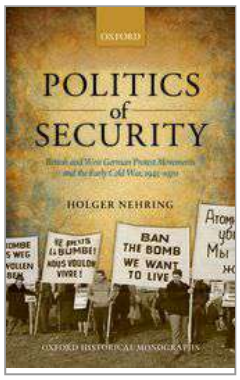

Politics of Security: British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War, 1945-1970
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‘Peace’, the Nation, and International Relations

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Abstract and Keywords

Behind the movements’ clear agendas lurked a more complicated set of policy proposals that were deeply ingrained in nationally specific experiences and in specific ways of framing the role of their respective nation in world affairs. While the British and West German activists brought with them a multiplicity of views about international relations, we can nevertheless see nationally specific ways of framing the issue of nuclear armaments. At the core of this convergence around nationally specific issues were the activists’ severe misgivings about a real and substantial defence policy problem, which arose out of the nuclearization of the strategies of the NATO countries since the mid-1950s.

Keywords: protest movements, nation, CND, Campaign against Atomic Death, Easter Marches, Third World solidarity, global consciousness

Their organizations gave CND and the West German movements a clear address within their political systems and provided them with channels of communication that were able to translate the ‘noises’ of the manifold experiences of movement activists into clear messages. Yet their momentum came from framing the issue of ‘security’ in specific ways. It was this framing that gave the movements not only a social coherence, but also a discursive one. While the nuances were contested within the movements, there was a basic consensus. Both movements were ‘against nuclear weapons’.

Behind the movements’ clear agendas lurked a more complicated set of policy proposals that were deeply ingrained in nationally specific experiences and in specific ways of framing the role of their respective nation in world affairs. While the British and West German activists brought with them a multiplicity of views about international relations, we can nevertheless see nationally specific ways of framing the issue of nuclear armaments. At the core of this convergence around nationally specific issues were the activists’ severe misgivings about a real and substantial defence policy problem that arose from the nuclearization of the strategies of the NATO countries since the mid-1950s. For the protesters, then, the issue of nuclear armaments was much less about utopian ideals of ‘peace’. Instead, they were primarily concerned about preserving ‘security’ and ‘order’ at a time when the arms race between the superpowers had become a ‘functional substitute for war’ and when subsequent crises in international relations—first over Berlin in 1958–59, then over the shooting of an American spy plane by the Soviet Union, again over Berlin in 1961 and in Cuba, in autumn 1962—appeared to illustrate this analysis.[1]

Events in international relations, the framing of ‘security’ and the movements’ dynamics were thus intimately related. They reflected the **(p.157)** fundamental changes in the international landscape after the 1955 Bandung Conference of non-aligned nations and after the crises connected with Krushchev's Secret Speech at the CPSU's Twentieth Party Convention, the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian reform movement, and the Suez crisis in 1956. These developments brought a general softening of the ideological entrenchment of the late 1940s and early 1950s and thus created the space for ideas to emerge that could not be slotted neatly into a bipolar cold war mindset: socialist aims now percolated beyond the labour and communist movements into the extra-parliamentary arena and were often combined with appeals to nationhood and national self-determination. While many of the progressive hopes of the mid-1940s had been put on shelf almost immediately after the Second World War, they were now being revived under new auspices.[2]

This chapter analyses the interpretations and expectations that emerged from developments in domestic and international politics and links these to the protesters’ conceptions of the role of their nation in international affairs. While the basic parameters of the debates about these issues were remarkably similar in both Britain and the Federal Republic, the form and content of the arguments differed. Both movements propagated ideas of a political morality framed in the context of the nation.

Humanitarian Frames

The foundation from which activists were able to achieve this and recognize themselves as part and parcel of the same movement was a ‘global imaginary of integration’ that was based on a humanitarian interpretation of the activists’ responsibility.[3] This global imaginary opposed the politics of containment that

operated according to the binary code of a divided world by imagining the world as a family united by its common humanity. This project was, at times, framed as a commitment to human rights, as an imagined global brotherhood of mankind, or as a common humanity forged by the overwhelming global relevance of the question of life and death in the nuclear age.[4] This meant that interpersonal sympathy **(p.158)** rather than law was, for activists, the fundamental moral capacity: talking about ‘humanity’ meant that everyone was part of this ‘circle of the we’, as the circle of people to whom we ascribe rights and whom we feel obliged to treat decently.[5]

Thus, those who marched on the annual Aldermaston Marches felt that they enacted a theme similar to the one of the ‘Family of Man’ photographic exhibition that had toured the United States and Europe during the mid-1950s as part of the American government's effort to highlight the advantages of Western civilization over Eastern despotism, thus appropriating government rhetoric as part of their experiences.[6]

> I belong to a family, the biggest on earth
> A thousand every day are coming to birth.
> Our surname isn’t Hasted or Dallas or Jones
> It's a name every man should be proud he owns.
> It's the family of man keeps growing,
> The family of man keeps sowing
> The seeds of a new life every day.

Differences of belonging are submerged under a ‘universalist scope of identification’[7]: the metaphor ‘family’ suggested an intimate relationship of activists, although they lived far away from each other. In Britain, this conceptualization of humanity as a family also had resonances with wartime propaganda that had portrayed Britain as one big family, a highly inclusive metaphor and constellation, where the members of the family are known primarily through their internal functions, but also by their professions.[8]

In both countries, the Protestant missionary Albert Schweitzer was a symbol for these global connections within one humanitarian framework. He had called nuclear armaments a ‘disaster [Unglück] for humanity’.[9] Schweitzer as a symbol for this global connectedness thus also functioned as a ‘symbolic guardian of European colonial continuity after 1945’. This had a particular meaning in Germany, a country that did not have any formal colonial possessions outside Europe after 1918: Schweitzer's moral **(p.159)** example could highlight the moral rejuvenation of West Germany after the Second World War and thus underwrite an exculpation of Germans.[10]

The Empty Peace

Another transnational frame of reference came to connect the British and West German movements. Viewed from the outside, CND and its West German counterparts were peace movements, their supporters ‘peaceniks’. Some observers at the time even claimed that the activists severely weakened Western defence: ‘While … supported by the high-minded through the doctrine of example’, the leader of the British Labour Party Hugh Gaitskell argued in 1960, just after the Scarborough Party conference had adopted resolutions that argued for Britain's unilateral nuclear disarmament, ‘[peace] is popular with others for purely escapist or beatnik reasons, and with others, again, because they are fellow-travellers, if not avowed Communists’.[11] Yet, neither CND nor the West German movements framed the issue of nuclear armaments in their country primarily as one of ‘peace’. While the traditional peace organizations, such as the British Peace Pledge Union (PPU) and the German Peace Society (*Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft*) were still active and while a small minority of activists understood themselves as pacifists, the movements defined themselves much more precisely as ‘for nuclear disarmament’ or ‘as against nuclear weapons’. Given the involvement of a number of pacifists in prominent positions in both the British and West German movements, this is surprising. Although the main British movement journal was called *Peace News*, ‘peace’ mattered very little in the programmatic statements and the activists’ personal reminiscences. Although they often discussed ‘world peace’, the vast majority of CND and West German activists would not have considered themselves as supporters of a peace movement, nor as pacifists: ‘Let's admit it frankly,’ a West German activist remarked in 1963, ‘the words peace, peace society, peace council, peace party have, through all kinds of conceptual confusions, entirely lost their meanings and have **(p.160)** been discredited so much, that they can merely provoke a sorry smile … ’.[12]

‘Peace’ had, despite its progressive origins, lost much of its legitimacy in post-Second World War Western Europe. Beginning with the ‘World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace’ in Wrocław in 1948 and culminating in the Stockholm Peace Appeal in March 1950, Communist Parties across Western and Eastern Europe had launched an international peace movement under the auspices of the World Peace Council in order to campaign against ‘Western imperialism’. While the Soviet Union and its allies were havens of peace, the West was denounced as ‘totalitarian’ and war prone. Conversely, the West portrayed itself as the camp of ‘freedom’, where ‘peace’ was a given, and accused the Soviet Union of totalitarian tendencies.[13] The majority of activists in Britain and West Germany at the time were clearly concerned about appearing too close to the communist movement. Yet their hesitation to use the word ‘peace’ to frame the issue of nuclear weapons policies went beyond fears of political recrimination, or considerations of how best to advertise the movement.[14]

The reluctance to use the word ‘peace’ also reflected, both in Britain and in the Federal Republic, direct or appropriated experiences of mass death and military and civilian suffering. Vera Brittain observed during the Blitz that ‘our island is no longer a detached unscarred participant, sharing in the conflict only through the adventures of masculine youth’.[15] After the Second World War, therefore, ‘peace’ as a utopian vision was no longer an option to endow activists with sufficient momentum to sustain the movement: ‘Pacifism’, John Middleton Murry wrote in June 1945, ‘assumes an irreducible minimum of human decency … which no longer exists’.[16] Momentum for the campaigns in the late 1950s and early 1960s came not from ‘peace’, but from the far more specific focus on ‘nuclear disarmament’. The focus was no longer an abstract notion whose contents **(p.161)** pointed to the future. Instead, the activists’ emphasis developed utopias in and through their everyday interactions.[17]

This emphasis on a pragmatic concept of security rather than a utopian vision of peace becomes particularly obvious if one examines one context more closely, in which ‘peace’ did play an important role in movement debates about international relations: in the discussions about the Soviet Union's proposals for ‘peaceful coexistence’. Nikita Krushchev had proposed such a policy in September 1954 to signal a change of emphasis in foreign policy after his election as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and it became an important buzzword in discussions about foreign-policy issues. While movement activists used the term, few picked up on its history and connotations, although communists in Britain and West Germany did not deny the concept's lineage when propagating their cause.[18]

Krushchev's concept referred back to Soviet foreign policy immediately after the First World War. At that time, Chicherin, the Soviet delegate to the International Economic Conference in Genoa, argued that immediate ‘world revolution’ was not possible in the present situation, and therefore proposed a Soviet foreign policy that would accept that the ‘old social order’ and the ‘new order coming into being’ existed in parallel, while adhering to ‘Communist principles’.[19] This meant, in practice, maintaining the general antagonism between ‘the West’ and the Soviet Union, but transferring the battles from the military to the ideological and economic levels.

When British and, more rarely, West German protesters picked up the concept, they used it with quite different connotations. While the Soviet concept of ‘peaceful coexistence’ was essentially dynamic and still oriented towards rapid socio-economic change that would ultimately lead to socialism and communism around the world, most protesters entirely ignored this dynamic element when framing the international situation. Instead, they defined ‘coexistence’ as an end to the superpower competition, which, in turn, would lead to an end of the arms race. They used ‘peaceful coexistence’ as a synonym for the creation of a nuclear-weapons- **(p.162)** free zone in Europe, as the Polish Prime Minister

Rapacki and, at various stages, the British politicians Anthony Eden and Hugh Gaitskell had recommended.[20] Yet others used ‘peaceful coexistence’ as a theme to develop the concept of a ‘non-nuclear club’ of great powers around the world, which would, in turn, inspire others to disarm as well.[21] In Britain, therefore, most protesters emphasized that the maintenance of the status quo in the international system should be maintained, while only some argued for socio-economic changes at home.

British activists thus framed the issue of nuclear weapons for Britain in a pragmatic fashion. They campaigned for the country's unilateral disarmament and for the withdrawal of American bases from British soil in order to dissociate Britain from the arms race and not make it the possible target for an attack. They realized only gradually that this would have implications for Britain's NATO membership. From 1960 onwards, particularly during and immediately after the Cuban missile crisis in autumn 1962, there were calls from within the movement that Britain leave NATO.[22] From the beginning of 1958, there had also been voices in Britain that called for the ending of patrols by US Strategic Air Command bombers above the British Isles.[23]

West German Easter Marchers used the term ‘peaceful coexistence’ similarly, most famously in their slogan ‘Either Coexistence, or No Existence’, which filtered through to Britain as well.[24] Like British activists, they had shed ambitions for an all-encompassing ‘peace’ that would rest on a new socialist socio-economic order and favoured incremental reforms instead.[25] By the early 1960s, the West German activists had not only lost the original concept's connotation of socio-economic change. They had also lost the one element that had given the West German activists’ framing of international relations their specificity and momentum: the link between nuclear weapons policies and German unity. Willy Brandt, keeping his distance from the nuclear weapons movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, had this in mind when he coined the slogan about ‘No Existence’ at a speech at the Berlin *SPD*'s state party convention in **(p.163)** May 1955. He criticized notions of ‘peaceful coexistence’ as being too status quo oriented. Such an understanding, he argued, meant that ‘coexistence was no-existence for the whole German people’, since ‘the line that cuts Germany into half is for us not just a line on the map, but a cut through millions of German families … ’.[26]

The Campaign against Atomic Death, following social-democratic foreign-policy concepts since the foundation of the Federal Republic, had still emphasized this element. It had pointed out that the acquisition of nuclear-capable equipment for the German army would drive an even deeper wedge between East and West Germany: ‘Preventing atomic armaments and 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!’[27] The *SPD*’s ‘Plan for Germany’ (*Deutschlandplan*) of 18 March 1959 had reiterated these demands by

demanding military disengagement in central Europe.[28] Yet, on 30 June 1960, shortly after the failed Paris Conference on solving the crisis over German division, Herbert Wehner, one of the main drafters of the plan, declared that the plan was now ‘a thing of the past’ and offered the *CDU* a foreign policy of cooperation.[29] The Easter Marches, by contrast, only rarely mentioned German reunification explicitly and instead campaigned for nuclear disarmament around the world, as the circumstances had changed significantly: the first batteries of nuclear-capable rocket launchers for the West German army had started to arrive and, in August 1961, the Wall had gone up in Berlin.[30]

From the early 1960s onwards, after the decision to arm the *Bundeswehr* with nuclear-capable equipment had been passed in the West German parliament by the Christian Democratic majority, the West German movement became increasingly concerned with worldwide disarmament. From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, CND and the West German movements constantly framed and reframed their expectations of the international order. Their conceptions of the international situation were not entirely new, however. Rather, they appropriated concepts for an international order that had circulated since at least the late 1940s, **(p.164)** but had gradually lost currency among parties and governments. This created constant movement, as the activists sought to push their societies ‘back to the future’. Only a minority of activists from the New Left went beyond this status quo oriented framework. They argued that security could be maintained only through rapid socio-economic change across the world. This meant the decline of the anti-nuclear-weapons movements, but the emergence of new movements in both countries, which framed the issue of ‘security’ altogether differently.

Debating Nationhood as Security Strategy

While the protesters constantly redefined their goals to respond to a rapidly changing international landscape, one element in their analyses remained seemingly fixed: the role they assigned to their nation in international politics. British protesters, although they sometimes differentiated their use of words, normally used ‘English’ as synonymous with ‘British’ national identity. Through framing the issue of nuclear armaments in this way, the activists sought to represent their own aims as directly connected to their nations’ interests and thus facilitate communications with their societies at large. The dynamic of appealing to concepts of ‘nationhood’ in the political process lay in the fact that they could be filled with different meanings, yet at the same time offered the movements a clear location in the political debates. Particularly for British activists, appeals to the nation's greatness provided them with a coherent theme and thus seeming coherence over time, while they constantly adapted to the changing international and domestic situations. Interestingly, Scottish nationalism did not matter in these framings, even after the *Polaris* missile basis

had opened at Holy Loch: activists regarded the base as detrimental for Britain's national security, rather than as an infringement for Scottish rights.[31]

Defining and debating their nation's role in world affairs thus served the protesters as a security strategy; it was through redefining nationhood that the activists expressed their desires for a safer world and for a safer home. Paradoxically, the debates among activists about how their own nations should be defined frequently took place through mutual observations of the other movement. The protesters’ analyses of their own and the other country's history played a crucial role in these observations. British activists regarded themselves as the representatives of the lead nation: **(p.165)** ‘Britain's conscience cannot be saved by waiting for other nations … Unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons is both a moral duty in itself and the greatest contribution that Britain can make to … hastening a multilateral agreement’; ‘to subordinate armed force in the service of national sovereignty to a world code of law’.[32]

Movement activists at the time would have rejected an interpretation that highlighted their concepts of national belonging and would have pointed out that they were concerned about the ‘fate of the world’ and in solidarity with nations across the globe. West German protesters, in particular, would have had difficulties identifying what they thought of the German nation. Because of the division of the country, Germany existed only in the form of a question, something that had been lost after war and National Socialism.[33] Contemporary commentators and historians have followed this interpretation and assumed that a German national identity had been lost after 1945. Ute Frevert has even gone so far as to suggest that national identity after 1945 ‘was not felt from the inside, but attributed from the outside’.[34] In Britain, despite CND's explicit appeals to nationhood, the situation was remarkably similar, and historians have only started to uncover these constructions since the early 1980s.[35] Perspectives that assume that national identity was not a relevant parameter in post-1945 Britain and West Germany overlook, however, that the definition of national citizens as members of a world community was itself part of the resources that endowed national specificities with symbolic power, as it allowed the activists to create resonance for their claims in their respective societies.[36]

These processes reveal a complex dialectic between innovation and existing cultural norms. Activists accepted what Lauren Berlant has called the ‘national symbolic’: ‘the order of discursive practices whose reign within a national space produces, and also refers to, the “law” in which the accident of birth within a geographic/political boundary transforms individuals **(p.166)** into subjects of a collectively held history.’[37] Traditionally, nationalism had provided societies with a ‘discourse of sacrificial inscription’ into the nation through the willingness to die for the nation.[38] British and West German activists, by contrast, reversed this relationship by using ideas of nationhood to express their sacrifice to *prevent* a war that would mean that they would die for their nation as civilians. But most of

the activists were not pacifists. They still drew on concepts of national ordering and discipline, and did not generally reject the use of violence for political purposes.

It is striking to what extent the constitution of both movements as seemingly coherent political actors depended on defining them as linked to their respective nation. For the Labour defence expert Denis Healey, CND was nothing less than ‘jingoism with an inferiority complex’,[39] and David Marquand, then a member of the Young Fabians within the Labour Party, pointed out in 1960 that

> CND is to the left what the Suez expedition was to the right: the last brave hope of British nationalism … Even more than the right, members of CND cannot imagine a world in which British moral gestures would in fact count for very little; and if told that is the world they live in, they refuse to believe you.[40]

Likewise, West German activists considered defining the meaning of Germany after 1945 as an ‘oppositional topic’.[41]

In both movements, activists came to combine concepts of a concern for humanity as a whole with ideas about a specifically *national* morality. In doing so, they did not ‘invent’ the nation from scratch, but they reformulated expectations of the immediate post-war years, or even the 1920s, which they had either directly experienced, or to which they became acquainted through discussions with their colleagues.

While the government emphasized the role of nuclear weapons for maintaining Britain's leadership in world affairs, the protesters saw the **(p.167)** unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons as the only way to preserve Britain's status as a great power. It would be an act of moral leadership that would confirm Britain's place in the world as a civilized country and a ‘peaceable kingdom’.[42] Accordingly, CND's 1962 Manifesto pointed out that ‘a Britain that publicly told the world, still aware of her resounding history, that she was siding at least with the forces of sense, and reason, and right, would rally behind her thousands of people from the non-communist world’. By linking CND so firmly to specific visions of British nationhood, CND became ‘part of the nation's future’.[43]

At a time when British intellectuals and politicians debated the sources and nature of Britain's decline as a world and imperial power, J. B. Priestley found much solace in CND: ‘We British no longer have any bright image of ourselves. And perhaps, among other things, we [in CND] went campaigning for that image.’[44] Priestley was not an isolated voice. In 1958, a group of campaign supporters met the tired protesters when they walked onto the field in front of the Aldermaston nuclear weapons research site and proclaimed with a loudspeaker: ‘Lift up your hands and be proud. 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.”’[45] York CND's banner on the 1958 Aldermaston March expressed this sentiment by proclaiming: ‘Let Britain lead’, a slogan that was reminiscent of propaganda from the Royal Navy at the beginning of the twentieth century: ‘Britain's unilateral action ended the slave trade: let Britain lead again.’[46]

The appeal to Britain's moral core was intimately bound up with the protesters’ visions for a different Britain. Often tapping Christian rhetoric, activists regarded the Bomb as the symbol for the break-up of community into alienated human beings who had come to support violent assertions of British greatness such as the 1956 Suez invasion.[47] They believed that CND would help to refound that community and serve as an example to the world. In a ‘Memo to our Next Prime Minister’ on ‘our **(p.168)** role in the modern world’, CND Vice-Chairman Ritchie Calder reiterated these claims: ‘Do me a personal favour, Prime Minister, give me back my ride in my own country. Let me push out my chest, and say, “I am British.”’[48] Such moral (rather than military-heroic) renderings of nationhood occurred at a time when, in plays like *Oh! What a Lovely War!*, non-heroic narratives of warfare were beginning to emerge in British popular culture that emphasized the moral, rather than the military, function of soldiers.[49]

West German protesters were, initially, less emphatic in highlighting their nation's role in the world and focused instead on German division alone. Increasingly, however, West German activists came to advance ideas of Germany's special role in the world as a peacekeeper that were strikingly similar to the ones voiced by British protesters. The problems in finding and defining boundaries in an age of insecurity, spurned by decolonization and the debate about economic decline in Britain and the division of the country in Germany, appeared to result in the use of very similar symbolic resources, which endowed the activists with meaning.

Focusing on the implications of nuclear armaments for German reunification, activists involved in the Campaign against Atomic Death emphasized that Chancellor Adenauer's policies were ‘anti-German’.[50] Yet, another theme that was already present in earlier discussions came to overlap this topic, particularly after the building of the Berlin Wall had made the country's immediate reunification even less likely. In striking similarity to British protesters, West German activists carved out a new role for the Federal Republic: ‘the service that we could [give] to America and the world as harbingers of reconciliation.’[51]

For the West German activists, the division of Germany and the experiences of being on the front line in the cold war thus became assets in international relations. Unlike British protesters, however, West German protesters used, in line with general public discourses, the very absence of any concepts of nationhood as the main symbolic resource for developing a view on the West

German nation's role.[52] It became West Germany's national mission to shed all allegiance **(p.169)** to national politics. Accordingly, activists came to argue in favour of a policy that ‘did not serve the interests of the one or the other side in one country, but that served a new, world-wide security policy’.[53] National power thus came, along with redefinitions of notions of masculinity at the time, to lie in morals rather than in might.[54] This tuned-down rhetoric was in marked contrast to the GDR's hyperbolic, emotional, and aggressive propagation of a ‘national mobilization of all Germans in the fight for peace and national unity’ among groups of the West German far left and far right.[55]

In accordance with their primarily moral definition of their nations, the British and West German protesters believed that their definitions of nationhood could do without boundaries towards outsiders and enemies. Everyone was potentially included, and it was precisely the absence of such explicit boundary mechanisms that endowed the campaigns with the momentum to attract people with different experiences. It was through transcending the dominant boundary mechanisms of nationhood at the time that the movements gained their own distinctive character.

Movement activists in both countries tended to believe that the Soviet Union was less aggressive and more trustworthy than the British and West German governments portrayed it. This is why they assumed that nuclear weapons were not necessary for deterrence in the first place, and this is why they thought that conversations across the Iron Curtain would lead to a lessening of tensions.[56] Yet, only very few protesters actively endorsed Soviet policies, mostly marvelling at the alleged success of ‘planning’ in the Soviet Union. The majority within CND remembered the Moscow Trials, the Hitler–Stalin Pact, Russia's ‘winter war’ against Finland, and **(p.170)** Krushchev's ‘Secret Speech’, which had exposed the purges for the first time.[57]

British protesters were, in general, more outspoken in their criticism of the United States’ foreign policy than their West German colleagues. Yet only few protesters subscribed to a deeply ingrained ideological anti-Americanism that defined the United States in essentialist terms as the natural enemy of the respective nation. Instead, in accordance with their affirmation of British greatness, they focused on British sovereignty and rejected what they saw as American hegemony in the post-Second World War world. They campaigned to prove that their country was ‘not just an appendage of the United States’:[58] ‘For the first time since 1945 Britain would have an independent voice. For the first time she would be free to engage in the politics of peace, externally struggling to export disarmament and internally building the new society which disarmament would make possible.’[59] This element became particularly clear in the protests against US bases and overflights.[60] Yet, most CND activists heavily criticized Bertrand Russell when, during the Cuban missile crisis, he described

President Kennedy and his advisers as ‘American madmen’, while being much milder towards the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev.[61]

Protesters in both countries not only defined their respective nation by referring to the present, but also endowed their campaigns with specific momentum by drawing on the past as a symbolic resource. British protesters tried to recapture something that had been lost in post-Second World War developments, while West German protesters tried to uncover their past in order to be able to untie themselves from the net of German history.[62] Events like the desecration of the Cologne Synagogue on Christmas Day 1959 and the trials of high-ranking National Socialists gave Germany's most recent National Socialist past a particularly high salience.[63]

(p.171) For most British protesters, the Second World War formed the central positive reference point. Mentions of the wartime spirit abounded in CND's publications and speeches. *Tribune*, the paper of the Labour Left, compared the first Easter March to ‘the turn of the tide’ at Dunkirk.[64] In a similar vein, a CND pamphlet pointed out that the movement was ‘an upsurge of the spirit of the British people on a scale that recalls “our finest hour” in 1940 … Now we seize another chance to win through the pressing dangers to a better future for ourselves and mankind.’[65]

The success of the Anti-Corn Law League in the 1846 and Irish independence in 1921 were other frequent points of historical reference.[66] At the 1962 Aldermaston March, CND's banners pointed to Britain's leadership in ridding the world of the slave trade.[67] Speaking at Manchester's Free Trade Hall, A. J. P. Taylor proudly presented CND as the successor to the free traders John Bright and Richard Cobden.[68] At the 1963 Aldermaston March, there were plans for a gathering near Windsor Castle to sign a new version of the *Magna Carta*. Protesters were to gather ‘in the fields of Runnymede’ in order to ask the Queen to support the cause of unilateral disarmament.[69]

Looking across the Channel to Germany, therefore, CND activists regarded the plans to provide the German army with nuclear-capable equipment with great dismay. They feared that it would prevent a more permanent settlement of the German question and increase the likelihood of nuclear war in Europe.[70] Many CND protesters had already rejected the conventional armament of the Federal Republic in the early 1950s, primarily because they feared a resurgent Germany. Many who were now in CND had been anti-appeasers during the 1930s. Some agreed with the views of Sir Robert Vansittart that there was a deep-seated flaw within the German national character.[71] Accordingly, supplying nuclear-capable equipment to the West German government was, for them, a novel form of appeasement.[72] For Kingsley Martin, the West German **(p.172)** Defence Minister Franz Josef Strauß was the ‘most dangerous man in Europe’ and, thus, a new Hitler.[73] Accordingly, many CND supporters regarded the division of

Germany almost as a blessing and the GDR as a legitimate state, an attitude that was to lead to frequent conflicts between West German and the British movement activists, as many West German activists had not fully accepted German division.[74]

Yet, in general, CND activists differentiated between the West German government and the protesters: while the government was in continuity with National Socialist policies of national grandeur, the protesters were signs of a growing mood among the real and better Germany.[75] The German Democratic Republic sought to encourage these feelings against the German government among the British protesters, especially by asking Hilda Forman, a British Communist Party (CPGB) member, to form a ‘circle of friends’ for the GDR, particularly among CND youth groups.[76]

West German activists used the past not as an example, but as a motivation to march away from it. While British activists sought to establish a new kind of nation in the present, West German protesters regarded their campaign as an act of redemption from Germany's most recent past.[77] This theme ran through the history of both the Campaign against Atomic Death and the Easter Marches and provided the activists with constant momentum, even once new issues, such as the Vietnam War and the planned Emergency Legislation, had crowded out their interest in nuclear weapons.[78] The main parliamentary debate on nuclear armaments and the public launch of the Campaign against Atomic Death took place on **(p.173)** 23 March 1958, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Hitler's Enabling Act.[79] Exploiting the symbolic date in a somewhat hyperbolic fashion, Helmut Schmidt argued for the parliamentary opposition: ‘We say to the German people … that the decision to equip both parts of our fatherland with nuclear weapons directed against each other will be seen by history as a decision as important and ominous as the Enabling Act was previously for Hitler.’[80]

Increasingly, explicit mention of *national* factors withered away, and activists came to define their specific national task, not as citizens of a nation, but as ‘constitutional patriots’.[81] Protesting became, in Hans-Konrad Tempel's words, a duty that flowed directly out of Germany's history:

> The German people have already once been accused of holding their tongues, where brave words and deeds would have been necessary. Millions of people lost their lives in concentration camps like Bergen-Belsen. Yet all of mankind is threatened with destruction from the continuation of test explosions and atomic armament. It is essential to counter this danger through an unmistakeable [and] total rejection of all preparations for atomic war in East and West.[82]

It seems to be no coincidence that the West German protesters used references to camps when making their point. It was through the pictures of the camps that

the Allies had confronted the West Germans with their responsibilities for National Socialist crimes.[83] The protesters thus revived and redefined a prominent leitmotif of the discussions about ‘democratic renewal’ immediately after the end of the war. They echoed the existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers, who had, in his 1946 book *The Question of German Guilt*, called for the transfiguration of the German nation state into a stateless nation and of German citizens into ‘pariahs’ who would assume the burden of moral responsibility after collapse of the German nation state.[84]

(p.174) Both movements, therefore, had diametrically opposed positions in their political systems. While CND activists affirmed Britain's national past and criticized the government for squandering it, West German activists sought to reappropriate democratic traditions in German history so that the history of their present would not yet again turn into a ‘history of false orders and tragic subordination’.[85] Nevertheless, both movements framed their national identity in ways that gave their own nation a mission in international affairs.

Alliances

Over time, British and West German activists came to shift their views away from an emphasis on nuclear weapons alone and began to highlight what they regarded as the underlying problem of nuclear armaments: the impact that NATO, the Western defence alliance, had on *national* security. Instead of envisioning an entirely new international order, most activists framed their responses to nuclear armaments by reformulating and reviving experiences that pointed to ‘the nation’ as the centre for the international system. They revived, in various shapes and guises, proposals from the periods immediately after the Second World War and after the 1955 Geneva Conference, which called for a neutralization of central Europe. Initially, in their transnational discussions about this issue, which engaged creatively with ideas from Eastern European politicians, the majority of protesters regarded such proposals as primarily foreign-political devices. Only with the increased influence of the New Left from around 1962 onwards did discussions of a neutral, yet socialist ‘third force’ in world affairs gain prominence.[86] Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana in particular served as an example for the power of what activists called an ‘active’ or ‘positive’ neutralism visible among African and Asian nations since the 1955 **(p.175)** Bandung Conference and, especially, the 1962 anti-nuclear-weapons summit in Accra (Ghana).[87]

British and West German protesters assumed that both the Eastern and Western power blocs had lost the coherence of the early 1950s, primarily because of social developments in the Eastern bloc, but also because of the falling-out among Western allies in the wake of Britain's and France's Suez intervention in 1956.[88] The Soviet Union's calls for ‘peaceful coexistence’ seemed to suggest some movement in the East, to which the Western governments had insufficiently responded. In the words of a British observer, the world was ‘in a

state of tension and anarchy and tend[ed] towards war rather than peace. Unresolved disputes [dotted] the landscape like sleeping volcanoes.’[89]

Initially, British protesters did not discuss the United Kingdom's role within NATO. Most of the evidence points, however, to a tacit acceptance of NATO's role. Many British protesters even warned of the dangers that Britain's dissociation from the Western Alliance might have for international stability.[90] During this early period, the protesters took up the various disengagement proposals that British and East European politicians had developed since the Geneva Conference: the Eden Plan, the Macmillan Plan, the Gaitskell Plan, and the Rapacki Plan were all quoted in order to highlight the importance of reducing conflicts over central Europe and keeping the arms race under control.[91] This stance gave CND a unique degree of support, even among members of the defence establishment who supported NATO unquestioningly, but doubted that Britain would profit from possessing its own stock of nuclear weapons.[92]

While CND's basic consensus was solely concerned with matters of foreign policy, two increasingly vocal groups within CND regarded foreign policy as an element of social policy: the Labour Left and the New Left. They sought to create momentum for the campaign by reviving **(p.176)** conceptions of international order that were closely connected to domestic political and socio-economic change. A possible third group was the British Communists, who were still largely opposed to CND in 1958–59, as they believed that unilateral disarmament might discredit the Soviet Union's disarmament initiatives within the UN framework. From 1960 onwards, despite the Party's attempts to convert CND into a ‘peace movement’, they formed but a small minority of supporters within CND.[93]

Those activists who regarded themselves as part of the Labour Left regarded the international situation of the late 1950s as the verification of their arguments of the late 1940s. Without mentioning NATO, but with major implications for Britain's role within it, they thus revitalized third-force proposals from the period immediately after the Second World War. They argued for a ‘third force’, led by Britain, between the superpowers that would act as a moderating influence in international relations and that would combine the best elements of ‘capitalism’ and ‘socialist planning’.[94] Part of CND's foreign-policy agenda was, therefore, the last glimmer of the ideas of the traditional Labour Left, developed during the Second World War and most prominently discussed in 1946–47 under different international circumstances. Its short triumph was the success of a unilateralist motion at the 1960 Labour Party conference. This group's opponents were those Atlanticist Labour politicians with close links to the United States, who were active in the Bilderberg group and around the journal *Encounter*.[95]

As in the late 1940s, Labour Left politicians warned of American hegemony and the implications for British sovereignty. The apparent dependence of British foreign and defence policy and strategy on American technology and general guidance confirmed their worst fears about the dangers flowing from an Atlanticist foreign policy. Members of this group not only resented the hegemony of the capitalist United States in the West; they also feared a resurgent (West) Germany, possibly equipped with nuclear weapons, within a NATO framework.[96]

Positively, they envisioned Britain as a ‘third force’ in world politics, a crucial mediator between the Eastern and Western bloc. Grouped around it would be the former colonies, ideologically united within a socialist **(p.177)** Commonwealth that would avoid the Soviet Union's sins, but could, at the same time, benefit from the advantages of planning for a fair and just society. Rather than through nuclear weapons, Britain would maintain its ‘greatness’ through its ideological mission. The activists’ support for the disengagement proposals, even if they came from beyond the Iron Curtain, was the practical side of the coin.[97]

The other group of activists within the British movement that regarded foreign and social policies as inextricably linked was the New Left.[98] With its growing influence within the Campaign from the early 1960s, New Left activists revived the dynamic connotations of the term ‘peaceful coexistence’.[99] Superficially, the New Left's ideas resembled those of the Labour Left. But the New Left's emphasis on grass-roots politics and its sceptical attitudes towards socialist planning within the Eastern bloc gave their arguments a different character. Rather than advocating a ‘third force’, therefore, New Left activists saw Britain as the spearhead for ‘active neutrality’ or ‘positive neutralism’.[100] In contrast to what they regarded as the ‘passive’ neutrality of Sweden and Switzerland, this kind of active neutrality was to be the ‘reverse of isolationism’. It was to entail an active and ‘indeed aggressive’ foreign policy that was aimed at relaxing East–West tensions, dismantling the military blocs, and resuming ‘economic, political and cultural intercourse between the Communist and non-communist world’. It was to lead to the ‘elaboration of details of a possible diplomatic détente and the affirmation of a community of human aspiration at levels deeper than diplomacy’, which flowed from socialist premisses.[101]

For the British New Left, the existence of NATO was the expression of the division of the world into two camps, a situation that contained ‘within [it] the threat to man's peaceful advance, indeed to man's future existence’.[102] Underlying this analysis was the belief that fighting against **(p.178)** nuclear weapons and nuclear strategies was not enough. Rather, the New Left assumed that it was the strategy of nuclear preparedness and the cold war itself rather than Britain's own bomb that was the ultimate danger. It was, therefore, wrong for Britain to be part of an alliance that insisted on manufacturing and deploying bombs. Thus, Stuart Hall argued in a CND pamphlet that Britain had given up

any flexibility in framing its foreign policy. Once Britain had accepted the Alliance's premises, it was obliged to follow ‘every other dangerous twist in the weapons race’. NATO's failure to seriously consider the Rapacki and Macmillan plans for disengagement had illustrated how little could be done to move towards peace ‘from a position well within an alliance which is committed to the strategies of war’.[103] For Hall, as for many New Left activists, the case against the bomb became a case against all nuclear alliances and strategies.

Conversely, many New Left activists argued that the United States and the Soviet Union be brought to talk to each other only if the ground was cut away beneath the feet of the two camps. First precedents had been set at the 1955 Bandung Conference as well as with Yugoslavia's peculiar position in world politics and Poland's suggestions for disengagement. New Left members believed that such measures would have an extraordinary effect on the structure of international relations. If one NATO member contracted out of the two camps, they predicted, the summit deadlock would collapse. This would free socialist movements across Europe and sound the death knell to the Stalinism within the British, French, and other Communist Parties across Europe.[104] They pointed out that only Britain had, through its traditional ties to the Commonwealth and the strength of the labour movement there, the strength to pursue such a policy.[105]

Underlying these ideas was the assumption that communism was not inherently authoritarian but had merely become so during the 1930s. Proponents of this view claimed that ‘the Cold War reinforce[d] and sustain[ed] these features, which sooner or later [were] likely to crumble under internal pressures in a period of international relaxation’. At the same time, only such a period of relaxation would allow Western societies like Britain to advance on their way towards truly democratic socialism, which would not suppress but encourage the voicing of people's individual experiences.[106] Labour movements in Britain, France, and Italy, New **(p.179)** Left supporters argued, could thus regain their unity and follow similar policies at home. The same situation would allow a movement towards unification in Germany to begin.[107] This would solve the ‘cramp’ of Europe that George F. Kennan had diagnosed in his BBC Reith lectures.[108] If the cold war continued, by contrast, ‘the half-frozen antagonists’ would become ‘more sluggish in their reactions, more stupid in their thoughts’, merely amassing destructive power for the maintenance of power blocs and bases. The ensuing inertia would make it difficult to adequately address the many problems of the time. Thompson even mused that ‘some new Bismarck’ might well emerge in Bonn, or, referring to President de Gaulle's policy of giving France a nuclear *force de frappe*, that ‘some shabby Corsican in France’ might possess the atom bomb.[109]

New Leftist activists only rarely used foreign-political and strategic arguments in isolation against Britain's NATO membership. For the New Left's supporters within CND, NATO was not so much a military alliance, but the expression of a specific political, social, and economic ideology that emphasized apathy and consumption rather than active participation in public life. The Western Alliance was the symbol of ‘Natopolitan ideology’, the post-Second World War liberal consensus in the West.[110] Significantly, however, although the New Left activists played a prominent role in framing international security, CND as a whole lost popular support when it followed New Left arguments and argued for Britain's exit from NATO. Most activists’ experiences did not lead them to develop such long-term visions of socio-economic change; they remained satisfied with the more limited proposals that focused on an end to nuclear weapons testing.

While West German protesters also voiced experiences that emphasized what they regarded as national interests vis-à-vis alliance policies, the vast majority of West German activists lacked a utopian vision similar to the one propagated by the British New Left. Instead, they focused on incremental changes, while emphasizing the overarching aim of international stability. Contemporary rhetoric emanating from the Adenauer government suggests that the Easter Marches campaigned outside the **(p.180)** parameters of the Western Alliance.[111] The GDR's propaganda machine did indeed play no small role in publicizing disengagement plans in West Germany and thus provided the West German protesters with arguments. Yet, from the activists’ perspective, these proposals were not forms of indoctrination, but merely *expressed* their experiences and expectations.[112]

Unlike in the British movement, there were only very few in the West German Easter Marches who saw a link between foreign and social policy that was close to Communist ideology.[113] Such a link had been a characteristic feature of the *SPD* and Communist Party programmes in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but had, since Erich Ollenhauer's election as party leader and the banning of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Party of Germany (*KPD*)) in 1956, disappeared from the party-political discourse.[114] Not even national–neutralist sentiments made it into the many Easter March leaflets and pamphlets, and they remained confined to either far-right or far-left publications.[115]

While the British New Left activists emphasized the ideological components of NATO, the overwhelming majority of West German anti-nuclear-weapons protesters both within the Campaign against Atomic Death and within the Easter Marches primarily questioned the *military* component of the alliance. Some sections in the West German movement questioned the reliability of American protection, given that the Soviet Union now appeared to be able to hit the United States with intercontinental missiles. Like the West German government, they feared that the United States would not risk Washington or New York City

for Berlin. Because of the restrictions on ‘acceptable’ political expression that the cold war imposed on the Federal Republic's political culture, even these, in comparison with the British New Left's more moderate suggestions, aroused suspicions within the main political parties and the government.[116]

(p.181) Although the majority of protesters expressed their desires for a security policy that was determined nationally, they did not argue for a foreign policy that was entirely independent of Alliance considerations. Rather, they disagreed with Alliance policies in the specific area of nuclear weapons policies. While the *SPD* had still highlighted the adverse impact that nuclear armament would have for the prospects of German unification, Easter March activists already focused their policies on the Federal Republic only.[117] The majority of West German activists expressed expectations of a rather static international system. Although the Easter Marches had been organized against the wishes of the *SPD* executive, the activists merely continued to advocate disengagement and a nuclear-free zone in central Europe after the *SPD* had abandoned such plans. While the party had already moved, under Brandt's leadership, towards a more dynamic conception of international politics, the momentum that drove the Easter Marches remained the desire to create security through a relatively static *national* security policy and regarded this as an imperative that flowed from Germany's experience of violence in the Second World War.[118] The majority of the German population, by contrast, lived a life of ‘perpetual holidays, with the Germans in the middle, as calm as the Swiss in the remotest mountains’, and ignored the dangers of the current international system.[119]

Rather than fundamentally question Adenauer's policy of political integration into the West, most West German protesters sought to establish different priorities. Instead of arguing for a strengthened military alliance, as the Adenauer government had (for example by establishing a multilateral force), they advocated rather static plans for military disengagement, whose origins harked back to the immediate period after the Second World War. George F. Kennan's proposals for a neutralization of central Europe, which he had first voiced in the BBC's Reith Lectures in late 1957 and which were published in Germany in 1958, were especially popular. They revived his proposals from the late 1940s and were founded on the emphasis of psychological and ideological defences.[120] *SPD* politicians, including Helmut Schmidt, also drew heavily on the Gaitskell Plan.[121] These **(p.182)** proposals implied, in striking similarity to American, British, and Soviet governmental plans of the late 1950s and early 1960s, freezing the geostrategic map of Europe and plans for internationally controlled disarmament.[122]

Rather than regarding NATO and the other nations as the fundamental problem, most West German protesters, like their British counterparts, blamed the lack of progress towards a multilateral détente on their own government. While NATO had been founded to roll back communism, the West German activist Arno

Klönne argued, this goal had already lost currency in Washington by 1955; it had remained ‘the lie on which Adenauer had built the Federal Republic's integration into NATO’ in 1955. Everyone, apart from West German politicians, Klönne argued, agreed with proposals to lessen tension in central Europe, but Bonn's security policies had hit a dead end.[123]

The fundamental reason why the Easter Marches generated such concerns within the *SPD* and within the West German government was, therefore, not that they advocated new and radical policies, but rather that they advocated programmes that expressed the experiences of the Second World War and thus contradicted the policies of normalization and the ‘politics of the past’ of the West German government.[124] Significantly, Helmut Schmidt, a former *Wehrmacht* major, was initially a staunch supporter of the Campaign against Atomic Death, as it appeared to reflect his war experiences. Unlike those who remained attached to the movement, however, he redefined his war experiences in the light of subsequent international developments. As the two crises over the future of Berlin in 1958–59 and 1961 and the crisis over Cuba in 1962 did not result in wars, he came to argue that deterrence worked. The likelihood that nuclear weapons would be used remained close to zero. Living with the atomic bomb had become possible.[125] By contrast, the Easter Marchers who had experienced the Second World War either as children or as adult civilians continued to believe that the use of nuclear weapons remained likely and that defending West Germany with nuclear weapons would destroy the country.[126]

(p.183) Foreign Lands: the Colonial Question

From the mid-1950s onwards, the challenge to the Western alliances posed by the ever-present threat of nuclear confrontation between the superpowers was joined by what contemporaries perceived as an equally dangerous and dynamic element in international affairs: the emergence of a vigorous, broad-based, and assertive nationalism throughout the developing world. These nationalist stirrings not only posed a major challenge to the world order of cold war. They also promised to exacerbate the already existing tensions between Washington and Moscow, as the two superpowers competed for the loyalty and resources of the newly emerging areas and introduced a further element of instability into the international system. Nowhere had the connection between the two elements become clearer than during the crises of Suez and Hungary in autumn and early winter 1956.[127] From the perspective of Western activists, the cold war was rapidly becoming a global conflict: ‘The last button may be pressed precisely because the hungry two-thirds are not going to stand it much longer.’[128]

Thus, from the early 1960s onwards, British and West German protesters increasingly incorporated assessments of the situation in the decolonizing world into their experiences of international insecurity; but more dynamic conceptions of the politics of security defined as solidarity with decolonizing movements

around the world took some time to take hold. In both movements, there existed a broad consensus among different groups of activists that national self-determination was of crucial importance and that the colonies should be ‘liberated’ as quickly as possible. It was this theme, more than any other, that provided the British and West German protesters with the links between their protests against nuclear weapons and against colonialism; as the developing countries had a right to national independence, so the protesters asserted that right for their own countries. Paradoxically, however, this theme generated much more momentum for the movement in West Germany, which lacked an immediate colonial past, than for CND, which campaigned in the midst of decolonization.

In Britain, the New Left, in particular, voiced concerns about the role of nuclear weapons for the ‘developing world’. But they did so in ways that did not transcend dominant interpretations of decolonization and **(p.184)** thus expressed expectations of the majority of CND activists. For most CND activists imperial questions merely formed a canvas on which they projected their particular views of Britain or, mostly, England. They did not directly identify with the cause of national liberation.[129] They came to regard the campaigns against nuclear weapons and in favour of rapid decolonization as two sides of the same coin:

> It is not just that hunger, misery and despair are the most likely cause of the outbreaks of revolt that can become the occasion of nuclear war—we need only to note that place where the bomb was nearly used, Korea, Viet Nam and Laos, the Congo, Cuba—but the bomb above all demands that the peoples of the rich and poor lands find a framework for joint action.[130]

In the Federal Republic, by contrast, a small number of activists came, as part of their arguments against French intervention in Algeria, to identify much more emphatically with the cause of ‘national liberation’: ‘Algeria is everywhere; it is here, too, like Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Budapest.’[131] Initially, the majority of West German activists had not perceived the imperial dimension as important. However, through engagement in various transnational socialist networks and through reporting in periodicals, a small minority of West German activists began to emphasize the importance of decolonization, in particular with regard to Algeria.[132] Even once West German activists had discovered the importance of Third World nationalism for international politics from around 1961 onwards, they interpreted it primarily as an inspiring realization of true neutrality between the Soviet Union and the United States. Like the majority of their British counterparts, they also marvelled at the opportunities for economic development in the former colonies, such as the new port of Tema and the Volta Dam project in Ghana. Unlike British activists, however, West German protesters

never regarded it as their mission to lead the camp, or to implement similar policies in central Europe.[133]

(p.185) Only after the question of German unification had lost its salience in the wake of the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 did a minority of West German activists from circles around the Socialist German Student Federation take the situation in the developing world more seriously. In close engagement with ideas from the American and the British New Left, activists from the Socialist German Student Federation (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (*SDS*)) within the Easter Marches now argued for a dynamic movement ‘from below’ that would give neglected groups in colonial societies a voice.[134] As the West German activists conceived of German nationhood as an empty space that could be realized only by reaching out to humanity as a whole, they connected developments at the centre and the periphery much more directly than their British colleagues. Many within the *SDS* now argued that the Federal Republic would be increasingly affected by events in Europe and the world: ‘we need to overcome the geographical boundaries of the nation, even of Europe and the West—in a world divided in three we have to orient ourselves as One World in order to win the future and overcome the barriers of the past.’[135] The suppression of colonial peoples was thus essentially the same as the suppression of dissent at home: ‘If we are silent,’ Hans Magnus Enzensberger argued, ‘we cannot hope to be immune towards totalitarianism from left and right’ at home.[136] Combining this theme with the trope of German unification, Hans Magnus Enzensberger argued with regard to Algeria that the war was ‘also waged in our name, [and Algeria] is as close to us as national self-determination of the GDR’.[137] West German activists regarded support for ‘national liberation’ elsewhere as an act of self-defence (*Notwehr*): ‘Not only peace and freedom are indivisible, but also torture, hunger and war. Either we abolish them or they abolish us.’[138]

For many West German activists, especially those coming from the *SDS*, looking closely at the Third World revealed what remained hidden in the West: the suppression of national independence movements **(p.186)** through the United States and the capitalist world system.[139] For *SDS* activists, this ‘fight against militarism and war’ could be waged only ‘as a struggle for fundamental structural reforms of economy and society’.[140] By the mid-1960s, when nuclear weapons had lost their salience in West German debates, the war had come home to the West German activists. Many had experienced the war only as children, but they believed that what they saw in the television and news media showed the violence that ‘the system’ could generate. Violence was real in the colonies, but it remained ‘structural’ in the Western world, inhibiting the growth of individuals.[141] Unlike the majority of British activists, West German activists thus began to switch the coding of the debate from one that focused on ‘security’ to one that focused on ‘violence’ and ‘non-violence’. ‘Peace’ as a utopia of human fulfilment re-emerged in movement discussions from the mid-1960s onwards.

Through their constant reframing of the issue of nuclear weapons, *SDS* activists had moved away from defining ‘security’ pragmatically as ‘order’ and ‘stability’. Instead, they argued that lasting security could be achieved only through fundamental *changes* both to the structure of international relations and to socio-economic structures at home.[142]

In Britain, such arguments had a much smaller resonance within CND, as the rather critical reaction of many British activists towards Perry Anderson's similar interpretation of imperialism shows.[143] Whereas British anti-nuclear-weapons protesters were confronted with the very real problems of decolonization, for West German activists the Third World had, in the words of Oskar Negt, an abstract, albeit much closer, presence in the metropoles.[144] Foreign observers picked up these crucial differences between the British and West German attitudes, as well. African representatives at a European–African conference at Castle Burg (on the river Wupper) in Germany criticized the lack of ‘politicization’ of the British **(p.187)** delegation.[145] Only few British activists at the time commented critically on race violence in Britain and on the violent oppression of colonial uprisings by the British government.[146] The anthropologist Peter Worsley was one of the very few New Left activists who feared that the ‘culture of violence’ among British forces abroad would, in the medium term, introduce violence into society in the mother country and thus ‘dehumanize’ it.[147] Likewise, only a small minority of British activists disputed the writings of the French anti-colonial activist Frantz Fanon, who highlighted violence as a feature of colonialism and argued that large differentials in wealth between Britain and the majority of developing countries made ‘class solidarity’ impossible and would lead only to neo-colonialism.[148] From this perspective, Britain's moral leadership in unilateralism was merely a continuation of colonialism by other means.[149] The majority of British activists disagreed with such framings, however.

An important root for the activists’ inability to reinvent the movement lay in the positive definition of Britain's foreign policy. They thought that not weapons and force, but Britain's moral lead, should be the backbone of its foreign and defence policies.[150] The protesters’ image of themselves as citizens (or even subjects!) of a ‘peaceable kingdom’, together with a fundamental trust, grown through history, that Britain would not turn ‘fascist’, made these views plausible and prevented the switching of codes towards one of violence/non-violence. Quoting the nineteenth-century liberal John Stuart Mill, Edward P. Thompson and John Saville argued for a foreign policy that would ‘redeem the character of our country.’[151] The activists’ central claim chimed well with ‘liberal views of the Empire’, in which empire was not a source of military pride and greatness, but **(p.188)** evidence of Britain's civilizing mission and moral leadership.[152] For British protesters, British global power was the bringer of freedom. Thus, the activists revived and adapted ideas of a ‘people's empire’ that had become popularized during the Second World War.[153] Some activists even displayed an

‘enlightened paternalism’:[154] ‘There are still some colonies in the world … which are too small for full independence, or whose people need further guidance and education before they can govern themselves.’[155]

As much as the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and CND protesters differed on the issue of nuclear weapons, they agreed on the basic functions of British diplomacy. Revisionists in the Labour Party at the time criticized this attitude as an ‘unholy alliance of Commonwealth fanatics on the right and nuclear disarmers on the Left’.[156] Rather than attacking imperialism as such, they criticized the specific form decolonization took: ‘Britain is in a unique position in all this. What India has achieved would be nothing compared to the immense pressure Britain could generate, in alliance with India, Ghana, Yugoslavia and backed by the uncommitted countries, for world peace and active neutrality.’ It would bring Britain ‘into association with that enormous Afro-Asian world whose giant figures so rightly dominate the pygmy Whites in the cartoons of Abu’.[157]

Through Britain's unilateral disarmament, therefore, this grouping of states would ultimately lead to the emergence of a neutral group of nations in international affairs, a development that British actions could bring about and that would ultimately lead to radical social change at home.[158] Pointing to the emergence of an African group of states that distanced itself from both the United States and the Soviet Union, the New Left activist John Rex demanded that ‘the Voice of the African Congress … be heard at the polls in Britain, because ultimately the Congress **(p.189)** and the Labour Party are part of the same movement’.[159] This would, New Left activists believed, help us ‘recapture something of their vision of what Socialism is about’.[160]

Despite these differences between the British and the West German movements, which emerged from around 1963 onwards, they shared an important characteristic that distinguished them from many earlier peace movements and from the protests of the later 1960s. Neither British nor West German activists framed ‘nuclear disarmament’ as part of a wholesale programme of change in domestic and international society. Only a minority rediscovered conceptions of a positively defined ‘peace’. Instead, the activists’ focus came to lie on proposals to deal with what they regarded as the dangerous present.

Notes:

([1]) Andreas Wenger, *Living with Peril: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nuclear Weapons* (Lanham, MD, 1997), 248.

([2]) Cf. O. Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge, 2005); Jason Parker, ‘Cold War II: The Eisenhower Administration, the Bandung Conference, and the Reperiodization of the Postwar Era’, *Diplomatic History*, 30 (2006), 867–92.

([3]) Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003), 23. See the argument by Ziemann, ‘A Quantum of Solace?’, 372–3.

([4]) Andrew Oppenheimer, ‘West German Pacifism and the Ambivalence of Human Solidarity, 1945–1968’, *Peace & Change*, 29 (2004), 353–89.

([5]) David Hollinger, ‘How Wide is the Circle of the We? American Intellectuals and the Problem of Ethnos since World War II’, *American Historical Review*, 98 (1993), 317–37.

([6]) *The Family of Man: The Greatest Photographic Exhibition of All Time*, created by Edward Steichen for the Museum of Modern Art (New York, 1955). The following extract (text and music by Fred ‘Karl’ Dallas) is from IISG, C100 uncatalogued collection: CND songbook.

([7]) Oppenheimer, ‘West German Pacifism’, 372.

([8]) Geoffrey G. Field, *Blood, Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class* (Oxford, 2012), 183–216.

([9]) Appeal from 23 April 1957, quoted in Friedenskomitee der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ed.), *Blaubuch über den Widerstand gegen die atomare Aufrüstung der Bundesrepublik* (Düsseldorf, 1957), 95–6.

([10]) Nina Berman, *Impossible Missions? German Economic, Military and Humanitatian Efforts in Africa* (Lincoln, NE, 2004), 96–7.

([11]) Hugh Gaitskell at the Labour conference in Scarborough, October 1960, quoted in Philip Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell* (Oxford, 1982), 579. Replicating these prejudices: Paul Mercer, ‘*Peace’ of the Dead: The Truth Behind the Nuclear Disarmers* (London, 1986).

([12]) Hermann Speelmann to Dr. Gerhard Schmidt, 12 October 1963, quoted in Appelius, *Pazifismus in* Westdeutschland, ii. 513; interviews with Hans-Konrad Tempel, 19 August 2002, and Arno Klönne, 22 August 2002; SAPMO-BArch, DY30-IV.2.-2.028: ‘Bericht über den Ostermarsch West 1963’, 2 May 1963; *Peace News*, 29 November 1963, 2.

([13]) SAPMO-BArch, DY30-IV 2-10.02-120, 145–7: ‘Der Kampf für eine atomwaffenfreie Zone in Eurppa unter Einschluß der beiden deutschen Staaten —Hauptaufgabe der gegenwärtigen Epoche [1958]’.

([14]) *Peace News*, 2 January 1959, 2; *Peace News*, 11 August 1961, 3; HIS, TEM 100,04: ‘Aufruf zum Ostermarsch 1960’; Tempel to Andreas Buro, 2 April 1962;

SAPMO-BArch, DY30 J IV 2/2/643: ‘Außerordentliche Sitzung des PB der SED am 23 April 1959’.

([15]) Vera Brittain, *England's Hour* (London, 1941), xiii.

([16]) *Herald of Peace*, 22 June 1945, 2. Cf. also Mass Observation, *Peace and the Public;* Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, ch. 11.

([17]) *Peace News*, 18 August 1961, 8; *Peace News*, 25 August 1961, 1; AdsD, DGB, Abt. Organisation 24–9005: Brochure for the public platform of the DGB regional committee Lower Saxony, Den nächsten Krieg gewinnt der Tod. August 1914: Erster Weltkrieg, September 1939: ‘Zweiter Weltkrieg’, 30 August 1964.

([18]) Andrew Rothstein, *Peaceful Co-Existence* (Harmondsworth, 1955); LHASC, CP/CENT/SPN/1/14: ‘H-Bomb and Disarmament Campaign’, speaker's notes, 16 August 1957; Till Kössler, *Abschied von der Revolution: Kommunisten und Gesellschaft in Westdeutschland 1945–1968* (Düsseldorf, 2005), 369–85.

([19]) Quoted from Rothstein, *Peaceful Co-Existence*, 35.

([20]) *Peace News*, 21 November 1958, 4; *Peace News*, 20 March 1959, 4.

([21]) Wayland Young, *Strategy for Survival: First Steps in Nuclear Disarmament* (Harmondsworth, 1959); *Peace News*, 27 November 1959, 1.

([22]) MRC, MSS 181/4: Stuart Hall, *Steps towards Peace*, CND pamphlet (London, 1962).

([23]) *Peace News*, 18 July 1958, 1.

([24]) HIS, TEM 200,03: ‘Slogans zum Ostermarsch 1961’, March 1961; Heinz Kraschutzki, ‘Koexistenz oder No-Existenz’, *Friedensrundschau*, 12 (1958), 3–5; *Peace News*, 10 March 1961, 10.

([25]) HIS, TEM 200,03: Vack to Tempel, 20 August 1962; ‘Aufruf zum Ostermarsch 1960’.

([26]) Willy Brandt, ‘Rede des Präsidenten des Berliner Abgeordnetenhauses von Berlin, Brandt, auf dem Landesparteitag der Berliner SPD, 22 Mai 1955’, in Siegfried Heimann (ed.), *Willy Brandt. Berlin bleibt frei: Politik in und für Berlin 1947–1966* (Bonn, 2004), 186–94.

([27]) BAK, ZSg. 1-E/70: ‘Kampf dem Atomtod’ (April 1958), 15; Claus Rainer Röhl, ‘Zwei Volksbewegungen’, *konkret*, 14 (1958), 1; Hans Werner Richter to Ernst Nolte, 10 March 1957, in Richter, *Briefe*, 245–7.

([28]) *Europa Archiv*, 14 (1959), 187–91.

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