscientious objection movement on the creation of the Easter March and, consequently, our understanding of the beginnings of the Easter March is incomplete.² Historians of the West German peace movement often describe the founders as “a small group of religious pacifists,” and describe the Easter March as a continuation of the 1950s’ protests against nuclear weapons.³ However, the initiators of the Easter March were much more than just religious pacifists, and the Easter March was a product of a much broader network of activists and organizations, which dated back to the debates over rearmament and conscription in the 1950s.

Drawing the connection between the Easter Marches and the West German conscientious objection movement, this chapter argues that the learning process that many West German activists went through in the latter half of the 1950s during their work in the IdK, VK, and AG prepared them to transition from these fairly limited protests campaigns to broader, farther reaching campaigns that involved hundreds of thousands in protest against the West German government. Thus, this chapter establishes the importance of the movement to the creation and success of the Easter March campaign. This chapter also challenges the traditional understanding of the origins of the Easter Marches and seeks to provide a more nuanced account of how and why the Easter March campaign was created by discussing the early years of the campaign and

² An important exception is Holger Nehring’s work on the connections between the British and West German antinuclear movements. See Nehring, “National Internationalists,” and his recent book *Politics of Security*.

³ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 220; Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 98; Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO*, 70.

illustrating how the lessons learned in the IdK, VK, and AG were applied. Furthermore, this chapter examines how the West German public received the Easter March movement and how its leadership navigated the complex and often contradictory Cold War East West rhetoric. This chapter will also look at how the Easter Marches developed as a distinctly West German protest movement as a result of the experiences of the activists and the unique geopolitical position of the Federal Republic of Germany. The activism of these individuals, outside of official party actions such as the KdA, put them at odds with the Social Democratic Party and was the forerunner to the conflict between the politically active, nonaligned public and the established political parties.

The West German Easter Marches are fairly well known in the history of German protest activism. Historians recognize the Easter Marches as the first protest campaign of the 1960s and consider it to have ushered in the extra-parliamentary opposition movement that defined the era.⁴ However, historians often ignore the origins of the Easter Marches. What little information historians do provide about founders of the Easter Marches focuses on the religious element and the phrase “religiously minded pacifists” or “small group of Quakers” is repeatedly used.⁵ The Action Group for Nonviolence, the IdK and later VK group that focused on direct action tactics of nonviolence and organized the first Easter March was certainly made up of people who

⁴ Burns, and van der Will. *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 92.

⁵ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 37; Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 98; Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 220.

were mostly, if not all, pacifists, but there is no indication that they were especially religiously motivated in their pacifism.

It is interesting that this aspect is the one of the few facts historians have provided and it warrants exploration. The historians that do mention the origins of the Easter Marches all cite the same source, Karl A. Otto's 1977 book *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO* that came out of his 1975 dissertation at Bielefeld University. It is the only academic study of the Easter Marches and is an important contribution to the study of the emergence of extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany. However, most historians, to their detriment, repeat Otto's description of the Easter March founders. Otto wrote that Konrad Tempel and a "group of religiously motivated pacifists" initiated the first Easter March in 1960 and went on to describe the Action Group for Nonviolence as a "Quaker group" within the VK.⁶ This description of the Action Group for Nonviolence only focuses on one aspect of the group and leaves out a multitude of other motivating issues.

Pacifism has often, but not always, been rooted in a person's religious beliefs. However, in the context of postwar Germany, there are a multitude of reasons why someone would be a pacifist. The founders of the AG, Konrad and Helga Tempel, were Quakers but, according to them, they were the only Quakers in the 20 or so members of the group.⁷ Quaker values can be seen in some of the AG's organizational principles,

⁶ Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO*, 70.

⁷ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

such as moral responsibility and the emphasis on personal initiative. However, none of the AG literature or rhetoric contained religious elements or any material that would indicate that religious beliefs motivated the group. Konrad Tempel wrote, “[R]eligious issues played no role in our work, even if people like [Karl A.] Otto, among others, accepts it. [It] is obvious to derive such a statement from the fact that we are both Quakers; however, it is wrong.”⁸ As illustrated during the preparations for the Hamburg vigil in 1958, the AG saw their activism as a product of their personal convictions that the world had seen enough war and violence. It would be more accurate to say they also found motivation in the teachings of Gandhi and Thoreau.⁹

It is somewhat unfortunate that this religious label has continually been applied to the initiators of the Easter Marches, and while religion was an important influence for some of the Action Group for Nonviolence, namely the Tempels, we must be careful not to miss the other motivating factors that are equally important: fear of a nuclear war, war weariness from the Second World War, a sense of moral responsibility for Germany’s actions on the world stage, and the desire to bring the Cold War division of Germany and Europe to a peaceful end. A multitude of people in the Federal Republic and throughout the world shared these factors. If we only acknowledge the possible religious

⁸ Letter from Konrad Tempel to the Norddeutscher Rundfunk Hauptabteilung Politik, September 10, 1982, HIS, TEM 500,02.

⁹ Henry David Thoreau, *Widerstand Gegen Die Regierung*, in *Texte Zur Gewaltlosigkeit* no. 2, (Hamburg: Aktionskreis für Gewaltlosigkeit, 1959), Konrad Tempel, *Texte Zur Gewaltlosigkeit*, HIS, TEM 100,03.

motivations, we could miss the factors that tie this group of West German activists to the much larger narrative of peace activism during this period of the Cold War.

Konrad and Helga Tempel and the other founders of the Easter March were key members of the West German conscientious objection movement and had been actively protesting the government's military policies for several years prior to the formation of the Easter March. During their time with conscientious objection groups such as the IdK and the VK, these activists had developed the organizational and intellectual space to create a popular protest campaign. Furthermore, they established and practiced methods of nonviolent protest that engaged the West German population but stayed within the boundaries of the law. Without this valuable experience, the Easter Marches may not have been able to achieve such success or sustain its momentum into the late 1960s.

Konrad Tempel's participation in the 1959 Aldermaston March propelled his ambition to launch a similar protest action with the Action Group for Nonviolence the next year. After locating the Honest John missiles at the British weapons base at Bergen-Hohne, the AG focused on organizing the march effort.¹⁰ The Tempels and the AG tapped into the West German conscientious objection movement for recruits and support. After much discussion, the initial organizers decided the march would consist of

¹⁰ The MGR-1 Honest John rocket was the first nuclear-capable surface to air missile in the U.S. arsenal. The truck mounted rocket was developed in the early 1950s and by the mid 1950s they were deployed in Europe. The MGR-1 was fitted with a 2, 10, or 30, kiloton nuclear warhead. See James N. Gibson, *Nuclear Weapons of the United States: An Illustrated History* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Pub, 1996), 177-179.

four march groups that would start from different points and all converge on the British rocket base at Bergen-Hohne in what was called a *Sternmarsch* or Star March.¹¹

While the AG in Hamburg set up and staffed the central leadership of the Easter March, the leadership of the individual marches came mostly from the regional conscientious objection organizations. This allowed for more participation from the conscientious objection groups in the area. Instead of requiring activists from the other cities to travel to Hamburg to participate in the march, the Easter March organizers relied on the regional groups and leadership to recruit participants locally. The Bremen, Brunswick, and Hannover march columns were organized by IdK members, including the future Speaker of the Easter Marches Andreas Buro, while the Hamburg column was organized by the AG with support of the VK.¹²

Burns and Van Der Will argued that from the beginning the Easter March had to create “from scratch an appropriate infrastructure capable of sustaining the burgeoning movement.”¹³ However, it is clear that the Easter March initiators did in fact have the organizational framework on which to build. Their experience in the conscientious objection movement along with their international network of activists gave them the tools necessary to get the Easter Marches off the ground.

¹¹Letter from Konrad Tempel to VK membership January 16, 1960, Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

¹² Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013; Buro, *Gewaltlos gegen Krieg*, 87-88.

¹³ Burns and van der Will. *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 92.

The AG had to rely on the conscientious objection organizations for a great deal of logistic support. Since their protest actions up to that point had been restricted to Hamburg and the surrounding area, they did not have the experience to coordinate an event of this size and scope in terms of both participants and geography. This did not mean, however, that they did not know how to accomplish the task. The previous few years of local protest activity along with numerous WRI events and a large network of conscientious objection activists throughout West Germany gave them a good deal of knowledge and resources. Furthermore, they were able to tap into their transnational network of activists for inspiration and advice. Through their WRI connections in West Germany and abroad, the AG coordinated with activists in other parts of the country and reached a larger circle that included representatives of the emerging New Left in West Germany.¹⁴

The Easter March organizers made sure to spread the word to the local populations along the march routes and hoped to raise support for the protest effort. With the support of the VK, they printed and distributed flyers with the headline “Atomic Alarm!” and contained detailed maps of the local area with the blast radius of an atomic bomb clearly marked. Just underneath the local map with the blast radius a question asked, “What is going on in the heath?” in reference to the Lüneburg Heath in Lower Saxony where Bergen-Hohne is situated. The flyer then explicitly detailed what would happen if one of the nuclear weapons stationed at Bergen-Hohne exploded, warning that all nearby towns would be totally destroyed, all living things would be killed, towns and

¹⁴ Nehring, *Politics of Security*, 150.

cities a bit more distant (such as Hannover and Bremen) would deal with the effects of radiation, and the entire region would become a wasteland. Much like the declaration of the Göttingen Eighteen in 1957, the Easter Marchers countered the dangerous duplicity they saw in the Adenauer government and declared, “And [Chancellor] Dr. Adenauer called these rockets the ‘further development of artillery’!” If the person felt compelled to do something about the danger lurking in their local area they were encouraged to write to politicians, protest in Bonn at the Defense Ministry, or take part in the Easter March of Atomic Weapons Opponents to Bergen-Hohne. At minimum, the Easter March organizers asked the locals to “show your sympathy” and “greet the opponents to atomic weapons” as they march to the rocket base at Bergen-Hohne.¹⁵

Another leaflet asked the same question, “What is going on in the heath? You don’t know? There are a lot worse things than tanks exercises in green seed fields or in quiet Juniper valleys.” The flyer declared that each Honest John rocket stationed at Bergen-Hohne was just as deadly as the bomb dropped on Hiroshima “(86,000 dead in one fell swoop!).” This leaflet also provided the schedule of speeches for the march that listed talks by a number of doctors, professors, and leaders of the Easter March as well as the founder of the GdW and one of the leaders of the VK Hans Herman Köper, Dr. Gustav Heckmann, and Konrad Tempel.¹⁶

¹⁵ Leaflet for the 1960 Easter March, HIS, TEM 100,04.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Before the march began, the organizers published a mission statement titled, “Why We March.” In this statement they outlined the major arguments of their campaign: nuclear weapons were not simply further development of artillery but were an entirely new, exponentially more destructive weapon as clearly demonstrated by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; nothing justified the “mass murder” by the use of these weapons, including the defense of a nation. The statement included a call to outlaw all “weapons of mass destruction” in all states, in the case of the two Germanies the outlawing of all “manufacture, storage, testing and use of atomic weapons;” a call to all statesmen East and West to take the risk of unilateral nuclear disarmament to put an end to the arms race. As well as a call for all “responsibility conscious citizens in East and West to refuse any service for the production, storage, testing and use of nuclear weapons.”¹⁷ Throughout the document, the Easter March organizers emphasized that leading statesmen and average citizens on both sides of the iron curtain must take action. They viewed nuclear weapons and the responsibility to eliminate their existence as a global concern rather than just a German or European concern. In their view, it was the responsibility of the members of a civil society to take action against a policy that they believed would harm thousands if not millions of people.

The early spring weather was certain to be poor, so Easter March organizers asked participants to dress appropriately for the multiday march, which meant sturdy shoes, warm clothing, and raincoats and umbrellas. Vehicles would transport their

¹⁷ “Warum Wir Marschieren,” Easter March of Atomic Weapons Opponents, Hamburg Work Group, HIS, TEM 100,04.

baggage, and the organizers arranged accommodations for each night on the march. The marchers faced dreary wet weather when they set off for Bergen-Hohne from their respective starting points that they would endure for the duration of the march. Despite the bad weather, many remained cheerful and focused on the purpose of the march and the renewal spirit of the Easter holiday. One young student on the march stated, “This march is the fairest fulfillment of Easter.”¹⁸ Photos of the march show respectfully dressed men and women walking in columns three abreast with small signs and a large cloth banner stretched between two poles declaring, “From Hamburg to Bergen-Hohne.”¹⁹

The Easter March organizers wrote the slogans on the signs and pamphlets that were used on the march and circulated the approved list among the participants. These slogans drew attention to the major concerns the Easter Marchers wanted to communicate to the West German public; some were provocative, and others were quite direct. The marchers carried signs that simply said, “We want to live!” or addressed nuclear weapons development stating, “No bomb without test – No test without death!” and “Training for nuclear weapons is training for mass murder!” One questioned the government’s defense policy asking, “Nuclear weapons – protection or suicide?” Perhaps the most provocative was the slogan that likely struck a chord with every

¹⁸ Dr. Lothar Schulze, “Noch ist es Zeit, Bruder!” *Hamburger Morgenpost*, April 23/24, 1960.

¹⁹ “‘Ostermarsch’ aus Protest,” *Harburger Anzeiger und Nachrichten*, April 19, 1960.

German who saw it, as it connected the Honest John rockets in the Lueneburg Heath to the Holocaust: “First Bergen-Belsen – Now Bergen-Hohne!”²⁰

A number of British CND members participated in the march and this information was passed on to news outlets in order to show how the nuclear weapons issue in Germany was significant enough to not only garner support from people outside of the Federal Republic but to have people travel internationally to join the protest march. The Easter March organizers sent a detailed list of the British participants that provided brief bios of each person. These participants came from varied backgrounds and included housewives and teachers as well as a nurse and engineer and an artist. The Easter March organizers made sure to point out the fact that both the Conservative and Labour Parties were represented among the British participants in order to further establish the fact that the Easter March was not driven by a particular political philosophy.²¹

Similarly, the German participants came from diverse political and socio-economic backgrounds because the threat of nuclear war was an issue that concerned many people throughout West German society. This heterogeneous mix of participants reflected a shift in German protest culture. Historian Alice Holmes Cooper noted,

Whereas workers had contributed the numerical bulk of the 1950s movements, protests from the 1960s on increasingly mobilized the middle

²⁰ “‘Ostermarsch’ aus Protest,” *Harburger Anzeiger und Nachrichten*, April 19, 1960.

²¹ Letter from the Easter March Committee to Reuters, April 14, 1960.

class. This new, critical intelligentsia was most concentrated among the youth at universities and high schools (Gymnasias) and among tertiary-sector and public sector employees (Angestellte and Beamte). Together with the “old left” remnants of the traditional labor movement and Protestants already active in the 1950s, it led the 1960s movements that changed the face of German politics.²²

In this way the Easter March movement helped bridge the generational divide between the “old left” pacifists from the immediate postwar period and the younger activists of the 1960s who were not necessarily pacifists but certainly engaged peace protesters. Konrad and Helga Tempel, in many ways, had a foot in each generation but were not really part of either which is perhaps why they were able to lead the burgeoning Easter March movement so effectively.

As mentioned previously the final destination of the star march that Easter weekend was a place called Bergen-Hohne. Konrad and Helga Tempel and the rest of the Easter March organizers were very cognizant of the proximity of the British rocket base at Bergen-Hohne to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The AG did not specifically look for a nuclear weapons site that was close to a concentration camp but they found Bergen-Hohne to be the perfect location for the protest march in part because of immediacy of Bergen-Belsen. They emphasized the connection between the rocket base and the concentration camp in many of their flyers, signs, and speeches drawing direct parallels between nuclear warfare and mass murder.

In the immediate postwar period, the images and testimonies from Bergen-Belsen became well known. The British were particularly aware of the concentration camp

²² Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 97.

because units of the British Army liberated the camp and the liberation was so well documented. In the 1950s, Anne Frank's diary was published in many languages and was soon adapted into a Pulitzer Prize winning play and critically acclaimed film. The diary became a symbol of the victims of the Holocaust and, since Anne and her sister Margot both died in Bergen-Belsen, the concentration camp was very recognizable for Germans and non-Germans alike.

Interestingly, Bergen-Belsen as a symbol may have had implications beyond the Holocaust. According to Habbo Knoch, director of the Bergen-Belsen camp memorial: "Bergen-Belsen [...] became a synonym world-wide for German crimes committed during the time of Nazi rule."²³ In this sense, when the Easter March referenced Bergen-Belsen they were connecting the site to the whole span of German atrocities committed during the Second World War. Furthermore, the reference to Bergen-Belsen and the atrocities of the Holocaust provided a clear contrast to the actions of the Easter March activists.

As noted earlier, some of the official slogans for the Easter March directly referenced Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and the Holocaust.²⁴ The March organizers drew clear parallels between the development of nuclear arsenals and the possibility of a nuclear war with the mass killing of the Holocaust. This provocative

²³ Habbo Knoch (editor), *Bergen-Belsen: Wehrmacht POW Camp 1940–1945, Concentration Camp 1943–1945, Displaced Persons Camp 1945–1950. Catalogue of the permanent exhibition* (Wallstein, 2010), 9.

²⁴ Easter March Slogans sent to Rudolf Augstein, HIS, TEM 100,04.

position left no ambiguity about the activists' opinion of nuclear weapons in the Federal Republic.

The Easter March addressed the connection of the danger presented by nuclear weapons with the horrors of the Holocaust in their "Why We March" statement. The leadership suggested that by their silence during the Nazi regime the German people were guilty for the perpetration of the Holocaust and that it was their duty to speak out against the impending mass murder that would accompany nuclear warfare.

In view of the former concentration camp Bergen-Belsen only few kilometers distant from the missile training ground, we remember that we Germans once became guilty by silence. At that time, a public protest could have cost you your life, whereas today we exercise a fundamental right of the Basic Law when we call out to all perspicacious people: First Bergen-Belsen, now Bergen-Hohne. Citizens be vigilant, let us give a sign.²⁵

This statement highlights the driving force behind their activism; their duty, as citizens of the new, democratic Germany was to raise their voices and speak out against what they believed was wrong in the actions of their government. The activists were plainly stating that they, as citizens of a new Germany and unlike the citizens of Nazi Germany, were taking action to prevent another crime against humanity. They were doing their duty as members of a civil society when the German people failed to do so during the Nazi regime. The Easter Marchers acknowledged that similar acts of protest in Nazi Germany would have led to dire consequences but reminded their fellow citizens that in

²⁵ "Warum Wir Marschieren," Easter March of Atomic Weapons Opponents, Hamburg Work Group, HIS, TEM 100,04.

the new Germany their right to speak out against injustice was protected by their Basic Law.

By claiming the Holocaust and nuclear war were equivalent, the Easter Marchers drove home the seriousness of their message. If one accepted their claim that nuclear war and the Holocaust were equally horrible and destructive then, as Germans, it was their moral responsibility to speak out against nuclear weapons because they did not speak out against the Holocaust. At the same time the Easter March organizers, in the “Why We March” statement, implied that it was understandable that Germans did not speak out against the actions of the Nazi regime. Free speech was not a protected right in Nazi Germany and the consequences for such action could be fatal, but in the new Federal Republic no such excuse existed. If West German citizens believed nuclear weapons were wrong then they had a duty and a moral responsibility to speak out against the Government’s defense policies.

After the conclusion of the march at the Bergen-Hohne rocket base, the marchers went to the Bergen-Belsen memorial to lay a wreath. One of the marchers, Dr. Lothar Schulze, wrote a report on the first Easter March that was published in the major Hamburg newspaper, the *Hamburger Morgenpost*, not long after the march. Dr. Schulze acknowledged that their actions and slogans involving Bergen-Belsen would be controversial but explained that the question of nuclear weapons was serious enough to warrant the connection: “After completion of the rally, we drove to Bergen-Belsen to lay a wreath. One of our signs had the inscription: ‘First Bergen-Belsen, now

Bergen-Hohne' and there may well have been some who did not like this inscription. But where is the difference between murder in the concentration camps and mass murder by the bomb? In both cases, innocent people were hit."²⁶ Here Dr. Schulze draws a very strong correlation between the Holocaust and the nuclear bomb. To him, it seems the unifying factor was not the intent of the perpetrator but the innocence of the victims. After affirming the equivalence of the Holocaust and nuclear war, Dr. Schulze reiterated the point the Easter March organizers made about responsibility.

The German people have been accused before of remaining silent when courageous words and deeds were needed. In the concentration camps - like Bergen-Belsen - millions of people lost their lives. But the continuance of test detonations and the build-up of nuclear arms threatens to destroy all of humanity. It is imperative to confront this danger with unmistakable, total rejection of all preparations for nuclear war in the east and the west.²⁷

Dr. Schulze also pointed out a clear complication inherent in the nuclear weapons policy of the time, having nuclear weapons forced you to play a zero sum game, "None of us will say that those who favor nuclear weapons want to use them. But basically, they must be prepared to use the bomb if they threaten to do so. Those in charge are then perhaps no longer the masters of their decisions."²⁸ He believed nuclear weapons put countries on a path that would lead them, willingly or not, to nuclear war and once the line was crossed there would be no return from nuclear war. The only way to avoid the mass destruction and death of a nuclear war, and, ostensibly, an event on the level of the Holocaust, was to not have nuclear weapons at all.

²⁶ Dr. Lothar Schulze, "Noch ist es Zeit, Bruder!" *Hamburger Morgenpost*, April 23/24, 1960.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

The all who participated in the first Easter March considered it a success. Their message was spread throughout Lower Saxony and in the cities of Bremen, Hamburg, Hannover and Brunswick and participants from all walks of life and from beyond West Germany joined in the protest. When compared to events later in the decade the March was fairly small and limited but it was one of the most complex and well-attended events of the period. It would not have been possible for the Action Group for Nonviolence to organize a protest event of this magnitude, modest as it was, without the efforts of the conscientious objection organizations and their members.

The West German conscientious objection organizations supported the Easter March in every facet of the march from planning and media to mailing lists and finances. The media contacts and press analysis went through the VK press office and all the Easter March publications and handouts were published by the VK.²⁹ A large number of individual members who participated in the march belonged to one of the organizations.³⁰ The support of conscientious objection activists was such that a quarter to half of each pillar of the march was comprised of VK or IdK members. In fact, the national leadership of the VK marched in the first Easter March and even gave some of the speeches at the rallies along the march.³¹

²⁹ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013; see also the letters, pamphlets, and flyers in Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

³⁰ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013; Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013; “Zusammenstellung der Einnahmen Ostermarsch 1960,” Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

³¹ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013; “Was ist in der Heide los?” Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

While the Easter March was not officially organized by or affiliated with either the IdK or the VK, the involvement of conscientious objection activists was to such an extent that it led the West German press to believe that all the participants were part of the conscientious objection movement. Many of the newspapers reported that the marchers were all conscientious objectors, and some stated that the marches were orchestrated by the IdK and VK printing articles with titles such as “Star March of Conscientious Objectors,” “Conscientious Objectors plan Easter Star March,” and “Conscientious Objectors March.”³²

For the most part the press showed only a passing interest in the first Easter March. Most newspapers gave a brief description of the march and noted that in Great Britain a much larger march against nuclear weapons had also taken place over the Easter weekend. Some papers printed articles that were skeptical of the methods chosen to spread the Easter March message and the potential for success.

Prior to the march the national daily *Die Welt* expressed a degree of skepticism about the tactics chosen by the Easter March organizers. The article reflected that public protest marches seemed to be the chosen demonstration of the times but questioned the efficacy of a protest march, “The means of marching is legitimate, although one could imagine other equally effective methods to get his view expressed. However, it has the disadvantage that what is to act spontaneously, must be planned down to the last, to

³²“Protestmarsch verboten,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, April 9, 1960; “Marsch der Atomgegner zum NATO-Uebungsplatz,” *Niederelbe-Zeitung*, April 19, 1960; “Atomprotest in der Heide,” *Frankfurter Rundschau* April 19, 1960; “Drei-Tage-Marsch gegen A-Waffen,” *Hannoversche Presse*, April 19, 1960; Karl-Heinz Stahnke, *Presseanalyse*, HIS, TEM 100,04.

reduce the rations, the field kitchens or hot sausage. This affects the effect of these marches. It is hard to imagine that this four-day march will have the political impact that the organizers seem to promise.”³³ The criticism of a lack of spontaneity in the planned Easter March indicates a misunderstanding of what the organizers sought to achieve. The goal of the Easter March was not to have a group of people suddenly converge in protest in the city square, much like the earlier Fight Atomic Death protests, but to have people commit to a long term demonstration that more accurately represented their campaign.

When the Action Group for Nonviolence initiated the two week around the clock antinuclear vigil in Hamburg in 1958 they specifically chose a demonstration tactic that emphasized commitment and dedication in order to express their message. Helga Tempel wrote that they wanted to show that this was not an issue that one protested for just an afternoon.³⁴ The AG believed that the issue of nuclear weapons was so important it required their commitment to a long-term campaign and simultaneous demonstrations requiring endurance and extended sacrifice conveyed how seriously they took the issue.

Most papers ran articles with brief descriptions of the march that focused on the bad weather the marchers endured and seemed disappointed when they reported that the march “proceeded without incident.”³⁵ There was little mention of the Easter March’s message beyond the point that the activists were marching in protest of nuclear weapons. Smaller papers were much more engaged in discussing the merits of the Easter

³³ “Marschierer,” *Die Welt*, March 3, 1960.

³⁴ “Mahn-Wache,” HIS, TEM 100,01

³⁵ “Kundgebungen gegen Atomruestung,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, April 16, 1960.

Marchers' proposals. The Stuttgart regional daily paper, the *Ludwigsburger Kreiszeitung*, was one of the few that supported the actions of the Easter Marchers. The author, Fritz Mack, noted the Easter March was nothing like the typical "Osterspaziergang" or leisurely nature walk but something else entirely. Mack wrote that even if you did not think the demonstration would have much success one had to admit that the Easter Marchers observantly recognized the "threat to existence" nuclear weapons posed.³⁶ The demonstration, according to him, was different from the usual group of superficial people discussing "war and the rumors of war" on their days off. The Easter Marchers went beyond simply discussing the danger nuclear weapons pose to humanity by addressing the question of guilt that mankind "as God's creatures would take on themselves when launching nuclear war."³⁷ The *Ludwigsburger Kreiszeitung* seems to have recognized one of the major differences between most antinuclear protests up to that point and the Easter March. The Easter March believed in the primacy of action rather than rhetoric and went beyond only acknowledging the danger and destructive force of nuclear weapons by also addressing the guilt the German people would carry for that destruction.

On the other hand, the local paper from the town of Soltau near Bergen-Hohne, the *Soltauer Kreiszeitung*, took the opposite position when they directly responded to the Easter March message writing:

³⁶ "Auch ein Osterspaziergang," *Ludwigsburger Kreiszeitung*, April 16, 1960.

³⁷ Ibid.

We only want to note on the campaign that no one is for war, we would all prefer to see the nuclear and missile only serve the peaceful uses (in Germany, there are no nuclear weapons in the Bundeswehr's possession), but what good is it if a few kilometers away strong-armed opponents are threatening our freedom every hour? We need to be at least prepared and ready for defense! If there are such marches, then please also march in the Thuringian Forest, where the Russians have missile stations. This is nothing more than a fact, they should rather adapt to the realities and not be one-sided.³⁸

The *Soltauener Kreiszeitung* presented a common argument at the time in writing that nuclear weapons were necessary for the defense of the country. They argued, when used for defense, nuclear weapons were essentially used for peaceful means. Thus changing the meaning of the word "peace" by claiming defensive actions were inherently peaceful and attacking the rhetoric of the Easter March. Using the claim that the very freedom of the West was threatened by the Soviets also changed the character of discussions about peace and implied that if the Easter March activists wanted to disarm the nuclear weapons bases then perhaps their version of peace was to actually surrender to the communists.

The *Soltauener Kreiszeitung* reflected the position of many when it stated no one was for war but the reality of West Germany's geopolitical position on the frontlines of the Cold War forced the Federal Republic to at least meet the Soviet's missile stations with installations like Bergen-Hohne. However, they were quick to point out that the West German military did not have its own nuclear weapons, passing the burden and potential guilt on to the NATO allies. The *Soltauener Kreiszeitung* ignored the fact that the Easter March called for nuclear disarmament in the East and the West and suggested the

³⁸ *Soltauener Kreiszeitung*, April 19, 1960.

activists march in the Thuringian forest where it was rumored the Soviets stationed nuclear weapons. Ironically, the AG had actually tried to determine if there really were Soviet nuclear weapons in the Thuringian forest and had drawn up preliminary plans to demonstrate in the DDR.³⁹

The *Soltauener Kreiszeitung* took a very strong position in opposition to the Easter March. The article captures the essence of what the Easter March was up against in West Germany. Their message of nuclear disarmament and peace was continually met with skepticism and suspicion from parts of the population. The Easter March had to convince the doubters that they too recognized the threat posed by the Soviet Union but believed the best way to remove the threat was through nuclear disarmament in the West and the East. This was a very difficult task when words such as “peace” had such fluid definitions.

One of the major accomplishments of the first Easter March, which was also acknowledged by activists at the time, was that it brought together many pacifist groups that individually protested against nuclear weapons. This was especially true in regard to the conscientious objection organizations, the VK and IdK. Konrad Tempel, in a speech at the 1960 WRI Triennial Conference in Ghandigram, India, stated “...the protest march became the most significant action arranged after the war by pacifist groups (I.d.K., V.K.) which was reported in detail by more than 130 German and a number of

³⁹ “Protest In Germany,” report to Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War, June 3, 1960. HIS, TEM 600,01.

foreign papers.”⁴⁰ In the same speech, Tempel identified two major spheres of leadership that published statements in support of the Easter March; the religious and the scientific. The Easter March had support from two major figures from both spheres in Pastor Martin Niemoeller and physicist Dr. Carl Friedrich Weizsaecker. Tempel reported that the Easter March had to deal with fact that the Trade Unions, the Fight Atomic Death committees, and the Social Democrats all stayed away from the Easter March and partly boycotted the march.

In his speech Konrad Tempel recognized several roadblocks to more participation from the general population: government propaganda that “succeeded in drawing away the skeptical part of the population and also influenced or paralyzed the pacifists,” the world political situation that seemed to justify the government’s actions, economic prosperity that made the population “immune against pacifist warnings,” and the belief that only large numbers could be effective. Tempel also noted that in 1956 peace activists limited their activity to the issue of conscientious objection and this “turned out to be, at least in some groups, a fateful error because most of the members, especially the older members, were not used to active participation.” Tempel ended his speech with a call for more direct action and warned that without more support and direct participation from peace groups it was unlikely that government nuclear policy will be changed from below.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Konrad Tempel, “Atomic Disarmament in the Federal Republic of Germany,” IISG, 249.

⁴¹ Ibid.

After the first Easter March the Action Group for Nonviolence continued to seek out opportunities for protest actions. Perhaps motivated by the success of the Easter March, on May 15 the group organized a march to the East German border to demonstrate for human rights and protest against totalitarianism. They walked to the border between East and West Germany near Lauenburg, a small border town on the river Elbe about 30 miles or 50km East of Hamburg. Carrying black flags a little more than a dozen Action Group for Nonviolence members marched in protest of the totalitarianism of the DDR and the Eastern Bloc in general.⁴² Prior to the march, the Action Group demonstrated with black flags in front of the French, Yugoslavian, Portuguese, Spanish, South African, Czechoslovakian, and Turkish consulates.⁴³ Konrad Tempel reflected that demonstrations and subsequent march were hastily prepared and not very well thought out.⁴⁴ They had neither the number of participants nor the clear, well-publicized message of the Easter March so they occurred without remark or, perhaps, notice of news outlets or the respective governments of the FRG or DDR. Despite the negligible results from the protest demonstrations, the group's efforts in May 1960 illustrate the commitment the activists had to direct action tactics. West German activists also continued to support the Aldermaston marches in Britain after the creation of the German Easter March movement. In fact, the 1961 Aldermaston march reportedly

⁴² Letter to local editors from the Action Group for Nonviolence press service, May 11, 1960, HIS, TEM 100,01.

⁴³ Letter to the Hamburg police from the Action Group for Nonviolence, May 30, 1960, HIS, TEM 100,01.

⁴⁴ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

had over 500 German participants.⁴⁵ This is an indication of how for many Germans the nuclear weapons issue, and the scope protests against the development and deployment of the weapons, was not limited to the Federal Republic.

After the success of the first Easter March in April of 1960, the organizers were able to maintain their momentum and prepare for a bigger march the next year. With the assistance of the VK Documentation Office, they worked to determine how the West German public received the march and collected a wide range of newspaper articles from the region as well as from the major papers in the Federal Republic.⁴⁶ Their analysis showed that while the march was reported in about 130 papers most of the articles only briefly discussed the march highlighting the march's similarities with the Aldermaston march in Britain or commenting on the weather the marchers endured. There were a number of articles with photographs of the march column and marchers with signs and the fact that their regional protest event was reported in the major West German dailies such as *Die Welt*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Bild* was very encouraging.⁴⁷

The Easter March organizers also gathered statements from people who had participated in the 1960 march as well as from leaders of the peace movement in Germany and abroad. The famous British philosopher and peace activist Bertrand

⁴⁵ Memo from April Carter and Bayard Rustin to CNVA Leadership, April 7, 1961. Committee for Nonviolent Action Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection (hereafter SCPC), Series 6, Box 14.

⁴⁶ The VK *Dokumentationsabteilung*, headed by Karl-Heinz Stahnke, was an office that collected a variety of printed material about conscientious objection and peace protest from around the world. Karl-Heinz Stahnke, Presseanalyse, HIS, TEM 100,04.

⁴⁷ Karl-Heinz Stahnke, Presseanalyse, HIS, TEM 100,04.

Russell wrote in support of the Easter March and noted its connection with the British CND campaign, “I am completely willing to support a German march in the line of Aldermaston marches. These marches have had a very remarkable influence on the opinion of the British public, and I hope that similar marches in Germany prove just as effective.”⁴⁸ Professor Dr. Max Born, physicist and mathematician who was one of the Göttingen 18, also wished the march success along with Professor Dr. Fritz Wenzel, Theologian and SPD politician, who endorsed the movement despite his party’s reluctance to support the Easter March. Perhaps most importantly the Easter March organizers secured the support of Pastor Martin Niemöller who wrote, “I once took part in the first march in England to Aldermaston ... I will happily support your project.”⁴⁹

The Easter March leadership recognized that for the demonstration to have more of an impact they needed to reach more people with their message. They planned to accomplish this in two ways; redirecting and growing the march and diversifying the group of participants. The 1961 march expanded outside of northern Germany to include a southern star march in Bavaria, a southwestern star march in Baden-Württemberg and Hesse, and a western star march in the Ruhr.⁵⁰ The direction of the march was reversed so that it began at a central location and then the various groups would march back to their home cities. In the north, the star march began at the rocket base at Bergen-Hohne

⁴⁸ 1961 Easter March planning document, HIS, TEM 100,04.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ The same star march tactic, multiple march columns converging on one point, was continued from the previous year.

and ended in Hamburg, Bremen, Brunswick, and Hannover.⁵¹ In the south, the star march began in Ingolstadt and ended in the cities of Nuremberg, Munich, and Augsburg. In the southwest, the star march began near a rocket base in the town of Miltenberg and ended in Frankfurt, Mannheim, and Stuttgart. The western star march transverse the Ruhr industrial region beginning in Düsseldorf and ending at a rocket base in Dortmund.⁵² Except for the march from Essen to Dortmund, each star march began in a small rural town and ended in a number of major cities in West Germany. This would allow for much greater participation at the rally at the conclusion of the march as people could simply take part in the final day of the march and many bystanders could witness the concluding events and speeches.

The 1961 Easter March planning also featured an effort to augment the makeup of the march groups. The Easter March leadership wanted to focus on making the march more diverse and include antinuclear activists from every walk of life. In doing so they hoped to boost the number of participants and better illustrate the point that the nuclear weapons issue concerns all West Germans. They were willing to break with their traditional protest culture to achieve this diversity. “The overall picture of the march should correspond with the complexity of the nuclear opponents, so it must be the goal that jazz and Skiffle groups participate in the march. The more expressive the march is the greater chance we have that television reflects the Easter March. And we will thus

⁵¹ Letter to supporters from Easter March of Atomic Weapons Opponents Hamburg Working Group, December 1960, HIS, TEM 200,01.

⁵² 1961 Easter March flyer, HIS, TEM 200,01.

provide millions of people a sign.”⁵³ The dramatic effect of the antinuclear activists marching into the city from the nuclear weapons site and rural towns would certainly pique the interest of the press and, they hoped, earn the Eastern March airtime on television news outlets.

At the same time, the Easter March organizers were initiating a significant change in German protest culture. The addition of popular music and the focus on promoting a fun protest experience that would encourage young people to join the march marked a shift towards the joyfulness and festive nature that became the hallmark of 1960s peace protests. Burns and Van Der Will argued that the experience of the Easter Marches was the first time the peace movement added the element of joy and celebration.⁵⁴ The music and symbols of the Easter Marches are directly influenced by the international peace movement and were possible because of the transnational network key activists cultivated in the late 1950s.

Along with these changes, the Easter March leadership shifted their focus to pay more attention to involving and inspiring the younger generation. The handouts and flyers advertising the 1961 Easter March reflected this approach. The flyer targeting young people declared in bold letters, “Hot Music is the Zest of Youth. We Young say

⁵³ “Overall Plan for the Preparation and Implementation of Easter March 1961,” HIS, TEM 100,04; Skiffle has roots in jazz, blues, and folk music. In Britain in the 1950s it became very popular and many famous musicians such as Van Morrison and Mick Jagger started out playing in skiffle bands. The Beatles, who had close connections with the Hamburg music scene, evolved from a skiffle group formed by John Lennon known as The Quarrymen.

⁵⁴ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 98.

YES to Life.”⁵⁵ The addition of music and colorful participants was aimed at encouraging the participation of other segments of West German society, particularly the youth, but they maintained an emphasis on the importance of action. The maxim “deeds not words” was at the heart of their protest culture and to achieve this in practice the Easter March leadership worked to inspire people who opposed nuclear armaments to show their commitment to the cause and take part in the March. They acknowledged that the March was an intimidating course of action but asserted the goal was worth the risk declaring, “We must awaken in our members the courage to experiment in the service of humanity and the chance for them to be pioneers for a better world...”⁵⁶ The Easter March leadership believed that in the course of their action new participants would be assured that their deeds were not in vain, “In this way, a deep passion for peace can arise, which gives us all the confidence and certainty we are on the right track.”⁵⁷

Konrad, Helga, and the other members of the Easter March leadership recognized that they were up against stiff competition when it came to rhetoric about duty and honor. The proponents of nuclear weapons in the Federal Republic frequently evoked a sense of responsibility and the honor in defending Germany. It was easy to say West Germany was heroic in its defense of freedom and the Western world against the oppression of the Soviets. It was much harder to convince the average German that working for nuclear disarmament and world peace was an act of heroism. Therefore, the

⁵⁵ Flyer from 1961 Easter March, HIS, TEM 200,01.

⁵⁶ “Overall Plan for the Preparation and Implementation of Easter March 1961,” HIS, TEM 100,04.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Easter March needed to challenge the traditional assumptions of peace activism and push it to the level of national defense; except in their case they were performing heroic actions in defense of all mankind. The Easter March leadership announced, “As much as we must guard against the great words from the other side, so we need to heroize peace...which the younger generation does not relate to their ideals, but [we must] show them the real possibility and the imperative need to implement their ideals into action.”⁵⁸ The best way to convince the youth to put their principles into heroic action was to be the model of action, “But only by example, not by speeches and resolutions... Let’s give an example - we will reach the critical power of thinking and the break into the indifference of our generation!”⁵⁹

At the same time the Easter March organizers also made sure they connected with the average West German worker. The largest segment of the voting population all had the same basic concerns and the Easter March leadership worked to relate with flyers that addressed common issues writing “You have no time, you must see that on Friday your pay check is full - we all have this concern, because high prices and taxes eat away at our earnings - nuclear weapons cost money.”⁶⁰ Even after the success of the *Wirtschaftswunder* the average West German worker still worried about their finances and the Easter March organizers connected an everyday issue to the complex and somewhat extraordinary issue of nuclear weapons.

⁵⁸ “Overall Plan for the Preparation and Implementation of Easter March 1961,” HIS, TEM 100,04.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Flyer from 1961 Easter March, HIS, TEM 200,01.

After hooking the reader by addressing their financial concerns the flyer goes on to explain that the threat of nuclear weapons will affect every aspect of German life, “Not just money, our health, your tranquility, the happiness of your children, in short, peace is threatened by the madness of nuclear armament.”⁶¹ The flyer encouraged people to take control of the situation implying that West Germans had been complacent with their political voice and that direct action protest could have an influence on defense policy, “Enough decisions are taken from you, now you must do something at last! At Easter in 1961, we will not be celebrating, but taking part in the protest march of nuclear weapons opponents.”⁶² The flyer concluded by acknowledging the sacrifice the march would require but reminded potential participants of what was at stake declaring, “Our lives and the lives of our children are worth four days of marching!”⁶³

The approved slogans for the 1961 Easter March reflected the refined message of the organizers as well as the shift to a more national approach. The Easter March leadership released a list of approved slogans that were divided into several categories based on the character of the slogans including positive, political, moral-religious, and general slogans. Many reflected the desire of the Easter March to promote the protest as a democratic action: “Our No to the Bomb is a Yes for Democracy” and “Instead of Stronger Armies more Courage and Ideas” for example. Some slogans were directed at the East West divide and Cold War rhetoric, “Western Bombs Work the Same as Eastern

⁶¹ Flyer from 1961 Easter March, HIS, TEM 200,01.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

Bombs” and “Better Co-existence than No-existence.” Signs with a photo of the Hiroshima bombing were to be accompanied with the slogan “Do You Understand Now Why We March?”⁶⁴

The four star marches over the 1961 Easter weekend attracted many more people than the previous year. With several thousand attending the closing rally of each star march there were an estimated 23,000 participants involved in across all four marches.⁶⁵ This represented a significant increase over the thousand or so people who took part in some aspect of the 1960 march. The marches drew in people concerned with the nuclear weapons issue from every segment of society and challenged conservative strongholds in southern Germany.

Many participants wore the newly created peace symbol on their jackets as they marched and carried flags and banners with the symbol. Bystanders were very curious about the black and white symbol and activists often had the opportunity to share the message of nuclear disarmament while explaining the meaning of the symbol. Displayed in white against a black field what became widely known as the peace sign originally carried a much darker meaning of despair and impending doom. For the antinuclear activists the symbol reflected the gravity of the issue; to them the question of nuclear weapons was a question of life or death and the evoked images of the dying man and the unborn child were appropriate for their campaign.

⁶⁴ *Informationen*, 3/61, Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 200,01.

⁶⁵ Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO*, 102.

Karl-Heinz Stahnke, the director of the VK Documentation Office, again produced the press analysis of the Easter March. The expansion of the march to Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, and the Ruhr valley clearly attracted more attention from the press and accomplished the Easter March leadership's goal to reach a much wider audience. Stahnke reported that there were 956 news articles printed which marked a significant increase over the 130 articles from the previous year.⁶⁶ Many of these articles were simply the German Press Agency's report printed without adaptation or comment but a number discussed the Easter March and engaged with their message of nuclear disarmament. The VK collected a great deal of newspaper clippings that ranged from national and regional papers to local papers. The major papers often carried opinion pieces that were fairly critical of the East Marches while the smaller local papers, particularly those close to the border with the DDR, ran reports that were very critical of the Easter Marcher's message.⁶⁷

Interestingly Stahnke addressed the issue of German guilt and responsibility in the introduction to his press analysis writing, "We have to recognize once and for all that our attitude towards the atrocities of the Nazi times was wrong. We cannot free ourselves from the burden of conscience with those I-DON'T-KNOW-ANYTHING,

⁶⁶ Karl-Heinz Stahnke, Presseanalyse, HIS, TEM 200,06.

⁶⁷ For example the national paper *Bild am Sonntag*, "Sie küßten und sie schlugen sich," *Bild am Sonntag*, April 4, 1961; and the local papers such as the *Butzbacher Zeitung* from the town of Butzbach near Frankfurt, "Merkwürdige Osterfreuden," *Butzbacher Zeitung*, March 28, 1961; and the *Altmühl-Bote* from the Bavarian town of Gunzenhausen, "Unser Kommentar: Ostermarschierer," *Altmühl-Bote*, March 29, 1961.

IT-WASN'T-ME, or THERE-WAS-NOTHING-WE-COULD-DO-ABOUT-IT.”⁶⁸

Stahnke, in the same mind as the Easter March campaign, believed that Germany was potentially once again on the cusp of participating in atrocities against mankind with the nuclear weapons issue. However, this time they would make sure German society was well informed about the impending catastrophe and impelled to action.

Stahnke was very aware that the average citizen needed to be able to easily access the Easter March message and have the complex issues clearly described so that they could develop an informed position on the matter. Unfortunately, Stahnke lamented, many were too confused to make an opinion or were satisfied with a “terrible simplification” of the facts and formed “one sided opinions.”⁶⁹ Since easy access to complete information was an important factor, a clear and comprehensive understanding of how the West German press presented the Easter March was vital to the organizers’ work.

In his introduction Stahnke reiterated the impact a nuclear war would have and pointed out that if a person simply thought about the massive death and destruction of culture and civic freedom then they would be convinced nuclear weapons must be avoided. “Rethinking is needed!” he declared. In light of the gravity of the situation,

⁶⁸ Karl-Heinz Stahnke, Presseanalyse, HIS, TEM 200,06.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Stahnke stressed that the Easter March participants and the general public clearly understand the importance of their actions that Easter weekend.⁷⁰

The news media had much more to report on in the spring of 1961. Many West German newspapers reported on the international aspect of the 1961 Easter March noting that demonstrations took place in Great Britain, Denmark, the United States, and the Federal Republic and several noted the inclusion of jazz music.⁷¹ Others reported much more sensational stories about the growing confrontation between the SPD and the trade unions and the Easter March with headlines such as “[SPD Chairman Eric] Ollenhauer Against the Easter Marches,” “SPD Tries to Sideline Nuclear Weapons Opponents,” and “Easter March Forbidden for DGB [German Trade Union Confederation] Members.”⁷² The newspapers also reflected the Easter March’s struggle with the perception of communist influence running articles titled “Refusing Ulbricht” and “Conscientious Objectors Do Not Want Support From the SED.”⁷³ With the heightened publicity of the 1961 Easter March came a great deal of critical scrutiny. The Easter March leadership did not shy away from the challenge but increasingly found itself defending the message and character of the movement.

⁷⁰ Karl-Heinz Stahnke, *Presseanalyse*, HIS, TEM 200,06.

⁷¹ “Ostermärsche der Atomwaffengegner,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 4, 1961; Karl-Heinz Stahnke, *Presseanalyse*, HIS, TEM 200,06.

⁷² Karl-Heinz Stahnke, *Presseanalyse*, HIS, TEM 200,06.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

The Easter March organizers were very careful to ensure that the movement was unencumbered by political or philosophical labels and their efforts, by and large, were successful.⁷⁴ The conscientious objection activists were keenly aware of the difficulties political affiliations could bring. Throughout the latter half of the 1950s, the West German conscientious objection organizations struggled to avoid being labeled an appendage of the SPD or, even worse, under communist influence.⁷⁵ The Tempels and the Action Group for Nonviolence had declared from the beginning that the Easter March would stay above party politics or “*Überparteilich*.”⁷⁶ At the same time the Easter Marches were viewed with hostility from the political right and left who saw their attack on the policies of Federal Republic as eerily similar to the rhetoric and accusations from the DDR, but this never hampered their growth as a movement because they were able to overcome this perception in the public sphere.

The Easter March specifically called for nuclear disarmament in every nation without regard to the Cold War East/West tensions.⁷⁷ Not only would it stay above party politics, the organizers went so far as to make clear that the Easter March was also not an IdK or VK action even though many of the participants and a good deal of their logistic support came from the VK and IdK. The leadership firmly stated that the Easter

⁷⁴Letter from Konrad Tempel to VK membership January 16, 1960, Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

⁷⁵ Letter to Arlo Tatum June 14, 1958, IfZM, Sammlung Maurer, ED 718/2; see also Nehring, “Americanized Protests?” 218.

⁷⁶Letter from Konrad Tempel to VK membership January 16, 1960, Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

⁷⁷“Warum Wir Marschieren,” Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

March was an independent movement that was made possible by the participation of individuals.⁷⁸ The Tempels had learned through their years of activism in the conscientious objection movement that this was an essential element if the Easter March was to succeed in changing the way people thought.⁷⁹ Much like the act of conscientious objection, these activists believed that the reason for activism should come from an individual's own convictions rather than from a political party's campaign platform or an organization's edict.

The accusation of communist influence was one of the major hurdles facing the Easter March leadership as they worked to promote the Easter Marches as a legitimate platform for challenging the government's nuclear weapons policy. As many activists outside of Germany recognized, "In Germany there is a very complex situation owing to the problems arising out of the political situation, and in particular the fear of Communism and of being branded as 'fellow travelers.'"⁸⁰ A number of major organizations in the Federal Republic, including the Social Democratic Party, were reserved or outright hostile in their relations with the Easter March in part because they suspected communist influence or, regardless of whether the accusations were true, they did not want to risk being painted with the same brush in the court of public opinion. In a speech to the 1960 War Resisters' International conference in Gandhigram, India

⁷⁸Letter from Konrad Tempel to VK membership January 16, 1960, Konrad Tempel Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, HIS, TEM 100,04.

⁷⁹Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁸⁰ "Report on Conference Held at Groningen 11th & 12th March," March 13, 1961. Committee for Nonviolent Action Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

Konrad Tempel addressed the issue of communist influence stating “Although this protest was unmistakably directed against every military use of atomic energy in the East as well as the West and was in no way communistic influenced, the Trade Unions, The Committees of ‘Fight the Atom death’ and the Social Democrats not only stayed away but boycotted the action.”⁸¹

Tempel, in an effort to counter these claims, frequently explained that the Easter March was a movement and not an organized association and was not affiliated or directed by any outside group. The marches were simply “... organized by people who see nuclear armament in East and West as a mortal danger to the peace of the world and for the existence of mankind. They therefore call anywhere in the world for the immediate and permanent cessation of all nuclear weapons tests, waiving further production of nuclear weapons, arrangements on the nuclear-weapon-free zones, general controlled disarmament and abolition of all existing nuclear weapons.”⁸² Tempel also pointed out that though the Easter Marches take place in the West, “We also protest against the development of atomic weapons by the Soviet Union as we do against the development of atomic weapons in the USA, Great Britain, and France. We have written to Minister President Kruschew the same as we have to President Kennedy.”⁸³

⁸¹ Konrad Tempel, “Atomic Disarmament in the Federal Republic of Germany,” India WRI Triennial Conference 1960, IISG, WRI, 9.

⁸² Konrad Tempel “Anfeindungen” Juristische Gegenwehr, 1962, HIS, TEM 300,05.

⁸³ Ibid.

When a news report that 10,000 antifascists from the GDR were planning to hold an Easter memorial rally at Bergen-Belsen was published in mid March, 1961 Tempel immediately responded as the leader of the Easter March. He wrote that there were no connections between this East German group and the Easter Marches and even though the Northern star march was set to start from the same location on Holy Thursday, the event had been planned since the previous fall and was a continuation of the same event held the year before. He went on to point out that the SED had declared the month of March a “battle month” against the Bundeswehr’s nuclear armaments and reiterated that the Easter Marches were “completely independent of all organizations and political directions” and were opposed to atomic weapons of mass destruction from both East and West.⁸⁴ While reports of communist connections were upsetting and potentially harmful to the Easter Marches, the leadership used them as opportunities to educate the public about their antinuclear message and promote individual action.

In spite of their efforts, the Easter March faced criticism and outright defamation from the Social Democratic Party and several big businesses and trade unions.⁸⁵ It was such a concern that April Carter and Bayard Rustin made sure to inform American peace activists that “... in Germany, I.G. Metal’s leadership and the leadership of the Social Democratic Party, both denounced the German Marches over Easter as communist

⁸⁴ “Erklärung,” February 15, 1961. HIS, TEM 200,16.

⁸⁵ “Ostermarsch-Veranstalter kündigen Strafanträge an,” *Badisches Tagblatt*, March 28, 1961; “Atomwaffengegner: SPD Lügt,” *NWZ Geislinger Fünftälerbote*, March 24, 1961.

dominated.”⁸⁶ Within in a year of its founding the Easter March campaign was embroiled in a public confrontation with the Social Democrats that put the future of the movement in danger.

The Social Democratic Party was traditionally the party of peace and had resisted West German rearmament, conscription, and nuclear weapons.⁸⁷ Their antinuclear campaign championed a message very similar to the Easter March message and had featured very large rallies and demonstrations throughout the Federal Republic in 1958 with a great deal of grassroots support. Why then was the SPD so hostile to the Easter March to the point of banning its membership from participating? The answer, most likely, lies in the organizational character and protest culture of the Easter Marches as well as the fact that the KdA continued to exist.

As discussed previously, the Easter Marches were intentionally independent from any and all party or organizational affiliation. They were very wary of big institutions such as the labor unions, the church, and traditional political parties.⁸⁸ Much like the VK and the controversial Independence Clause from the 1958 merger attempt, the Easter March emphasized voluntary participation by individuals and rejected any effort, real or perceived, by political groups to attach themselves to the campaign. For his very firm stance on this issue, Konrad Tempel recalled in a later interview that he was occasionally

⁸⁶ Memo from April Carter and Bayard Rustin to CNVA Leadership, April 7, 1961. Committee for Nonviolent Action Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

⁸⁷ Drummond, *The German Social Democrats in Opposition*, 35.

⁸⁸ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 92.

called a tyrant.⁸⁹ Initially the Easter March leadership would not even allow regional VK or IdK chapters to officially take part in the march or for their members to carry banners or signs indicating VK or IdK affiliation. Unlike the KdA, the SPD could not control the Easter March and dictate its message or protest tactics. To the SPD, the Easter March was a rogue campaign that cluttered the public protest space and drew attention and membership away from the KdA.

According to Erich Ollenhauer, the SPD “distanced itself from the Easter Marches not because it supports a nuclear arms race or has given up on disarmament, but because the Easter Marches do not seem to be an appropriate means to bring us closer to disarmament.”⁹⁰ In March of 1961 Ollenhauer claimed the Easter Marches were backed by communists and believed the “...preparation[s] for four marches this year are even more exposure [for] Communist Organization and Soviet Zone propaganda.”⁹¹ In light of the SPD “The SPD cannot and will not support these events. The SPD also expects that Party members and members of the KdA do not participate in these marches.”⁹² If West Germans were concerned about nuclear weapons, they were encouraged to direct their efforts towards the Fight Atomic Death campaign. However, by 1960 it was obvious that the KdA was really just a façade propped up by the SPD with no real influence or effective protest strategy. The SPD had seemingly given up its

⁸⁹ Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁹⁰ Rose, “Transnational Identities In National Politics,” 226.

⁹¹ *NDR3 Schulfunk*, Geschichte 2. Halbjahr 1982, 32, HIS, TEM 500,01.

⁹² *Ibid.*

antinuclear efforts in the Bundestag and indicated their acceptance of the government's stance on defense and foreign policy.⁹³ Konrad Tempel was justified when he said "We are going to the streets because those who should represent us do not represent us anymore."⁹⁴

In a statement provocatively titled "Why the SPD is Lying" Konrad Tempel challenged claims made by Erich Ollenhauer in a news article published in late March 1961 shortly before the second Easter March. Ollenhauer stated that the Easter Marches were promoting unilateral nuclear disarmament in the West and insinuated that this was because they were sympathetic to the peace movement in the GDR. To prove these claims were false Tempel cited statements from Easter March leaflets that clearly stated their opposition to nuclear weapons both East as West such as "In the name of reason and humanity we therefore turn to all governments East and West, to refrain from any military use of nuclear energy."⁹⁵ These Easter March statements were very similar to the SPD's own proclamations and Tempel noted that there was no real difference from the Fight Atomic Death campaign either. The core issue was that the SPD, along with most in traditional party politics, did not like the Easter Marches because they disagreed with their antinuclear platform or because they represented an unknown and uncontrollable entity. The SPD worried the Easter March movement would affect their

⁹³ Wehner, *Verhandlungen*, June 30, 1960, 46:7052-61.

⁹⁴ "Wo einst Erich Ollenhauer stand..." *Die Andere Zeitung*, April 4, 1963, cited in Rose, "Transnational Identities In National Politics," 215.

⁹⁵ "Warum lügt die SPD," March 23, 1961, HIS, TEM 200,16.

political positions and feared it could lead to a fundamental breakdown in party unity.⁹⁶ It was clear to the Easter March leadership that the SPD and conservative parties used their considerable influence and power against the Easter March in public forums such as the news.

Tempel believed the situation struck right at the heart of democracy, “When free and responsible citizens do not have the opportunity to adequately express their conscience in protest and their concern of the West is distorted from their concern of the East, then our democracy is lazy and all talk of democracy is lazy and all talk of democracy and human dignity is disingenuous.”⁹⁷ He observed that, “The value of a democracy is to be judged by the way minorities are treated in it,” meaning in this case political minorities, and noted, “The current minority of nuclear weapons opponents posed of resolute conscience against any nuclear armament each in East and West is systematically vilified.”⁹⁸ Tempel along with the other activists long recognized that their political opinions were not widely accepted but believed they had the right to express them all the same. With indignation, Tempel called out the SPD on their lies and twisting of the democratic process. In concluding he appealed to the President of the Federal Republic, to journalists, to the clergy and teachers, and to the people to help

⁹⁶ Rose, “Transnational Identities In National Politics,” 222-226.

⁹⁷ Warum lügt die SPD,” March 23, 1961, HIS, TEM 200,16.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

preserve the Basic Law and the freedoms it guaranteed citing the articles that protected freedom of conscience, freedom of ideological belief, and freedom of expression.⁹⁹

Despite the SPD ban on participation in the Easter March many nuclear weapons opponents who were previously involved in the Fight Atomic Death campaign transitioned to the Easter Marches. The SPD leadership reiterated its stance in opposition to the Easter Marches prior to the 1961 march stating "...the Social Democratic party cannot and will not support these events" but Social Democratic members increasingly participated in the Easter Marches in the early 1960s.¹⁰⁰ To many who defied the ban, it became obvious that the KdA was a hollow shell propped up by the SPD and the Easter Marches had taken its place as the outlet for antinuclear activism.¹⁰¹

As the Easter Marches grew and increasingly took the place of the Fight Atomic Death campaign as the primary organization for antinuclear action in West Germany, it carved out space between the spheres of traditional party politics and public life. The SPD's resistance and opposition to the movement served to illustrate the fact that the party no longer represented many on the left and extra-parliamentary opposition, in the form of the Easter Marches, was the only alternative. The Cold War seemed to be drawing closer to an armed conflict and in the absence of political representation in the Bundestag peace activists were forced to take matters into their own hands. In a report to the War Resisters' International Konrad Tempel wrote, "The present situation in

⁹⁹ Warum lügt die SPD," March 23, 1961, HIS, TEM 200,16.

¹⁰⁰ Rose, "Transnational Identities In National Politics," 227.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 234.

Germany forces us to the greatest possible activity. The desire on the part of West Germany to get nuclear weapons heightens decisively the tension in world politics and increases the threat of nuclear war. We therefore demand that Germany gives up the idea of getting nuclear weapons, for the whole of Germany. [And] Germany refuses the stationing of troops equipped with nuclear weapons on German territory.”¹⁰²

The Easter Marches continued to grow through the early 1960s and by 1964, when Konrad Tempel stepped down as Speaker, around 100,000 people participated in the protest. The Easter Marches help form the protest culture of the 1960s through the promotion of popular music and a celebratory nature, the application of mass popular protest, and the appeal to German youth to take an active role. Historians note that the Easter Marches created the blueprint for how an organization had to remain party neutral and rely on individual participation in order to secure long-term survival and success.¹⁰³ This also helped the movement survive attempts to paint the organization as communist or communist influenced. The elements that led to the success of the Easter March all have their roots in the first hand experience peace activists gained in the conscientious objection movement. The power and moral responsibility of the individual were principles applied in the VK and IdK, and especially in the AG.

One of the major accomplishments of the early Easter March campaign was that in many ways it bridged the divide that existed between the two West German

¹⁰² Konrad Tempel, “Marching At Easter,” WRI News From Sections, February, 1962. IISG, 87.

¹⁰³ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 92.

conscientious objection groups. The yearly Easter March was one of the few times that VK and IdK members joined in protest. While they disagreed about how the West German conscientious objection movement should be organized and led, they were united in their opposition to war and nuclear weapons and the Easter Marches, due in part to its insistence on voluntary participation of individuals, provided the forum for them to express their convictions together. In a speech to the 1963 WRI Triennial Conference in Stavanger, Norway Herbert Günneberg stated, “All three branches [of the West German conscientious objection movement] work together in the Easter March movement; and this movement is the realization of practical refusal in the political and ideological area.” He went on to argue that antinuclear activism and conscientious objection were based on the same principals, “It is the psychological refusal of individuals, who unite and make a demonstration, which in future, as we hope, will have a political effect. ...Individual refusal in the nuclear age is based on conscientious objectors, but must have allies in other areas of attitude.” Günneberg summed up the basic principles of individual responsibility and action that the Easter March embodied stating, “The refusal of taking part in war-preparations is a personal, individual refusal first; and on this individual refusal actions are based, which are performed by equally minded groups.”¹⁰⁴

Perhaps the best way to describe the origins of the Easter March movement is to say that it was founded by conscientious objection activists who sought to develop a

¹⁰⁴ Herbert Günneberg. “The Individual Refusal in the Nuclear Age,” Speech at the WRI Triennial Conference in Stavanger, Norway July 27, 1963, IISG, WRI, 10.

more effective form of opposition, and was a product of a diffuse network of activists and organizations, which dated back to the debates over rearmament and conscription in the 1950s. The experience gained, and the lessons learned from the conscientious objection movement were applied to the Easter March, and helped the movement reach heights the Tempels and other early leaders never dreamed possible.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, many of the original participants were conscientious objection activists, and the two conscientious objection organizations, the IdK and VK, provided essential support to the movement. The importance of the conscientious objection movement in the creation of the Easter March should not be overlooked; to do so would only tell half the story.

¹⁰⁵Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

CHAPTER VI

THROUGH THE IRON CURTAIN: WEST GERMAN ACTIVISTS AND THE 1961

SAN FRANCISCO TO MOSCOW WALK FOR PEACE

In front of the red walls of the Kremlin on October 3, 1961, Reiner Steinweg, a young peace activist from the small West German town of Hohenhausen in North Rhine-Westphalia, handed out hundreds of antimilitary leaflets to a crowd of enthusiastic Russians. Steinweg, along with peace activists from all over the Western world, had accomplished something no one had ever done before; he had walked through the Iron Curtain to protest militarism and nuclear weapons at the height of the Cold War. The incredible story of this march, known as the American-European March for Peace, highlights the transnational cooperation of peace activists in the United States, Britain, and West Germany in the early 1960s.

This chapter investigates collaboration between West German peace activists and members of peace organizations outside of West Germany with particular attention to the transfer of information between them and exchange of tactics and methods of protest from one another as well as the many issues that divided them. It also studies the transnational social space that allowed this communication to take place. By examining the cooperation between the organizers of the Committee for Nonviolent Action's 1960-1961 American-European March for Peace, I will demonstrate how the West German, British, and American activists coordinated and developed nonviolent protest strategies. While the West German activists learned from and adopted some of the

protest methods of peace organizations in Great Britain and the United States, they created their own culture of protest and with it developed a distinct set of tactics and “rules of engagement” for their organizations.¹ The CNVA 1960-1961 American-European March for Peace represents a milestone in the development of the West German peace movement because it was one of the first, major international protest events to challenge government defense policies in the East and the West, and the first to physically cross the Cold War divide to deliver their message. This remarkable event would not have been possible without the recent experience of key West German activists from the conscientious objection movement and the emerging Easter March campaign.

Historians have looked broadly at the San Francisco to Moscow Walk for Peace; this chapter is a much closer look at the march.² One that focuses on the West German portion of the march, specifically the involvement of West German peace activists and the effect the march had on West German protest culture. Furthermore, it explores more deeply the concept of transnational social space and how the interaction of peace activists from the U.S. and West Germany influenced one another.

¹ The influence of American forms of protest on the protest movements in the Federal Republic of Germany has been a topic of discussion among German historians. See Klimke, *The Other Alliance*; Nehring, “Americanized Protests?”; Gassert “Atlantic Alliances”; Kraushaar, “Die transatlantische Protestkultur.”

² The most complete study to date is Günter Wernicke and Lawrence S. Wittner, “Lifting the Iron Curtain: The Peace March to Moscow of 1960-1961,” *The International History Review*. 21, no. 4: 900-917. Wernicke and Wittner provide an excellent overview of the march with analysis of Soviet, Polish, and East German sources.

A number of problems and issues arose during the march. One of the primary issues was the lack of a common discourse about nuclear disarmament and peace. This was due to the fact that each group of activists came from distinctly unique political realities and their views were often based on what they dealt with their respective countries. Furthermore, the term peace meant different things to different people. To some, peace simply meant the absence of war. To others, peace meant much more and in some cases peace was a word that was used by the communists. For many West German activists, peace was a word that had to be used carefully in the context of nuclear disarmament.

Some of the issues were cultural. The West German activists often felt the Americans were recalcitrant when dealing with the authorities, undisciplined on the march, and dismissive of the potential impact the march would have on the peace movement in the Federal Republic. These issues came to a head at perhaps one of the most dramatic moments of the march when on Sunday, August 13, 1961 they found themselves in East Berlin, the epicenter of the Cold War, when the Berlin Wall went up.

The problems and issues encountered during the development and implementation of the peace walk are not unique to this event. In fact, several historians have discussed in detail how protest groups deal with these obstacles. Because of the multitude of national activists involved and the states being crossed during the peace walk this was difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Every activist brought with them the specific domestic and national concerns that made up their protest agenda and

political discourse. Holger Nehring argues that international and national dimensions are always at play in transnational movements.³ Activists can never really escape the political realities of their respective countries. When addressing the British and West German antinuclear movements Nehring observed, “Both movements related their own aims to global and international problems. But they continued to observe the world from their individual perspectives: national, regional and local forms remained important.”⁴ In addition, each country the march entered had its own distinct set of political realities and contexts that influenced the way the peace walk’s message was received.⁵

A useful definition of peace movements is that they are “...social movements that aim to protest against the perceived dangers of political decision-making about armaments.”⁶ The San Francisco to Moscow Peace Walk was a movement that was a product of American society with a specific set of protest tactics; specifically, nonviolent civil disobedience. Political scientist Lawrence Quill observed that civil disobedience was a “...form of collective activity [that] constituted an act of uncommon sense. While common sense leveled down political options so that alternatives played out within a field defined by the existing institutional order, civil disobedience (at least in some forms) held out the possibility of rupturing this constructed social and political reality.”⁷

³ Nehring, “National Internationalists.”

⁴ Ibid., 561.

⁵ Ziemann, “A Quantum of Solace?” 388.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Lawrence Quill, *Civil Disobedience: (Un)Common Sense in Mass Democracies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 164.

Civil disobedience was being employed with success in the Civil Rights movement and while it was not a uniquely American tactic it was not commonly employed in Europe. The use of civil disobedience on the peace walk had the potential to disrupt the cohesion of the marchers because the tactic was unfamiliar to many of the European activists and likely to cause problems in Eastern European countries that had a different view of civil liberties. However, it was necessary for the peace walk organizers to develop a consistent protest strategy if the march was to spread its message effectively along the route because a united strategy can be a tool to bring together activists who are divided culturally and spatially.⁸

This event, a walk for peace that protested the nuclear weapons race and militarism, was an attempt to address a very serious issue facing most of the world; the buildup of Cold War tensions that were seemingly destined to erupt in nuclear war between the East and the West on the continent of Europe. The peace walk participants endeavored to influence the politicians in the United States and European countries to change their respective defense policies and remove nuclear weapons from their arsenals. Knowing the peace walk would have little to no effect on American and European politicians, the organizers focused instead on encouraging the people of each country to demand peace and nuclear disarmament for themselves.

The organizer of the peace walk, the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA), was formed in the United States in 1957 to protest against the U.S. government's nuclear

⁸Jackie Smith and Hank Johnston, *Globalization and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social*

weapons programs. The CNVA was one of the first peace organizations to employ nonviolent direct action, in particular civil disobedience, in the United States. The CNVA used nonviolent direct action in their protests against nuclear arms and while they were not the largest or perhaps most influential American antinuclear organization, they were certainly one of the most dramatic.⁹

In the fall of 1960 the CNVA planned a peace march through the U.S. and Europe, most importantly communist countries in Eastern Europe such as the DDR, Poland, and the Soviet Union. The marchers would carry signs, leaflet, and talk with locals about unilateral disarmament and peace. If possible, they would demonstrate at military installations. The CNVA organizers knew this would take a high level of organization and international support but they believed in the power of peace and nonviolence and knew that if they could get into the Soviet Union they would make history.¹⁰

Around 100 people left San Francisco December, 1961 with the goal to raise awareness of peaceful alternatives to the Cold War policies of military deterrence and promote peaceful, nonviolent solutions to international conflicts and Cold War tensions. They were “walking to stimulate people all over the world to think about the problem of

Movements (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 5-6.

⁹ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 249.

¹⁰Bradford Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands; The Story of the San Francisco to Moscow March for Peace* (Raymond, N.H.: Greenleaf Books, 1966), 2-3.

international peace.”¹¹ Their “program for peace” was based on the belief that “military power is immoral and will not work” and urged “that people demand and governments adopt moral policies that will lead to lasting peace, not to war.”¹² While admirable, this attempt to create a common discourse about peace and nonviolence was heavily weighted in the context of the American peace movement.

To create a lasting peace the CNVA asked the governments of the world to renounce militarism and nuclear weapons. Militarism, as they defined it, was the reliance on military power to solve international problems. This was attached to a transnational framework that envisioned a world that solved its problems without violence or the threat of violence. The CNVA called for unilateral disarmament, the end of conscription, and a universal guarantee of civil rights, among other things.¹³ Furthermore, they implored people everywhere to encourage their government to take these steps. For example people could influence their government by refusing to pay taxes that supported military programs, refuse to serve in the military, protest and demonstrate at military installations and industries, or participate in local and national peace organizations.¹⁴ These appeals reflected the social and political realities of the U.S. and while they were applicable in parts of the Western world, many of their suggestions were simply impossible in other countries, particularly in Eastern Europe.

¹¹Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 2-3.

¹²Ibid.

¹³ Committee For Nonviolent Action Bulletin, November 10, 1960, HIS, TEM 500,03.

¹⁴“Basic Policy of San Francisco to Moscow Walk,” HIS, TEM 500,03.

Nonviolence was at the core of everything activists on the CNVA American-European March for Peace did. The CNVA leadership emphasized Gandhian nonviolence in all actions. In its most extreme form this meant enduring physical abuse and violence without responding with violence in word or deed.¹⁵ The West German peace movement was also influenced by the precepts of Gandhian nonviolence. Theodor Michaltscheff studied and wrote extensively on Gandhi's teachings and disseminated his writings through the monthly IdK publication he edited, *Die Friedensrundschau*.¹⁶ Michaltscheff was particularly interested in Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha*, adhering to the truth in thought and action, and strove to emulate this in his life.¹⁷ He also worked hard to spread Gandhi's teachings in the West German peace movement and because of his efforts, along with those of likeminded pacifists, many West German activists were able to share a common discourse on nonviolence with American CNVA members.

The CNVA also promoted direct action and this primarily took the form of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience was a tactic that had been successfully employed in the United States most recently by the Civil Rights movement.¹⁸ It was clear to CNVA activists that civil disobedience was a powerful tool that could be used to bring about

¹⁵ Committee For Nonviolent Action Bulletin, November 10, 1960, HIS, TEM 500,03

¹⁶ Theodor Michaltscheff, *20 Jahre Friedensrundschau: 20 Jahre Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner (1947 - 1966); persönliche Erinnerungen*, (Hamburg: Archiv Aktiv, 1996); Andrew Oppenheimer, "Air Wars and Empire: Gandhi and the Search for a Usable Past in Postwar Germany." *Central European History* 45, no. 4 (2012): 669-696, 671-673.

¹⁷ Oppenheimer, "Air Wars and Empire," 680.

¹⁸ On the transfer and implementation of Gandhian nonviolent civil disobedience in the Civil Rights movement see Sean Chabot, *Transnational Roots of the Civil Rights Movement: African American Explorations of the Gandhian Repertoire* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2012).

political change. In previous protests demonstrations in the United States, members of the CNVA had climbed the gates of a missile base in Omaha, Nebraska, and trespassed onto a submarine base to board nuclear-armed vessels in New London, Connecticut. In both cases, members were arrested and several served time in prison for their actions.¹⁹ If the peace walk across the United States and Europe was to succeed the CNVA and participating activists would have to use civil disobedience to change the rules and work outside the traditional sphere of politics. In an outline of the basic policy for the peace walk, the European CNVA organizing committee in London wrote:

Their aim is to take their message to the people in each country, and they hope to do this with the cooperation of the authorities in each case. But should any country prevent the team's entrance, or should they be admitted, but prevented from handing out their leaflets or carrying their banners, they will have no alternative but to protest through some form of non-violent civil disobedience, such as remaining at the border or facing arrest rather than allow their basic message to be obscured.²⁰

The direct action tactic of civil disobedience, coupled with nonviolence, constituted a dramatic and efficacious protest strategy that the CNVA American-European March for Peace utilized in Europe. This is important to note because up to this point, nonviolent direct action—specifically civil disobedience—was not part of the West German protest repertoire.

Along with a central organizing committee in the U.S. the CNVA tapped into their transnational network to coordinate with organizing committees in each European country along the route. The CNVA quickly realized that organizing the European

¹⁹Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 249.

²⁰ "Basic Policy of San Francisco to Moscow Walk," HIS, TEM 500,03

section of the march would be very complex and reached out to European peace activists for help and created a central organizing committee for the European portion that would coordinate the efforts of each national committee.²¹ These European committees assisted with a myriad of logistical issues from visa applications and correspondence with the local and state authorities to accommodations and food. Another important function of these committees was to contact local antinuclear and peace groups so that they could participate in the march and the various gatherings and protest activities. This contact and cooperation with other international peace organizations provided invaluable opportunities for the activists from each country to share ideas and discuss protest strategies and tactics. The CNVA utilized the transnational social space to organize the march and in doing so helped develop it further.

The European central organizing committee was based in London and consisted of British activists April Carter, Hugh Brock, and Bayard Rustin who was also a member of the CNVA Executive Committee. In their role, these activists had oversight of the European portion of the march.²² The CNVA chose them to serve as the organizers for the European leg of the march because the Americans recognized that it was essential to have activists who had extensive experience with peace work in Europe. Furthermore, their experience as European peace activists put them in the best position to develop a common discourse on nuclear disarmament for the peace walk. Their knowledge of the political situation in each country, familiarity with the various peace movements, and,

²¹Minutes of Executive Committee meeting January 6, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1.

²²Ibid.

most importantly, their international networks and personal connections with activists in France, Belgium, and West Germany would be immeasurably beneficial to the march.²³ They had all been working with one another since the mid-1950s in War Resisters' International. Along with the chair of the CNVA, American peace activist A.J. Muste, this group stayed in constant contact with the marchers and made most of the strategic decisions.²⁴

The West German organizing committee worked closely with A.J. Muste and the central organizing committee in London several months before the march reached the Federal Republic in mid July. As part of their effort to develop a common rhetoric for the march, the CNVA insisted that anyone involved in the walk had to be in full accord with three points: "unilateral disarmament and opposition to nuclear war preparation by any and every country; the commitment in principle for walkers to commit civil disobedience if, where and when necessary; direct appeal to people everywhere to call on their respective governments for unilateral initiative."²⁵ Each of the West German organizing committee members were selected because of their experience in the West German peace movement. They had all worked with Carter, Brock, and Rustin in the WRI and had developed strong relationships. Furthermore, all of the members of the West German organizing committee were involved in the West German conscientious

²³Minutes of Executive Committee meeting January 6, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1.

²⁴The Dutch born Reverend A.J. Muste was one of the most famous American peace activists and had been involved in nonviolent protest activities for decades. He was also well known for his work in the labor movement and the civil rights movement. Jo Ann Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

²⁵Minutes of Executive Committee meeting January 24, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1.

objection movement as members of the IdK or the VK and were involved in the Easter Marches. The committee included Helga and Konrad Tempel, Dr. Andreas Buro, Herbert Stubenrauch, and Heinz Kloppenburg.²⁶

These organizing committees—the European central organizing committee and the national organizing committees—along with the CNVA leadership, all took part in developing the strategy for the peace walk as it passed through Europe. This strategy, based on an attempt to create a common discourse about peace and nuclear disarmament and predicated on nonviolent protest tactics such as civil disobedience, was necessary for creating a sense of unity for the marchers. Furthermore, the establishment of a common strategy and the collective actions of the organizers and participants contributed to the advancement of the activists' transnational social space.²⁷

The European central organizing committee believed it was especially important to include Konrad and Helga Tempel in the West German planning committee. In a letter to CNVA Chair, A.J. Muste, April Carter and Bayard Rustin wrote, "It is essential we get [the] support of Helga and Konrad if [the] March is to have any worthwhile support in W. Germany: their Easter March organization now includes all the most dynamic and politically sound groups and individuals in North and Central Germany, and has achieved the miracle of bringing the VK and IdK together."²⁸ Furthermore, Carter and

²⁶Minutes of Executive Committee meeting April 20, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1.

²⁷Nehring, "National Internationalists," 576.

²⁸ Politically sound most likely meant not communist in this context. Confidential Memo from April Carter and Bayard Rustin to AJ Muste April 22 and 23, 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

Rustin pointed out that “Konrad represents the most vital and active part of the German Peace movement [and] we decide in working through him especially since he has the confidence of [Martin] Niemoeller and several other older and respected leaders.”²⁹

Interestingly, the West German organizing committee was willing to temporarily adopt the common discourse of the march even though the central demand of the peace walk, unilateral nuclear disarmament of each country they passed through, was not part of their protest rhetoric in the Federal Republic. The Easter March, the primary antinuclear protest movement in West Germany, did not call for unilateral disarmament but simply opposed (American) nuclear weapons for the Bundeswehr. Many West German antinuclear activists believed the CNVA position was an extreme one that was unrealistic and even dangerous in the political environment of the Federal Republic.³⁰ This reaction can be attributed to the fact that West Germany did not have nuclear weapons of its own and it was on the frontlines of the Cold War, where a call for unilateral disarmament seemed both hazardous and communist-inspired.³¹ Even though the West Germans involved in the organization of the peace walk accepted the CNVA’s protest message, it is not hard to see how other West German activists, let alone the West German public, might not.

²⁹ Memo from April Carter and Bayard Rustin to AJ Muste April 13, 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

³⁰ Konrad and Helga Tempel, interview by author, Ahrensburg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

³¹ Nehring, “National Internationalists,” 564.

When the CNVA began coordinating with the West German activists a number of problems arose, all a direct result of the unique political reality of the Federal Republic. Because the march organizers had not yet received permission to enter East Germany the West German activists were concerned about going forward with planning the West German section of the walk. They believed it would be a serious mistake for the walk to enter the Federal Republic unless it had advance permission to enter the DDR, and that if the walk was not allowed into East Germany, the resulting publicity would be very harmful to the already tense East/West relationship. The West Germans were also concerned about the effect on the September Federal elections if the march went wrong; they worried the resulting political grandstanding would swing votes in favor of the right.³² Furthermore, if a demonstration was held at the border protesting the DDR's decision it would serve only to intensify Cold War tensions between the two German states.³³ Helga Tempel explained that if the march failed to reach the East and the walkers were stopped at the East German border "it would strengthen hostilities and prejudices between the East and West. [Because of this] we were a bit reluctant to have the march come."³⁴ The West German activists were working to reduce Cold War tensions and open peaceful avenues of discussion and conflict resolution between the two German states; a protest demonstration at the border, in their minds, would only exacerbate the situation.

³² "Report on meeting held in Germany," April 22 and 23, 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

³³ Minutes of Executive Committee meeting May 23, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1.

³⁴ Konrad and Helga Tempel, interview by author, Ahrensburg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

Konrad Tempel and Heinz Kloppenburg advised the European committee that if the march was refused entry into East Germany then it should try to enter the Eastern Bloc through Austria or Scandinavia. The possibility of the march becoming political ammunition if it was stalled at the border was a very serious concern for them. The Executive committee replied that while “an alternate route is not precluded, but a single or simple rebuff at the East German border is not considered sufficient to cause a change of plan. The committee recommends that the walk persevere at the East German border for some length of time and that civil disobedience at that point be considered and tried before any consideration of change of route.”³⁵

The West German organizers also feared the consequences if the march was allowed to enter East Germany. They believed that if the march was allowed to enter the DDR and was welcomed by the Peace Council, an organ of the East German government, the West German peace activists and their respective organizations could be labeled communist sympathizers by the West German press. The West Germans were also very concerned about the possibility of the East German Peace Council attempting to hijack the march in order to raise their own message and attack the policies of the Western governments.³⁶ This was a very real concern as the Tempels and Buro had dealt with a similar situation with communists attempting to hijack the message of the Easter March in West Germany. During the 1961 Easter March several other organizations attempted to take advantage of the publicity surrounding the event and promote their

³⁵Minutes of Executive Committee meeting May 4, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1.

³⁶“Report on meeting held in Germany,” April 22 and 23, 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

own message. In a few cases communist leaning groups carried signs with their own slogans and tried to march at the head of the column, Tempel and the other Easter March leaders stopped them from doing this and reiterated the policy of individual participation.³⁷

As discussed earlier, West German peace activists found themselves in a particularly difficult situation when it came to their rhetoric. In the Federal Republic, due in part to its position as a frontline state in the Cold War and the nature of its postwar occupation, the term peace was considered by many to be a communist term. This meant that every time West German peace activists employed peace rhetoric they were confronted with accusations of communist influence. Furthermore, their position at the frontlines of the Cold War in Europe meant that their political reality was very different than the American and British situations and this restrained their field of action a great deal.³⁸

When the Tempels joined in organizing the march it seemed to them that everything had already been decided. They often got the impression that the Americans were not careful enough to listen to their European counterparts and include their concerns in the decision making process. Helga recalled, “When we heard about it [the CNVA March] we only had the possibility to help when they came through West

³⁷ *Norddeutscher Rundfunk*, April 3, 1961; Konrad and Helga Tempel, interview by author, Ahrensburg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

³⁸ Nehring, *Politics of Security*, 32.

Germany rather than plan anything about the march.”³⁹ April Carter and Bayard Rustin recognized the discomfort of West German activists and informed the Executive Committee, “It was clear that the German group felt that the American Committee should have consulted in advance with European Pacifists who would be directly affected by the March, and should take into account the advice and fears of National Committees who would have to bear the repercussions of the March on their movement after the Americans had returned home.”⁴⁰ However, the West Germans understood that the Peace Walk was coming to Germany even if they did not provide organizational assistance, “the only other option was to say no and leave them in the street. So we helped organize the march in Germany but we were a bit afraid of what might happen at the border.”⁴¹ This episode encapsulates one major problem facing transnational activism, activists have difficulty leaving their particular national perceptions behind. The American activists were often unable to see beyond their immediate protest rhetoric and goals to consider the implications of their actions in a very different political environment, particularly on the local peace movement

Helga and Konrad Tempel handled most of the correspondence and West German promotion for the march; they sent a number of flyers advertising the march to peace organizations and activists, asking for support and donations.⁴² Their goal was to

³⁹ Konrad and Helga Tempel, interview by author, Ahrensburg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁴⁰ “Report on meeting held in Germany,” 22 and 23 April 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

⁴¹ Konrad and Helga Tempel, interview by author, Ahrensburg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁴² Letter from Helga Stolle to West German peace workers and peace organizations June 1961, HIS, TEM 600,03.

raise enough money to support each West German activist on the march in full and pay back the CNVA for the funds spent in preparation for West German participation.⁴³ The West German organizing committee felt that it was very important to completely support its activists. In its view, securing adequate funding for protest actions prior to the events was an important element of a successful protest campaign. The West German organizing committee had helped prepare the march route by securing permission to hold gatherings and leaflet in the towns and cities they would pass through.⁴⁴ In each town along the way the committee had also arranged for a local peace activist to assist the marchers. These local activists helped coordinate logistical issues such as food and housing as well as organizing meetings and demonstrations.⁴⁵ Many opened their homes to the marchers and gave whatever assistance they could.

Another important role for the West German organizing committee was the recruitment and training of West German march participants. The European organizing committee wanted to ensure that the new marchers were well versed in a number of nonviolent tactics such as “how to face arrest non-violently, the use of a silent vigil, the effectiveness of fasting in a given situation, and attitude toward Police.”⁴⁶ They also wanted to make sure that all were familiar with the pacifist writings of Henry David

⁴³ Each of the West German participants needed around 800-1000 DM for the march from the Federal Republic to Moscow. Interestingly the organizers wrote that it would be embarrassing if they could not support their marchers despite the *Wirtschaftswunder*. Letter from Helga Stolle to West German peace workers and peace organizations June 1961, HIS, TEM 600,03.

⁴⁴ Dr. Andreas Buro, interview by author, Grävenwiesbach, Germany, July 16, 2013.

⁴⁵ Lehmann, *We Walked to Moscow*, 47.

⁴⁶ “Training for Team Members,” April 28, 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

Thoreau and Gandhi.⁴⁷ Konrad Tempel was chosen to be responsible for the training of the West German march participants. Tempel's training sessions included: self-discipline, cooperation, and accepting or not accepting leadership.⁴⁸ He had a particularly difficult portion of the training where he asked all the men to roll up their pant leg. He had a needle and asked them to hurt themselves to show their willingness to sacrifice by sticking themselves with the needle. And all the men were about to do it. Konrad said, "Stop what you are doing! You are trusting me without using your brain. Every leader needs your brain." He taught many cooperation exercises, nonviolent techniques, and focused on confidence building within the group.⁴⁹ Much like the Action Group for Nonviolence, Tempel emphasized individual action based on personal convictions.

Konrad Tempel's training sessions dealt with some of the nuance of Gandhian nonviolence. According to Tempel, it was not enough to be willing to suffer abuse for your cause in a spirit of nonviolence. Tempel taught that nonviolent action, which could involve painful sacrifice, required intelligent action. One's actions must have purpose; blindly following orders was not part of Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha*. Nonviolent action, based on Gandhian principles, was not the same as passive resistance. Gandhi wrote that *Satyagraha* consisted of three elements "Satyagraha is a weapon of the strong; it admits of no violence under any circumstance whatsoever; and it ever insists upon

⁴⁷ "Training for Team Members," April 28, 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

⁴⁸ Konrad and Helga Tempel, interview by author, Ahrensburg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

truth.”⁵⁰ Tempel also sought to instill the basic elements of what Sean Chabot calls the Gandhian repertoire, a set of rules of conduct for protest actions. Chabot describes both the individual and organizational levels of the Gandhian repertoire, “At the individual level, the Gandhian repertoire outlined a code of discipline for participants in direct action campaigns. Everyone was supposed to suffer the anger of an opponent without retaliation, avoid the use of insults or any form of violence, willingly submit to arrest or punishment, and obey the orders of group leaders.” Tempel specifically focused on each of these components of the individual’s responsibility in his training sessions. The application of the repertoire at the organizational level required a different set of responsibilities, “At the strategic and organizational level, the Gandhian repertoire emphasized self-reliance, honorable negotiation with the authorities, self-discipline, and openness in communication.”⁵¹ While there were no formal training sessions for the march organizers, all were well read on the principles of Gandhian nonviolent action, and throughout the peace walk they adhered to the Gandhian repertoire.

In the Federal Republic of Germany a number of West German peace activists joined the march. These included a number of young student activists who had been chosen to participate by the West German committee such as 23 year old Franziska Mentzel from West Berlin who had participated in the 1961 Easter March from Düsseldorf to Dortmund, 20 year old Johannes Meyer from Hamburg who had been part

⁵⁰Mahatma Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol. 19, (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 2000), 350.

of the Easter March from the beginning in 1960 and was a member of the IdK, and 22 year old Reiner Steinweg of Hohenhausen, also part of the 1961 Düsseldorf to Dortmund Easter March and a member of the VK. They all spoke English and had proven track records in peace work in West Germany.⁵² Furthermore, each of the West German members selected by the planning committee had participated in two weekends of mandatory training to prepare them for the various political and social issues they might encounter on the march as well as train them in the basics of Gandhian nonviolent action.⁵³ Their language skills proved invaluable to the peace walk as they were frequently called upon to translate during meetings, demonstrations, and impromptu gatherings.⁵⁴ They were also essential when dealing with the government and police in East and West Germany.

The international cooperation efforts during the march also highlighted significant differences in the way the West German and American activists planned and executed protest actions. From the beginning the West German activists were shocked by the way the Americans dealt with people in positions of authority. They were also shocked by what they believed to be an irresponsible lack of planning for the march. The fact that the Americans had not worked out a detailed written agreement with the

⁵¹Sean Chabot, "Transnational Diffusion and the African-American Reinvention of the Gandhian Repertoire." in Jackie Smith and Hank Johnston, *Globalization and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 101.

⁵² "History of the San Francisco to Moscow March for Peace" HIS, TEM 500,03.

⁵³ Letter from Helga Stolle to West German peace workers and peace organizations June 1961, HIS, TEM 600,03.

⁵⁴Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 111.

government of each country on the march route or that the CNVA had not collected enough money to finance the march beforehand stunned the West Germans.⁵⁵

This difference in attitude was highlighted a number of times during the march. To the horror of the West German activists, the Americans often operated by the policy of ‘it is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission’ when dealing with the complex regulations and prohibitions in the West German towns and cities. The West Germans felt everyone should march with dignity and respect for the local community and maintain a sense of cohesiveness. They also preferred that the marchers ask permission to stop for lunch and short breaks. At the same time the American activists could not believe their eyes when a West German marcher would stop the first policeman they saw when entering a town and ask “whether we could have three, two or one leafleter on each side of the street; whether we could cross the street to get more leaflets; how often pedestrian crossings were provided; whether we should walk on the sidewalk or on the pavement edge; whether we should proceed in ones or twos.”⁵⁶ It is not surprising that activists from different parts of the world had different approaches to conducting a protest march. While it is clear that specific national concerns heavily influenced the participants’ political objectives, their respective cultural traditions also influenced their behavior.

⁵⁵Lehmann, *We Walked to Moscow*, 44; Konrad and Helga Tempel, interview by author, Ahrensburg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

⁵⁶Lehmann, *We Walked to Moscow*, 44.

A number of episodes on the march provided the activists with opportunities to observe the different approaches to protest march conduct. At one point as the marchers walked through the Federal Republic a number of West German activists joined the march with their own brightly painted signs. They carried signs with slogans from the Easter March such as “*Besser Ko-Existenz als No-Existenz*” (“Better Coexistence than No existence”) and “*Was willst Du verteidigen, wenn nichts übrigbleibt?*” (“What do you want to defend when there is nothing left?”).⁵⁷ Interestingly, the police did not want to allow the signs carried by the West German activists with the Easter March slogans. The police claimed that the slogans had not been approved and therefore could not be carried on the peace march. The marchers protested this restriction and eventually the police agreed to allow them to carry the signs as long as they were only carried at shoulder height.⁵⁸ This incident is quite strange because the West Germans had carried signs with these very slogans on five separate marches that were spread all across the Federal Republic just three months earlier.

Most likely the police were simply trying to maintain as much control as possible over the march but one has to wonder what the German activists thought about the situation. When confronted with this restriction the Americans had simply refused to comply and negotiated with the authorities over the issue. Once they had resolved the issue the activists marched on. Later in the day the police tried to stop the marchers from leafleting in Wuppertal. When they pressed the police to show them a copy of the law or

⁵⁷ “Slogans für den Ostermarsch” HIS, TEM 100, 04.

⁵⁸ Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 110.

regulation that stipulated where they could not pass out leaflets the police had no answer. The officers then consulted with their superiors and eventually gave in and allowed the marchers to continue leafleting.⁵⁹

Each time the marchers were confronted with restrictions by the local authorities they refused to be intimidated or dissuaded and ultimately got their way. For the West German activists this regular confrontation with authority was undoubtedly an enlightening experience. The American activists put the Gandhian repertoire in action during these encounters with the local authorities. The West German activists, who were familiar with the Gandhian repertoire through their training with Tempel, were able to witness firsthand how *Satyagraha* was a position of strength. This lesson was soon emphasized to a higher degree when civil disobedience was employed.

While the West Germans were often uncomfortable with the way the Americans dealt with authority, they respected their passion for the movement and were very impressed with their nonviolent direct-action tactics of civil disobedience. Because the marchers had not been allowed to demonstrate at any military establishments in the Federal Republic they decided to defy the authorities and stage demonstrations before they left. There was some discussion within the group and with the organizing committees about how many demonstrations should be attempted and where. The CNVA chairman, A.J. Muste, did not want to risk losing the march before reaching a

⁵⁹Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 111.

communist country if the marchers were deported or imprisoned so he advised only one demonstration.⁶⁰

The group eventually decided on four demonstrations on August 4; the Defense Ministry in Bonn, the NATO barracks at Dortmund-Brackel, the Niedersachsen recruiting headquarters in Hannover, and the military base at Bergen-Hohne.⁶¹ Each location was chosen for its connection to either the West German military or NATO; the Bundeswehr installations were selected to convey the message of unilateral disarmament in West Germany while the NATO locations were chosen as the representatives of the international body that was responsible for the preservation of peace or the escalation of violence in Central Europe. The marchers sent a press release to news outlets and wrote to the police in each location notifying them of the demonstrations that would take place that Thursday, detailing exactly what they were planning to do.⁶² They explained that the demonstrations would be peaceful and nonviolent; every demonstrator would be governed by a discipline of nonviolence in word and deed.⁶³ This too was part of the Gandhian repertoire; honorable negotiation with the authorities and openness in communication.⁶⁴ Furthermore, by announcing their intention to stage protests and

⁶⁰Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 112-114.

⁶¹The influence of the West German activists can be seen in the selection of the demonstration locations. The military base at Bergen-Hohne and the NATO barracks at Dortmund-Brackel were both locations that the 1961 *Ostermarsch* had focused on just a few months earlier. *Protokoll über die Arbeitssitzung des Zentralen Ausschusses für den Ostermarsch*, January 20/21 1961, HIS, TEM 200, 02.

⁶²“Report, Dortmund-Brackel Protestdemonstration,” 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 16.

⁶³Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 114-115.

⁶⁴Chabot, “Transnational Diffusion and the African-American Reinvention of the Gandhian Repertoire,” 101.

providing the authorities with specific information on when, where, how, and why they were protesting the march organizers helped dispel the threatening nature, unpredictability, and most importantly the chaos often associated with protest events.

The demonstrations at the rocket base at Bergen-Hohne and the recruiting headquarters in Hannover went smoothly and were unhindered by the police. The demonstrations at the Ministry of Defense in Bonn and the NATO barracks in Dortmund were a different matter. In Bonn the activists were apprehended by the police as soon as they left the house where they were staying. The police asked them to get in a waiting van and instead of cooperating with the police they sat down and had to be carried into the van. At the police station an officer questioned them and asked them if they knew that the planned demonstration at the Defense Ministry was forbidden. The marchers said they were aware and were then informed that they would be punished if they proceeded with the demonstration. Much to their surprise, the activists were released and all their leaflets and signs were returned to them.⁶⁵

The marchers then went to the square in front of the West German Ministry of Defense and began to tell the crowd why they were there and what they were about. As soon as they raised their signs they were confiscated by the police and the marchers were arrested. In front of a large crowd of onlookers and German press they went limp in the hands of the police and were once again bodily loaded into the police van. At their trial the marchers received a sentence of a 25 DM fine each or one day in jail. They refused

⁶⁵ Letter from Jack Smith to Neil Haworth 3 August 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 15.

to pay the fine and after some confusion the court decided to simply let them go free.⁶⁶ Apparently the police and the court could not understand why the activists would willingly disobey an order against the demonstration even though they knew they would be punished. One of the marchers, American Barton Stone, remarked “In my opinion it is of great urgency that direct action and the concept of civil disobedience be made commonplace in the minds of the German people. For this reason I greatly respect and appreciate the German citizens who participated in the four demonstrations here at the risk of much greater punishment than the foreigners, and the many other German people who have courageously helped us.”⁶⁷

At the NATO barracks at Dortmund-Brackel the situation played out a bit differently. When the marchers, along with a local march supporter, approached the main gate and began the demonstration they were immediately stopped by waiting police. The police said that they were on base property and that it was forbidden to demonstrate. The marchers pointed out that they were on a public road and cars and pedestrians had been going past the main gate all morning. To this the police responded that they had special orders to not allow anyone with signs or leaflets to demonstrate at the gate, but they could not produce any written order or regulation supporting their claim. When the activists decided to disobey the police and continue with the demonstration, the men were taken by the police and loaded into the police van. The rest

⁶⁶ “Demonstranten gegen Aufrüstung in Bonn zu Geldstrafen verurteilt,” *Westdeutsches Tageblatt*, August 4, 1961.

⁶⁷ Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 117-118, quote from page 118.

of the group immediately sat down and all signs and some leaflets were confiscated. After sitting in protest for an hour, the remaining women attempted to continue on to the main gate of the base. All of their leaflets were confiscated before they reached the main gate but they were allowed to stand in silent vigil.⁶⁸

After their interrogation at the police station, the men were informed that they could stand at the gate but they were not allowed to hold signs or pass out leaflets. This did not deter the men and as soon as they could they returned to the base with new signs and more leaflets. These were immediately confiscated by the police and after several more attempts to pass out leaflets one of the demonstrators was again arrested and his limp body was loaded into the police van. This process was repeated and eventually the police allowed the demonstrators to hand out their leaflets to the passing pedestrians and soldiers. With all of their signs confiscated the demonstrators made cloth signs and attached them to their jackets in defiance of the police orders. At this point the authorities had had enough and they were all arrested and carried by hand into the police van to be transported to the police station where they were not released until later that evening.⁶⁹ All the while the German press filmed and took photos of the demonstration and the acts of nonviolence when the demonstrators were arrested.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ "Report, Dortmund-Brackel Protestdemonstration," 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 16.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ "Polizei verhinderte 'Demonstration' von Atomwaffengegnern in Brackel," *Dortmunder Tageblatt*, August 4, 1961. Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 120-121.

The demonstrations at the Defense Ministry in Bonn and the military base at Dortmund-Brackel were successful in a number of ways. First, the marchers were able to create dramatic scenes with their nonviolent direct-action tactics of civil disobedience that were witnessed by a large number of onlookers and German press.⁷¹ This was exactly the kind of attention the activists wanted. Second, their civil disobedience coupled with nonviolence surprised the West German authorities and in a way forced them to reconsider how they viewed peace activists.⁷² Third, and perhaps the most important, the efficacy of nonviolent civil disobedience had a significant impact on the West German activists involved. The experience taught Reiner Steinweg that civil disobedience worked and the actions of just a few can break through the indifference, blind belief in authority, and lack of moral courage to stand up for one's beliefs that seemed to paralyze West German society.⁷³

Furthermore, the success of the demonstrations' nonviolent tactics resounded through the rest of the West German peace movement as well. In a report to Hugh Brock, editor of *Peace News* in London, Helga wrote "the impressive non-violent behavior in the civil disobedience actions in Bonn and Dortmund will have impressed our pacifists too. Maybe after that we will find a better echo in demanding more actions of this manner."⁷⁴ These protest events exemplify the significance and importance of

⁷¹ "Demonstranten gegen Aufrüstung in Bonn zu Geldstrafen verurteilt," *Westdeutsches Tageblatt*, August 4, 1961.

⁷² Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 118, 121.

⁷³ Steinweg, *Der Grosse Marsch Von San Francisco Nach Moskau*, 8.

⁷⁴ Letter to Hugh Brock from Helga Stolle August 16, 1961. HIS, TEM 500, 03.

transnational cooperation to the development of the West German protest culture. The American marchers showed the West Germans how nonviolent civil disobedience can make even a small protest action have an impact and, thanks to the media, reach thousands with their message.

When the march crossed over into the German Democratic Republic at the Helmstedt-Marienborn border crossing on August 7 the activists were excited and a bit apprehensive about going behind the Iron Curtain.⁷⁵ The East Germans welcomed them as a group but East German authorities were not very happy to host activists from West Germany. It seems that the East German authorities were worried about the presence of the West German activists and often insinuated that they were sent as spies for the Adenauer government. One American marcher wrote that, “GDR officials were also very much against having Konrad Tempel around – a West German Quaker and student who had done a lot of organizing for us, and had obtained an East German visa on his own and joined us. He understood East Germans and spoke in their idiom far too effectively for the official’s comfort.”⁷⁶ The other West German marchers were also closely watched but none were individually detained or arrested while they marched through the DDR.⁷⁷

At times the West German organizers were concerned that the Americans became too emboldened by their success in dealing with the authorities and that they

⁷⁵Minutes of Executive Committee meeting August 21, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1.

⁷⁶Lehmann, *We Walked to Moscow*, 51.

would eventually push too hard and seriously jeopardize the march. In the DDR the marchers pushed the authorities to the limit and the concerns of the West German activists were confirmed.⁷⁸ The march was plagued with problems in the DDR that primarily came from the state-sponsored German Peace Committee.⁷⁹ The German Peace Committee was eager to join the march and capitalize on the moment to push their message for peace, often carrying their own signs and passing out their own leaflets.⁸⁰ The problem was that the East German message of peace called for West German disarmament and condemned the “militarism” of the Federal Republic and the United States while at the same time not saying anything about the nuclear weapons and military buildup in East Germany and other communist countries.⁸¹

This was part of a struggle for the legitimacy of the politics of peace that had been going on for more than a decade between peace organizations in the two Germanies. In the DDR the state-sponsored German Peace Council was the only peace organization allowed to exist and it was strictly controlled by the East German Socialist Unity Party. The traditional German peace organization, the German Peace Society, was banned in the DDR in 1949 and consequently all peace rhetoric coming out East Germany was dominated by the agenda of the communist state.

⁷⁷ “Bulletin Copy East Germany,” CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 16.

⁷⁸ Letter to Hugh Brock from Helga Stolle August 16, 1961. HIS, TEM 500, 03.

⁷⁹ Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 130-133.

⁸⁰ Konrad and Helga Tempel, interview by author, Ahrensburg, Germany, July 24, 2013; Minutes of Executive Committee meeting August 21, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1.

⁸¹ Letter to Hugh Brock from Helga Stolle August 16, 1961. HIS, TEM 500, 03.

The activists could not abide the high-jacking of their march and they constantly objected to the actions of the East German participants. The marchers believed that the integrity of the peace walk was being compromised and they frequently resorted to noncooperation and would sit down and halt the march in protest.⁸² This action would earn them a brief respite from the East German signs and leaflets but they always came back. By the time the march reached the outskirts of East Berlin on Sunday, August 13, the tension between the Peace Committee of the DDR and the marchers was nearing the boiling point.

Geopolitical tensions were also nearing a boiling point in the contested city of Berlin. The current Berlin Crisis had been ongoing since the fall of 1958 when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev delivered a speech in which he demanded that the Western powers pull their forces out of West Berlin. This ultimatum sparked a three-year crisis over the future of the city of Berlin that culminated in early August of 1961, the very same moment the San Francisco to Moscow Walk for Peace entered the city. In the summer of 1961, President John F. Kennedy met with Khrushchev in Vienna to address the ongoing issue of Berlin but they were unable to reach an agreement. Following the conference Khrushchev once again demanded the Western powers withdraw from Berlin. Kennedy responded by activating 150,000 reservists and increasing defense expenditures, in preparation for a potential conflict over the future of the city.⁸³

⁸² "Bulletin Copy East Germany," CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 16.

⁸³For more on the Berlin Crisis see Gerhard Wettig, *Chruschtschows Berlin-Krise 1958 bis 1963: Drohpolitik und Mauerbau* (München: Oldenbourg, 2006); Kitty Newman, *Macmillan, Khrushchev*

At the core of the crisis was the difficult question of what to do with Germany in the long term and the CNVA leadership was well aware of this. Prior to the march reaching Europe, the CNVA executive committee had decided to avoid the issue of German reunification and only generally make reference to it in regard to the need for disarmament.⁸⁴ They believed the issue to be too politically complex to broach on the peace walk.⁸⁵ Unbeknownst to them, the march would find itself at the center of a politically complex and extremely dangerous crisis that became a defining moment of the Cold War.

Early in the morning on Sunday, August 13, East German workers under police guard sealed off the borders of West Berlin with barbed wire. This action, ordered by East German leader Walter Ulbricht, was an attempt to stop the flood of people fleeing the DDR to West Berlin and to solve the “Berlin question” that had plagued the East West relationship.⁸⁶ The heightened tensions between the East and the West were coming to a head in Berlin and many feared war between the superpowers. West Berliners gathered in protest at the border at the Brandenburg Gate, the very place the CNVA had planned to march a few days later to symbolize the walk’s crossing into the

and the Berlin Crisis 1958-1960 (London: Routledge, 2007); Frederick Kempe, *Berlin 1961: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Most Dangerous Place on Earth* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2011).

⁸⁴Minutes of Executive Committee meeting March 16, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 16.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶By the time the border was closed almost 160,000 people fled to West Berlin in 1961 alone. Bark and Gress, *From Shadow to Substance: 1945-1963*, 464-470.

communist East.⁸⁷ At the same time many East Berliners congregated and protested the closing of the border.⁸⁸ The members of the walk for peace found themselves in the middle of a very tense political situation. To make things even more difficult, their only source of information was the German Peace Committee leaders with whom they had been having so many problems.⁸⁹ It was not until later that night that the marchers were able to get in contact with A.J. Muste who advised them that the situation was very dangerous and to not try and walk from East to West Berlin. Muste asked them to stay where they were and that he would try to reach them the next day.⁹⁰

That same night a representative from the East German Ministry of the Interior arrived to meet with Bradford Lyttle. He outlined the situation in Berlin and said that under no circumstances would the march be allowed to enter Berlin. Furthermore, the government would send buses the following morning that would take them to Stalinstadt on the East German-Polish border where the marchers would cross into Poland and continue the walk for peace. After talking with the team, Lyttle informed the government representative that they rejected the East German government's proposal and offered to walk around Berlin instead of entering West Berlin through the Brandenburg Gate.⁹¹ The representative from the East German Ministry of the Interior flatly refused to negotiate

⁸⁷Pertti Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21-22; Lehmann, *We Walked to Moscow*, 52.

⁸⁸Around 60,000 East Berliners worked in West Berlin and almost all of these *Grenzgänger* were cut off from their places of employment literally overnight. Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall*, 21-22.

⁸⁹“Bulletin Copy East Germany,” CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 16.

⁹⁰Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 138.

and informed the marchers that buses would arrive in the morning to take them to the Polish border. When the buses arrived the marchers refused to board them and once again their limp bodies were carried into the waiting vehicles as they practiced nonviolent noncooperation. Because they would not comply, the East Germans decided to deport the marchers back to West Germany instead of taking them to Stalinstadt near the Polish border.⁹²

At the time it seemed that the march was over. They did not know if the Polish government would allow them to enter the country to continue the walk and, based on the response of the East German authorities, the marchers feared that their goal of reaching Moscow was in jeopardy.⁹³ The West German activists on the march felt that the Americans had pushed the East German authorities into an impossible situation.⁹⁴ West German activist Andreas Buro spoke with the team and got the impression that “...the group did not understand the really difficult and explosive situation in Berlin and the DDR.”⁹⁵ Furthermore, because of this lack of understanding, the group’s perception of the East German authorities, and their treatment of the marchers, was inaccurate. Helga Tempel reported, “It seemed to him [Buro] as if the group understood the behavior of the officials from the [East German] Peace Council and the police as a

⁹¹ “Bulletin Copy East Germany,” CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 16.

⁹² Minutes of Executive Committee meeting August 21, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1; “Report of telephone conversation with A.J. Muste in West Berlin, August 16, 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

⁹³ “Bulletin Copy East Germany,” CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 16.

⁹⁴ Letter to Hugh Brock from Heinz Kraschutzki August 15, 1961, HIS ,TEM 600, 06.

special oppression against the March itself, and not as an outcome of the really new and unforeseeable situation.”⁹⁶

The inability to fully understand the situation was due in part to the fact that the American marchers came from a different political reality.⁹⁷ Germans, from both the FRG and the DDR, recognized more fully the gravity of the situation because they, to varying degrees, lived in a state of constant fear of war. The Germans thoroughly understood that they lived on the frontlines of the next war and that Berlin was the flashpoint. This belief was even more pronounced for German activists who “imagined the Cold War arms race as a constant pre-war situation.”⁹⁸ This belief, coupled with their personal experiences and memories of the Second World War, something the American activists lacked, dictated the German response to the situation that Sunday.

The West German organizing committee felt very strongly that marchers had been “too inflexible” and that this was because of a lack of preparation. The West German committee “often got the impression that their knowledge of the Eastern countries and their understanding of their way to live and to act was too small to react adequately to the political possibilities without obscuring the idea of the march or jeopardizing to complete [sic] the March to Moscow.”⁹⁹ Unlike many of the activists on

⁹⁵ Letter to Hugh Brock from Helga Stolle August 16, 1961, HIS, TEM 500, 03.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Nehring, “National Internationalists,” 561.

⁹⁸ Nehring, *Politics of Security*, 11-12.

⁹⁹ Letter to Hugh Brock from Helga Stolle August 16, 1961, HIS TEM 500, 03.

the peace walk, each of the West German team members had experience in peace work and had been specifically trained in preparation for this march. The Americans, however, did not seem to be prepared to deal with potential issues that could, and often did, arise on the march. The West German committee reported:

The team members were not all experienced in peace work as they were said to be. Most Americans and some Europeans had not been trained or briefed by their National Committees, so they came without any certain expectations while those trained had learned to demand a certain behavior from themselves and therefore had certain ideas about the way the group and individuals should act, what knowledge they ought to have, and how decisions should be found. In fact there was a serious lack of willingness to learn about [...] the special conditions of the foreign countries and to act according to these conditions.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, the committee wrote that in some cases the marchers chose not to utilize the experience of the West German activists: “Those who were experienced in the march were not willing to listen to the opinion of the new comers, who often knew the situation in their own country better than the veteran walkers.”¹⁰¹ The combination of inadequate training and a willingness to defy the authorities when they believed the integrity of the march was at risk could, at times, end up putting the whole project in jeopardy. In short, the West Germans believed that while the group was in the DDR they “demanded too much from the officials, overestimated their own power and meaning and underestimate[d] the difficult situation of the authorities in a communist totalitarian state.”¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Letter to Hugh Brock from Helga Stolle August 16, 1961, HIS TEM 500, 03.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

After several days of negotiation the marchers secured visas to enter Poland and continue the walk for peace.¹⁰³ The team had learned their lesson and decided to be more compliant with the authorities for the rest of the march.¹⁰⁴ They would not practice civil disobedience for the rest of the walk but would always work to resolve any issues with nonviolence and reasonable discussion. After reflection the team realized that civil disobedience simply did not work in the East because there was no audience for the act and, instead of imprisonment for their actions, they were simply deported out of the country.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, direct-action protest tactics such as civil disobedience were concepts that worked in Western democracies but had limited cogency in dictatorships. As it turned out the marchers did not encounter the same problems in Poland and the Soviet Union as they had in France, the FRG, or the DDR. The Soviets, not wanting to seem hostile to the international peace movement, welcomed the marchers to campaign in the Soviet Union and influenced Poland to do the same.¹⁰⁶

The members of the American-European March for Peace were able to achieve their goal and enter the Soviet Union in late September, 1961. During their march across the Soviet Union they were met with friendly curiosity from the local peasants and had a

¹⁰³Minutes of Executive Committee meeting August 21, 1961. CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 1, Box 1.

¹⁰⁴Lyttle, *You Come with Naked Hands*, 149.

¹⁰⁵“Report of telephone conversation with A.J. Muste in West Berlin, August 20, 1961, CNVA Papers, SCPC, Series 6, Box 14.

¹⁰⁶For an excellent overview of the march with analysis of Soviet, Polish, and East German sources see Wernicke and Wittner, “Lifting the Iron Curtain: The Peace March to Moscow of 1960-1961.”

number of opportunities to talk with the people about peace and nuclear disarmament.¹⁰⁷ After 5,000 miles, seven countries, and ten months of walking, the march reached Moscow October 3, 1961. In Moscow they handed out thousands of leaflets and spoke to large crowds every night. They were shuttled around by Soviet officials the entire five days they were there but for the most part they were allowed to speak about their cause without restriction.¹⁰⁸ They found the Russian people to be very welcoming and quite curious about their message.¹⁰⁹

At the same time the march proved to many West German activists that transnational cooperation was possible and could be a very effective way of promoting a message. This was the first time that many of them had interacted with American peace activists on a personal level and after walking and doing peace work together for nearly five months across four countries they believed that they had achieved something great and had raised the bar for international cooperation. While they did not always agree with the methods and tactics of the American activists, the West Germans could not deny the efficacy of nonviolent direct action and were particularly impressed with the civil disobedience tactics employed by the Americans. Helga Tempel was particularly influenced by the Americans' flexibility, especially after they had passed through the Iron Curtain, "Their willingness to adapt to the changing situation in the East was

¹⁰⁷ Steinweg, *Der Grosse Marsch Von San Francisco Nach Moskau*, 18-19.

¹⁰⁸ Wernicke and Wittner, "Lifting the Iron Curtain: The Peace March to Moscow of 1960-1961," 914.

¹⁰⁹ Steinweg, *Der Grosse Marsch Von San Francisco Nach Moskau*, 24-26.

impressive.”¹¹⁰ Furthermore, Andreas Buro, one of the West German organizers, felt, somewhat paradoxically, that the Americans’ lack of political awareness was actually somewhat of a strength because it helped them focus on a common goal; no atomic weapons regardless of existing political factors.¹¹¹

The efforts by the walk organizers to create a common discourse on peace and nuclear disarmament were fraught with difficulties. Most of these difficulties stemmed from the multitude of national and regional perspectives the marchers brought with them. The peace walk also highlighted an important function of a transnational social space: the ability to transfer ideas. Up to this point neither the conscientious objection groups nor the Easter March movement had used civil disobedience as a protest tactic. The primary methods of protest employed by these activists were organized vigils, such as the protest vigil against atomic weapons *Mahnwache* in 1958 organized by the Action Group for Nonviolence under the leadership of Helga and Konrad Tempel, leafleting campaigns, such as the *Aktion 4/3* campaign by the VK to raise awareness about the constitutional right to conscientiously object to military service, and protest marches, best exemplified by the Easter March events of 1960 and 1961 against nuclear weapons. In every case the protest organizations worked within the law and were careful to comply with local authorities. This was important to the conscientious objection organizations and the Easter March movement because they did not want to be branded as lawless hooligans and lose their potential for influence in the public sphere.

¹¹⁰ Konrad and Helga Tempel, interview by author, Ahrensburg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

¹¹¹ Dr. Andreas Buro, interview by author, Grävenwiesbach, Germany, July 16, 2013.

Nonviolence was always a part of their protest culture but civil disobedience, possibly because they had not yet seen it employed, was not a common tactic used by the West German peace movement.

The ideas of direct action through nonviolent civil disobedience that were put to use during the San Francisco to Moscow Walk for Peace had a strong effect on the West German peace activists.¹¹² In fact, the Executive Committee of the VK, including Helga and Konrad Tempel and Wilhelm Keller, met in Hamburg September 10, 1961 and decided to set up an initiative committee to attempt to found a German *Komitee der 100*.¹¹³ This group was based on the British “Committee of 100” that was organized in 1960 by the famous British pacifist Bertrand Russell and other antiwar activists. The organization would be dedicated to the use of mass nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience and had worked with the West German peace activists to coordinate events. The goal was to found a West German organization that was interested in direct-action and could explore the possibility of employing nonviolent civil disobedience.¹¹⁴ At the demonstrations in Bonn and Dortmund-Brackel during the San Francisco to Moscow Walk for Peace the West German activists saw first hand how powerful nonviolent civil disobedience could be. Furthermore, they recognized that when civil disobedience was performed in a spirit of nonviolence it was not identified as

¹¹² Letter from Christopher Farley to Helga Stolle, October 8, 196, HIS, TEM 100, 01.

¹¹³ Letter to Bertrand Russell at the Committee of 100 from Helga Stolle and Wilhelm Keller, September 10, 1961, HIS, TEM 700, 02.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

dangerous lawlessness but rather as a peaceful way to bring attention to their message against war and nuclear weapons. It could help them break through the rigid boundaries of politics and allow the West German activists to influence policy making from outside the traditional realm of political parties.

Activists can never really escape the political realities of their respective countries. However, these struggles illustrate the protest culture of the West German peace movement and offer a window into the unique character and immediate concerns of the movement. Ultimately, the march highlights the development of the peace movement in West Germany, from the early opposition to rearmament and conscription in the mid-1950s to the major national and transnational protests against nuclear weapons and war in the 1960s, and illustrates how the movement became a force in West German society.

This march also confirmed for the West German activists the importance of careful planning and thorough training. Even though the march was not terminated just outside of East Berlin, it very well could have been and that was the kind of risk the West Germans did not want to take. Most importantly the San Francisco to Moscow Walk for Peace was an excellent opportunity for the West German activists to establish and develop personal and institutional connections like never before. Those who participated in the organizing and coordinating efforts of the march gained valuable experience in transnational cooperation that would pay dividends for the West German peace movement. The five West German activists who walked from the West

German-French border in Aachen all the way to Moscow learned a great deal about their neighbors to the East and discovered first hand that peace was a genuine concern for those living behind the Iron Curtain. After returning to West Germany, these activists, when confronted by cynics telling them to go preach peace and disarmament to the Soviets, could say with confidence “We have gone to the Soviet Union and we protested for peace and disarmament in front of the Kremlin!”

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In December of 1966, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats formed a Grand Coalition under the leadership of Kurt Georg Kiesinger. With ninety-five percent of the Bundestag under the control of the Grand Coalition, the APO in West Germany, joined by the growing anti-authoritarian student movement, was galvanized. Over the next few years, the APO and the student movement rocked West German society and defiantly challenged the government in Bonn. Through mass demonstrations, civil disobedience actions, and university takeovers, the APO and student movement initiated a caesura in West German political discourse that reverberated for decades.¹

The creation of the Grand Coalition with the CDU/CSU-SPD alliance in 1966 marks the endpoint of this dissertation. The concurrent rise of the APO and the shooting of Benno Ohnesorg just a few months later radicalized the student movement which changed the character of protest in West Germany. Furthermore increased American involvement in Southeast Asia triggered a massive wave of protest in West Germany that in some ways superseded nearly all other aspects of the peace movement. While the Easter Marches became even larger in the late 1960s, the rise of the student movement changed it significantly and ultimately caused its demise. The VK and IdK also changed

¹ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 99-101.

in the latter half of the 1960s and, frankly, while they continued to exert influence they were increasingly sidelined by the emerging student movement.²

The West German peace movement, through the activities of the antinuclear movement and the conscientious objection movement, continued to coalesce in the early 1960s. In 1961, the Easter Marches opened regional offices all over West Germany.³ The next few years the Easter Marches grew significantly with 50,000 participants in 1962, 80,000 in 1963, and by 1964, 100,000 people participated in marches all across the Federal Republic.⁴ In nearly every major city in West Germany in 1964, the Easter Marches held a culminating march rally.⁵ By the late 1960s, the Easter Marches were one of the largest, mass participatory movements in West Germany.⁶

All this would not have been possible were it not for the actions of key individuals in the conscientious objection movement. Their work in the late 1950s,

² During this period of protest, there was an enormous increase in conscientious objectors. In 1966, there were 4,431 applications for conscientious objector status. This number increased to 5,963 in 1967 and in 1968 11,952 potential conscripts applied for conscientious objector status. By 1971 this number had grown even more as 27,657 young men chose not to serve in the Bundeswehr. This marked increase in conscientious objectors is indicative of the social changes going on in the late 1960s. It was clear that draft age men in the Federal Republic were becoming increasingly more likely to choose conscientious objection. In 1972, of the 192,509 conscripts called up 17.5 percent conscientiously objected to military service; a remarkable 171.4 percent increase in percentage since 1957. This dramatic shift clearly signified a change in the social perception of military service and conscientious objection in the Federal Republic as well as the powerful, negative influence of the Vietnam War. See Federal Republic of Germany, *White Paper 1973/1974*, 59, 112.

³ Dr. Andreas Buro, interview by author, Grävenwiesbach, Germany, July 16, 2013.

⁴ “Unser Widerstand Wird Wachsen,” HIS, 300,03; “Ostermarsch 63, Bericht über eine Kampagne für Abrüstung,” HIS, 400,01; “Informationen über die Kampagne,” HIS, TEM, 400,01.

⁵ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 220.

⁶ *Ibid.*

facilitated by the IdK and VK and inspired by the WRI and the transnational social space it fostered, gave them the practical and theoretical training in forming protest movements and the confidence that their actions would have an effect on West German society. The success of the Easter Marches validated years of hard work and sacrifice for this cohort of activists, but as the campaign grew and adapted to the changing social climate of the mid- to late-1960s they increasingly found themselves pushed to the margins as a new generation of activists took control of the movement.

Throughout the early 1960s, the movement attracted an increasing number of German youth who identified with the Easter March's message of nuclear disarmament. The success of the Easter March movement in capturing the interest of the West German public dramatically changed the face of the peace movement. The Easter Marches further embodied the celebratory nature that characterized the protest movements of the late-1960s with young people in bright colors, children riding bikes along the march column, people with balloons and small musical instruments, whole music bands at the head of the march or even in a horse-drawn wagon, and singing popular protest songs such as "The H-Bomb's Thunder," "Down by the Riverside," and "Geh Mit Uns (Go with us)" sang to the tune of the well-known spiritual "Bye and Bye."⁷

Following the 1962 Easter March, the leadership added a subtitle to the name of the campaign to reflect the broadening of the movement's focus. The subtitle "*Kampagne für Abrüstung*" (Campaign for Disarmament) more accurately described the

⁷ "Bericht von einer Kampagne für Abrüstung, Ostermarsch 1962," *Pläne*, October, 1962, HIS, TEM 300,04.

objective (*Zielsetzung*) of the campaign that, by 1962, included a sharper political critique of nuclear weapons policy in the Federal Republic.⁸ The Easter March expanded its activities to include events that marked a broader recognition of state sponsored violence with dates of commemoration outside of the Easter holiday. Many of these events, such as Hiroshima Day on August 6 and Anti-War Day on September 1, were already part of the CO movement's protest agenda.⁹

The Easter Marches soon overtook the CO organizations in terms of popularity and importance to the West German peace movement. The nuclear armaments issue was still being discussed in the Bundestag and there was a possibility of having a voice in these discussions. After 1956, conscription was part of West German law and the CO movement could only serve to support COs and work to prevent the outbreak of war. The Easter Marches, on the other hand, represented an outlet for dissent and actually had a chance to affect government defense policy. For Andreas Buro, the IdK became less important after 1960 as he focused more on the Easter Marches.¹⁰ To Buro, and many in his cohort of CO activists, the VK and IdK still served a purpose in their support of COs and overall work for disarmament and peace but the Easter Marches provided a forum for a much broader segment of the population. Werner Böwing reflected, "The Easter

⁸ Flyer, "Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner Kampagne für Abrüstung, Grundsätze," HIS, TEM 300,02; Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb*, 220.

⁹ "Zwischen Atomkrieg und Gewaltlosigkeit," *Freiburger Zeitung*, August 13, 1959.

¹⁰ Interview with Andreas Buro, Grävenwiesbach, Germany, July 16, 2013.

March was a more inclusive organization” that engaged with the issue of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament more effectively.¹¹

The CO movement continued its work supporting COs and raising awareness for conscientious objection but, despite becoming overshadowed by the Easter Marches, never ceased its engagement with peace protest and international anti-war campaigns. As an indication of the effect of the movement’s work, along with the escalation of the war in Vietnam, conscientious objection became more accepted in West German society. Into the latter half of the 1960s, young men in West Germany increasingly claimed conscientious objection status. In 1966 there were 4,431 applications for conscientious objector status. This number increased to 5,963 in 1967 and in 1968 11,952 potential conscripts applied for conscientious objector status.¹² This is a significant increase over the first few years of conscription. In 1957, only 328 (0.3 percent) of the 100,000 men mustered for the first draft in April 1957 (those inspected by the draft boards but not actually drafted) exercised the right of conscientious objection.¹³

In the early 1960s, the West German government proposed legislation known as the *Notstandsgesetze* (Emergency Laws) that would significantly curtail personal freedoms in the case of a national emergency and potentially require citizens to aid in the defense of the country regardless of their personal convictions. The Allied Powers still maintained control over emergency powers in crisis situations and the West German

¹¹ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013.

¹² Federal Republic of Germany, *White Paper 1973/1974*, 59.

¹³ Federal Republic of Germany, *White Paper 1970*, 265.

government wanted to assume these powers and settle the final issue of national sovereignty.¹⁴ This elicited a strong backlash from many West Germans who saw similarities with the emergency laws of the Weimar period that Hitler used to consolidate power.¹⁵ Klaus Vack, the General Secretary of the VK, stated with concern that the proposed West German laws “...differ from the Emergency Laws of other Western countries in that they aim at a complete militarization of the population and are strongly reminiscent of the Emergency Laws of the Weimar Constitution and the so-called Authorization Laws of the Hitler era.” He went on to draw a direct line from Imperial Germany to the Federal Republic, “Sad as it is, it has to be stated that, starting from the Kaiser’s law, via Hitler’s decrees, and arriving at the present drafts, we witness an obvious decline of democracy.”¹⁶

The conscientious objection movement adamantly rejected the proposed laws and the issue became a concern on the international level. The WRI Chairman, Harold Bing, characterized the proposed laws as a direct threat to democracy in the Federal Republic stating the change to the Basic Law “will give the government greatly increased powers of almost dictatorial character and a series of emergency laws which, when brought into operation, would establish a totalitarian regime.”¹⁷ The VK viewed the laws as “a

¹⁴ Cooper, *Paradoxes of Peace*, 87.

¹⁵ For more on the Emergency Laws and the public resistance they encountered, see Michael Schneider, *Demokratie in Gefahr: Der Konflikt um die Notstandsgesetze, Sozialdemokratie, Gewerkschaften und intellektueller Protest (1958-1968)* (Bonn: Neue Gesellschaft, 1986).

¹⁶ “Emergency Laws, A Bill Before The Parliament of the Federal German Republic,” WRI, Archives of the War Resisters’ International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

creeping preparation for war,” and the IdK believed the rights of civilians would be completely voided since through the laws “the whole nation would be prepared for total mobilization for total war and the last basic constitutional right would be jettisoned.”¹⁸ The IdK went on to declare, “The defense of democracy and freedom must not be allowed to lead to the surrender of this very democracy and freedom.”¹⁹ Martin Niemöller summed up the opinion of many when he stated “My basic objection to an emergency legislation is that I consider democracy to be the only possibility for a German future and I see this democracy on which our future depends extremely endangered.”²⁰

The VK and IdK mobilized their membership and actively protested against the proposed laws. The WRI, extremely concerned about the potential threat the Emergency Laws posed, encouraged chapters around the world to support their German friends. One campaign addressed a proposed provision of the laws that would allow the government to commandeer civilian vehicles for military use. The VK created signs and bumper stickers that defiantly stated, “My Car Stays Civilian!”²¹

The Easter March campaign also focused their efforts on the Emergency Laws. While not directly related to nuclear armaments, for the Easter March movement the

¹⁸ “Emergency Laws, A Bill Before The Parliament of the Federal German Republic,” WRI, Archives of the War Resisters’ International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “War Resisters’ International, News from sections,” February, 1962, Horst Maurer Collection, IfZM, ED 718/16.

Emergency Laws represented a war preparation mentality on the part of the government and an expansion of militarism in West German society. The Emergency Laws became such an issue for the Easter March campaign that it was made a central element of the protest platform beginning with the 1965 March.²² Their protest rhetoric reflected this broader protest agenda and, along with standard Easter March slogans such as “Our No to the Bomb is a Yes for Democracy,” the 1966 Easter March featured many slogans directed at the Emergency Laws including: “Instead of Emergency Laws – Détente and Disarmament,” “Emergency threatened because of Emergency Laws,” and “Don’t change the Basic Law, change Policy.”²³ Many activists saw the Emergency Laws as evidence of the increasing militarization of society and a direct threat to West German democracy. Some marchers joined with intellectuals and academics to create a separate group they called the “Committee ‘State of Emergency of Democracy’” in an effort to counter the Emergency Laws head on.²⁴

The IdK and VK cooperated on several protest efforts despite their continued existence, at their own wish, as separate organizations. As the Vietnam War escalated, the CO movement initiated information campaigns and protest actions that targeted American installations in West Germany and the complaisance they saw in the government towards American foreign policy. One information campaign in 1966 directly targeted American soldiers. VK and IdK members passed out pamphlets to

²² *Informationen zur Abrüstung*, 19 (1964), 73, HIS, TEM 400,01.

²³ “Arbeitsmappe 1966,” *Kampagne für Abrüstung – Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner*, Zentraler Ausschuss, HIS, TEM 400,03.

²⁴ Nehring, *Politics of Security*, 252.

soldiers at American bases titled “To American Servicemen in Europe” with a drawing of a Vietnamese mother and child fleeing a cloud of bombs and missiles raining from the sky.²⁵ The IdK and VK, with a fairly astute understanding of how the war was being fought, told the soldiers, “If you are sent to Vietnam, you will be part of a system which destroys whole villages of men, women and children, burning them with napalm and forcing them to survive in refugee camps.”²⁶ The CO groups acknowledged that the soldiers were in a difficult position, “Talk is easy, but you are the one in the tough spot,” but let them know that many of the German activists were COs themselves. The leaflet encouraged the American soldiers to do something about the conflict in Vietnam: write their superiors about their objection to the war, protest in the barracks, apply for conscientious objector status, or simply go AWOL. The German activists reminded the American soldiers that the U.S. Government held individual soldiers responsible for their actions at the Nuremburg trials and in an interesting twist claimed that this protected soldiers who resisted the war.²⁷

The Easter Marches also incorporated resistance to the Vietnam War in its protest agenda by the mid-1960s. As with the protest against the Emergency Laws, protest against the war in Vietnam was another addition to the ever-increasing Easter March protest agenda. American military bases and the Bundeswehr’s participation in NATO exercises were, for many West Germans, clear signs of Bonn’s support, or at

²⁵ “To American servicemen in Europe,” Archives of the War Resisters’ International, 1921-74, microfiche (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1977).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

least acquiescence, of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. In a 1965 flyer that targeted Germans, the Easter Marches printed a full-page photo of a Vietnamese prisoner being threatened with a knife with the title “Politicians in Bonn are for cruelty in Vietnam.”²⁸ The Easter March flyer highlighted the increasing violence and destruction in Vietnam and decried the “dirty war” America was waging with napalm and gas. The flyer called on Germans to take action against the atrocities and join the 1965 Easter March, “What is happening today in Vietnam, tomorrow may be practiced in Germany!”²⁹ Approved Easter March slogans, now numbering in the dozens, called for an end to the war and declared “Don’t Bomb! Negotiate with the Vietcong!” and “No Support for US-Policy in Vietnam.”³⁰ One slogan tied the Vietnam War back to the principle issue for the Easter March campaign asking, “Does the Third World War begin in Vietnam?” Ultimately, the conflict created the potential for the use of nuclear weapons and the deployment of napalm and massive bombing campaign only strengthened this view with Easter March activists. The inclusion of the war in Vietnam in the protest agenda represented a divergence from the original goal of nuclear disarmament but not a complete abandonment.

In the mid-1960s, as the Easter March began to incorporate other issues such as resistance to the proposed Emergency Laws and American involvement in Vietnam, the campaign changed significantly from its founding in 1960. By the late-1960s the Easter

²⁸ “Bonner Politiker für Härte in Vietnam,” HIS, TEM 400,01.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “Arbeitsmappe 1966,” Kampagne für Abrüstung – Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner, Zentraler Ausschuss, HIS, TEM 400,03.

Marches were a major force in West German society and had laid the foundation for the emerging student movements. However, its antinuclear message was diluted as a number of issues were added to the platform and the creation of the Grand Coalition drove the campaign to address more political concerns.³¹ Konrad Tempel later reflected that the initial strength of the Easter Marches came from its uncomplicated stance on nuclear disarmament, “It started with a very simple, clear message, no atomic weapons east or west. So in the beginning it was very easy to bring people in who agreed with the message. The more complicated the message became the more difficult it was to keep the group focused.”³² The changes in the campaign caused many of the original founders to leave the Easter March and, for some, depart protest activism altogether. Tempel stepped down as speaker of the Easter Marches in 1964 citing his personal belief that a person should not occupy a leadership position for more than three years. Andreas Buro took over as speaker and led the campaign into the tumultuous years of the late 1960s.³³ When the Emergency Laws were adopted in 1968 and the student movement became increasingly violent, the Easter Marches abruptly disintegrated.³⁴

The VK experienced a similar evolution during the mid- to late-1960s. As the 1968 generation took a larger role in the organization and made up an increasing larger portion of the membership, the character of the VK changed to reflect the political

³¹ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 94.

³² Interview with Konrad and Helga Tempel, Ahrensberg, Germany, July 24, 2013.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Burns and van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany*, 96.

currents and rising student protests. Werner Böwing believed the new VK committee was unpredictable and chaotic politically. He left the position of Chairman as younger members pushed for a broader protest platform and Böwing felt the new members, many were also part of the Socialist German Student Union (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* or SDS), were unproductive and no longer focused on conscientious objection.³⁵ The IdK saw a similar change but it was not as extreme because the older generation pacifists maintained a great deal of control over the character and leadership of the organization. Theodor Michaltschef continued to write and serve in a leadership role until his death in 1966.³⁶ Both CO organizations survived 1968 intact and eventually merged with the German Peace Society in the 1970s, finally accomplishing the merger that they first attempted in 1958.

The Easter March and CO movement were responsible for many of the changes that occurred within their organizations in the latter half of the 1960s. The key activists that helped transform the CO movement and establish the Easter Marches valued individual action and personal responsibility. They worked to create the space in West German society where a person could voice political opinion with a real chance of being heard. The efforts of Helga and Konrad Tempel, Klaus Vack, Andreas Buro, Werner Böwing, and others of their cohort carved out a position in the undefined space between the political and social spheres that allowed for the emergence and development of extra-parliamentary opposition. It should come as no surprise that their movements

³⁵ Interview with Werner Böwing, Solingen, Germany, July 17, 2013.

³⁶ Michaltscheff, *20 Jahre Friedensrundschau*.

evolved as more individuals, particularly youth, joined and brought with them their own closely held convictions and political beliefs. They set out to change West German society and succeeded, although perhaps not exactly as they initially envisioned.

This dissertation, ultimately, studies the recivilizing process in West Germany by examining the early protest movements and positioning them in history of how Germany became a civilized society after the Second World War. This dissertation focuses on the point where the spheres of politics and society intersect and explains how this intersection allows for a better understanding of the development of West German society. By studying the conscientious objection movement and a cohort of key activists during the latter half of the 1950s and early 1960s this dissertation illustrates how West Germans navigated the undefined extra-parliamentary space and learned to participate in the new democracy. Through their actions, which were driven by strongly held convictions and sense of morality, these individuals helped create a place in their society that allowed for the peaceful but resolute expression of political opinion.

This dissertation investigates the conscientious objection movement as a bridge between the people who protested in the 1950s, the activist cohort that emerged in the early 1960s, and the student movements of the late 1960s. Furthermore, it challenges the traditional understanding of the conscientious objection movement in West Germany. This dissertation serves as the starting point for future study on the issue of conscription and society in the Federal Republic. It will also help to uncover the beginnings of extra-parliamentary protest in West Germany by exploring the continuities between the

postwar generation of protesters and the 1968-generation and investigating the organizational legacy of some of the first protest groups in the Federal Republic.

The conflict between the generations is a defining aspect of the protest movements of the 1960s, however little is made of the connections between them. I propose that the anti-conscription and conscientious objection organizations that began in the 1950s and continued through the 1960s are some of the connections. Many of the people involved in the founding of the IdK and VK participated in the rearmament protests in the mid- to late-1950s when the Adenauer government created the Bundeswehr and subsequently instituted conscription. This cohort of activists developed their protest repertoire, forged their transnational networks, and established their movements in the late 1950s and early 1960s. As the Easter March campaign and the CO movement matured in the 1960s, a new generation of activists learned how to protest and developed their own protest culture.

At the center of this narrative are the CO groups that were the training ground for this important group of activists. I argue that although these CO groups primarily focused on conscientious objection, they also promoted a complex set of issues regarding political legitimacy, the role of the postwar state, and challenged the right of an older generation over the use of their bodies. The CO movement helped establish the postwar German peace movement and propelled it into the 1960s. A major contribution that the CO movement made to the development of the peace movement in West Germany was the initiation of the antinuclear movement in the late 1950s and best

exemplified in the Easter March campaign. The CO movement was never particularly effective as a one-note movement, but it achieved lasting influence because it offered a platform for a larger critique of the Federal Republic of Germany and because it helped to incubate a generation of activists who became the APO. The CO movement worked best when it stopped being a distinct movement and became part of the landscape of social upheaval in the 1960s.

A key element to the success of this activist cohort was the personal and organizational relationships developed with activists outside of the Federal Republic. I argue that it was through the international connections and organizational development of the IdK and VK, along with the knowledge gained from several years of active protest, that the Easter Marches were able to emerge and grow into one of the most powerful protest movements in Germany. By focusing on the IdK and VK in the late 1950s and early 1960s my dissertation will provide an essential component to the pre-history of 1968 that will help explain how a powerful protest movement like the Easter Marches came into existence.

The core of activists that emerged from the CO movement created the cultural, intellectual, and organizational space for the APO to develop and grow into a powerful force in the Federal Republic of Germany. The protest culture they developed – their protest tactics and protest philosophy – along with their transnational networks and protest events helped lay the foundation for widespread, mass participatory protest movements that shook the foundation of West German society and helped it develop into

a more liberal democracy. In the midst of this process, this activist cohort assisted the advancement of civil society in Germany and all the while stayed civil, in word and deed.

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