THE PEACE MOVEMENT AND THE SECOND COLD WAR: EUROPEAN AND TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES

Workshop for Young Scholars, March 24—26, 2010, Berlin/Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis. Cosponsored by: Referat Zeitgeschichte und Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis (Heinrich Böll Foundation), German Historical Institute Washington DC (GHI), University of Augsburg, Geschichte des europäisch-transatlantischen Kulturraums (GETK). Conveners: Christoph Becker-Schaum and Marianne Zepp (Heinrich Böll Foundation), Philipp Gassert (GETK), Martin Klimke (GHI). Participants: Hanno Balz (Lüneburg); Philipp Baur, Reinhold Kreis (GETK); Enrico Böhm, Eckart Conze, Sebastian Kalden, Jan Ole Wiechmann (University of Marburg); Robert Camp (Archivist of the AGG); Gunter Dehnert (University of Erlangen); Tim Geiger, Anja Hanisch (IFZ Munich-Berlin); Jan Hansen (HU Berlin); Paul Hockenos (Internationale Politik, Berlin); Claudia Kemper (University of Hamburg); Alexander Leistner (University of Leipzig), Silke Mende (University of Tübingen), Birgit Metzger (University of Freiburg), Eva Quistorp (Green Party, et al.), Ines Reich-Hilweg (Berghof-Stiftung, Starnberg), Saskia Richter (FU Berlin), Simon Teune (WZB Berlin), Tim Warneke (University of Heidelberg).

The peace movement of the 1970s and 1980s has now become “old enough” for many previously unpublished and unreleased sources to be made available to researchers. Yet it is also recent enough that many eyewitnesses can still be found. Consequently, it is a hot topic in historical research, drawing many young scholars to study it. This workshop, organized in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the international research project “Nuclear Crisis — Transatlantic Peace Politics, Rearmament, and the Second Cold War” (www.nucl earcrisis.org), brought several of these aspiring historians together.

In his opening remarks, Philipp Gassert pointed out a central question in research on this era: What prompted so much protest? Regarding the NATO Double-Track Decision in particular, he noted that we live today “in the shadow of the atom bomb” without mass protests, so the strong reaction was not just a matter of course.

were to the movement. Galvanized by the Double-Track decision in 1979, the Christian peace movement rejected the “spirit, logic, and practice of deterrence” and called for the “democratization of security policy.” It expanded the concept of security to include economic, energy, and ecological questions, representing a fundamental paradigm shift in the FRG’s sense of security in the 1970s and 1980s.

Alexander Leistner then turned to the Christian peace movement in East Germany (GDR). In “Religious Peace Groups in the GDR under the Influence of the Nato Double-Track Decision: Formation of the Movement and Activists’ Identity,” he advocated analyzing individual and group biographies to ascertain people’s motives. According to Leistner, some protesters sought to position themselves in relation to the GDR, spurred by conflict with state institutions. The youth culture of the 1980s and the emigration movement equally manifested people’s desire to distance themselves from or even opt out of the regime.

A public roundtable moderated by Paul Hockenos, co-editor of the magazine *International Politics*, concluded the first day. It featured two eyewitnesses of the peace movement: Eva Quistorp, a long-time member of the National Executive Board of the Green Party, as well as of the European Parliament, of the Coordinating Committee of the peace movement, and an activist in the women’s movement and for European Nuclear Disarmament (END); and Ines Reich-Hilweg, a peace researcher and a research fellow at the Berghof-Stiftung and a former employee of the State Parliamentary Group Bündnis 90/Die Grünen Rheinland-Pfalz. Quistorp emphasized the importance of “Frauen für Frieden” [Women for Peace] and END in the heterogeneous peace movement. Ines Reich-Hilweg related some of her experiences with grassroots initiatives to build trust and reduce military dominance. She cited the practice of German municipalities declaring themselves to be “nuclear-free” zones as an especially effective form of protest. Both agreed that the peace movement raised a class of anti-experts and helped create a critical, democratic public. They also agreed that a mood of hope and change — rather than fear of annihilation — drove the movement, as it tried to recapture the optimism of the 1960s. Only this positive outlook could explain its profound impact.

Jan Hansen explained the shift in SPD opinion — from support for the Double-Track Decision to rejection of missile sites in 1983 — as a crisis in the party marked by the dissolution of its consensus on security policy. Simultaneously, a new perception of the superpowers emerged. Young people and alternatively socialized Social Democrats, especially, began to question the West as a normative model for free, democratic societies, and viewed the East more positively. Silke Mende then illuminated the founding of West Germany’s Green Party in the 1970s and 1980s in “Ökopax [Eco-Peace Group] — the Founding Greens, the Cold War, and the Peace Movement.” Two issues of survival — the environment and peace — merged in the Greens’ crisis discourse. “Ökopax” signaled the integration of the two concepts into a green-alternative political approach that advocated an ecological and nonviolent society. “Peace” thus gave the new party a distinctive agenda, helping it to distance itself from the foreign and security policy consensus of the postwar years.

The third panel, moderated by Hanno Balz, turned to the public debate and popular culture of the Second Cold War. In “The Public Debate about the NATO Double-Track Decision in the Federal Republic, 1979–1984,” Tim Warneke articulated the visions of danger and salvation in the peace movement. He focused on radical positions that sought to “achieve insight through fear.” Allusions to the Second World War (Hiroshima) and the Holocaust predominated among historical analogies, as examples from both the German and American discourse revealed. Philipp Baur then explored “Nuclear Apocalypse Scenarios in 1970s and 1980s Pop Culture,” arguing that these should be viewed as both a mouthpiece and a mirror of the rearmament debate. Such representations tended to be rendered with alarming authenticity and to employ the rhetoric of agitation. Arguing for critical analysis of works like Anton-Andreas Guha’s Ende — Tagebuch aus dem Dritten Weltkrieg [The End — Diary from the Third World War], Baur explored whether such works heightened fear of nuclear strikes.

The fourth panel, moderated by Marianne Zepp, presented two sub-projects from the research project “The KSZE Process: Multilateral Conference Diplomacy and Its Consequences” (Institut für Zeitgeschichte Munich-Berlin and Lehrstuhl für Osteuropäische Geschichte, Erlangen). Using Poland as an example, Gunter Dehnert discussed the “Self-organization of Society — Solidarność, Citizens’ Committees, and the Long Path to Democracy.” Poland
was remarkable because its most important opposition movements, the Workers’ Defense Committee (KOR) and Solidarność, did not stem directly from the Helsinki Accords as in other Warsaw Pact countries. Nonetheless, the accords generated a document ratified by Poland that helped propagate the idea of general human and civil rights across broad levels of Polish society. Anja Hanisch, in her presentation on “Criticism, Dissidence, and Opposition through the Lens of State Perceptions and Reactions,” elucidated the consequences of the CSCE process for the GDR. On the one hand, the SED presented itself as an equal participant in such conferences and an internationally recognized sovereign state. However, the emigration movement undermined the legitimacy the SED hoped to achieve domestically by explicitly demanding the GDR adhere to the CSCE Accords.

Panel 5, moderated by Simon Teune, dealt with selected peace movement actors. Hanno Balz discussed “The Bundeswehr Riots of 1980 in Bremen — A New Social, Youth, and Peace Movement between Pacifism and Militancy.” Analyzing the protests against the central pledge for recruits in Bremen’s Weser Stadium, he demonstrated the differences between the autonomous anti-war and “civil” peace movements. The Double-Track Decision and the escalation of the East-West opposition drove the “civil” movement, whereas the left-radical “War against War” Movement focused on a North-South opposition and regarded U.S. policies toward the revolution in Iran as an imperialist “war for oil.” Next, Claudia Kemper addressed the role of physicians in the anti-nuclear peace movement of the 1980s in the German section of the IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War). As the doctors feared that expansion of the civil defense system would militarize health care, they made protest against the civil defense plans developed in the context of the Double-Track Decision central to their work. With its campaigns and expertise, the IPPNW formed an interface between the field of medicine and the public, although it could not maintain its non-partisan self-conception. Saskia Richter then traced the “Rise and Fall of a Green Icon” in the person of Petra Kelly (1947–1992). Kelly took was a public leader in founding the Green Party up to 1983. But when the party joined parliament and grew less unified, Kelly was bound to fail. Her charisma in protesting the Double-Track Decision was famous, led frightened FRG citizens to project their hopes and fears upon her, and became an integral part in the struggle against powerlessness in the so-called “Age of Apocalypses.”
Eckart Conze concluded the second day with a public lecture entitled “Striving for Security and Skepticism towards Modernity.” Conze argued that the debate about the Double-Track Decision and rearmament was not only a fierce controversy about the security policy of the federal government and the Western alliance, but also about the concept of security. The peace movement criticized a traditional understanding of security, articulating, too, a profound discomfort with technological-industrial modernity and the idea of progress that lay at its core. Having developed in the late nineteenth century, this sort of thinking had become widely accepted, especially after 1945. In the mid-1970s, the security discourse changed: the peace movement believed that securing peace through mutual nuclear deterrence fundamentally contradicted its own understanding of nuclear-free peace.

After a tour through the Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis [Green Memory Archive], the sixth panel, moderated by Christoph Becker-Schaum, concerned transnational aspects of the peace movement. Enrico Böhmer discussed the G7 World Economic Summit as a new format for international cooperation. The “Security Summit” openly and intimately addressed questions of energy supply and the economy, including the relationship between industrial and developing countries. As governments treated these increasingly as “security” issues, the understanding of international security politics expanded beyond pure defense and alliance matters. The G7 debates on defense policy had to address arguments against rearmament, even though the summit itself was intended as a partial answer to protesters’ demands. Then Sebastian Kalden outlined the transnationalization of the Christian peace movement in Western Europe (1979–1985) in “Protests of Unlimited Disarmament.” Christian peace groups in the Netherlands, Germany, and Great Britain worked together across national borders, making mass demonstrations such as the one in the Hofgarten in Bonn on October 10, 1981, possible. They transferred ideas of peace not only by exchanging forms of protest (i.e., devotions, peace festivals, human chains), but also through the symbols they used.

The final panel, moderated by Martin Klimke, concerned 1980s protest. Birgit Metzger presented catastrophe discourses and counter-strategies in the West German debate about Waldsterben, or forest death (1978–1986). The increasing damage to the forests, then traced to acid rain, touched a nerve in the German public,
prompting debate that utilized pertinent motifs relating to the glorification of the forest in German Romanticism, concepts of disease (AIDS, cancer), and the Second World War. Nonetheless, the protest against the alleged forest death turned out to be smaller than the anti-nuclear movement. Invoking the slogan “One world — one fight — one enemy” as her title, Reinhild Kreis then took up the anti-American protests in the Federal Republic of the early 1980s. Almost a decade after the demonstrations opposing the Vietnam War, the West German protest movement once again focused on American policies in the rearmament debate: the peace movement criticized American (and West German) armament policy, and other groups accused the U.S. of imperialism. Kreis highlighted the movement’s global dimensions and action-orientation. National Socialism, the Second World War, and the Vietnam War, especially, stood out as consistent targets for its criticism.

In their concluding remarks, Philipp Gassert and Martin Klimke observed that the peace movements were not “just about peace.” Rather, they ought to be regarded as part of a larger shift in the self-conception of society associated with the radical breaks, crises, and transformations of the 1960s–1980s. The peace movements of the 1970s and 1980s typically met with broad societal support (in contrast to “1968”), but they were also characterized by “professionalization and scientification of criticism.” Gassert and Klimke registered several gaps in research on these movements, including gender specific and transnational perspectives, the social composition of protest groups, cultural representations, and consideration of the Eastern European viewpoint.

In the concluding discussion, participants noted open questions, such as the language and symbolism of the protest movement (compared to the student movement of the 1960s), the role of the media in the debates, the relationship between the peace movement and the emerging culture of memory of the 1980s, and the significance of the conservative political camp. The atmosphere of the workshop was excellent, with constructive and fair discussion among participants, due in no small measure to the hospitality of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. In short, the workshop highlighted that its themes have now become one of the most dynamic fields of research in current contemporary history.

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