

Memory and Protest in the West German Peace Movement of 1960s

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Abstract

When thinking the West German 1960s, the focus is often on the student movement and its radicalization after 1968. Nevertheless, the 1960s was a period of continuous political fermentation in country, that evolved connected to social and protest movements. This paper explores the role memory and historical culture had in these movements, especially to the extent that it was connected to recent, Nazi, past. It raises the argument that historical and memory culture shaped the environment within which protest movements evolved and at the same time was a main component of the political contestation they were part of. In order to do so, the paper will trace the process of memory work, especially as far as the conceptualization of the recent past was considered. More specifically, it will do so by examining the journal *Informationen zur Abrüstung*, which was published by the peace movement that developed in the political and cultural environment of the extra-parliamentary left, and focusing on the its references to the past, their contextualization and the meanings attributed to them.

Keywords

Cultural Memory, Historical Culture, Protest Movements, Postwar, 1960s, West Germany

1. Introduction

When thinking the German 1960s, the focus is often on the student movement that emerged in 1968, in response to the shooting of Rudi Dutschke. Although the shooting was indeed a moment of transformation for the student movement towards more radical pathways and has been engraved in the cultural memory of West Germany, the attention it has received often hinders the long process of civil engagement and protest action that shaped West Germany's political and

cultural scene in the first post-war decades (Guittet, 2016; von Stetten, 2009). As early as the 1950s, critical voices started to challenge the consensus on where the country was politically positioned in the post-war power scene. Such voices were expressed through various groups, political, intellectual, and cultural, and facilitated the emergence of the protest movement of the early 1960s that transformed the country's political culture. At the same time, important memory work took place in these movements, mainly because in Germany, such as in many other countries who struggled to regain sovereignty after the Second World War, politics and memory were closely entangled. This paper will explore this entanglement in the peace movement of the 1960s, which had a pioneering role in the formation of the country's post-war protest culture, at least until the student movement took the leading role in the late 1960s.

More specifically, this paper will focus on the memory culture that can be traced in the movement for peace and disarmament in West Germany and its official journal *Informationen zur Abrüstung*, published since 1963. The journal was the communicative organ of the peace protest movement in West Germany and was published periodically, mostly on a monthly basis, from 1963 to 1969 (71 issues), initially in Munich (until March 1965) and later in Offenbach, making minor adjustments to its title according to the movement's political choices¹. Published throughout the transformation of the peace movement to the *Außerparlamentarische Opposition*, indicating this transformation even in its title, the journal is a relevant source for the exploration of dynamics of memory while the peace movement gradually acquired a broader political character². The main interest of this paper is to trace how the past was invoked in the journal, as well as how it is contextualized in relation to political contestation in the 1960s. As opposed to the wide spread assumption that memory of the recent past was silenced in post war West Germany in such an extent that it created a consensus of acceptance of the Nazi past, recent scholarship has showed that memory and its negotiation was a vital part of political and cultural fermentations in the country since its foundation in 1949 (Gassert & Steinweis, 2006; Moses, 2007; Olick, 2005). In the same line, this paper raises the argument that 1968 in Germany was not a sudden breaking of the silence, but a moment of massive reaction against the status quo and its ideological and cultural discourse that had been gradually being cultivated the previous years. In other words, it will argue that historical and memory culture shaped the environment within which protest movements evolved

¹Since 1968 the journal was titled *Außerparlamentarische Opposition. Informationen für Demokratie und Abrüstung*.

²For an argumentation that connects the peace movement in West Germany with the *Außerparlamentarische Opposition*, understanding the first as the precondition of the second, see, Alrun Berger, "The Historical Cultures of the 1960s' West German Peace Movement: A Learning Process?", in S. Berger and C. Cornelissen (eds), *Marxist Historical Cultures and Social Movements in Western Europe during the Cold War. Case Studies from Germany, Italy and Other Western European States*, Springer Link: London 2019, pp. 187-216. Also, Otto (1977), *Vom Ostermarsch zur APO. Geschichte der ausserparlamentarischen Opposition in der Bundesrepublik 1960-70*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.

and at the same time was a main component of the political contestation they were part of. The past negotiated in the frame of the protest movements was not a neutral one nor was it disconnected from crucial issues of the present. On the opposite it was a past that played a vital role in the way that the present was shaped, both on a conceptual level and in the level of state administration. In order to do so, the paper will trace the process of memory work, that painstakingly brought to the fore and challenged aspects of public memory that by smoothing parts of the recent past enabled the survival of the culture background of Nazism in the present, especially in the way they appeared in the peace movement that developed in the political and cultural environment of the extra-parliamentary left.

2. Protest Movements in Federal Republic of Germany

In the 1950s, the first post-war period was reaching to an end, giving its place to the seeking of a new normality. At the same time, tensions that had been building up in the previous period started to manifest. The cause for the first important protest movement in West Germany was the announcement of Chancellor Adenauer's program of rearmament. Although discussions on such a probability had started as early as 1947, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 made the situation favorable for West Germany, as they were fears that the climax of the Cold War could expand to the center of Europe. This prospect raised concerns about the prospect of the country's militarization, and was highly unpopular among the public, pacifists' factions within the Protestant churches, the German Trade Union Federations and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Associations such as the Emergency Association for Peace in Europe and the Women's Peace Congress emerged in the early 1950s and took a stance against rearmament, from a rather conservative point of view. The first initiative opposing rearmament was rather spontaneous and grassroots, articulated around the slogan *Ohne Mich* (without me). The initiative was supported mainly by people that had experienced losses in the World War and young men and women, and was expressed by the undertaking of symbolic actions (such as the carving of the letter F for Frieden—peace and the use of badges with an army boot on which the phrase *Ohne Mich* was inscribed). However, the movement was short lived, as it did not find political support neither from the Left nor from the Right. Equally insufficient in making a difference to Adenauer's plans were the attempts of SPD to call for federal elections. When Gustav Heinemann resigned from the cabinet in the late 1950 and founded the Emergency Association for Peace in Europe, the first significant peace movement in FRG was ready to be born (Ziemann, 2008: p. 244).

In 1952 young people in Germany met in a "Conference of the Young Generation", in which nearly forty religious, political, and other youth organizations participated, to organize their opposition against rearmament. Its most significant outcome was the "peace caravan", a rally that was planned to take place a

few months later in Essen. The rally was banned by the state government, but nevertheless nearly 30.000 people attempted to continue with the rally, leading to violent police intervention, which resulted to many injuries and arrests and the death of the 21 year old Phillip Muller, who was shot by the police (Buschfort, 2002: pp. 253-258; Seiffert, 2002: p. 654). Nevertheless, this assassination did not result in the strengthening of the peace movement. On the contrary, it was rather inscribed in the discourse of anticommunism that was levelling in the period, and discouraged further participation in protest actions (Nelhiebel, 2017: pp. 129-145).

Action was picked up two years later, in 1954, on the occasion of the Nine Power Conference in Paris, where Adenauer negotiated that West Germany was granted sovereignty, in order to be able to proceed with the rearmament program, causing a new round of opposition in the country. At this point, SPD openly opposed the rearmament program and the Paris Conference, arguing that it would lead to the continuation of the Cold War. It declared 1955 a “year of struggle” and planned numerous events in this direction, coded under the title “Paulskirche movement” (Burns & van der Will, 1988: pp. 84-85). Despite the opposition by SPD, West Germany was granted sovereignty and NATO membership in 1955, and in the next two years Adenauer passed a bill on the introduction of conscription and announced the creation of the army, which would be given nuclear weapons. The prospect of nuclear armament though was not welcome by the public nor the opposition or scientists. In 1957, eighteen of West Germany’s most prestigious scientists published the “Gottingen Declaration”, in which they declared their devastating effects of all nuclear weapons and called the Federal Republic not to proceed with the project of manufacturing and owning nuclear weapons. Even though Adenauer rejected their intervention and accused them of promoting the cause of communism, the declaration had a great impact on the public. As a matter of fact, it sparked the first post war major protest movement, with the participation of church groups, town councils, trade unions, students’ associations, academic organizations and women’s groups. In this climate, SPD took a more dynamic stance towards the issue and formed a working committee to organize and materialize a campaign under the slogan “Fight Nuclear Death” (Burns & van der Will, 1988: p. 87). The initiatives organized under the auspice of “Fight Nuclear Death” lasted until the summer of 1958. The electoral victory of the CDU that summer was interpreted as a defeat of the antinuclear movement, upon which SPD had based its campaign. As a response, SPD decided to update its public profile, so as to strengthen its possibilities for electoral victory. Part of the update was that SPD now supported the country’s place in NATO. Subsequently distanced itself from the “Fight Nuclear Death” movement, and consequently the movement, which had been initiated and organized by SPD in the first place, whined.

In the meantime, the peace movement had gained the support of the German critical intelligentsia. As a result, after the distancing of SPD, the rest of the

groups that supported the anti-nuclear agenda, continued the protest in outside the parliament, forming what is known as extra-parliamentary opposition. This phase of the peace movement was defined by the Easter Marches and was highly affected by the CND movement in the UK. The practice begun with a four-day protest march organized by Hans-Konrad Tempel, a teacher at the time at Hamburg, in 1960 towards the nuclear missile base at Bergen-Honc in northern Germany. It was the birth act of a protest movement that marked the 1960s in West Germany, molding and shifting according to the political imperatives each time. Although the new movement picked upon the heritage of the previous “Fight Nuclear Death” movement, at the same time it gradually acquired characteristics that were politically loaded in a broader way and highlighted the role of grassroots initiatives and individual responsibility as opposed to the tying to a political party or an institutionalized actor. The new agenda included not only the claim against nuclear weapons in West Germany, but expanded so as to include the claim for unilateral disarmament, echoing the emerging global demand against an imminent nuclear catastrophe (Burns & van der Will, 1988: pp. 91-92).

3. Memory in Post-War Germany

In his study on which memories are transmitted and why, Jacques Hassoun refers to the double knot of memory: we are obliged to connect to the memory of the previous generation, in order to obtain reference points and roots in the present and at the same time we are obliged to depart from it—to leave it behind so as to find it anew and through that process to create spaces of freedom and belonging. Generations are in this sense caught in a cycle of smuggling memory from one generation to the other, constantly creating new spaces of belonging (Hassoun, 1994: pp. 91-96). Post war generations found themselves in front of such a dilemma, even in cases where memory was not in the center of their focus. Memory has been a challenging issue in post-war Germany: it has repeatedly become a burden that hindered possibilities of a smooth path into the future, while, on the other hand, its total rejection clashed with the core of national identity. As Dirk Moses has argued, after the war was over, Germans found themselves in front of a gordian knot: on the one hand, attesting to what happened in the recent past as part of the national memory would perpetuate the collective guilt and stigma connected to the crimes of Nazism but at the same time would protect the core of national continuity, on the other, alienating themselves from the past and claiming towards a European identity would facilitate their dealing with issues of collective guilt and a mortgaged future, but would disrupt the continuity and coherence of national identity (Moses, 2007: pp. 27-31). In this sense, even if not openly advertised, Jeffrey Ollick argues, memory was a constructive block of post-war German identity, especially as far as the Federal Republic is concerned. In making this claim, Ollick defines a series of important milestones that indicate the close encounter between the shaping of the national identity and the struggle to make sense of the National Socialist past. Namely,

among others, the antisemitic publications in Munich in 1949, the debate about Hans Globke, who was a former Nazi government official but nevertheless appointed by Chancellor Adenauer as his chief of staff in 1950, the wave of antisemitic vandalism in 1959-1960, the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961, the diary of Ann Frank, the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, the debate about the role of the Catholic Church in the Nazi regime later in the 1960s, Chancellor Willy Brandt's kneeling at Warsaw Ghetto Memorial in the 1970s, the history war in the 1980s (Olick, 2005: pp. 1-2).

The issue of how to deal with the past did not appear for the first time in the frame of the protest movements. It puzzled both Germans and the Allies since the end of the war. Widespread collaboration with, or at least tolerance towards, Nazism in different European countries made post-war beginnings rather complicated. The memory consensus that emerged across Europe to solve the problem was that Germany was the only nation to blame for the terrors of the war. The consensus made the passing towards the new era smoother for European nations, with the exception of Germany. If Germany was sufficiently punished in a way that there was no possibility for Nazism to re-emerge, Europe had nothing to fear in this respect. The first post-war years were characterized by a collective guilt in Germany that was more or less imposed from the outside through the re-education and de-nazification programs imposed by the allies and that can be culturally traced in works such as *Der NS-Staat. Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager* by Kogon (1946), *The Question of German Guilt* by Jaspers (1946) and *The German Catastrophe*, by Meinecke (1946). In response, a number of memory frames emerged in the country, that helped make sense of the past and, most importantly, of how Germany found itself in the position of occupation and catastrophe in the mid-forties. The first framework emphasized the existence of German antifascist groups both during and after the war and blamed the Allies for not supporting them in their struggle against Nazism. In this manner, the failure of Germany to come to terms with the past was partly due to the strategies of the Allies, that didn't allow for such an indigenous process of coming to terms with the past, and imposed a top-down narrative instead. The second framework was based upon the conceptualization of the Second World War as a European civil war so as to argue that peace in Europe, and more specifically in the Western Bloc which was of interest, could not be based on punishment and vengeance against one of the member states. The third framework was based on the argument of German victimhood, claiming more specifically that German citizens had become the first victims of the Nazis, even before the War and moreover that, whatever the price they had to pay for their country's military aggression, they had paid it when the Allies bombed the country and expelled German people from their homelands (Olick, 2005: pp. 11-14). This framework featured prominently in the 1950s also through the focus of various authorities in West Germany on the German expellees from the USSR and Eastern Europe (Moeller, 2001).

After the establishment of the Federal Republic in 1949 and the ensuing of the Cold War, geopolitical power balance changed, and so did memory frameworks in West Germany. The country was at that point considered an important ally in the Western Block, and consequently its conceptualization as a world pariah started to recede. Therefore, in the early 1950s a large number (approximately 200,000) of prior Nazi officials were reintegrated in the state apparatus, although previously banned by the Allies (Rigoll, 2013: pp. 36-73). At this point, while the need to remember the consequences of National Socialism was clearly stated both by President Theodor Heuss and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, the focus was clearly towards the future and the task to rebuild Germany. During the 1950s, the aspects of the past that were connected to Nazism and the agents and mechanisms that turned ideology into a political program were absent from the public discussion and were not part of the communicative memory. In schools, despite the reformed curricula, history was actually taught up to the 19th century or, at the best, to the Weimar Republic, leaving the recent-past out of scope. This absence though, although often interpreted as a repression of the recent memory, has been also interpreted as a desire to stay away from the knowledge of what really happened and be obliged to deal with it, both in the public and the familial sphere (Kattago, 2001: p. 41; Fulbrook, 2018; Welzer, Moller, & Tschuggnall, 2002). Rather than dealing with the difficult aspects of the past and attempting to come to grips with it, West Germans sought to create a stable political democratic order and to avoid dynamic opposition to the government, with protest methods that were characterized as either communist or Nazi. More recent approaches, especially after the boom of memory studies and their entanglement with historical research, underline the fragile balance between what was openly admitted in the public sphere and memories that continued to shape cultural practices, especially in the safety of the private sphere (Wierling, 2010: pp. 104-105). Alon Confino, in his study on how memory affected the cultural practice of tourism in post-war Germany, traced a space of remembrance under the surface, where memories of National Socialism continued to be negotiated even when there was no official expression of them (Confino, 2000). Even so, critical voices articulated competing memory narratives, especially in the field of cultural production, underlining the important role of active participation and bystanders' tolerance to the Nazi regime (Herf, 1997). Such voices came either by antifascists who had an active role in the war but found no place in the post war consensus of collective amnesia or by intellectuals who had lived through the Nazi regime in an age that they were too young to have any significant participation, but who nevertheless had first hand memories and were now at an age that could articulate competing narratives. Additionally, civic initiatives appeared and shaped an environment of memory cultivation, although they were caught in the dynamics of the Cold War and focused especially on the concept of German victimhood (Wustenberg, 2017).

In the late 1950s, a series of public expressions of antisemitism in West Ger-

many brought the cracks of the consensus that was based on communicative silence into the fore (Kansteiner, 2006). In the late 1950s up to the early 1960s an exhibition shocked West-Germany, which was slowly recovering from the defeat at the Second World War. Reinhard Strecker, at the time a student at the Berlin's Freie Universität in the mid 1950s and a member of the SDS (Socialist German Students' Union), together with his fellow students, curated the exhibition "Un-gesühnte Nazijustiz" ("unatoned Nazi justice") which provoked great controversy. The exhibition took place in city of Karlsruhe, the seat both of Germany's Constitutional Court and Federal Court of Justice, and was based on documents collected from the East Germany archives that proven the true identity of judges that were nazi sympathizers and still in office in the late 1950s. The exhibition received publicity and challenged the wide spread certainty of the german public that the Allied denazification program had solved the problem of nazi Germany. On the contrary it brought into the fore that the program was limited to the nazi political elite and civil servants, while other former nazis were allowed to integrate in the society. Although it was not until the Auschwitz trials that the subject gathered nationwide attention, the exhibition was the among the first cultural initiatives on the "reappraisal of the past", after a decade of silence (Habermans, 2020: p. 26).

4. Peace Movement and Memory

The 1960s marked a new turn in memory culture of West Germany. During this period, the scope of the debate concerning the country's nazi past shifted and became more of a domestic political affair than one that was articulated around Germany's international image. The main interest in this period was focused on the one hand on individual perpetrators, especially those with a public office, and on the other on the possibility that German people were not actually working through the past, but were instead repressing it so as to turn page and therefore there was a valid possibility that fascism would re-emerge, if the initial conditions that allowed its emergence in the first place were not rectified. The peace movement in West Germany developed in close relation with the international peace movement and echoed the broader formation of the Holocaust as a cosmopolitan memory and the emergence of a witness culture as took place in connection to the Eichmann trial (Levyand & Sznaider, 2002). It was therefore strongly rooted in the anti-war and anti-nuclear climate of the period and orientated towards the future. It reflected the problematization that emerged especially among youth, intellectuals, and activists about the fragile conditions that the Cold War shaped. Nevertheless, the same movements served as vessels in which the past and most importantly its significance in the present was negotiated. This negotiation did not always take place openly. More often, it was an implicit process, where negotiation of memory was blended into the general prospects of the movement. In the case of the peace movement in West Germany, the interplay between memory and the development of the movement should

be followed in two strands. The first one is related to the way that the movement established continuities with previous protest movements in the country, building as a result on existing cultural practices and shaping imagined cultural and political genealogies. The second strand is related to the memory work, that was explicitly orientated towards negotiating and revising circulating conceptions and narrations of the past (Nehring, 2005: p. 185).

1) *Cultural memory and practices*

Cultural memory has been gradually acknowledged as an important factor in their shaping and development, in the sense that it becomes the scene upon (or against) which new protest movements emerge. Even more, patterns of contestation, from organizational structures to repertoires of concepts, slogans, images, mental representations and cultural genres, more often than not circulate through generations defining at the same time the horizon and the limits of contestation—what can and what cannot be said, in what way and to what extent (Zamponi, 2018: pp. 18-35). In the case West Germany, post war protest movements built upon the political culture that was shaped in the country during the period of the Weimar Republic. Posters, newspaper adverts, public gatherings, marches, journal publications, that were extensively used during this period, were in the quiver of political contestation much earlier. Postwar protest movements incorporated this heritage into their repertoires (Ziemann, 2008).

Marches and demonstrations were part of the political culture of Germany, even though their practice had declined after the establishment of the Nazi regime. Weimar republic was shaken by “the fight for the streets”, a struggle that manifested through the antagonism for political visibility of the different parties. Marches were practiced regularly on the occasion of commemorative political festivities, as part of the ceremony, that often extended over a day. In that sense, they were rather organized and ceremonial instead of practices developed in the context of contentious politics. In the core of such festivities were the aspired values for the reconstruction of the German society after the First World War, which in both the Right and the Left wing political spectrum met at the ideal of the “soldier”—the man what was brave and committed enough to fight either for the nation, in the first case, or for the ideals of communism and social justice in the second. Other rallies, especially those connected to the rising food prices, had characteristics that combined rural rebuke and festival culture and, although political, their violence remained contained; demonstrations as part of politics of contestation were practiced as well. Nevertheless, violence in the streets was not completely avoided, although it was not a staple for the demonstrations of the period (Schumann, 2009).

Peace protest movements in the 1960s took up the practice of these demonstrations, adapting them to the specificities of the 1960s. Concepts of disciplinarization into containment gave their place to the notion of joy, that entered the scene of protest for the first time during this period. Activists participated in a joyful celebration of the prospect of peace that could be achieved through the

movement, and that was the reason that peace marches resembled a communal festivity in different countries in the 1960s. Songs, flags, especially designed little objects, colorful badges and stickers, cultural diversity as expressed in dress code and political identities, were all symbolic expressions of a different, more inclusive society, that was looked forward to (Nehring, 2005). Peace movements in the 1960s did not aspire to mold “soldiers”. The climate of the 1960s was not anymore that of militarization, that prevailed in the ideological systems of the interwar period. Instead, if peace movements hoped to contribute to the formation of the new citizen, then at the center of this education was the idea of democracy. In several occasions, the movement underlined the interconnection between the struggle for peace and the building of a democratic society, making the connection of the two a recursive theme and the transgression between culture and politics one of their staples (Buro, 1977: pp. 51-52; Klimke & Scharloth, 2010).

Another practice that refers to continuity with past political culture is that of political journalism. Extended scholarship on the subject has shown that during the Weimar republic, media was a strong agent in the shaping of the republic’s features, the dynamic between its different groups, the building of a social cohesion and overall, in the building of engaged citizenship (Lerg, 1989; Deak, 1968; Gay, 1968; Canning et al., 2010). One of the factors that contributed to the flourishing of the peace movement in the 1960s was, among others, the publishing of journals that served as its communicative organs. The most important was a journal titled “Information on Disarmament”, published by the “Campaign for Disarmament—Easter March of the Nuclear Weapons Opponents”. The journal was published since 1963, and continued with this title until 1967. From that point onwards and until 1969, it was published under the title “Extra-Parliamentary Opposition—Information for Democracy and Disarmament” and was published by the “Campaign for Democracy and Disarmament”. The journal was published initially in Munich and then in Offenbach and appeared periodically, mostly on a monthly base.

The journal focused mainly on relevant issues and news both domestic and international. The first issue, for example, is dedicated to the significance of the peace movement and the importance of securing bomb and nuclear free prospects for the future. Its opening statement is dedicated to the demands of the 1963 Easter March (*Presse- und Informationsdienst: Kampagne 1963, hrsg. vom Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner—Kampagne für Abrüstung, Zentralausschuss*, May, 1963: p. 1), through which the refuse of the Nuclear Bomb and the atomic power is equated to a confirmation statement for democracy: “Unser Nein zur Bombe ist ein Ja zur Demokratie” (Our no to the bomb is a yes to democracy). In the rest of the pages there was information on the details of the march in different cities of West Germany along with photo-documentation and a selection of how the march was represented in the press.

2) Conceptualizing the past in the peace movement

Protest movements often have a double relation with the past. On the one hand they are grounded on previous protest movements, as shown in the section on cultural practices, often establishing imagined affiliations and genealogies (Rigney, 2018: p. 373). On the other, they tend to challenge established representations of the past—the role that the past plays in the present and in forming current political and cultural identities. What is at stake is usually not a total negation of the past, but a calibration of what memory is acknowledged as relevant in the present, and in what context and meaning. How in other words the past will become involved in meaning making in the present and in planning the aspired routes for the future. As far as the West German peace movement is concerned, we will focus on two key concepts that were important in this process, namely the concept of “Mitteleuropa” and that of “Fascism” and its connection to the notion of “second guilt”.

The peace movement participated in the renegotiation of the meaning attributed to the concept of *Mitteleuropa*, that was taking place in the post-war decades. The concept had of course its own long history. It initially appeared in the early 19th century and was central to the elaboration of political projects, orientated both towards the country’s domestic and foreign policy and the forming of political projects, well into the 20th century, with a peak in Hitler’s era. After that, the concept is said to have disappeared from the political scene, connected to the wide-spread condemnation of the memory of the Third Reich and its political and ideological discourse and to have reappeared only in the late 1970s-1980s in a different context, related to the struggle for German reunification. Although this statement might be true as far as the official rhetoric of the Federal Republic of Germany is concerned, the concept itself remained active in the meantime in historical culture and influenced understanding and decision making related to the present. In his detailed study of the concept and of the way it influenced German politics, Jörg Brechtefeld argued that the concept had a formative power through modern German history, affecting the political, cultural and ideological field. As far as the post-war period is concerned, it slowly reappeared in the late 1950s and early 1960s, especially connected to the Berlin crisis of 1962 and the distrust it created between the Federal Republic and its Western Allies. In this context, the concept of *Mitteleuropa* reappeared as part of the discussions on *Ostpolitik*, although they did not translate into political action. Nevertheless, especially in cycles of SPD that developed around Willy Brandt, the concept was used in a way that exceeded political dilemmas of the nation’s reunification and to reconceive *Mitteleuropa* disconnected from German imperialistic aspirations, as a European space in the center of Europe, in which Germany recognized the responsibility for the aggressive politics after 1938. It was on the other hand connected to national policies, as a step in the struggle towards reunification and building national and political power in the international arena and was in any case overshadowed by the dominant discourse of the two opposite blocs in the Cold War (Brechtfeld, 1996: p. 76).

If there was the case in the official political discourse, the climate in the protest movements was slightly different. In the peace movements of the 1960s, the concept of Mitteleuropa gained visibility in the framework of neutralism and the widespread dissatisfaction against NATO policies. Mitteleuropa evolved in a concept that represented a new mental map of Europe, according to which the center of Europe could become a space of peace and disarmament, beyond the two military alliances, that could guarantee the peace in Europe. Rolf Koltzsch, the district chairman of the Young Socialists in Ostwestfalen-Lippe and member of the SPD, addressed the participants in the peace march of 1963, and claimed that it is the people's chance to take power into their hands, and that trusting the two great powers is the most irresponsible thing to do, especially in Germany and in Mitteleuropa, where a solution is mostly needed (Koltzsch, 1963). In the peace march of 1963, the concept was central to its claim and used as a motto, as stated in the first issue of the journal *Informationen zur Abrüstung*: "Mitteleuropa_atomwaffenfrei", "Mitteleuropa—militärisch verduente Entspannungszone" "Mitteleuropa—Brücke zwischen Ost und West" [Nuclear free Mitteleuropa, Mitteleuropa: demilitarized zone, Mitteleuropa: A bridge between the East and the West] (May, 1963: p. 1). In the same way, the concept is used in the frame of the next peace march, in 1964, which coincided with the anniversary of the 50 years from the beginning of the First World War and the 25 years from the beginning of the Second World War. The twin anniversary is used by the peace movement as an occasion to resignify Mitteleuropa as a space of peace instead of a place that would trigger a world war for the third time: "Should a world war start for a third time in Mitteleuropa? We answer No!"³ The next year's march took place in the same tone, demanding no nuclear arms in the German states, no participation of West Germany in the nuclear weapon system, a demilitarized and nuclear free Mitteleuropa, solidarity and co-operation with other countries to "solve the humanity's most important challenge: to eliminate war and hunger". This time, the point of reference in the past was the twenty years from the end of the Second World War. The commemoration of the twenty years from the end of the war, the organizers of the peace march stated, was a unique opportunity for Germany to understand that politics of power that were adopted in the past resulted in two world wars and were catastrophic. The German people, they continued, had now a chance to compensate for the wrongdoings of the past and the pain they inflicted with the war, by taking the initiative to promote co-operation and peace in the region⁴.

The discourse of the need of the German people to rectifying for the pain they caused in the past and to lift the burden of their identification with Nazism and the politics of the Third Reich was recurring in the rhetoric of peace protest movements in the 1960s in Germany. It is connected to the concept of the "second

³"Aus der Kampagne", *Informationen zur Abrüstung*, Jg. 2, Nr. 10/11, München, 24. April 1964, 24.04.1964, p.11.

⁴"Abschlussklärung für den Ostermarch 1965", *Informationen zur Abrüstung*, Jg. 3, Nr. 22, Offenbach, 9. Mai 1965, p. 12.

guilt”, that constitutive in the political thinking of the New Left in the country. The concept of the “second guilt” referred to the principle that the young generation could not be held accountable for the crimes of their fathers, only under the condition that they acknowledged and rectified them. Failing to atone for them, by whitewashing for example Nazi officials and collaborators and by tolerating the shaping of conditions that favored the re-emerging of fascism, constituted a “second guilt”, a repeating of the guilt of the forefathers. (Olick, 2005: p. 4). The concept of the second guilt in particular kept reappearing as a motivation to mobilize participation in peace movements. The invitation to participate in the first Easter March in Bergen-Hohnestated that “the German people had already been accused once of having remained silent when courageous words and deeds would have actually been necessary” and that “millions of people had been killed in the concentration camps.”⁵ The song composed especially for the 1964 Easter March, for example, used this concept as a culmination of the reasons of engaging with the movement. Its last verse reads as follows: “You German people, you almost always marched for the wrong goals, in the end it was just dreary do you know today where you are being taken? Take your fate in hand, don’t bury your head in the sand and don’t get lost any more!”⁶ Similarly, Arno Klönne, based his argument on supporting the campaign against the Vietnam war on Deutschland’s historical, political and military situation as formed in the 20th century. Politics based on power and its imposition, he argued, had already led Germany twice in the 20th century at the brick of destruction and have resulted in isolation. Therefore, it would be against the country’s interest to continue to pursue such politics through supporting USA in the Vietnam War (Klönne, 1965: pp. 1-2).

The debate over the “second guilt” was fuelled by concerns of rising neofascism in the country. More and more voices warned that neofascism was an open historical phenomenon, threatening to come into life and dictate the present when least expected. In 1968 Eckart Spoo, a renowned journalist and editor of the Frankfurter Rundschau who had lived through the Nazi period as a child, underlined the danger of the strengthening of the NPD, in the upcoming elections of 1969. In the basis of this argument was that neofascism was familiar to the German citizens, was part of their experience to which many of them held preferential ties, even if they had not had the chance to express them in public in the previous years. Interestingly enough, according to the poll upon which he had based his argument, the main power of the NPD was in the age group 46 - 60 years old, in other words in the age group that were in their 20s - 40s in the period of the Third Reich and were old enough to have actively participated. Eloquently Spoo argued on the deep roots of neofascism in the country: “Doubtless it is more difficult to mobilize people for anti-fascism than for neo-fascism. Because anti-

⁵Ausschuß für den Ostermarsch zum Raketen-Übungsplatz Bergen-Hohne (1959/1960) “Aufruf zum Ostermarsch der Atomwaffengegner”, LAV NRW R, RW 115 No. 141, as referred in Berger, “The Historical Cultures...”, p. 196.

⁶Informationen zur Abrüstung, Jg. 2, Nr. 9, Ostern 1964, p. 8.

fascism presupposes committed awareness, which must first be ignited, while neo-fascism blind clinging to traditional prejudices, the comfortable renouncement of one's own alternative thinking and decision-making in favor of a perfect command system is enough" (Spoo, 1968: pp. 11, 13). In the same manner, Arno Klonne, who was the spokesman of the Easter March movement during the 1960s, commented on the parallelization between the student protest movement and the SA and SS Terror that was regularly used by mainstream media and stated that the journalists and the politicians who used it were at least familiar with, if not trained according to, the methods used in the Nazi regime propaganda⁷.

This brings us to the third point I would like to raise in this section, namely how memory culture shaped the way that protest movements and political contestation was perceived and interpreted. Memory of events as well as mental maps shaped by mainstream representations of the course of the nation's recent history shaped the matrix upon which meaning making of political activity was elaborated in the present. Historical and memory culture shaped the environment within which protest movements evolved and the conceptual web within which they were interpreted. Emotions and attitudes towards such movements were not always relevant to the protests or their agendas as such, but to the way they were thought to be evoking the past and the conceptual connections formed as a result. For example, during the protests of 1968, the newspaper *Die Welt* draw analogies between the perceived dangers towards the state by the protest and the fate of the Weimar Republic⁸. Similarly, the characterization of the protest methods as "fascist terror methods" (faschistischer Terrorismethoden) became a staple of the establishment against the student protest movement in the late 1960s (Stubenrauch, 1968: pp. 14-15). As a matter of fact, references and analogies to Weimar Republic kept reoccurring through the whole period. The fear of Communism, that was flourishing next door, on the one hand and the burden of the Nazi past that remained silenced and unresolved on the other, turned the streets of West Berlin in an arena where the past not only haunted the present, but demanded to be acknowledged and resolved. "Governing and media elites as well as most West Germans looked at protesters and saw Nazis and Communists battling it out in the streets in the early 1930s, eroding Weimar democracy in the process", states Michael L. Hughes, giving a vivid account of the centrality of the past in the structing of the process of meaning making in the presence (Hughes, 2005). For example, opponents of the 1967 protests made parallels between the protesting students and the interwar communist, implying that protests were an attempt to overthrow liberal democracy. In the same line, in the opposite direction, protestors compared the police forces with the "SA, SS

⁷Außerparlamentarische Opposition. *Informationen für Demokratie und Abrüstung*, Jg. 6, Nr. 55 (Febr. 1968), p. 2.

⁸Schröder (1968), "Die Standfestigkeit wird geprüft", *Die Welt*, 17 April, file Zeitungen April 1968, Aktenbestand des Sozialistischen Anwaltskollektivs, HfS. Reference from Thomas, *Protest Movements...*, p. 177.

and Gestapo”, using historical analogies to stress the defects of democracy in the post-war regime (Thomas, 2003: pp. 110-111). Similarly, in 1967, when the treaty on the proliferation of nuclear weapons was discussed, analogies to the Versailles Treaty and to the Morgenthau plan appeared in the public sphere⁹.

Such analogies should be discussed beyond the concept of historical accuracy. Historical analogies, thinking about the past in terms of reversing its consequences and correcting the path of historical time, mobilizing the image of the past as imprinted in cultural memory so as to mobilize protest movement and political contestation is typical in moments of contestation, where what is at stake touches upon the core of the national identity. The memory culture in which the protest movements evolved in was avoiding the most challenging questions of the past, such as German responsibility for the Holocaust and that of denazification. References to the German responsibility for the war were more abstract, and referred mainly to the catastrophe they brought upon the country itself and its neighbors, and to the negative image that it had created for the country and that needed to be rectified by current political choices. Nevertheless, the peace movement gradually brought such questions into the fore (Berger, 2019: p. 197). The fact that in their context the difficult movements of Weimar republic and the Nazi past were recalled, was a strong indication that this period was far from being yet historicized. On the opposite, it was part of the practical past, in the sense that it could be clearly detached from the present, and most significantly, it was part of the shaping of a new historical consciousness¹⁰. More importantly, their recollection highlighted, their gravity as they proved to be able to mobilize analogical historical thinking, shape representations and generate political contestation. The past negotiated in the frame of the protest movements was not a neutral one nor was it disconnected from crucial issues of the present. On the opposite it was a past that played a vital role in the way in which the present was shaped, both on a conceptual level and in the level of state administration.

In other words, the way that concepts of the past appear in the context of protest movements often indicate a shift in the perception of historical time, which, in the case of Germany, is apparent in its results—i.e. in the new historical consciousness that emerged in the following years, in which the Nazi crimes, the Holocaust and the discussion about the Sonderweg acquired a central place.

5. Conclusions

The peace movement in West Germany was the leading protest movement in the 1960s, until the domestic and international political context, as well as the coming to age of the next generational cohort, led to its radicalization (Ziemann, 2008: p. 254). Turning points in this process was the protest against the war on

⁹“Atomwaffensperrvertrag ‘ein neues Versailles?’”, in *Informationen zur Abrüstung*, Jg. 5, Nr. 44, Offenbach 1967, p. 8.

¹⁰On the relevant discussion, Antonis Liakos (2019), “Street History. Coming to terms with the past in Occupy Movements”, in Stefan Berger (ed), *The Engaged Historian. Perspectives on the Intersection of Politics, Activism and the Historical Profession*, Berghahn Books.

Vietnam that internationalized the movement to a significant extent, the assassination of Benno Ohnesorg during the protest against the state visit of the Shah of Iran Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in 1967, as well as the assassination attempt against Rudi Dutschke the next year (Michels, 2017). From that point onwards, the movement acquired clearer characteristics of political contestation (Buro, 1968: pp. 15-16) and in many cases there was a break between the older and the younger generation, with the latter one following more radicalized approaches to socialism, that have been often interpreted as a “type of distancing and purification ritual in relation to the sins of the fathers.” (Elias, 1996: pp. 252-253). Nevertheless, recent scholarship on the subject focused on West Germany has underlined the importance of discerning between familial and political generation and acknowledging the differences between public discourses on the relationship between generations and the relations that were shaped in the private sphere. von Hodenberg (2018) argues that the clash between the older and the younger generation should be understood in an abstract way, as a clash between the constructions of two generations, while at the same time familial bonds were retained unaffected or were challenged only by issues of everyday life and not by political contestation. The guilt blamed on the older generation was a rather generalized abstract guilt of having taken part in the terror than a specific accusation towards loved ones.

This paper has focused on political generations and the way in which memory of the recent past contributed to politics of contestation. It has shown that protest movements in the late 1960s emerged in the background of a political contestation that was building up already since the previous decade and in a climate of an ongoing attempt to deal with the burden of the memory of the recent past. In this contestation, political generations had an elevated importance, as it was clear that the previous generation, mainly that of the 1950s, contributed significantly to the spark of the 1960s. The massive character of the protest movements of the late 1960s voiced the gravity of the past in much clearer ways than before and at the same time sparked its systematic negotiation, opening space for its historicizing and for the emergence of a new historical consciousness. In the framework of the protest movement, the past was not only the background against which it emerged, but a space of contestation, deeply engraved in its aims and prospects.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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