
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

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Abstract

This article examines the politics of communication between British and West German protesters against nuclear weapons in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The interpretation suggested here historicises the assumptions of 'transnational history' and shows the nationalist and internationalist dimensions of the protest movements' histories to be inextricably connected. Both movements related their own aims to global and international problems. Yet they continued to observe the world from their individual perspectives: national, regional and local forms thus remained important. By illuminating the interaction between political traditions, social developments and international relations in shaping important political movements within two European societies, this article can provide one element of a new connective social history of the cold war.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, protesters against nuclear weapons campaigned for the fate of the world. The supporters of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), for example, solemnly 'pledged [them]selves to this, the common cause of mankind'.¹ In a similar vein the British writer and CND supporter Robert

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1 CND Charter, n.d. (c. 1959): Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull (hereafter BJL), John Saville papers (hereafter JS), JS-7.

Contemporary European History, 14, 4 (2005), pp. 559–582 © 2005 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S0960777305002766 Printed in the United Kingdom

Bolt concluded that ‘The brotherhood of man is no longer a notion, it’s here.’² We can find similar evidence for the movement’s global consciousness and their internationalism in other national contexts. Movements around the world cited the theologian Albert Schweitzer, who called nuclear armaments a ‘disaster [Unglück] for humanity’.³ Thanks to this rhetoric and to the global nature of the nuclear threat, the anti-nuclear-weapons movements, like the student and anti-war movements of the mid- and late-1960s, appear almost as a single global actor. Historians have followed this self-interpretation of the peace movements and described anti-nuclear-weapons movements across the world as transnational phenomena *sui generis*: as very similar responses to a global threat.⁴

This article seeks to differentiate these interpretations by bringing out ‘the intrinsic connections between local decisions and global contexts’.⁵ Its focus is on the two strongest anti-nuclear-weapons movements during the late 1950s and early 1960s, which were also intimately connected: the British and the West German protest movements. A close empirical analysis demonstrates the very ambiguous character of the movements’ relations with each other. While the movements professed to be concerned with international issues and with ‘humanity’ as a whole, they were embedded firmly in their respective political systems and their national political traditions. They adopted a rhetoric which had their respective ‘nation’ as the centre point. The aim of this article is to provide one element of a new social history of the cold war by illuminating the ways in which social developments and international relations interacted in shaping important political movements within two European societies.⁶

The reading suggested here historicises the assumptions of ‘transnational history’. It does not take the protesters’ rhetoric for granted⁷ and instead makes it the subject of

2 Robert Bolt, ‘Do You Speak Nuclear?’, *New Statesman*, 24 Dec. 1960.

3 Appeal from 23 April 1957, quoted in Friedenskomitee der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, ed., *Blaubuch über den Widerstand gegen die atomare Aufrüstung der Bundesrepublik* (Düsseldorf: Friedenskomitee der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1957), 95–6; Georg Reuter to Willi Richter, 17 March 1958: DGB Archives, Bonn, Abt. Organisation, 24/2182. All translations appearing in this article are by the author.

4 On the protests against nuclear weapons see April Carter, *Peace Movements: International Protest and World Politics since 1945* (London: Longman, 1992); Lawrence S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954–1970* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). On ‘1968’ see Wolfgang Kraushaar, *1968 als Mythos, Chiffre und Zäsur* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), 19, and Hans Günter Hockerts, “1968”, als weltweite Bewegung’, in Venanz Schubert, ed., *1968. 30 Jahre danach* (St. Ottilien: eos Verlag, 1999), 13–34.

5 Jürgen Kocka, ‘Historische Sozialwissenschaften heute’, in Paul Nolte et al., eds., *Perspektiven der Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000), 5–24, here 21.

6 On historical predecessors see Ute Gerhard, ‘National oder International. Die internationalen Beziehungen der deutschen bürgerlichen Frauenbewegung’, *Feministische Studien*, 12, 2 (1994), 34–52; Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women’s Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815–1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, ‘Historical Precursors to Modern Transnational Social Movements and Networks’, in John A. Guidry, Michael D. Kennedy and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Globalization and Social Movements: Culture, Power, and the Transnational Public Sphere* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 35–53.

7 For an example of such a method: Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002).

historical analysis. At the same time, it avoids the trap of interpreting these movements within their national contexts alone or, as James Hinton puts it, as proponents of ‘imperialist pacifism’.⁸ Instead, the nationalist and internationalist dimensions of the movements’ histories are shown to be inextricably connected. 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.⁹

Such an approach requires a fresh look at the methodological assumptions of transnational history writing. Like more recent sociologists, the piece departs from the assumption that communication is a central part of politics.¹⁰ Accordingly, it conceptualises transnational relations primarily as communicative relations,¹¹ while not neglecting the importance of the territoriality of political decision-making during this period.¹² By examining the politics of communication, it avoids the methodological pitfalls of theories of diffusion and inter-cultural transfer. In both models, impact is difficult to prove, and the political and social context remains in the background.¹³

Communication is ‘improbable’, as the sociologist Niklas Luhmann has observed. It depends on manifold preconditions, such as the ability to listen to the message and the ability to understand it. Also, its success – the adoption of the information by the receiver as a guideline for action – depends on a variety of factors.¹⁴ In the case of the two movements under consideration here, communication mostly took the form

8 James Hinton, *Protests and Visions: Peace Politics in 20th-century Britain* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), viii–ix.

9 Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, ‘World History in a Global Age’, *American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), 1034–60.

10 Niklas Luhmann, *Die Politik der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 14–16; Rudolf Stichweh, ‘Systems Theory as an Alternative to Action Theory? The Rise of ‘Communication’ as a Theoretical Option’, *Acta Sociologica*, 43 (2000), 5–13; Ute Frevert, ‘Politische Kommunikation und ihre Medien’, in Ute Frevert and Wolfgang Braungart, eds., *Sprachen des Politischen. Medien und Medialität in der Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 7–19.

11 Niklas Luhmann, ‘Die Weltgesellschaft (1971)’, in *idem*, *Soziologische Aufklärung* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), II, 51–71. Generally on this: Benjamin Ziemann, ‘Überlegungen zur Form der Gesellschaftsgeschichte angesichts des ‘cultural turn’’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 43 (2003), 600–16, here esp. 612–15.

12 Jürgen Osterhammel, ‘Transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte: Erweiterung oder Alternative?’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 27 (2001), 464–479; Johannes Paulmann, ‘Grenzüberschreitungen und Grenzräume. Überlegungen zur Geschichte transnationaler Beziehungen von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis in die Zeitgeschichte’, in Eckart Conze, Ulrich Lappenküper, and Guido Müller, eds., *Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen. Erneuerung und Erweiterung einer historischen Disziplin* (Weimar and Vienna: Böhlau, 2004), 167–96.

13 Doug McAdam and Dieter Rucht, ‘The Cross-National Diffusion of Movement Ideas’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 528 (July 1993), 56–74; on transfer processes see Rudolf Muhs et al., eds., *Aneignung und Abwehr. Interkultureller Transfer zwischen Deutschland und Großbritannien im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bodenheim: Philo, 1998) and Johannes Paulmann, ‘Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer. Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 267 (1998), 649–85.

14 Niklas Luhmann, ‘Die Unwahrscheinlichkeit der Kommunikation’, in *idem*, *Soziologische Systeme 3: Soziales System, Gesellschaft, Organisation* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1981), 25–34; *idem*, *Politik der Gesellschaft*, 18–68.

of mutual observation, in person, through the context of institutions and through the media.¹⁵

Social movements depend, more than other political actors, on communication and a public sphere.¹⁶ They are only loosely structured and therefore lack most of the opportunities of mobilisation and sanction which more formal political groups, such as traditional pressure groups and political parties, have at their disposal. They also do not have formalised and direct access to the political system. Instead, their salience depends almost solely on communicating their aims to the public. Even the protests themselves become an important form of communication in this context.¹⁷ More than other political actors, social movements therefore depend on constructing a coherent and unitary identity in order to be taken seriously.¹⁸

While communicating their aims to the public, social movements 'frame' the problems they are concerned with and thus create very specific interpretations of reality. They make sense of the world around them by condensing and selecting certain interpretations from a wide array of possible meanings.¹⁹ This process of selective communication is an intensely political act, and it reflects the political and social circumstances in which it takes place.²⁰ The unity and coherence of the movements' rhetoric is a by-product of these framing processes. The movements resort to a rhetoric of political and social unity because they occur in differentiated societies. They refer to the unity of human solidarity and world society not because it already exists, but to express the problems in addressing it.²¹

This article considers the movements' politics of communication in four steps. After locating the two movements briefly in the politics of the time, it will show the ways in which internationalist rhetoric and nationalist thinking were intimately linked. The third section considers the problematic effects of this ambiguity on

15 Habbo Knoch and Daniel Morat, eds., *Kommunikation als Beobachtung. Medienwandel und Gesellschaftsbilder 1880–1960* (Munich: Fink 2003); Andreas Schulz, 'Der Aufstieg der 'vierten Gewalt'. Medien, Politik und Öffentlichkeit im Zeitalter der Massenkommunikation', *Historische Zeitschrift* 270 (2000), 65–97; Axel Schildt, 'Das Jahrhundert der Massenmedien. Ansichten zu einer künftigen Geschichte der Öffentlichkeit', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 27 (2001), 177–206.

16 Dieter Rucht, 'Öffentlichkeit als Mobilisierungsfaktor für soziale Bewegungen', in Friedhelm Neidhardt, ed., *Öffentlichkeit, öffentliche Meinung, Soziale Bewegungen* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 337–58.

17 Bernd Simon and Bert Klandermans, 'Politicized Collective Identity: A Social Psychological Analysis', *American Psychologist*, 56, 4 (2001), 319–31.

18 Alain Touraine, *Production de la société* (Paris: Senil, 1973); Alberto Melucci, 'The Process of Collective Identity', in Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans, eds., *Social Movements and Culture* (London: UCL Press, 1995), 41–63; Craig Calhoun, 'Social Theory and the Politics of Identity', in *idem*, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 9–34.

19 Frank Becker and Elke Reinhardt-Becker, *Systemtheorie. Eine Einführung für die Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus, 2001); Rudolf Schlögl, 'Historiker, Max Weber und Niklas Luhmann. Zum schwierigen (aber möglicherweise produktiven) Verhältnis von Geschichtswissenschaft und Systemtheorie', *Soziale Systeme*, 7,1 (2001), 23–45.

20 Bernd Weisbrod, 'Medien als symbolische Form der Massengesellschaft. Die medialen Bedingungen von Öffentlichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert', *Historische Anthropologie*, 9, 2 (2001), 270–83, here 282. See also *idem*, ed., *Die Politik der Öffentlichkeit – die Öffentlichkeit der Politik: Politische Medialisierung in der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003).

21 Peter Fuchs, *Die Erreichbarkeit der Gesellschaft. Zur Konstruktion und Imagination gesellschaftlicher Einheit* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), esp. ch. VI.

the politics of communication within transnational institutions. The fourth section examines the importance of symbolic protest communication as a core part of the transnational relations between the movements.

The movements and national politics

Both movements emerged within very specific national contexts framed by the national repercussions of the cold war and the specific political conditions in each country. Both movements actively appropriated specific left-wing political traditions for their cause, but they did so in nationally peculiar ways.²² The British and the West German movements started in the late 1950s as protests against nuclear weapons tests and the radiation emanating from them. They responded to the nuclearisation of NATO strategy, and they were directly connected to political shifts within the social democratic parties and labour movements. However, owing to the different political circumstances in both countries, the British and West German movements had quite different aims and were linked to different social groups. In Britain a group of, broadly speaking, left-wing intellectuals founded the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in early 1958 in order to bring together previous movements and to campaign for a policy of *unilateral* nuclear disarmament after hopes that the Labour Party might take up that aim had faded. CND was in line with traditions of previous radical movements in British politics, both in terms of its membership and in terms of its strategies. Yet CND became the crystallisation point for all kinds of radical movements, especially New Left groups. The various strands of the New Left criticised both Stalinism and the top-down nature of the traditional Labour politics. By harking back to traditions, such as those advocated by William Morris in Britain in the nineteenth century, they propagated what one would now call ‘grass-roots democracy’.²³ The main form of protest was the annual march between Aldermaston and London on Easter weekends, although vigils and local protests continued.

Initially, the issue of unilateral disarmament provided a basic consensus for these different groups. Yet gradually important political differences emerged which had to do with different attitudes to the political process. While the majority of CND focused its activities primarily on parliamentary politics from outside Parliament, New Left groups advocated a more wide-ranging strategy which was supposed to change the political system as a whole. From the early 1960s CND even campaigned, under the influence of the new left, for Britain’s exit from NATO.²⁴ In autumn 1960s a more radical group around the philosopher Bertrand Russell and his

22 This confirms and differentiates a point Craig Calhoun has made for the nineteenth century: Craig Calhoun, ‘The Radicalism of Tradition: Community Strength or Venerable Disguise and Borrowed Language?’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 88, 5 (1983), 886–914. See also Holger Nehring, ‘The British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons and the Cultures of the Cold War, 1957–64’, *Contemporary British History*, 19, 2 (2005), 223–41.

23 On the New Left see Michael Kenny, *The First New Left. British Intellectuals after Stalin* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995).

24 On CND’s foreign policy aims see Mark Phythian, ‘CND’s Cold War’, *Contemporary British History*, 15, 3 (2001), 133–56.

assistant Ralph Schoenman left CND and founded the Committee of 100.²⁵ This group rejected CND's hierarchical structure and its focus on parliamentary politics. It sought to transform British society, primarily through grass-roots activities.²⁶

In West Germany, we can distinguish two distinct campaigns against nuclear weapons. Neither movement campaigned for unilateral disarmament, but instead opposed the equipment of the Federal Army with nuclear-capable equipment and argued for general disarmament in a United Nations context, a position adopted by the Conservatives and the Labour revisionists in Britain. There were two main reasons for the moderate character of the German movements' aims: the Federal Republic did not have its own nuclear weapons and it was a front-line state in the cold war, where unilateral disarmament especially appeared both hazardous and communist-inspired. The first German campaign, gloomily called 'Campaign against Atomic Death' (*Kampagne Kampf dem Atomtod*), was not, as in Britain, launched against a labour party, but by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and trade unions when the Adenauer government made public its plans to acquire nuclear-capable equipment for the German army in early 1958. The SPD thus revived its traditions as both party and social movement.²⁷ A new movement emerged after the SPD abandoned the campaign in the wake of its adoption of the 1959 Bad Godesberg programme of reforms and several election defeats in regional elections.²⁸ In 1960, a small group marched for the first time in northern Germany under the banner of the Easter Marches of Atomic Weapons Opponents. Copying the main British protest form, a group of Hamburg Quakers had imported the Easter March. The Easter Marches were the formative period for a left-wing movement which was neither social-democratic nor communist and creatively brought together both pacifist and socialist traditions.²⁹

Yet the different political contexts in Britain and the Federal Republic impeded an understanding of the circumstances in the other country. In Britain, the Labour executive's emphasis on *multilateral* disarmament was diametrically opposed to CND's agenda of *unilateral* nuclear disarmament. In the Federal Republic, the SPD's attitude towards multilateral disarmament in general and the opposition to arming of the Bundeswehr (Federal Army) with nuclear-capable equipment meant a general opposition to Adenauer's 'policy of strength', and motivated the party to initiate

25 The standard work on the British Movement is Richard Taylor, *Against the Bomb* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

26 On the Committee see Frank E. Myers, 'Civil Disobedience and Organizational Change: The British Committee of 100', *Political Science Quarterly*, 86 (1971), 92–112; Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, 190–269.

27 Hans Karl Rupp, *Außerparlamentarische Opposition in der Ära Adenauer* (Cologne: Pahl Rugenstein, 1984).

28 On continuities with earlier protest movements see Jost Dülffer, 'The Movement against Rearmament 1951–55 and the Movement against Nuclear Armament 1957/59 in the Federal Republic: A Comparison', in Maurice Vaisse, ed., *Le pacifisme en Europe des années 1920 aux années 1950* (Brussels: Bruylant, 1993), 417–34.

29 Karl A. Otto, *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO. Geschichte der ausserparlamentarischen Opposition in der Bundesrepublik 1960–70* (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus, 1977).

its own protest organisation, the Campaign against Atomic Death.³⁰ Moreover, advocating unilateral disarmament would have been unthinkable in the Federal Republic. First, the country did not possess its own nuclear weapons. Hence demands for unilateral disarmament would have affected the Western allies. More importantly, the strongly anti-communist climate in the Federal Republic cast all demands for disarmament as fellow-travelling activities. While anti-communism existed in British society as well, its actual effects on respectability in the political process were much more pronounced in the Federal Republic.³¹ Both these factors led to serious misunderstandings in the communications between CND and the Campaign against Atomic Death.

National visions

Although the protesters' rhetoric suggested that they had shed all references to national identity, they continued to think in terms of independent and equal nations. By addressing their national audiences, the movements sought to position themselves in relation to their respective national political codes. This offered the most effective way of campaigning and provided them, at least initially, with a basic consensus within. Hence defining their respective national identities was central for the British and West German movements. Both movements defined the relationship of their respective nation towards mankind by giving it specific functions within the inter-national system.³² The British protesters sought to establish the moral lead of the nation within a post-colonial Commonwealth.³³ 'Lift up your heads and be proud', a group of waiting supporters proclaimed through a loudspeaker on the first Aldermaston march in 1958, 'the lead has been given to the English people. Britain must take up that lead in the world. "England, arise, the long, long night is over"'.³⁴ Although regional campaigns existed in Scotland and Wales and although the movement tapped regional political traditions, the protests were not yet coupled with demands for more regional autonomy. Instead, the protesters sought to connect local and regional concerns to the global dangers from nuclear weapons.³⁵

30 Minutes of the SPD Parteivorstand, 24 Jan. 1958: *Archiv der sozialen Demokratie*, Bonn (AdsD). For Britain see 'Summary Report of the Meeting between the International Committees of the Labour Party NEC and the TUC General Council', Transport House, 10.30 am, 6 March 1958: The Archives of the British Labour Party, Series One: National Executive Committee Minutes, part 5: 1956–1959 inclusive (Microfiche edition, Harvester Press, Hassocks, 1976: Bodleian Library, Oxford).

31 Rolf Elker et al., eds., *Beiträge zur Geschichte des SDS* (Berlin: Asta FU Berlin, 1987), 45.

32 See Johannes Paulmann, 'Deutschland in der Welt: Auswärtige Repräsentationen und reflexive Selbstwahrnehmung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg – eine Skizze', in Hans Günter Hockerts, ed., *Koordinaten deutscher Geschichte in der Epoche des Ost-West-Konflikts* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2004), 63–78.

33 See Meredith Veldman, *Fantasy, the Bomb and the Greening of Britain. Romantic Protest 1945–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

34 *Peace News*, 11 April 1958, 8.

35 See Willie Thompson, 'The New Left in Scotland', in Ian MacDougall, ed., *Essays in Scottish Labour History: A Tribute to W. H. Manwick* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1978), 207–24.

A unilateral British foreign policy would restore Britain's 'greatness in the moral sense'.³⁶ According to this 'White Man's burden school of unilateralism',³⁷ British unilateralism would allow the nation to utilise its special relationship with the Commonwealth and thus play a leading role in Third World development: 'A Britain that publicly told a world, still aware of her resounding history, that she was siding with the forces of sense, and reason, and right, would rally behind her thousands of people from the non-communist world'.³⁸ Most CND supporters linked their demands for a reinvigorated national community to pleas for bringing morality back into politics, primarily by reinvigorating the British public sphere and civilisation: 'The people of Britain today badly need a sense of purpose'.³⁹ Some historians and sociologists have taken this to mean that CND was predominantly a moral, as opposed to a political, campaign.⁴⁰

Yet CND's emphasis on morality was intimately bound up with its vision of a different Britain and was, therefore, highly political. Often tapping into Christian rhetoric, the British protesters regarded the bomb as the symbol of the break-up of community into alienated human beings who supported violent versions of British greatness such as the 1956 decision to invade Suez. Here, the influence of the New Left and the Labour left can be seen. Despite differences between them, both these groups subscribed to an essentially moral vision of Labour politics, and both argued that Labour groups should fulfil this vision. This vision emphasised the moral strength and decency of the British population, which would provide the basis for Britain's leadership in the struggle for equality and fairness both at home and in international relations.⁴¹ Hence British protesters linked their demands to a positive endorsement of their nation's past and specifically the colonial heritage: for them, CND meant a reassertion of 'world influence' as the manifestation of the right kind of nationalism.⁴²

Due to the division of their country, the national question was of fundamental importance to the West German movement. Yet because of the complicated history of Germany in the previous 150 years, West German protesters revitalised their nationalism by embedding it in an international-humanist context to an even greater extent than their British counterparts. Many West German protesters regarded it as Germany's national mission to shed all allegiance to national policies. They argued in favour of a policy which 'did not serve the interests of the one or the other side in one country, but which served a new, world-wide security policy'.⁴³ West

36 The Bishop of Llandaff at a CND meeting in Central Hall, Westminster, 1965, quoted in 'Give Us Our Independence', *Sanity*, October 1965, 3. See also 'War in Vietnam', *Peace News*, 10 May 1963, 1.

37 David Marquand, 'Bombs and Scapegoats', *Encounter*, January 1961, 43.

38 *Sanity*, December 1961, 2; CND Manifesto (1962), *Sanity*, March 1962, 1; *Sanity*, January 1963, 4.

39 Frank Beswick in *Sanity*, December 1961, 2.

40 See, e.g., Frank Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism. The Social Bases of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968).

41 See Stephen Howe, 'Labour and International Affairs', in Duncan Tanner, Pat Thane and Nick Tiratsoo, eds., *Labour's First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 119–50.

42 See *Sanity*, August 1963, 10.

43 *Informationen zur Abrüstung*, no. 3, September 1963, 6; *Bundesarchiv Koblenz* (hereafter BAK) ZSg. 1–262/3. See also 'Scheidung der Geister und Wege', Hamburg n.d.: BAK Zsg. 1–214/1, 4.

German protesters sang songs, often imported from Britain, which pointed out that they neither marched against the West nor against the East, but for the world.⁴⁴ They thereby perpetuated a view of Germany as the centre of world politics and of the cold war.⁴⁵ But even if they looked towards supranational solutions to the German question, the West German protesters maintained a commitment to national self-determination which was premised on humanist values.⁴⁶ They now expressed nationhood in terms of democratic rights and national *Kultur*.⁴⁷

The protesters' presentation of the German nation was anchored in an anthropological discourse which looked at the humanist question of renewing and the 'changing' of man and his 'character'. The nation was endowed with 'supra-national' responsibilities. Thus the 1961 Easter Marches invoked European experiences in their 'Easter Manifesto'. In order to prevent Europe from becoming 'a no man's land for the planners for destruction', they argued, protesters had to invoke the 'traditions of the alert European realism' which would replace the 'shabby metaphysics of the military' and thus prevent the 'surrender of the European continent before history'.⁴⁸ In the protesters' reshaping of national identity, Germany became a country defined by a commitment to human rights.⁴⁹ Interestingly, however, given the importance of federal versions of German nationalism in the past and given the regionalised character of the West German Easter Marches, these concepts of national identity did not vary across the Federal Republic. As in Britain we can, however, find an appeal to local and regional issues and sites of memory, such as Dachau and Bergen-Belsen, as symbols of the global dimension of the nuclear threat.

All this did not mean that West German protesters were oblivious to the contentious issue of Germany's division. One commentator summarised the connection succinctly: 'Preventing atomic armaments and [securing German] reunification are linked like rain and corn: preventing atomic armament is the first step, the only step possible at this time on the path towards reunification!'⁵⁰ Protesters in the Campaign against Atomic Death regarded the question of nuclear weapons

44 'Unser Marsch ist eine gute Sache' (1963), quoted in Frank Baier, 'Ruhrgebiet – Leben, Kämpfen, Solidarisieren', in Robert von Zahn, ed., *Folk und Liedermacher an Rhein und Ruhr* (Münster: Agenda, 2002), 129–93, here 132.

45 'Aufruf zum Ostermarsch 1964 (Kurzfassung)': Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (HIS), Gertrud Wolferts Collection, Sbe540, Folder 'Friedensbewegung 50er und 60er Jahre'.

46 Stefan Andres, 'Nicht ein drittes Mal!', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 3 (1959), 299–304, here 302. For the background see Martin Wengeler, 'Die Deutschen Fragen. Leitvokabeln der Deutschlandpolitik', in Karin Böke, Frank Liedtke and Martin Wengeler, *Politische Leitvokabeln in der Adenauer-Ära* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1996), 325–77, here 355. See also Hans Günter Hockerts, 'Einführung', in *idem*, ed., *Koordinaten deutscher Geschichte in der Epoche des Ost-West-Konflikts* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2004), VII–XV, here X.

47 'Perspektiven einer mitteleuropäischen Friedenszone': *Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf* (HstAD) RW 115–420.

48 'Europäisches Oster-Manifest' (1961): IfZ ED 702–5; European Manifesto, Aldermaston March 1961: AdSD 2/PVAM000036. See also 'Europa ruft. Europäisches Komitee gegen Atomrüstung, London, 17/18 January 1959', 4: *Stiftung Archiv Berliner Akademie der Künste*, Hans Werner Richter archives (HWR) 1.43.408.1.

49 On the general context see Lora Wildenthal, 'Human Rights Advocacy and National Identity in West Germany', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 22 (2000), 1051–9.

50 Claus Rainer Rühl, 'Zwei Volksbewegungen', *konkret* 14/1958, 1.

as one of 'the fate for the existence of the people [Volk] and the nation'.⁵¹ Even after the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, when the division of Germany further lost salience in West German society as a whole, many of the groups involved in the protests regarded unification and nationality as 'oppositional topics'.⁵²

Yet while the Social Democratic Campaign against Atomic Death pointed out that the nuclear arming of the Federal Army would lead to the perpetuation of division,⁵³ this element receded into the background during the Easter March campaign.⁵⁴ By the mid-1960s, protesters mentioned German unity as part of a longer list of worries about the status of the German constitution and international relations in general. This reflected the protesters' growing realisation that the 'German question' was only one among many crises in the international relations of the time.⁵⁵ Their focus had now shifted: rather than seeing Germany as the centre of the cold war, they considered the problem from a different perspective; they were now primarily interested in European security. They no longer regarded Germany's situation as the root of a European problem, but looked for a European solution to solve the German problem.⁵⁶

The images selected and propagated by the West German movement frequently emanated from a very peculiar view of German history. They echoed earlier debates about the lack of a German capacity for democracy.⁵⁷ Conversely, the West German protesters sought to construct a 'new Germany' which made a clean break with what they described as 'imperial-republican-Nazi' traditions.⁵⁸ In this context, they also emphasised that 'the moral end moraine of Hitler's ice age has not really been worked through in any area of our life and has not yet been spiritually overcome'.⁵⁹ The cold war and the history of the two world wars thus fell into one in this interpretation. Unlike British protesters, German activists had an entirely negative view of the past: 'Everything which was wrong about the German past, everything which we can identify as the aberration of German history, blossoms again [in West German rearmament]'.⁶⁰ They drew on traditional left-wing critiques of German

51 'Kampf dem Atomtod', April 1958, 15: BAK, ZSg. 1-E/70.

52 Hans Magnus Enzensberger's acceptance speech for the 1963 Büchner Prize: 'Darmstadt, am 19. Oktober 1963', in *idem*, *Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm: Äußerungen zur Politik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 14–26; Hans Werner Richter to Georg Ramseger, 4 Dec. 1961, in Hans Werner Richter, *Briefe*, ed. Sabine Cofalla (Munich, 1997), 385–6.

53 Speech by Hans Werner Richter at the Circus Krone, Munich, for the Committee against Atomic Armaments, 18 April 1958: HWR 72.86.511, fo. 65.

54 Circular by Hans-Konrad Tempel, 16 March 1961: *Instut für Zeitgeschichte*, Munich (IfZ) ED 702–5.

55 Fritz René Allemann, '1959: Vertagte Entscheidung', *Die Zeit*, 1 Jan. 1960, 1.

56 Andreas Buro, 'Zielsetzung des Ostermarches' (Kurzfassung des Referats am 30. Juni/ 1. Juli 1962): IfZ ED702–2.

57 'Martin Niemöller. Das Ende der Demokratie': HStAD, RW 115 203, 171; Max Stierwaldt to Schmidt, 18 Nov. 1960: HStAD RW 115 268, 118–19.

58 *Programm und Aufgaben der Deutschen Friedensgesellschaft. Bericht über den Zonentag in Bielefeld am 8. Nov. 1946* (Hannover, 1946), 7.

59 Stefan Andres, 'Nicht ein drittes Mal!', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 3 (1959), 299–304, here 302.

60 Hans Werner Richter, 'Der Aufstand der Schriftsteller' (1958): HWR 72.86.511, fo. 82.

militarism,⁶¹ while simultaneously assuming that the Nazi dictatorship had almost been thrust on the German population as an alien force. In their critiques, protesters focused on the policies of the government rather than people's attitudes. Thus the whole of German history became a 'history of false orders and tragic subordination'.⁶² Some German Easter March songs rehearsed this theme: 'You German people [Volk], you have nearly always marched for wrong aims/ At the end, there was only rubble'.⁶³

The views which the West German activists instrumentalised were quite close to interpretations of German history prevalent among the British movement. And the observation of the British debate certainly played a role in their adoption of a reading of German history which was popular directly after the war, but which had fallen out of fashion by the late 1950s and early 1960s. A. J. P. Taylor's view that 'one looks in vain [in Germany's history] for a juste milieu, for common sense' and that 'nothing is normal in German history except violent oscillations' was quite common among CND supporters.⁶⁴ In his speech at the foundation of the European Federation against Nuclear Arms in London in mid-January 1959, Kingsley Martin echoed this interpretation by calling the West German secretary of defence 'the most dangerous man in Europe' and stating that 'no German general should be entrusted with nuclear weapons'. The German press commented on this and said that the protests went some way to show that there was a 'better Germany'.⁶⁵

The memory of the Second World War loomed especially large in the West German debates, while it played only a minor part in British discourses. This analysis thus confirms a point made by Michael Geyer: in the Federal Republic 'discrete military issues were foregrounded against a deeper horizon of uncanny experience'.⁶⁶ West German protesters defined the issue almost in social-Darwinist terms and as one of the survival of the West German nation as such: as the fight for existence.⁶⁷

61 Nicholas Stargardt, *The German Idea of Militarism: Radical and Socialist Critics, 1866–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

62 Grüße des Komitees gegen Atomrüstung, Munich, 1958: HWR 72.86.511, fol. 108.

63 'Unser Marsch ist eine gute Sache' (1963), quoted in Baier, 'Ruhrgebiet–Leben, Kämpfen, Solidarisieren', 132.

64 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of German History since 1815* (repr. London: Methuen, 1976), 1.

65 Kingsley Martin, 'Es gibt keinen Krieg für die Freiheit', in 'Europa ruft', Europäisches Komitee gegen Atomrüstung, London 17/18 Jan. 1959, 33: HWR 1.43.408. See the report in *Trierischer Volksfreund*, 20 Jan. 1959, and 'Gibt es "den" Deutschen?', *Westfälische Rundschau*, 27 Jan. 1959: HWR 72.86.512, fo. 143.

66 Michael Geyer, 'Cold War Angst. The Case of West-German Opposition to Rearmament and Nuclear Weapons', in Hanna Schissler, ed., *The Miracle Years. A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 376–408, here 393.

67 Naturfreundejugend Deutschlands, Landesverband Rheinland, Schulungsreferent der Ladesjugendleitung Peter Kahn (Merkstein/Aachen) to Campaign against Atomic Death, 28 Feb. 1959: AdsD 2/PVAM000018. For an elaboration of this theme see Holger Nehring, 'Cold War, Apocalypse and Peaceful Atoms. Interpretations of Nuclear Energy in the British and West German Anti-Nuclear Weapons Movements, 1955–1964', *Historical Social Research*, 29, 3 (2004), 150–70.

Institutions of transnational communications

The British protesters' positive view of their nation's history and the negative interpretations in the West German movements, themselves at least partly products of mutual observations between the movements, had important repercussions for the communications between the two movements. CND hardly felt the need to look abroad for models of protest. CND supporters mentioned movement activities in other countries to underline the worthiness of their cause, but they rarely thought about how they could imitate other movements. There were specific political aims which had to be implemented, and protests were a means of achieving these aims. The rejection of many national traditions by the West German movement meant, by contrast, that its supporters not only looked abroad for affirmation, but also for inspiration. Although Germany possessed pacifist traditions similar to those of Britain, the rupture of the National Socialist regime meant that there were neither as many personal nor direct intellectual continuities between the protests of the 1950s and those of the 1920s as existed in Britain. Hence West German protesters reappropriated protest traditions by engaging with protest movements elsewhere. The close links between British and West German Quakers, which had been established as part of the British Quakers' famine relief efforts in Germany immediately after that country's unconditional surrender in 1945, were an especially important avenue here.

Yet the communications between the two movements were fraught with problems. The problems of establishing and sustaining transnational bodies reflect the difficulties of a politics of communication between two movements which operated in two very different political contexts in the cold war and which had to appeal to very different audiences. There were very few direct connections between CND and its West German counterparts, the Campaign against Atomic Death and the Easter March Committee, apart from the regular exchanges of a few marchers. The West German campaign headquarters did not even seem to have been aware of the existence of a counterpart in Britain until the summer of 1958, almost half a year after both campaigns had been founded. Thus when the SPD-run Campaign received a letter from the British CND asking for some information about the campaign, the West German campaign office tried to secure information about its counterpart's credentials by writing to the international department of the Labour Party. But the Labour Party was not keen to help, since CND was regarded by Transport House, the Labour headquarters, as a divisive force. As a result, the Labour Party warned the SPD to avoid co-operation. The SPD, in turn, misunderstood Labour's political language and classified CND as 'communist'.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the British and West German activists ultimately founded movements whose reach went beyond national boundaries. In 1959 a group of West German and British protesters founded the European Federation against Nuclear Arms (EF) in Frankfurt. The Federation rapidly incorporated movements from other European countries as well, and in 1963/64 it was re-founded with a world-wide

68 See the folder 'Tarnorganisationen': AdsD 2/PVAM000007.

reach as the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace (ICDP). The founders intended the ICDP to be the democratic equivalent of the communist World Peace Council (WPC).

But, significantly, the first West German movement which established links with CND was not the SPD-run Campaign against Atomic Death. It was instead the Munich Committee against Nuclear Armaments' (Komitee gegen Atomrüstung). This Committee was run by the German writer and intellectual Hans Werner Richter, the founder of Gruppe 47, the most important literary circle in post-Second World War West Germany.⁶⁹ Richter established the initial contacts with the president of CND, Bertrand Russell, through a British journalist he knew from one of the Gruppe 47 conferences.⁷⁰ The Munich group was, as far as its social structure and organisation were concerned, very similar to CND. It consisted mainly of intellectuals, it was governed by a committee structure, and was, like the CND executive, initially not very keen on street protests. Its members, like the CND executive, perceived communication primarily as an elite affair and saw its purpose as the enlightenment of the public rather than effecting radical changes to society.⁷¹ Communication thus depended entirely on the activities of the elite groups.

Richter had initiated the EF together with Canon Collins, CND's chairman. The London headquarters of the Federation would co-ordinate joint campaigns in the future.⁷² In striking contrast to its rhetoric of a 'world community', there was unanimity at EF meetings that the Federation should *not* undermine the national position of the individual movements and should instead be sensitive to different national issues: the EF was not allowed to interfere in the national campaign efforts and was not even allowed to produce statements which went beyond what had been agreed at the national level.⁷³

This transnational body thus never assumed a significant role for communications between the British and West German movements. It was not even endowed with enough funds to support an international propaganda campaign. It was very difficult for the various national member movements to agree on common aims, especially since many national movements had difficulty in finding a consensus at home. Discussions were hampered by serious misunderstandings, by a degree of ignorance of the conditions in the other country, and, finally, by a denial that these problems existed at all. Also, communication was by and large a one-way process: the British movement showed even less interest in trying to establish contacts with other anti-nuclear-weapons movements than did the West German one. The different national cultures of the cold war prevented more thorough and wide-ranging discussions. Most importantly, the British and West German groups could not agree on a common

69 On Richter and the Gruppe 47 see Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, "'Askese schreiben, schreib: Askese". Zur Rolle der Gruppe 47 in der politischen Kultur der Nachkriegszeit', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 25 (2000), 134–67.

70 Christopher Holme to Hans Werner Richter, 2 April 1958, HWR 72.86.512, fo. 55.

71 HWR, 72.86.511, fos. 91ff.

72 Statutes of the European Federation against Nuclear Arms (c. 1959): HWR 72.86.512, fos. 20 ff.

73 Report about the European Congress against Nuclear Armaments, 6 Feb. 1959: HWR, 72.86.512, fos. 158 ff.

policy towards the WPC. The different assumptions about communism prevented this. British activists could voice sympathy towards policies advocated by the WPC relatively freely without the risk of discrediting their cause. Due to the staunchly anti-communist political culture in the Federal Republic, West German protesters, by contrast, risked discrediting their whole campaign if they endorsed any of the WPC's aims.⁷⁴ Although Hans Werner Richter's attitude had been characterised by a relatively large degree of tolerance towards the GDR's and the Soviet Union's foreign policies, the building of the Wall in 1961 had shattered his hopes of peaceful change from Stalinism towards socialist democracy in the East. With the backing of his Munich Committee, Richter then withdrew his support from Canon Collins's plans for a joint conference with the WPC.⁷⁵ When delegates of eighteen nations gathered in Oxford in January 1963 to found the ICDP as a world-wide successor organisation to the European Federation, West German delegates played hardly any role and US delegates also trod very carefully.⁷⁶ From its inception, the ICDP therefore lacked the firm support of the most powerful anti-nuclear-weapons movements at the time.

In this political setting, established institutions offered a better environment for direct communication. Radical pacifism offered the best resource. It sent out an unambiguous message and could look back to traditions which stemmed from the 1920s and were thus untainted by suspicions of communist subversion. Hence the War Resisters' International (WRI) was the central transnational body for the British and West German anti-nuclear-weapons protests. The WRI had been founded by radical, in other words non-middle-class, pacifists in the early 1920s. It was through this organisation and its journals that the first group of protesters in north Germany established contact with its British counterparts and, indeed, with pacifists from all over the world who thought along similar lines. In the 1920s and 1930s the WRI had been primarily concerned with assisting conscientious objectors. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, it was instrumental in spreading the ideas linked to non-violent civil disobedience and non-violent direct action. WRI's headquarters at the time was in Enfield in Essex, near London. The headquarters was dominated by the British peace movement around the Peace Pledge Union with its journal *Peace News*, and had strong links with the Committee of 100. Tony Smythe, the WRI's director in the early 1960s, was also a prominent Committee of 100 activist. The adoption of protest forms linked to direct action by the student protesters of the mid- and late 1960s cannot be understood without reference to the WRI channels, which were mainly links to the Committee of 100 rather than CND.⁷⁷

74 On West German anti-communism see Detlef Siegfried, 'Stalin und Elvis. Antikommunismus zwischen Erfahrung, Ideologie und Eigensinn', *Sowi*, 28 (January–March 1999): 27–35.

75 Hans Werner Richter to Canon John Collins, 9 Sept. 1961: HWR 72.86.512, fo. 303.

76 Strictly speaking, the ICDP was only founded one year later in Tyninge, Sweden. The Oxford conference just led to the formation of a Continuing Committee. See letter from Diana Collins to *Peace News*, 29 March 1963; letter by Judith Cook to *Peace News*, 1 March 1963; Dora Russell in *Tribune*, 31 May 1963; *Sanity*, March 1963, 9; Barry Gorden, 'After Oxford What?', *International Socialism*, 12 (1963), 12–14.

77 Wolfgang Kraushaar, 'Die transatlantische Protestkultur. Der zivile Ungehorsam als amerikanisches Exempel und als bundesdeutsche Adaption', in Heinz Bude and Bernd Greiner, eds., *Westbindungen. Amerika in der Bundesrepublik* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 257–84, neglects the connection.

This also means that the Committee of 100, and not CND, was really the West German Easter Marches' functional equivalent. What is striking in this context is that the social links reflected the ideas: there were very few links between CND and the Easter Marches because CND's pressure group focus did not seem to fit the West German context. There were, however, strong links between the Committee of 100 – via the War Resisters' International – and the Germans, while the Committee of 100 did not have a strong position in the British movement.

The WRI was so efficient because its organisation and its educational initiatives, which comprised conferences, summer schools and seminars, were already in place. Moreover, it was able to draw from various national traditions of protest, mainly in the pacifist and socialist fields, but also from links to youth and life reform movements. There existed an elective affinity between the pacifist rhetoric of 'one world', the West German movement's concept of national identity and the need for an unambiguous rhetoric in a social movement. As pacifist traditions had lain dormant in West Germany during the Nazi dictatorship and since West Germany lacked an independent socialist grouping to the left of the SPD, the WRI connections had a far greater impact on the West German movement than on the British one. Much more efficiently than the EF and the ICDP, the WRI was able to distribute information through its West German branches, the Internationale der Kriegsdienstgegner – Deutscher Zweig (IdK) and, from the early 1960s, the Vereinigte Kriegsdienstgegner (VK). Their publications carried reports from conferences, advice on reading and registration forms for conferences in a format which was accessible to all supporters. The WRI's West German journal, *Friedensrundschau*, carried a 'Letter from England' in every issue, informing West German readers of the most recent developments in the United Kingdom. The journal also frequently published articles which discussed different forms of protest, most importantly non-violent civil disobedience. In particular, the German WRI branch and the VK publications could tap into particular West German and British conditions by relying on local authors who translated the message into the local political and protest traditions.⁷⁸ Equally, British journals such as *Peace News* and, later, the CND's journal *Sanity* carried articles on campaigns abroad. The ideas for Easter Marches outside Britain first emerged in WRI networks. The links between the later organisers of the Easter March, Hans-Konrad Tempel and his fiancée Helga Stolle, started in the early 1950s. Tempel had been involved in discussion circles on the application of Gandhian methods of civil disobedience in Hamburg since the early 1950s as well as in the local war resisters' organisation. He was active in the protests against conventional West German rearmament and in the neutralist Gesamtdeutsche Volkspartei. As a Quaker he had also been in contact with the people who ran the Quaker Relief efforts in the British zone of occupation in the late 1940s.

It was at the WRI's eighth Triennial Conference which took place in July 1954 in Paris that he became acquainted with activists from the British peace movement such

78 See, e.g., Hilda von Klenze, 'Brief aus England', *Friedensrundschau*, 14, 2 (1960), 15 and *eadem*, 'Brief aus England', *Friedensrundschau*, 17, 6 (1963), 15–16.

as April Carter, Stuart Morris and Fenner Brockway.⁷⁹ The conferences not only contributed to the formation of a transnational network of protesters, but they were also instrumental in bringing together the dispersed activities of the West German movement. At the 1954 conference, Tempel met Ingeborg Küster, the future organiser of the Munich Easter Marches.⁸⁰ The circles around the WRI and its West German branches were also important in linking the Hamburg group, which organised the first Easter Marches, to a wider circle, mainly linked to Andreas Buro, then an official in the youth department at the Kassel city council, later one of the main organisers of the campaign.⁸¹ Through his job, Buro was in touch with representatives of various groups around the emerging New Left in West Germany, such as Klaus Vack of the youth organisation of the Friends of Nature (Naturfreundejugend) and Herbert Faller of the socialist youth organisation The Falcons (Sozialistische Jugend. Die Falken), who were both to become important organisers for the national and Hessian regional campaigns. Both had been prominent front organisations of the SPD in the 1920s.⁸² Vack himself, through his activities in the local VK branch, became involved in the WRI later on. Members of the West German Socialist German Student Federation (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund) also took part.⁸³

At the WRI conferences, activists from the US civil rights movements also acquainted West Europeans with the practice of Gandhian-type civil disobedience, thus reinvigorating the theoretical discussions about these forms of protest, a debate whose origins can be traced back to the 1920s. The 1957 conference in London was attended by Bayard Rustin, the future organiser of Martin Luther King's civil disobedience campaigns in the United States, and by the future activists of the Committee of 100, such as Christopher Farley, who were the first to organise sit-downs and the occupation of military bases and government buildings systemically in a Western European setting.⁸⁴

The conferences were mostly elite and middle-class affairs. At the time the costs of travelling were still significant and at least a rudimentary knowledge of foreign languages was required. Although these conferences mainly took place in the summer months, it is probable that they primarily appealed to full-time activists, students, academics and others who could afford the time and the money.⁸⁵ One could, therefore, argue that these contacts did not really matter as they concerned the

79 See the reports from the 8th Triennial Conference, Paris 1954: *Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, Amsterdam (IISG), WRI-7. See also the reports on the following Triennial IISG WRI-8, 9, 10, 11; and the exchange of letters between the WRI and Andreas Buro: IISG WRI-226.

80 See the list of conference members at the WRI's 8th Triennial Conference, Paris, 1954: IISG WRI-7.

81 See, e.g., the letter from Andreas Buro to Tony Smythe, 3 Sept. 1960: IISG WRI-226.

82 On these traditions see Jochen Zimmer, 'Das Abseits als vermiedener Irrweg. Die Naturfreundejugend in der westdeutschen Friedens- und Ökologiebewegung bis zum Ende der APO', in Heinz Hoffmann and Jochen Zimmer, eds., *Wir sind die grüne Garde. Geschichte der Naturfreundejugend* (Essen: Klartex, 1986), 93–170.

83 See the letters by Vack to the WRI: IISG WRI-252.

84 See the complete lists of those attending the 1957 conference, London: WRI-7, IISG.

85 See e.g.: the details for the WRI Study Conference at Blaricum near Amsterdam, 12–19 Aug. 1961: IISG WRI-63.

contacts of a particular minority. However, it is important to see that the participants in the WRI conferences acted as multipliers of information in their local war resisters', Easter March or student movement groups, wrote articles in the relevant journals and thus helped to spread information. Through their contacts with British protesters and through the news reports, they showed other protesters what forms of protests were possible. The exchange of marchers, often through local affiliates, was important in this context.⁸⁶ The WRI also assisted with supplying pictures for local exhibition and disseminating British marching songs to West Germany.⁸⁷ Also, rather paradoxically, the reports in the West German press on the British movement, in particular on the spectacular sit-downs by the Committee of 100, were far more thorough than the reports on the German Easter Marches. This further helped to increase the expectations for a novel form of extra-parliamentary protest.

Against the specific German context, the Easter Marches soon turned into crucibles in which these groups of the 'homeless left' met with the pacifist groups and formed the focal point of the emerging New Left.⁸⁸ In Britain, the New Left already had been formed in 1956 when Krushchev's 'Secret Speech' on Stalinist atrocities and the bloody crushing of the Hungarian revolution by Soviet troops had discredited the Soviet Union and the communist cause.⁸⁹ While in Britain the more radical activists with links to the WRI remained a fringe group,⁹⁰ the observation of the Committee of 100's activities in West Germany helped West German activists to rediscover their own national protest traditions. These traditions initially had nothing to do with the Marxism of the Frankfurt School, but rather with the writings of the Indian Mahatma Gandhi and the American writer Henry Thoreau. Radical German pacifists had discussed their ideas of non-violent civil disobedience and had gone back to debates in socialist anti-militarist circles since at least the 1920s.⁹¹ Temporarily forgotten in the Nazi era, the communicative space around the WRI which developed in the late 1950s secured an audience for these ideas, which went beyond the peace protesters.

The WRI's agenda appealed to West German protesters in search of new forms of protest with their emphasis on human solidarity, actions and emotions, rather than on articulating and propagating a precise political message. When the West German student protesters in the late 1960s resorted to campaigns of non-violent civil disobedience, to sit-downs and occupations of buildings, this was not so much

86 George Clark, 'Convenor's Notes', 27 March 1962: IISG, C100-2; Andreas Buro to Tony Smythe, 2 Nov. 1960: IISG WRI-226.

87 Andreas Buro to Tony Smythe, 11 May 1960; letters by Andreas Buro to Tony Smythe, 21 June and 13 July 1960 as well as Smythe's reply, 14 June 1960: IISG WRI-226.

88 On the West German 'New Left' see Siegwald Lönnendonker, Bernd Rabehl and Jochen Staadt, *Die antiautoritäre Revolte. Der Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund nach der Trennung von der SPD, Vol. 1: 1960–1967* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002), 44–95.

89 Kenny, *The First New Left*.

90 Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, 190–269.

91 Gernot Jochheim, *Antimilitaristische Aktionstheorie, Soziale Revolution und Soziale Verteidigung. Zur Entwicklung der Gewaltfreiheitstheorie in der europäischen antimilitaristischen und sozialistischen Bewegung 1890–1940, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Niederlande* (Frankfurt/Main: Haag & Herchen, 1977).

due to a simple diffusion of ideas from the United States to West Germany. It was rather because the protesters in the early 1960s had managed to broaden the appeal of radical pacifism. The language of pacifist brotherhood and not the political rationality of socialism lay at the root of West German extraparliamentary protests in the 1960s.

Practising transnational protests

Yet although these intellectual exchanges were important, the transnational social space did not work best in the realm of ideas and conferences. As one of the speakers at a WRI conference elaborated, 'Co-operation works best on the basis of action rather than that of exchange of ideas or on the day-to-day work'.⁹² It was primarily through the WRI network that the long American–European march from San Francisco to Moscow in 1960/61 could take place. Its aim was to symbolise the importance of co-operation among the different peace movements and to demonstrate the global nature of the protests against nuclear weapons.⁹³ Other international initiatives included the establishment of an International Peace Brigade, which was supposed to provide non-violent solutions to conflicts all over the world,⁹⁴ and a 'peace walk' from Vancouver to Berlin in 1964.⁹⁵

Common actions and the emotions generated on protest marches, even in the national context, achieved much more for the emergence of a transnational social space than personal links between organisers. The observation among the activists that they were not alone and that they were united in a common cause when marching together was of fundamental importance. Protesters became protesters by protesting. The moral rhetoric of a world community and human brotherhood was the expression of this feeling. As one activist put it at the time, internationalised marches 'gave a powerful impression of solidarity and unity without much conscious liaison having been attempted'.⁹⁶ Moreover, mutual observations served as powerful arguments for the cause. They demonstrated to the national publics that the protesters expressed the interests of people all over the world, and they also motivated their supporters.⁹⁷ For the group of supporters beyond the movement leaders, the British example thus served as an encouragement to try out something similar, to engage critically with its ideas and to adapt it to the West German context.

92 Comments by Theodor Michaltschaff on a paper by Pierre Martin, WRI 11th Triennial Conference, Stavanger (Norway), 27–9 July 1963: IISG WRI-11.

93 Report on the American–European March, 28 April 1961: IISG WRI-235; Gerard Daechsel, 'Amerikanisch-europäischer Marsch: Protest in Ost und West', *Friedensrundschau* 15, 6 (1961), 23.

94 Memorandum 'Weltfriedensbrigade', 2 May 1961: IISG WRI-235. For the perception in the Federal Republic see Andreas Buro and Helga Stolle, 'Die Weltfriedensbrigade', *Friedensrundschau* 16, 3 (1962), 6–7 and 14.

95 See Hans Sinn, 'Concluding report: Vancouver–Berlin peace walk', background paper no. 1, Study Conference 1964, Offenbach: IISG WRI-64.

96 Tony Smythe, 'W.R.I. and the International Peace Movement', WRI 11th Triennial Conference, Stavanger (Norway), Document 5, 4: IISG WRI-11.

97 For examples of such performative acts in a different campaign see Michael S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine. Draft Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Taken as a whole, the annual marches at Easter, although held nationally in Britain, West Germany and other West European countries, demonstrated the peaceful intentions of one's own nation towards others. Their immediate goals related to the national situation, yet the aims of ending the proliferation of nuclear weapons, ending the cold war and thus 'halting and decreasing the militarisation of public life' were formulated as international aims. They found their practical expression in border meetings and the exchange of delegations.⁹⁸ The information bulletins and personal meetings acquainted the West German activists in particular with new forms of protest: non-violent direct action 'as the way in which peoples can defend their values and their way of life' and thus achieve 'our ultimate aim . . . the elimination of violence from society'.⁹⁹

Communications across borders were also important for making international symbols accessible to the various national movements. It was through the exchange of delegations and marchers as well as through the journals of the national peace movements that the universally recognised symbol found its way into peace campaigns around the world. The sign was developed by a British artist from the 'N' and the 'D' in the semaphore alphabet (standing for nuclear disarmament), surrounded by a ring. The ring was alternatively interpreted either as signifying an 'unborn child', or the semaphore letters as a bent cross symbolising the 'death of man', or a 'rune of death', an interpretation preferred by the Germans.¹⁰⁰ The CND symbol could be found on West German Easter Marches after 1961. It made its way on to flyers and pamphlets from about 1962 or 1963 onwards. There also existed a demand for iconic figures who began to hold transnational significance. For example, the secretary of the Offenbach branch of the Verband der Kriegsdienstverweigerer was interested in obtaining a signed portrait of Bertrand Russell as a present for an old member. The former president of CND had become an icon for the global anti-nuclear weapons movements when he was arrested at a sit-down in the early 1960s.¹⁰¹

During the marches, however, the protesters never shed their national identities entirely. Instead of choosing to march in one column without any national symbols, the different groups were organised according to nationalities, even though their aim was to show the *international* character of the protest. The marchers continued to perceive themselves in terms of national identities, thus mirroring a world divided into different states rather than a 'global community' as such.¹⁰² The activists themselves realised that the international movement would be meaningless without the national movements¹⁰³ and were very much aware of the many differences between the

98 ICDP, Report of Inaugural Congress held at Tyninge, Sweden, 9–13 Jan. 1964, Volume One: Working Sessions, 42–5: IfZ ED 702–52.

99 Minutes of the National Committee of 100, Friends Institute, Birmingham, April 6/7 1963: IISG C100–1.

100 CND Newsletter 8, 19 June 1958: BJL JS–6. For the West German perception see 'Was bedeutet dieses Zeichen?', *Der Kriegsdienstgegner. Mitteilungsblatt der WRI Deutscher Zweig*, October 1963, 4/1963, 10: IISG WRI–235.

101 Klaus Vack to the WRI, 28 Sept. 1962: IISG WRI–252.

102 *Peace News*, 12 April 1959.

103 Report from the anti-militarist conference, Amsterdam 1962, 10: IISG C100–17.

national movements. The more astute contemporary observers concluded that 'non-violent resistance begins in one's own country'.¹⁰⁴ In the same vein, the historian and New Left activist E. P. Thompson concluded in 1963 that 'internationalisation' should not imply the work of a 'translation agency'. Instead, it should establish a 'discourse in which we participate'.¹⁰⁵

What emerged in the Federal Republic as a result of these communication processes was not another Committee of 100, or a simple copy of the British Easter March. Rather, it proved to be one, if not *the*, root for the extraparliamentary opposition of the later 1960s and for a variety of so-called new social movements in the 1970s. This adaptation of Britain as a model could only work because there was dissatisfaction with the state of the West German campaign and with West German democracy in general. In this situation, protesters were tempted to look at other examples. But very often they only found models about which they had known already: non-violent civil disobedience had been discussed in West German pacifist circles since 1945, while the roots go back to the 1920s, if not earlier. Similar strands had figured in the debates among certain sections of the socialist left. The British model of extraparliamentary protests either reminded the West German protesters of these traditions and provoked a new engagement with them, or it reaffirmed that these traditions could provide useful guidelines for action. Communication both between the countries and among the protesters within West Germany, brought these ideas back into the campaign's mainstream. The WRI's pacifism appealed to the West German protesters in search of new forms of protest as they emphasised human solidarity and actions as part of politics.

Due to the different protest traditions and the different social and political environments, the West German Easter Marches looked quite different from the British model. Given that CND's organisers were initially quite opposed to a protest march to the nuclear weapons research establishment in Aldermaston when it was first proposed in early 1958, this export success of the British model is rather ironic.¹⁰⁶ In 1959, however, the direction was reversed: marches were, from now on, to start at Aldermaston and to march to London. This decision reflected the desire to get more people to the final rally which was to be held in Trafalgar Square. But it was also symbolic: it meant that the pressure-group focus which held that there was no separation between state and civil society had won the argument inside the movement. Protests were held at the centres of political power to influence decision-making. By contrast, the radical pacifists, anarchists and members of the New Left who campaigned *against* a military state and wanted to change society, continued to protest at missile bases, often by using non-violent civil disobedience. The relative weakness of pacifist influences in the British movement is quite striking, given that radical pacifist and New Left traditions which emphasised the opposition between state and civil society were much stronger in Britain than in the Federal Republic.

104 Tony Smythe, Minutes of the National Committee of 100, Oxford, 21–2 Sept. 1963: IISG C100/1.

105 E. P. Thompson, 'Where Are We Now?', manuscript, n.d. (c. 1963): BJL JS-109. See also his foreword, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Merlin Press, 1978), iv.

106 Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, 29.

While non-violent civil disobedience was only discussed rather than practised among the West German campaigners until the mid-1960s, the West German activists nevertheless went back to the pacifist roots of the British marches when adapting them to the West German context, and turned it into the most important strand within the protest movement. Like the original British protesters and the Committee of 100, they campaigned at bases and highlighted the importance of grass-roots involvement in international politics. Unlike their British counterparts in CND, they went beyond the parameters of the consensus about democracy which had been established after the Second World War. This consensus had been built around strong parliamentary government and the welfare state and had firmly re-established the importance of territoriality for politics.¹⁰⁷ By using the word ‘resistance’, the West German protesters staged their involvement in the protests as compensation for the lack of resistance during the Third Reich. In West Germany, the foundation of an association which was not linked to any of the major parties and trade unions was in itself suspicious and confronted the protesters with the state machinery. This gave the West German campaign a much more anti-statist tone. Hence the protests of the West German Easter March campaign were not discussed under the heading of ‘proper politics’ as such, but under the heading of ‘communism’/‘anti-communism’.¹⁰⁸

From the early 1960s onwards, West German protesters campaigned at bases. Originally, the organisers planned several smaller marches through the rural regions of northern Germany to what they called the ‘death centre’ – Bergen-Hohne, the site of British barracks with nuclear weapons, which was close to the site of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Rather than protesting at the heart of political decision-making, the West German protesters chose a method which highlighted their commitment to the cause: they sought to represent themselves as the other, better Germany. Marching through rainy and cold weather over Easter instead of going for a leisurely walk (an *Osterspaziergang*) with their families served as a symbol for this commitment.¹⁰⁹ The establishment of such a public sphere beyond the labour and peace movements was a political act in itself. Commitment thereby became political. The West German protesters depended much more than their British counterparts on the media to portray them as one coherent movement: only if the media reported the marches through abandoned rural areas could they hope to alert the population at large to their cause. It was for the shared experiences on these marches that the protesters became, in their perception, tied up with a global movement.

The fundamental reason as to why these differences persisted lay in the ways in which each movement tried to communicate with their audiences, which they still regarded as national rather than international units. The emphasis on ‘proper politics’ in CND hindered transcending the boundaries of traditional protest politics

107 On this consensus see Martin Conway, ‘The Rise and Fall of Western Europe’s Democratic Age, 1945–1973’, *Contemporary European History*, 13 (2004), 67–88; Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 1992).

108 Rolf Elker et al., *Beiträge zur Geschichte des SDS* (Berlin, 1987), 45.

109 See Hans-Konrad and Helga Tempel, ‘...das man da wohnen möge’. *Vision und Erfahrung eines gemeinsamen Lebens* (Bad Pyrmont: Gesellschaft der Freunde, 1986), 11.

in Britain.¹¹⁰ These ideas had become an important part of British national identity which had emerged in response to the violence of the First World War and interpreted British society as a 'peaceable kingdom', as Jon Lawrence has recently shown. Since the 1920s, the civility of extraparliamentary protests in Britain had become a central demand for establishing their legitimacy.¹¹¹ Crossing these boundaries meant consciously transcending the dominant views about British national identity.¹¹² Most in the CND executive committee and many of its supporters therefore disapproved of measures of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience was called 'dubious' and 'dangerous' in many CND communications – terms that were reserved for denoting communist subversion in the Federal Republic.¹¹³

Although the reality of the Marches did not mirror the strict rules put forward by the organisers, CND maintained its original pressure-group focus even as increasing numbers of younger New Left supporters joined its ranks. Its protests continued to be directed against those in power in Westminster and in Whitehall, the elected and unelected members of the Houses of Parliament and the UK civil service. This is shown by the focus on marches and assemblies in Trafalgar Square and in Whitehall. The public sphere created by assemblies therefore remained comparatively more important in Britain than in West Germany.¹¹⁴ Some remarks by the more prominent participants reflect this. Diana Collins, the wife of Canon Collins, showed her lack of respect for anything that transcended the boundaries of middle-class behaviour. She wrote to Jacquetta Hawkes in February 1958 that 'the thought of spending a social evening organised by our long-haired bearded friends instead of an evening with you and Jack [J. B. Priestley] fills me with such despondency and gloom that I can hardly bear to contemplate it'.¹¹⁵

Those who disagreed with this pressure-group focus tended to leave CND for the Committee of 100 or to become active within New Left circles. The Committee found media-oriented protests at missile bases a much more congenial way of campaigning. Rather than working for specific political aims, its goal was to expose the power structures within the British state, the militarisation of British politics and the violence of the British military-industrial complex. Its supporters consciously sought to provoke police brutality in order to get it reported in the national media, or they sought to expose the militaristic structure of the British state by identifying the underground bunkers of the regional seats of government on the 1963 Aldermaston march.¹¹⁶ While the Committee of 100 received a lot of attention in the media, it had problems in maintaining a membership of 100, precisely because

110 Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, 190–269.

111 Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, 75 (2003), 557–89.

112 Charles Townshend, *Making the Peace. Public Order and Public Security in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 132–7.

113 CND Newsletter, March 1960, 3.

114 Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, 45–9 and 76–81.

115 Letter to Jacquetta Hawkes, 16 Feb. 1958, quoted in Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, 47.

116 Adam Roberts, 'The Police at Midnight', *New Statesman*, 22 Sept. 1961.

these kinds of protest did not conform to the expectations of respectability. Therefore, unlike in the Federal Republic, the movements which emerged in Britain did not have very strong continuities with the anti-nuclear-weapons protests and limited themselves to protesting about specific issues, such as the war in Vietnam. An overall extraparlimentary movement, similar to the West German one, never emerged, not least because the Labour Party under Harold Wilson continued to provide a home for left-wing activists until the late 1960s.¹¹⁷

While the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament therefore adhered, despite challenges, to the codes of ‘good politics’ in British political culture from within CND and from the Committee of 100, the West German protests against nuclear weapons developed further. The importance of pacifist non-violent traditions, supported by the transnational links through the War Resisters’ International, provided it with a reservoir of traditions which opened up new protest forms. Although the West German protesters did not initially challenge the dominant cultural codes, they laid the foundations of the staging of student protests. It was precisely the fact that, in the Federal Republic, the boundaries of politics were drawn along the lines of ‘communism’/‘anti-communism’ rather than ‘respectable’/‘non-respectable’ which prompted the protesters to establish their own and initially small public sphere. This was an important first step towards the emergence of an own-protest milieu in the later 1960s. It was this kind of politics from below, with its appeal to humanity as a whole, which lay at the root of the new social movements which emerged during the 1970s. And it reinforced the confrontational tone in which ‘the state’ and the ‘government’ were not seen as parts of civil society, but as its opponents.

Conclusion

The British and West German anti-nuclear-weapons protests were intimately linked with each other through various communication processes, yet they still campaigned primarily within the context of their respective nation-states. Their internationalist rhetoric was, therefore, part of their reinterpretation of national identity, rather than an expression of idealist internationalism. Despite superficial similarities the two movements followed quite different trajectories. The British movement maintained its traditional pressure-group focus and ultimately declined, while the West German Easter Marches formed the crystallisation point for the extraparlimentary protests of the mid- to late 1960s. The West German Easter Marches appear as a continuation of a model which never took off in Britain: the model of a loosely organised social movement, embodied by the Committee of 100, whose main purpose was not to achieve limited political goals, but to change society as a whole. Most protesters did not even consciously use Britain as a model for their own protests. Many of them had never been to Britain and did not speak English sufficiently well to communicate with their British counterparts. Britain mattered nevertheless: before the West German Easter Marches had been born, the British example created certain expectations

117 See Steven Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

within a specific group of West German protesters which could relate to this form of protest because it was in tune with its own ways of thinking. Moreover, once the West German protests had taken off, the example of the British campaign served as a motivation to West German campaigners to continue with their own protests.

The emphasis of both movements on the national contexts, despite their perception of the global nature of the nuclear threat, highlights the continued importance of territoriality as 'decision space' and 'identity space' in Britain and the Federal Republic during the early 1960s.¹¹⁸ The West German Easter Marches, however, already show signs of the collapse of the institutional role of territory. These marches started to undermine territoriality, not only by embedding their nationalist discourse much more firmly in humanist rhetoric than their British counterparts, but also by being a form of protest which fundamentally challenged the existing state of affairs and argued for a devolution of power towards 'the people', who were increasingly conceptualised as inhabitants of the world with specific interests, rather than as citizens of a particular nation-state.¹¹⁹ British activists were not continuously confronted by the existence of a catastrophic past and a divided nation which was at the front line of the cold war, but were able to tap positively into their nation's history. Their incentive to transcend the democratic and territorial consensus was, therefore, much smaller.

Many of the assumptions about the importance of networks and the permeability of borders which frame our own approaches to transnational history today were part of the discussions of the 1960s. Peace researchers, often with direct links to the peace campaigns, discussed the importance of communications across borders since the early 1960s. They also relativised interstate peace concepts because of global challenges and global communications. In their view, 'world peace' was only possible as the 'inner order of world society',¹²⁰ rather than as the peace between sovereign nations. It is important for historians of these networks to realise that this rhetoric of global unity and humanity was born out of frustration with the continuing dominance of territorial politics in Europe, and that nationalism and internationalism remained intimately connected for some time to come.¹²¹

118 Charles S. Maier, 'Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era', *American Historical Review*, 105, 3 (2000), 807–31.

119 Oskar Negt, 'Nicht nach Köpfen, sondern nach Interessen organisieren!' (1972), in *idem*, *Keine Demokratie ohne Sozialismus. Über den Zusammenhang von Politik, Geschichte und Moral* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), 300–12.

120 Robert C. Angell, 'Auf dem Weg zum Frieden (1957)', in Ekkehart Krippendorf, ed., *Friedensforschung* (Cologne and Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1968), 537–57, esp. 539–41; B. Landheer, 'Die Struktur der Weltgesellschaft und ihre rechtliche Formgebung', *Archiv des Völkerrechts*, 12 (1964), 1–13; Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *War and Peace in the Global Village. An Inventory of Some of the Current Spastic Situations that could be eliminated by more Feedforward* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); Georg Picht, 'Was heißt Frieden? (1971)', in Dieter Senghaas, ed., *Den Frieden denken. Si vis pacem, para pacem* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 177–95, here 191 and 184; and G. Wagner, 'Die Weltgesellschaft. Zur Kritik und Überwindung einer soziologischen Fiktion', *Leviathan*, 24 (1996), 539–56.

121 Optimistic assessments on the existence of a European public can be found in Klaus Eder, 'Zur Transformation nationalstaatlicher Öffentlichkeit in Europa. Von der Sprachgemeinschaft zur issuespezifischen Resonanzgemeinschaft', *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 10, 2 (2000), 167–84.