

The Apolitical Activist: East Germany's New Forum and
the History of German Grassroots Movements

by

Madalene Smith-Huemer
Class of 2014

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors in History and German Studies

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
ABBREVIATIONS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1	11
CHAPTER 2	40
CHAPTER 3	67
CONCLUSION	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY	97

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Erik Grimmer-Solem, Professor Iris Bork-Goldfield, and Professor Leo Lensing, my thesis advisors, for their continued support and guidance throughout the writing process. In addition, I would like to thank Professor Jennifer Tucker, my research supervisor for the Davenport Fellowship and White Grant. Finally, I wish to thank the staff at The Robert Havemann Archive for allowing me to use their materials, as well as Tom Sello and Marianne Birthler, who were gracious enough to answer my questions about their experiences in East Berlin.

ABBREVIATIONS

CDU	Christian Democratic Union
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
RHA	Robert Havemann Archive
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany

INTRODUCTION

"I believe that New Forum should continue to be what it was originally founded to be, namely a citizens' initiative, a nonpartisan platform whose mission is the discussion, debate, and submission of opinions."

"I want to engage in politics, but I do not want to be bound by party discipline."

"What interests me are the opinions of the citizens of our country."¹

These quotes, taken from the correspondences of New Forum members throughout 1989 and 1990, illustrate some of the prevailing sentiments of the largest opposition organization during the final months of the German Democratic Republic. New Forum, which was founded in mid-September of 1989 by East German dissident Bärbel Bohley and several other activists, was intended to be a platform that would open up the sphere of civil society, allowing citizens to voice their political and social concerns.² Throughout the fall of 1989, a period that some historians have called the "Peaceful Revolution,"³ New Forum became the leading organization at the Monday night Leipzig demonstrations, eventually attracting a following of over 200,000 members.⁴ Yet, despite the popularity of New Forum, the organization never chose to become a political party.

¹ *Diskussion: Partei oder nicht Partei* [Discussion: Party or Non-party], 1989, Press Releases, New Forum Papers, Robert Havemann Archive, Berlin. "Ich bin der Auffassung, daß das Neue Forum das bleiben sollte, als was es gegründet wurde, nämlich eine Bürgerinitiative, eine überparteiliche Plattform, deren Aufgabe die Diskussion, Meinungsbildung und Unterbreitung von Vorschlägen ist... Ich möchte mich zwar politisch engagieren, aber nicht an eine Parteidisziplin gebunden sein... Was mich interessieren würde, ist die Meinung der Bürgerinnen und Bürger in unserem Lande."

² Elizabeth Pond, "A Wall Destroyed: The Dynamics of German Unification in the GDR," *International Security* 15, no. 2 (1990): 35-66, here: 42.

³ Mary Fulbrook, *History of Germany, 1918-2000: The Divided Nation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).

⁴ Gareth Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany, 1945-1989* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 156.

The problem of New Forum's apolitical identity, which was the main cause of its rapid decline throughout *die Wende* (the turn), the initial period of German reunification, has occupied countless scholars of East German history. Considering the immense popularity and political potential of the group, why did its leadership remain adamant about abstaining from party politics? As the Socialist Unity Party (SED) of East Germany continued its steady decline, it became increasingly clear that a political void was beginning to open. Initially, the general opinion among East German demonstrators was that a new political system should replace the corrupt single-party system of the GDR. Hence, a popular chant at the Leipzig demonstrators, "Wir sind das Volk" (We are the people), demonstrated both the unity of the protest movement and a divide between the East German public and the SED regime.⁵

Despite the opportunity afforded to New Forum by the decline of the SED, its leaders chose to register as an organization, not a party. Several weeks later, the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 created a colossal shift in the direction of the East German opposition movement. Rather than chanting "Wir sind das Volk," as demonstrators had done throughout the months of September and October, the people now rallied behind "Wir sind ein Volk" (We are one people), indicating a movement towards German reunification. Once this shift in public opinion had taken place, it became increasingly difficult for New Forum to maintain its political influence, as West German politicians quickly intervened within a hasty process of German reunification.

⁵ David F. Patton, "Annus Mirabilis: 1989 and German Unification," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 753.

Considering the growing popularity of New Forum, why was the organization so insistent upon remaining apolitical or even anti-political throughout the final months of East Germany's existence? After the ousting of SED officials, the GDR experienced a political interim period, in which a series of public forums, known as Round Tables, attempted to redirect the country on a more democratic path. Throughout this phase, New Forum played a leadership role, interacting with parties on both the left and right, and ultimately succeeding in planning the GDR's first democratic elections for March of 1990. In addition to organizing and supervising several Round Table forums, New Forum leaders spent much of late 1989 and early 1990 publishing a wealth of press releases, academic studies, and other documents related to its idea of the Third Way. Neither unification with West Germany, nor a continuation of the SED's oppressive status quo, the Third Way was intended as a middle path towards a reformed democratic socialism. Yet, despite New Forum's immense concern for the political future of East Germany, the organization never evolved into a political party and could not participate in the national elections. Instead, the group gave its support to *Bündnis '90* (Alliance '90), a political merger of several different opposition groups from the fall of 1989, which had minimal success in the elections, but later merged with the West German Greens to form Alliance '90/The Greens.

The puzzle of New Forum's apolitical identity raises a number of questions. Most obviously: why was New Forum committed to remaining apolitical when there would have been clear advantages to political partisanship? Was this decision purely a result of the organization's disillusionment with the SED, or was there, perhaps, an

additional set of reasons that led New Forum to shy away from party politics? How was New Forum's decision to remain apolitical connected to its conception of a Third Way between capitalism and socialism? In many ways, the Third Way itself was intended to be above the realm of partisan politics, or a product of *Überparteilichkeit*. Hence, it is possible that there was some connection between the apolitical dimension of New Forum and its arguably anti-political belief in a Third Way. Finally, the question that is most important for how the group is viewed today asks whether New Forum's political decline within German reunification implies that the organization somehow failed. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to investigate the political goals of the organization. While New Forum may have failed in implementing the Third Way, it was perhaps not a failure on a larger, metapolitical level. Alternately, did the apolitical nature of New Forum in any way enhance its social and political goals, and, if yes, how was this achieved?

Historians of East German history have dealt with the problem of New Forum's apolitical identity in a number of ways. Some authors, including Christian Joppke in *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989*, have attempted to explain New Forum's apolitical bent by arguing that the organization was not as revolutionary as advertised.⁶ In fact, Joppke argues that New Forum's Third Way was merely a reoccurrence of earlier attempts to implement a revised version of socialism in the GDR. "The founding manifesto of New Forum was also a manifestation of the revisionism that still characterized opposition in East Germany."⁷ Although the socialist aspects of New Forum's Third Way did resemble theories of socialist

⁶ Christian Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989: Social Movement in a Leninist Regime* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

revisionism to some degree, Joppke's argument does not account for the democratic elements with which the group identified. In fact, New Forum may have been too revolutionary for the context of the communist GDR, leading many East German citizens to side with the arguably safer route of German reunification. Ultimately, Joppke's reading of New Forum as non-revolutionary overemphasizes the effect of the GDR's socialist institutions on the character of the group. Rather, the organization was just as influenced by apolitical and anti-political activism in the West as it was by earlier movements of socialist revisionism in the GDR.

Whereas some scholars of the Revolution of 1989 have related this final phase of opposition to earlier dissident movements in the GDR, others have investigated the specific cultural and sociopolitical circumstances that allowed New Forum (among other groups) to overthrow the regime. Gareth Dale, author of *The East German Revolution of 1989*⁸ and *Popular Protest in East Germany*,⁹ links the apolitical identity of New Forum to the character of East German street protest. New Forum "became a 'flag' that signified a general oppositional stance... but flags can relatively easily be dropped as others become available."¹⁰ Thus, Dale argues that East German demonstrators, and not New Forum's leadership, were the real determinants of the organization's path. Although pressure from the masses undoubtedly influenced New Forum to become a platform of East German opposition and likely affected its decision to remain apolitical, Dale's approach is ultimately too narrow to account for all of the factors that prevented the organization from registering as a political party. While ignoring the external influences of West German activism and simultaneous

⁸ Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution of 1989* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006).

⁹ Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany*.

¹⁰ Dale, *The East German Revolution of 1989*, 112.

revolutions in the Soviet bloc, Dale also does not account for the historical antecedents that led New Forum to take this perplexing position on political partisanship.

In addition to approaches that deal with the apolitical nature of New Forum by labeling the organization as non-revolutionary or a 'flag' of greater street protest, countless other explanations have been offered as to why the organization never became a political party. In "Annus Mirabilis: 1989 and German Unification,"¹¹ historian Robert Patton's only explanation for why New Forum chose to register as an organization, and not a political party, was that organizations were within the bounds of legality, whereas parties were not. Other authors attempt to explain the apolitical path of New Forum as arising out of its mistrust for the SED. Thus, in *Exit-Voice Dynamics*,¹² Steven Pfaff writes, "Above all New Forum wanted to avoid the rise of a new political elite."¹³ Hence, Pfaff implies that New Forum's condemnation of parliamentary politics was a result of negative experiences under the SED regime. Even in historian Konrad Jarausch's seminal book *The Rush to German Unity*,¹⁴ New Forum's apolitical Third Way is depicted primarily as a reaction to the two unwanted extremes of the SED regime and Western capitalism.

Thus, the existing literature on New Forum has tended to address the problem of its apolitical nature by suggesting that it was a reaction to some external influence. The organization is perceived as a canvas upon which social and political trends were revealed, but one that never served to influence these trends. Whether pressure from

¹¹ Patton, "Annus Mirabilis: 1989 and German Unification."

¹² Steven Pfaff, *Exit-Voice Dynamics and the Collapse of East Germany: The Crisis of Leninism and the Revolution of 1989* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁴ Konrad H. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

the masses, legal restrictions, or the fear of repeating the past, historians have provided any number of reasons for the group's grassroots apolitical identity. Yet, all of these solutions fail to provide New Forum with any autonomy as a political actor, and thus fail to understand the organization for what it truly was.

The reason behind this inadequacy within the existing literature on New Forum is not necessarily poor logic. Rather, the real problem has to do with the methodology used by historians writing about New Forum and the Revolution of 1989. A commonality between most, if not all, of the literature is that historians have investigated and analyzed New Forum solely within the context of East Germany. Although a few scholars, such as Christian Joppke, have attempted to create connections between New Forum and earlier reform organizations of the GDR, the organization has yet to be investigated outside the parameters of its communist setting. Hence, scholars have treated New Forum within a temporal and spatial vacuum, one that does not consider the influence of international and historical forces on the apolitical path of the organization and the Third Way. By investigating similarities between the apolitical activism of New Forum and grassroots movements throughout other periods of German history, it should become clear that the organization was not unique in its apolitical or even anti-political beliefs. New Forum's apolitical identity does not seem so peculiar if the historical lens is widened to consider grassroots movements in Germany's past more broadly.

This thesis will utilize a methodological approach that has not yet been explored by historians of New Forum and the Third Way. By treating the organization as one historical instance of grassroots reform, and not, as has been done, a political

anomaly within the GDR, the problem of its apolitical identity will begin to make sense. Rather than investigating the specific factors within the GDR that influenced the apolitical path of New Forum, the organization will be investigated through a comparison to grassroots and extra-parliamentary movements of the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras. By widening the historical lens, this thesis will attempt to portray New Forum, not as a reactionary, passive object, but as a political actor. Furthermore, this approach will involve widening the spatial lens to consider the external influences of grassroots activism and anti-parties of West Germany. Did non-traditional parties such as the West German Green Party influence New Forum to identify as apolitical, and, if yes, how so? Through a comparison between New Forum and grassroots movements throughout Germany history, a fuller, more complex explanation for its apolitical nature will begin to take shape.

In addition to creating a more thorough analysis of East Germany's New Forum, widening the historical perspective will allow for an investigation of the larger significance of apolitical activism throughout German history. What is the meaning of grassroots activism to the German political identity and what are its defining features? Although New Forum has been primarily understood through its apolitical identity, it possessed many other defining qualities. By investigating some of these features, such as environmentalism, social reform, and alternative lifestyles, it becomes possible to relate New Forum to other reform initiatives throughout German history. Furthermore, through a comparison of the political contexts in which Third Way movements arose, one can begin to understand the reasons behind their creation. What factors have pushed German citizens to engage in apolitical reform?

Are apolitical Third Way movements in any way a result of oppressive political environments? Although several historians have suggested that the oppressive SED regime led New Forum to condemn parliamentary politics, this claim can be better substantiated through historical comparison.

In order to solve the puzzle that is New Forum's apolitical identity, this thesis will argue that its character was not solely a product of the communist GDR. Rather, West German and historical manifestations of grassroots reform influenced the organization to oppose party politics in the interest of a superior political system. This thesis will be divided into three chapters, each of which utilizes a different form of analysis. Chapter one, "New Forum and the Apolitical Third Way," will investigate the defining features of the organization as they were manifested in the fall of 1989 and into 1990. Included among these features are, the intellectual character of New Forum's membership, its apolitical strategies, and the utopian content of its Third Way philosophy, which will be explored in order to provide a basic understanding of the organization. Chapter two, "The Defining Features of German Apolitical Reform," will begin to unpack the most essential elements of apolitical reform movements throughout German history, namely a focus on nature, grassroots organization, a commitment to social reform, and a counter-cultural identity. Through an analysis of these features within a broader historical context, a clearer picture of German apolitical reform should begin to emerge. Finally, chapter three, "Historical Instances of German Apolitical Organization," will consist of four historical examples of apolitical movements: the West German Green Party, Weimar-era synthesis ideology, the political philosophy of Weimar architects, and socialist revisionism.

These four test cases, while in some ways unrelated to New Forum, will also reveal the extent to which apolitical activism is embedded within German political culture. Thus, New Forum's apolitical identity was not solely a reaction to political circumstances; it was also the conscious effort to reform East Germany through the historically tested practice of grassroots apolitical reform.

CHAPTER 1

NEW FORUM AND THE APOLITICAL THIRD WAY

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, citizens of the GDR, their neighbors in West Germany, and people throughout the world rejoiced at the destruction of this symbol of political oppression. Yet, the period following this event, also known as *Die Wende*, was a tumultuous time for East Germans as the fate of their country was initially very unclear. Some East Germans believed that a new, more progressive path could be forged under a united Germany. Others looked to West Germany merely in expectation of increased material goods and job opportunities. Yet, even as German reunification appeared increasingly likely (it was the desired outcome of West German chancellor Helmut Kohl), many dissidents championed another cause. New Forum, still the largest civic organization in the GDR, was, on the whole, less attracted to the capitalist West, believing that there was still more to be done in an autonomous GDR. For the majority of New Forum's membership, the Third Way constituted a theoretically perplexing yet ultimately hopeful political vision for the future of East Germany. This chapter will explore exactly what the Third Way was, its apolitical dimensions, and its limitations within a hasty process of reunification.

Historical Context: The Revolution of 1989

The mass demonstrations that occurred in Leipzig (and in cities throughout the GDR) during the fall of 1989 were in no way spontaneous or the point at which formerly obedient citizens decided that they had finally had enough. Rather, it was the culmination of decades of dissident behavior, the moment in which a variety of

political and social factors combined to make a movement of opposition possible, even under the suffocating surveillance of the SED regime. Between the June 17, 1953 workers' uprising in East Berlin and the 1989 Monday night demonstrations in Leipzig, there were countless instances of nonconformity. Whether a political joke during a lunch break, a writer's hints at injustice, an attempted escape, or a bike demonstration through the streets of Berlin, dissent took a variety of forms in the GDR. As outlined in Detlev Peuker's book *Inside Nazi Germany*, dissident behavior can constitute many different actions, depending on the scope of the criticism and the sphere of the activity, from nonconformity and refusal all the way to protest and resistance.¹⁵

Although the civic movement during the fall of 1989 represented the crux of opposition in the GDR, the content and character of grassroots activism had been evolving throughout the 1980s. From petition campaigns to unofficial strikes, East German dissidents undertook a variety of methods to unsettle the East German status quo. Yet, reform in the GDR was quite unlike the political activities of alternative groups in democratic states, such as the Green Party of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Former leading member of the environmental organization *Umwelt Bibliothek* (Environmental Library), Tom Sello describes alternative methods of nonconformity: "It wasn't like in a normal society, where people could come together and form a party or a group. That wasn't possible in the GDR. One had to use the available options. For example we had bike demonstrations. We couldn't have actual

¹⁵ Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 83.

demonstrations, so we rode on bikes."¹⁶ Marianne Birthler, former member of the reform group *Solidarische Kirche* (Solidarity Church), confirms Sello's claim about East German opposition, stating that no one would have called themselves a resistance group in the GDR or would even have considered that they were opposing the government.¹⁷ In the GDR, most reform organizations functioned within the bounds of legality, a strategy that New Forum maintained through its official political registration and its reconciliatory stance towards the SED regime.

In 1989 a series of both domestic and international events accelerated the path of opposition and allowed the grassroots movement to transform from a quiet reform milieu into a nation-wide civic initiative. In the national elections in May of 1989, routine fraud on behalf of the SED produced an official vote of 98.85 percent, despite church observers who had been allowed to monitor voting polls reporting a lower number.¹⁸ Although over two hundred fifty civil rights groups filed suit against the government, all of them were ignored. Similar levels of fraud had undoubtedly been occurring over the last forty years, but by the spring of 1989, the SED's moderate toleration of grassroots reform had proven detrimental to its otherwise oppressive reign.¹⁹ Following the May elections, more than one hundred scattered protests throughout the GDR demanded the "liberalization of domestic policy" and began to

¹⁶ Tom Sello, interview by author, Berlin, July 18, 2013. "Aber das war eben nicht so wie in freien Gesellschaften, da man sagt, ja gut, den finden sich die Leute zusammen, und schliess mal eine zusammende gruppene Partei oder eine Gruppe oder eine Interessenvertretung. Das war in der DDR nicht möglich. Man musste sehen, wie man unter den Möglichkeiten, die da waren, irgendetwas ansprechen könnte. Das war zum Beispiel so ein Versuch... man macht mal eine Art Fahrrad-Demo, also eine Demonstration gab es eigentlich nicht, war nicht möglich, also ist man mit Fahrrädern gefahren."

¹⁷ Marianne Birthler, interview by author, Berlin, July 23, 2013.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Pond, "A Wall Destroyed," 40.

¹⁹ Fulbrook, *History of Germany*, 184.

awaken the general public to the phoniness of the GDR's "democratic" elections.²⁰

Thus, by operating under the uncontroversial titles of civic groups or reform initiatives and staying within the Protestant church, opposition organizations were able to slowly increase their influence without the immediate intervention or censorship of the SED regime.

In addition to election fraud, several factors pushed the civic movement to unite in opposition against the SED regime. Among these, General Secretary of the SED Erich Honecker's refusal to accept Soviet leader Gorbachev's increasingly liberal policies both infuriated the East German public while discrediting the GDR on an international stage.²¹ After a trip to West Germany in the fall of 1987, it was expected that Honecker would loosen the internal control system of the SED and perhaps even attempt to create some domestic dialogue among East Germans. Yet, from 1987 to 1989, Honecker suppressed public dissent more thoroughly than ever before.²² A separate event, Hungary's removal of its border restrictions on August 19, 1989, led thousands of East Germans to flee the country via Czechoslovakia into Hungary. By the fall of 1989, it had become clear that the East German government would not change on its own accord; the opposition movement was perhaps the only possibility for real political change.

Before delving into New Forum and the revolution of 1989, it is necessary to consider what factors prompted the discontent of millions of citizens and led them to risk their occupations and even their lives. Many political analysts and historians have considered this question and tend to offer a wide array of answers. Several authors

²⁰ Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, 38.

²¹ Pond, "A Wall Destroyed," 36.

²² *Ibid.*, 36.

have addressed this historical problem through a theoretical approach. In "Criticism/Self-criticism in East Germany: Contradictions between Theory and Practice," political psychologist Molly Andrews investigated the concepts of Marxist criticism and self-criticism and argues that these techniques provided the foundation for the citizens' uprising of 1989.²³ In comparison, historian Steven Pfaff argues that the crucial factors in making the revolution possible were shared grievances and expectations of social solidarity.²⁴ Just as there was a variety of reasons for the apolitical character of New Forum, there were also many different motivating factors within East German opposition. To some degree, both Marxist political philosophy and personal ties (as well as other social and political incentives) prompted East German citizens to participate in dissident activities.

In mid-September of 1989, activist and artist Bärbel Bohley joined with fellow protestors to found New Forum, the first nation-wide dissident club.²⁵ Later that month, a series of mass demonstrations in Leipzig and in cities throughout the GDR provided the perfect opportunity for New Forum to assert itself within the greater grassroots movement. Distributing political pamphlets such as *Aufbruch '89* (Awakening '89), the group successfully advertised itself as the new grassroots platform for open discussion and debate. A popular chant at the Monday night demonstrations, "Here Speaks the New Forum," indicated that the grassroots organization had quickly become the voice of opposition.²⁶

²³ Molly Andrews, "Criticism/ Self-Criticism in East Germany: Contradictions between Theory and Practice," *Critical Sociology* 24, no. 1-2 (1998): 130-153.

²⁴ Steven Pfaff, "Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilization: East Germany in 1989," *Social Forces* 75, no. 1 (1996): 91-117.

²⁵ Pond, "A Wall Destroyed," 42.

²⁶ Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany*, 159.

Although the group was initially denied official registration as a political organization, this ruling was soon overturned when over 70,000 protestors (the country's largest demonstration since 1953) gathered in Leipzig on October 9 to demand democratic reform and the legalization of New Forum.²⁷ Finally, on October 26, elected officials of the SED met with representatives of New Forum to discuss the organization's concerns, thus demonstrating the group's political legitimacy in the eyes of the government.²⁸ Throughout the fall of 1989, New Forum amassed the largest following of any opposition organization in the GDR, thus forcing the government to recognize its political influence. During the spring of 1990, the group continued its role as the most prominent mediator between the East German public and its quickly faltering leadership.

Although it is widely believed that November 9, 1989, the day the Berlin Wall fell, marked the overthrow of communist East Germany, this is perhaps only true to the outside world. For many East German dissidents, the actual turning point in the civic opposition movement had come approximately one month earlier, at the Monday night demonstrations in Leipzig. Marianne Birthler explains: "For me, the most important day of the revolution was October 9, 1989. That was the day we knew the revolution could not be reversed. Before then, there was too much police violence against demonstrators."²⁹ Birthler goes on to describe the acute sense of fear that gripped her church in Berlin and much of the nation on the night of the protest. It was believed that all schools would be closed the following day, that blood was being

²⁷ Ibid., 43.

²⁸ Pond, "A Wall Destroyed," 45.

²⁹ Birthler, interview. July 23, 2013. "Für mich ist der wichtigste Tag der Revolution der neunte Oktober. Das war der Tag an dem wir verstanden, dass diese Revolution jetzt unumkehrbar ist. Vorher gab es viel Polizeigewalt gegen Demonstranten."

collected to save the injured demonstrators, and that doctors were preparing to treat the victims of police brutality. Yet, none of these things occurred. Twenty minutes before the march was to begin, police pulled back from the main route, allowing demonstrators to march peacefully through Leipzig. Although the demonstrators were lucky that police had not intervened, the lack of violence was partially due to the calls of New Forum, which had urged participants to employ restraint if confronted by the authorities.³⁰ By the Monday night demonstrations in late October, over 100,000 people had signed New Forum's political platform "Awakening '89,"³¹ thus indicating the group's popularity and influence across dissident circles.

Believing that an authentic East German democracy would arise through grassroots politics, New Forum defined itself not as a party but as a platform for open political debate. In its first publication, "Awakening '89," the group wrote: "In our country, the communication between state and society has been destroyed."³² Thus, the group's initial primary concern involved the government's exclusion of East German citizens from political life, whereby the SED had lost all credibility in the GDR. As a platform for debate, New Forum sought to create a path for change, without dictating the outcome. Marianne Birthler describes this role: "New Forum had an important function, because it mobilized many people before the revolution. And many people were politically awakened, and, for the first time, gave signatures. The other groups narrowly focused on specific issues, but the New Forum created a

³⁰ Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany*, 164.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 159

³² *Aufbruch '89* [Awakening 89], September 9, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

mass mobilization."³³ Unlike other civic groups, which focused on only one area of social reform, New Forum desired to incorporate all social issues into a comprehensive list of necessary reform. In order to do so, New Forum encouraged smaller groups to redefine themselves as New Forum, declaring: "The experiences and knowledge of members of many parties and organizations are important - that gives life to New Forum."³⁴ As its following grew, New Forum's political identity as a platform for political debate began to take on new meanings. No longer just a space for discussion, New Forum constituted *the* alternative path in East German society, or what it called — the Third Way.

New Forum's Third Way

In its simplest terms, the Third Way can be assessed as a middle ground between communism and capitalism. Disillusioned by the SED regime, but wary of the materialist West, New Forum sought to combine the better aspects of each state. Although some East Germans criticized New Forum for opposing reunification, the group maintained that there was a better alternative to capitalism.³⁵ Despite political oppression and the extensive surveillance of the Stasi, there were many benefits to socialism, which New Forum did not want to relinquish. For example, although the group sought to increase civil liberties for citizens of the GDR, the state did have

³³ Birthler, interview, July 23, 2013. "Das Neue Forum hat eine wichtige Funktion, weil es vor der Revolution sehr viele Menschen mobilisiert hat. Und viele Leute sind bei dieser Gelegenheit politisch aufgewacht und haben sich zum ersten Mal getraut mit ihren Namen zu unterschreiben, dass sie Veränderung wollen. Die anderen Gruppen waren relativ klein und begrenzt, und nur das Neue Forum hat solche Massen mobilisiert."

³⁴ *Grundsatzpapier* [Founding Statement], January 16, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

³⁵ Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, 43.

relatively low unemployment rates and an impressive number of social services.³⁶

Working outside the limits of partisan politics, yet still attempting to influence the political course of the GDR, New Forum sponsored a conference on the creation of a “socio-ecological market economy” with limited privatization, open competition, and currency convertibility.³⁷ Thus, the organization sought to incorporate the economic freedoms of a market economy while maintaining a considerable amount of regulation and income equality.

In a document entitled "On the Reunification Plan of Pluralistic Rights," New Forum stated: "After achieving freedom from the clutches of Stalinism, we should not submit to the social injustices of Mr. Kohl."³⁸ Whereas many East Germans rejoiced at the superior market economy and seemingly infinite consumer products of the West, these benefits of reunification failed to entice most members of New Forum. Thus, although New Forum advocated for democratic institutions, its vision of democracy was not West Germany. Yet, in this short leaflet, probably distributed at one of the Leipzig demonstrations during the fall of 1989, New Forum is incredibly vague about just what the social injustices of Mr. Kohl were. A reoccurring problem within New Forum's political program of the Third Way, the inability to effectively articulate problems and their desired solutions would plague the organization well into 1990. Despite this weakness, New Forum continued to champion the Third Way,

³⁶ Dale, *The East German Revolution of 1989*, 114.

³⁷ Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, 100.

³⁸ *Zum Wiedervereinigungsplan der pluralistischen Rechte* [On the Reunification Plan of Pluralistic Rights], October 28, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Wir denken nicht daran, nachdem wir uns aus den Klauen des Stalinismus befreit haben, mit wehenden Fahnen in die soziale Ungerechtigkeit der 2/3-Gesellschaft eines Herrn Kohl überzulaufen."

through which the democratic civil liberties of the West would combine with the equitable social policies of the East.

Although it can be considered an amalgam of communism and capitalism, the leadership of New Forum often referred to their preferred political ideology as "democratic socialism." Despite the negative connotations that the term socialism possessed for many East German citizens, New Forum promoted an understanding of socialism based on its original intentions. Thus, the group sought to reclaim these forgotten definitions of socialism, e.g. a communal ethic, a commitment to welfare and redistributive justice, and collective ownership.³⁹ In addition to an emphasis on the communal or collective within its ideology, New Forum expounded a commitment to participatory democracy and disdain for voter alliances between political parties. This was the "democratic" aspect to its theory of "democratic socialism."⁴⁰ In *Exit-Voice Dynamics and the Collapse of East Germany*, Pfaff discusses the general rubric of the Third Way as a platform for human rights within the larger framework of a democratic renewal of socialism.⁴¹ Whereas most democracies rely on representational modes of participation, New Forum continued to emphasize grassroots strategies, advocating direct citizen participation rather than the parliamentary forms supported by the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and civic organization Democratic Awakening.⁴²

In practical terms, a "democratic socialism," situated somewhere in between communism and capitalism, implied neither reunification with the Federal Republic

³⁹ Dale, *The East German Revolution of 1989*, 113.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴¹ Pfaff, *Exit-Voice Dynamics and the Collapse of East Germany*, 194.

⁴² Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, 78.

of Germany, nor a continuation of the status quo in East Germany. Rather, New Forum and much of the opposition movement sought to create a new, arguably utopian GDR, without travel restrictions and including many of the civil liberties guaranteed in the West. In fact, as late as November 4, 1989, protestors still saw the movement as a landmark event in *East* German history, and virtually no one interviewed by reporters said they wanted reunification.⁴³ Although they welcomed support from the West, leaders of the greater opposition movement were not interested in relinquishing their political goals in exchange for the security of Western institutions. Having worked underground for many years, and in a number of different grassroots organizations, protesters such as Bärbel Bohley believed that the fall of 1989 was their moment for real political change.

Although New Forum itself resembled something like an umbrella of disparate political opinions and interest groups, it sought to expand its popular base through a merger with several other opposition organizations. Seeking to become more legitimate in the eyes of the SED, but not interested in running for office itself, New Forum, along with the groups Democracy Now and the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, gave its support to the progressive party *Bündnis '90* (Alliance '90).⁴⁴ Although the party had a liberal platform including a variety of political reforms, which it demanded from the SED government, its central statement was a refusal to be annexed by the West, thus reflecting the interests of New Forum. In fact, one of the first documents of Alliance '90, "Press Release of Alliance '90/The Greens," was published at the New Forum headquarters by New Forum leader Bärbel Bohley and

⁴³ Pond, "A Wall Destroyed," 47.

⁴⁴ Patton, "Annus Mirabilis," 765.

other members. Denouncing the SPD and CDU as inadequate and outdated parties within a reformed East Germany,⁴⁵ New Forum was instead inspired by the political merger of the two "anti-parties" of the GDR and West Germany.

During the fall of 1989 and even into 1990, New Forum was distributing a significant amount of literature in an attempt to publicize the discourse of a grassroots path towards a perfected socialist state. Noting the significance of the GDR's 40th birthday, the organization sought to distinguish between the sort of socialism espoused by the SED and a socialist ideology that could lead to a freer, more liberal state. In New Forum's statement on the 40th Anniversary of the GDR, the group wrote, "The government hypocritically says that socialism is endangered, but socialism is not threatened by a peoples' movement. Peoples' movements threaten nothing; rather, they help to develop a communal way of life."⁴⁶ Here, New Forum alluded to the hypocrisy of the SED, suggesting that there are two forms of socialism: one that the government abides by and one that is its original, intended form. Furthermore, in a country in which fear and intimidation were common political tactics, New Forum attempted to create a softer political image, one that was rehabilitative and not forceful. In the tumultuous political environment of 1989, New Forum sought to characterize itself as the Third Way solution by appealing to those who still felt they had a stake in an independent GDR.

⁴⁵ *Presseerklärung Bündnis '90/Die Grünen* [Press Release of Alliance '90/The Greens], May 16, 1990, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

⁴⁶ *Erklärung des Neuen Forum zum 40. Jahrestag der DDR* [Statement of New Forum on the 40th Anniversary of the GDR], October 10, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Der Sozialismus, den die Regierung so scheinheilig gefährdet sieht, kann durch eine Basisbewegung nicht bedroht sein. Bürgerinitiativen bedrohen nicht, sondern entfalten gesellschaftliches Leben."

Sensing the very real competition of Western political might, the group also used messages of warning, which urged East Germans not to falter from their state's intended course. Hence, in a press release after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the group wrote: "Do not fail to answer the call of the state's political awakening."⁴⁷ This line from a document published just weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall evokes an almost militant call to duty, which is eerily reminiscent of the sort of request that the SED would have demanded of East Germans. Yet, in order to awaken citizens to the intensity of the political climate, New Forum's publications required a decidedly straightforward and even demanding tone. On the one hand legitimizing the group in the eyes of the SED, the powerful language of New Forum's publications was effective in remedying the group's reputation as a somewhat inactive, indecisive platform for debate. In addition to warning the public about the costs of reunification, New Forum repeatedly characterized the fall of 1989 as a revolution, despite the variety of factors that had contributed to the decline of the SED regime. In the same document, the group exclaims that East German citizens are "heroes of a revolution," who should not become sidetracked by the temptations of reunification.⁴⁸ Again, New Forum was strategic in its use of an uplifting yet urgent tone, which alerted its followers to the seriousness of the political situation.

To fully understand the connection between New Forum's Third Way movement and reformed socialism, it is also necessary to consider the development of socialist ideology throughout its forty-year course in East Germany. Founded in 1949

⁴⁷ *Die Mauer ist gefallen* [The Wall has Fallen], November 12, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Laßt euch nicht von der Forderung nach einem politischen Neuaufbau der Gesellschaft ablenken."

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, "Ihr seid die Helden einer politischen Revolution."

under Soviet occupation, the GDR's utopian conceptions of community and socioeconomic equality were quickly degraded by the corrupt policies of the SED ruling party. Throughout "Stalinization" of the early 1950s, Third Way Marxists were purged from the higher ranks of the SED, allowing the Soviet Union to tighten its grip on East Germany's political trajectory.⁴⁹ Yet, the socialism espoused by intellectuals at the founding of the GDR never really died out; it continued to circulate in underground conversations, eventually resurfacing in the opposition movement of the late 1980s.⁵⁰ While the specific language of the Third Way is a German invention, the realm of apolitical reform was vast and extended throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. George Konrad, a Hungarian activist who eventually found refuge in West Germany, described anti-politics as a "network of conversations uncontrollable from above."⁵¹ Thus, the Third Way, which New Forum and other civic organizations championed as a model for an independent East Germany in the fall of 1989, was not a spontaneous invention. Although political manifestations of the Third Way were diminished under the SED regime, the ideology of *Überparteilichkeit* and the belief in a reformed socialism have been integral components of grassroots, apolitical reform throughout German history.

New Forum after 1989

After the success of the Monday night demonstrations, New Forum transitioned from its role as the leading opposition organization into a reconciliatory

⁴⁹ Fulbrook, *History of Germany*, 226.

⁵⁰ Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989*, 207.

⁵¹ Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 15.

middleman between the East German public and the SED. Yet in spite of its political goals, New Forum continued to see itself as an extra-parliamentary platform for discussion and debate — and not a political party. In "Awakening '89," the political leaflet distributed at the Leipzig demonstrations, New Forum stated: "Together we are building a political platform for the entire GDR, which makes it possible for people of all professions, circles of life, and parties to take part in the discussion of the essential societal problems of this land."⁵² For New Forum, apolitical activity did not imply a reversion back to the underground settings of church basements and private homes. Rather, the group sought a new vessel for social change outside of parliamentary structures and apart from plans for a united Germany.

An inclusive message, "Awakening '89" was intended to demonstrate the open-minded and unbiased nature of the organization (although it is clear that the leading members of New Forum did hold their own political biases). Thus, the group attempted to extend the bottom-up approach of grassroots organization to the entire state, creating a nationwide discussion that might ultimately reach the level of actual political change. In "Statement of the New Forum on the 40th Anniversary of the GDR," the group self-proclaims that, "New Forum is the site for new thinking."⁵³ While advertising itself as the creator of a new mode of politics, the group's utopian leanings and apolitical methods were actually part of a long history of German grassroots reform. Yet, within the oppressive context of East Germany, this concept

⁵² *Aufbruch '89* [Awakening '89], September 9, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Wir bilden deshalb gemeinsam eine politische Plattform für die ganze DDR, die es Menschen aus allen Berufen, Lebenskreisen, Parteien und Gruppen möglich macht, sich an der Diskussion und Bearbeitung lebenswichtiger Gesellschaftsprobleme in diesem Land zu beteiligen."

⁵³ *Erklärung des Neuen Forum zum 40. Jahrestag der DDR* [Statement of New Forum on the 40th Anniversary of the GDR], October 10, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Das Neue Forum ist eine Stätte für Neues Denken."

of a platform for discussion and debate was unprecedented and undoubtedly exciting for many citizens.

The central political vessel of New Forum throughout 1989 and 1990, the Round Table forums, were intended to bridge the gap between apolitical grassroots change and actual legislation. Like New Forum itself, the Round Table conferences were primarily intended as a temporary platform for discussion. In "Statement of New Forum on the 40th Anniversary of the GDR," the organization writes, "New Forum would eventually like to become unnecessary."⁵⁴ Similar to the intention behind the organization itself, the Round Table conferences were intended as a temporary institution on the path towards a revitalized political system. Held in several of East Germany's major cities, the forums were intended to address a variety of economic and social issues during this period of political transition. Although there existed a variety of independent Round Tables, including the grassroots-oriented "Round Table from Below," the most influential and largest forum, the "Central Round Table," hosted representatives from the main civic groups, as well as politicians from the SED. It included sixteen committees that addressed topics ranging from economic and constitutional issues to gender equality,⁵⁵ thus attempting to provide a holistic solution to the problem of political illegitimacy within the GDR. Although the Central Round Table was New Forum's first overtly political action, the group remained nonpartisan throughout the proceedings and played a relatively minor role despite its immense popularity within East German society.

⁵⁴ Ibid., "Das Neue Forum mag eines Tages entbehrlich sein."

⁵⁵ Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, 86.

During the spring of 1990, the delegates at the Round Table were able to agree upon and enact a variety of social measures, which began the process of democratization even before the first truly democratic elections on March 18th. Somewhat of an interim government itself, the Round Table cooperated with the revived *Volkskammer* (parliament) to create a new election procedure and voting laws, which were approved on February 20th. Within this reform act, changes included a mandatory closed voting booth instead of the outdated procedure of folding ballots in open view, an abolishment of the required minimum number of votes for holding seats in parliament, and a clause which allowed civic associations (not technically parties) to run for office.⁵⁶ Thus, during this short period of time in which East Germany retained some political autonomy, dominated by neither the SED nor West Germany, considerable progress was made towards New Forum's democratic social ideal. In addition to election reforms that mirrored the right to privacy in the West and loosened the SED's political control, the contributions of the Central Round Table even extended to include the civic movement, which had played an important role in the peaceful revolution during the fall of 1989. The clause permitting civic associations to run for office included organizations like New Forum, thus suggesting that this interim period in East German history made some progress towards the non-partisan Third Way. The fact that associations working outside of party lines would have had some political say suggests that even the East German Parliament was somewhat attracted to the radical democratic reforms posited by New Forum.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 120.

As delegates to the Central Round Table conferences, New Forum leaders continued their grassroots, regional-based strategies even on the national stage. In its application to the conference, the organization recommended election reform that would include "local government elections in cities and regions with the aim of creating the greatest possible autonomy and self-administration of individual communities."⁵⁷ Thus, rather than advocating top-down government reforms, New Forum continued to focus on regional, grassroots strategies that would give East German citizens a greater say in political and social matters. This commitment to a regional understanding of East German political identity is reminiscent of the *Heimat* movement during the Wilhelmine era, when Germany's authoritarian center was counteracted by the reformative efforts of individual communities. Yet despite the greater German tradition of grassroots regionalism, it proved difficult for New Forum to reconcile its own political agenda with that of the conservative SED.⁵⁸ Furthermore, organizations like New Forum were hypocritically working to dismantle outdated, oppressive structures in solidarity with the very party that had been the source of this oppression. Thus, although effective in enacting short-term democratic reforms, the Round Table was unable to provide a lasting solution for East Germany, partly because it represented the synthesis of two political enemies, who, despite their attempted reconciliation, ultimately desired very different outcomes.

⁵⁷ *Antrag an den Runden Tisch* [Application to the Round Table], December 19, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Erster Schritt: Kommunalwahlen in den Städten und Gemeinden mit dem Ziel der größtmöglichen Eigenständigkeit und Selbstverwaltung der Kommunen."

⁵⁸ Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, 80.

Who Were Third Way Intellectuals?

Essential to understanding how the New Forum operated during its brief political life, the identity and demographics of its membership reveal a great deal about both the organization's success and its failure. Much like grassroots movements throughout the developed world, New Forum members were, for the most part, well-educated, successful professionals, thus suggesting an intellectual or even elite identity within the group as a whole. Whereas blue-collar workers had more basic pecuniary concerns, the professionals and artists of East German cities had both the resources and historical knowledge to voice their opinions on political issues. In "Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilization," Steven Pfaff offers a "Rational Actor Approach" theory of grassroots movements, which views demonstrators as actors independent of organizational mobilization.⁵⁹ Within this identity driven theory, Pfaff shifts the emphasis from the institutional policies of mass parties towards the interests and expectations of individuals. In terms of New Forum, the Rational Actor Approach provides strong evidence as to why educated intellectuals not only felt the need to participate in the Third Way movement, but also composed an overwhelming majority of its membership. According to Pfaff, studies suggest that East German citizens with higher levels of education, and thus greater exposure to the political history of Germany, were more committed to socialist ideology than others.⁶⁰ Although one could argue that grassroots movements are generally more elitist in membership, perhaps a better approach investigates the motives of individual actors. In East Germany, educated professionals tended to

⁵⁹ Pfaff, "Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilization," 93.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

embrace the theoretical concepts of the Third Way because they were more familiar with them, and thus more prepared to advocate on their behalf.

Whatever the cause of New Forum's heavily intellectual demographic, it is clear that the group's arguably homogeneous membership was instrumental in shaping its political course. Bärbel Bohley, a founding member of the organization, was also quite perceptive about its imperfections and political mistakes. She wrote that the interest groups from which the greater civic movement evolved "were detached and aloof from the problems faced by the people."⁶¹ Although not a direct implication of New Forum itself, this statement suggests a general trend in the character of the Third Way movement, in which utopian political hopes tended to shroud the immediacy of the collapsing state. Statistical evidence reveals a similar picture. A survey of the Berlin New Forum membership found that almost 75% were educated to the tertiary level, 39% described themselves as intelligentsia, 10% percent as managers, and 10% percent as students.⁶² To some degree, the Third Way movement was a sort of turning inward away from the political reality of oncoming German reunification. Less concerned with the practical issues of currency exchange and potential unemployment, dissident intellectuals focused on the greater ideological question of an ideal socialism. Reminiscent of the Wilhelmine apolitical milieu, which deflected efforts at reform away from the state and towards personal development,⁶³ the East German Third Way neglected the more immediate international political issues of its time. Although the group was adept at formulating

⁶¹ Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany*, 157.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 171

⁶³ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 4.

well-articulated press releases and theoretical studies, it had less success in leading the East German people once the Leipzig demonstrations had passed.

Although there were clear limitations to New Forum's popularity, the group was actually quite skilled at social networking and tended to utilize personal relationships in order to build political bridges. One feature, which contributed to a rapid proliferation of the Third Way ideology, was the dominantly urban character of the movement. Although New Forum was established in all of East Germany's major cities, East Berlin was undoubtedly its political center.⁶⁴ From there, social solidarities arose in the private sphere between friends and associates. Tom Sello, leader of the civic group Environmental Library, described his affinity for the opposition movement as arising out of his own personal commitments and friendships.⁶⁵ Thus, the mobilization of grassroots groups, and especially New Forum, appears to have reflected the organization of an already existing reform niche within East German counter-culture.

Excluding those who had left for the West, New Forum garnered support from friends and associates, many of whom had lived and worked together in compact, tightknit communities for their entire lives. This "niche," so to speak, was not merely limited to established relationships; it also attracted outsiders who wished to join the Third Way movement. Although the group experienced difficulties in forming lasting connections with workers and laborers, it was, at times, surprisingly successful at attaining their support. During the fall of 1989, entire factories were known to sign

⁶⁴ Pfaff, *Exit-Voice Dynamics and the Collapse of East Germany: The Crisis of Leninism and the Revolution of 1989*, 213.

⁶⁵ Sello, interview, July 18, 2013.

the widely circulated "Awakening 89," New Forum's founding platform.⁶⁶ For the apolitical Third Way movement, which rejected nationalist propaganda and other methods of mass appeal, social networking proved an invaluable resource in maintaining and increasing popular support.

Partisan Politics and Apolitical Beliefs

Establishing its ambivalence about the East German government at the beginning of its formation, New Forum went on to view political parties through a mistrustful and sometimes jaded lens. Citing a disrupted communication between state and society as the central problem in East Germany in the widely distributed political pamphlet "Awakening '89,"⁶⁷ New Forum sought to rehabilitate a sense of national communication and organization. Although sometimes acting in alliance with the SED, the group alternately had a heavily apolitical ideology. Regarding its own political course, New Forum chose to register as an organization and not as a party, like the Social Democrats or Alliance '90, the latter a party that it officially supported.⁶⁸ Yet, through the Round Table debates and amendments to the electoral system, New Forum initiated a transformation of the East German government, one that was never brought to completion. Thus, rather than reform East Germany through parliamentary means, New Forum sought to change the political system entirely.

While apolitical in terms of organization, it could also be argued that New Forum was

⁶⁶ Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany*, 178.

⁶⁷ *Aufbruch '89* [Awakening '89], December 18, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

⁶⁸ It is important to note that New Forum was not able to register itself as an organization until October 31, 1989. Thus, it would have been much more difficult to enter partisan politics, even if the group had desired to do so.

ahead of the times because it sought to create an untested system through the synthesis of various government institutions and political philosophies.

Although the group struggled to define a clear political plan for East Germany, it was clear on one issue: partisan politics were dangerous and tended to promote the interests of greedy, self-interested individuals, and not the state. Thus, after the dissolution of Krenz's government in December of 1989, New Forum demanded a "caretaker government" that would work independently of parties.⁶⁹ Intellectuals such as Dr. Pavel Strohner of Berlin attempted to offer solutions to the corrupt single-party system of the GDR. In "People's Movements: Interest-politics or Integral Politics?" Strohner wrote, "What do integral politics look like compared to party politics? Are they a new element of the political system?" He went on to claim, "The previous history of humanity showed itself as a rise and fall of cultures and forms of government that emerged in the struggle of social forces and dissipated... Only an integral policy that builds on the cultural achievements of Western democracy can contribute to a meaningful development of democracy."⁷⁰ This study, belonging to an archive of New Forum materials, provides a new perspective on the meaning of the Third Way. Employing the term "integral" to imply a sort of wholeness to a reformed democratic theory, Strohner mirrors New Forum's calls for political synthesis. Within New Forum, questions regarding an integral vision of

⁶⁹ Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, 103.

⁷⁰ *Bürgerbewegung: Interessenpolitik oder integrale Politik* [People's Movements: Interest-politics or Integral Politics], 1989, Bärbel Bohley, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Wie soll nun solche eine integrale Politik im Gegensatz zu einer Interessen- und Parteienpolitik aussehen? Ist sie ein völlig neues Element in der Politik?... Die bisherige Geschichte der Menschheit zeigte sich als historisches Auf und Ab von Kulturen und Herrschaftsformen, die im Kampf sozialer Kräfte entstanden und vergingen... Nur eine integrale Politik, die auf den kulturellen Leistungen der westlichen Demokratie aufbaut, kann zu einer sinnvollen Weiterentwicklung der Demokratie beitragen."

government provoked a variety of answers, yet all responses involved some sort of revision of democratic institutions.

Although New Forum viewed parliamentary systems as outdated and even authoritarian, it was less clear about how a grassroots Third Way movement could feasibly replace typical republican structures. In "Against the Disintegration of New Forum," several of New Forum's most prominent members provided a sharp rejection of the trend of partisan formation in the GDR. Including the "Forum Party," an offshoot of New Forum, in their denunciation, the authors condemned newly formed parties for disobeying the organization's central apolitical tenet. Hence, "Political parties are always consumed with third-rate problems in order to improve appearances and to obscure the more important questions for which they do not have answers."⁷¹ Rather, the Third Way ideology was intended to remedy the problem of politicians having to fake interest in nonessential issues in order to increase financial support or popularity. If leaders acted outside of parties, then perhaps they would not be bound by promises or platforms, but could instead answer to the real interests of East German citizens. Yet, it can also be argued that New Forum was against parties because it saw them as threatening to the grassroots movement. As they claimed, "We are not against parties, but we are against the destruction of our citizens movement!"⁷² Within this single document addressing the state of New Forum, the topic of partisan politics is portrayed as both a negative and acceptable institution.

Although it tried to operate exclusively on the plane of civil society, New Forum

⁷¹ *Gegen eine Spaltung des Neuen Forum* [Against the Disintegration of New Forum], 1989, Bärbel Bohley, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Politische Parteien erliegen immer der Versuchung, drittrangige Fragen aufzubauschen, um Profil zu gewinnen und zugleich die Sachfragen zu verschleiern, für die sie keine Lösungen parat haben."

⁷² *Ibid.*, "Wir sind nicht gegen Parteien, aber wir sind gegen die Zerstörung unserer Bürgerbewegung."

found it difficult to escape politics altogether, even relying upon existing parliamentary structures to push for legislation at the Round Table forums.

Although its emphasis on individualism influenced New Forum's initial anti-partisan stance, it was not necessarily an "anti-political" organization, as much of its activity was intended to revolutionize politics. In "Founding Statement," New Forum declared: "After forty years of conservative thinking, it is important that we expect responsibility from the political system itself, not only from political parties."⁷³ Thus, although party greed and corruption may have been important problems, they were merely symptomatic of the greater political failure of East Germany. While denouncing the failures of political parties like the SED and the GDR's false presentation as a democracy, New Forum offered no sound alternative to a representative system of government. Thus, the problem with the Third Way movement was not necessarily its apolitical stance, but its failure to translate ideology into actual policy. Whereas events like the fall of the Berlin Wall could have been groundbreaking for New Forum in terms of asserting itself as the leading opponent of the SED, its popularity tended to decline after its leadership role during the October Leipzig demonstrations. As in other apolitical movements throughout German history, the East German Third Way was more adept at naming problems than solutions. While its apolitical nature created certain bureaucratic challenges, the group's non-affiliated identity could have been used to gain political allies in the democratic elections of 1990. Instead, New Forum was too critical of even the most

⁷³ *Grundsatzpapier* [Founding Statement], January 16, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Nach 40 Jahren vormundschaftlichen Denkens ist es notwendig, daß wir nicht länger mehr unsere Verantwortung an Parteien delegieren, sondern die Politik selbst gestalten."

progressive of parties, thus preventing its Third Way ideology from finding a receptive political outlet while becoming increasingly obscure.

Utopianism or Nationalism?

In order to better analyze the politically unique and often contradictory nature of the German Third Way, it is helpful to broaden the historical lens and to consider its manifestation during earlier periods. A typical analysis of the ideology tends to characterize it as considerably utopian in that it tended to ignore some real-world problems while portraying the future in an optimistic light. Yet, not all of New Forum's members would have agreed with that characterization, since in many ways the GDR had portrayed itself as a sort of socialist utopia although it was clearly far from it. Instead, New Forum attempted to retain optimism about the future while utilizing the organizational methods of earlier grassroots movements in German history. In *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, Kevin Repp argues that the Wilhelmine Third Way movement "refused flight into utopias or resignation," and instead "took a stand on contemporary ground, fully aware of the potential dangers."⁷⁴ Similarly, one should not necessarily define the Third Way as a utopian concept, since in many regards New Forum's use of grassroots strategies and call for democratic reform suggest a practical approach to real political change. Yet conversely, the mission of the Third Way implied that there was some elusive end to this uncharted territory, a final democratic paradise free from the corrupt influences of money and power. Although this mission involved a synthesis of existing institutions, its utopian content revealed a recurrent theme throughout Germany

⁷⁴ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 16.

history. The Third Way arguably constituted a symptom of German political oppression, a means of articulating political opinions within a system that did not accept dissenting voices.⁷⁵

Although very much a Soviet satellite state, East Germany differed from other Eastern European countries in how it responded to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Whereas many Soviet states underwent extreme nationalist revolutions, some violent and all striving for complete political independence, the GDR's peaceful revolution did not demand a complete overthrow of the SED regime. Although the existence of West Germany changed the political dynamic (reunification seemed a natural solution to the collapse of the SED regime), there were other factors that led East German citizens to shy away from nationalist appeals. Historian Robert Patton argues that intellectuals in particular avoided nationalist language because of possible links to the Third Reich.⁷⁶ Yet, the Third Way apolitical movement was also mistrustful of nationalism because it signified reunification through a top-down approach, rather than organic grassroots change. Thus New Forum functioned in the "gray area, neither public nor private"⁷⁷ (which might also be defined as civil society) in order to reform the state without using coercive tactics. In "On the Creation of a United German State," New Forum lamented: "In the past the people understood German nationalism as state-supported aggression," adding "the problems of our world will not be solved through nationalism."⁷⁸ Thus, the Third Way movement did

⁷⁵ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 4.

⁷⁶ Patton, "Annus Mirabilis," 759.

⁷⁷ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 15.

⁷⁸ *Zur Bildung eines gemeinsamen deutschen Staates* [On the Creation of a United German State], December 18, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "In der Vergangenheit haben die Völker deutschen Nationalismus als staatliche Aggression erfahren... die Hauptprobleme unserer Welt sind nicht nationalstaatlich zu lösen."

not wish to resemble processes of nationalism occurring in other European countries or to harken back to Germany's nationalistic past, but to forge its own uncharted grassroots path. By denouncing nationalist appeals, New Forum thereby distanced itself from West Germany and the trend towards German reunification.

The apolitical Third Way of East Germany was too abstract, too idealistic, and too impractical to be taken seriously. Eventually, it faded into the political background. Other members of the opposition movement were disenchanted by the group's lack of direction. Marianne Birthler of Solidarity Church explained that, "conceptually, I found New Forum very diffused. They wanted everything and nothing. For me, the group lacked clear contours. They only named problems; they didn't provide solutions."⁷⁹ Thus, to some degree, the apolitical identity of New Forum prevented the organization from articulating a clear political platform, which could be translated into actual legislation. Sensing the impracticality of its demands, the New Forum leadership eventually shifted its radical tone to encourage a more gradual process of reunification.⁸⁰ But even this solution, which aimed to save at least some socialist policies, could not halt the rapid economic and social changes occurring throughout the GDR. Thus, in the end, the political might of West Germany overpowered the grassroots strategies of East German Third Way advocates. Although New Forum's decision to remain apolitical was affected by the character of East German civic opposition, this was not the only factor influencing its political course. Rather, the apolitical features of New Forum were related to a greater

⁷⁹ Birthler, interview. July 23, 2013. "Inhaltlich fand ich das Neue Forum immer ziemlich diffus. Sie wollten alles und nichts, und hatte für mich keine klaren Konturen. Sie hatten nur Problem benannt, aber hatten nicht Lösungen."

⁸⁰ Patton, "Annus Mirabilis," 765.

tradition of German grassroots organization. The following chapter will investigate the common features between New Forum and grassroots movements throughout German history in order to make sense of the German affinity for apolitical reform.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEFINING FEATURES OF GERMAN APOLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Although much of the literature on New Forum and the Third Way considers this period in East German history as an organizational failure in which the West quickly triumphed over its socialist counterpart,⁸¹ this is perhaps only true in a political sense. Historically, it is almost impossible to pinpoint a beginning or an end to this alternative, apolitical component of German political culture. Furthermore, it is difficult to impose precise boundaries on exactly who this group includes or to determine what qualifies something as a Third Way movement in Germany history. Because New Forum's Third Way was a movement that aimed to reclaim a variety of forgotten social, political, and ecological concepts, it can be better understood by investigating these ideas in their earlier forms. While creating a precise definition of the apolitical Third Way is an arguably fruitless project, it is possible to highlight several themes that have characterized similar reform movements in the past. By illuminating some of these trends, this chapter will demonstrate that New Forum's apolitical nature did not arise in a vacuum, but was rather a single occurrence of extra-parliamentary activism, which has always been an important aspect of the German political culture.

The first aspect of the German Third Way, the cultivation of an environmental program, dates back to Wilhelmine conservation movements, in which conceptions of nature and conservation became intrinsically linked to German national identity. In addition to a grassroots interest in conservation, political parties were quick to utilize

⁸¹ Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany* and *The East German Revolution of 1989*.

public sentiment for nature within platforms that emphasized the "Germanness" of exercise and the outdoors. Among such parties were the National Socialists, whose extensive propaganda included notions of a superior German understanding of and connection to the natural world.⁸² Although tainted by its association with National Socialism, conservation continued to be a major concern among activists in both West Germany and the GDR. One of the most polluted nations on the European continent, East Germany of course had an additional set of incentives when it came to nature conservation and restoration. Given noteworthy similarities in the frequently irrational demands of activists and their use of utopian terminology, however, the ideological link between apolitical environmentalism in East Germany and earlier German Green movements cannot be ignored.

A second connecting thread between East German opposition and the alternative movements of generations past is a commitment to grassroots politics, which reveals an affinity for the "gray area," neither public nor private, in which real change might be achieved.⁸³ What might be termed the political aspect of New Forum's Third Way, this component of an alternative reform movement is also sharply apolitical, especially in its renunciation of partisan politics and the parliamentary system. Although New Forum saw itself as a platform for the discussion of political issues, it did not consider itself a political organization, and, for the most part, it shied away from affiliations with parties. Considering the oppressive history of the SED, it makes sense that New Forum was wary of party politics, but this tendency is not unique to the East German opposition. In Wilhelmine Germany,

⁸² Frank Uekötter, *The Green and the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁸³ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 14.

localized conceptions of nationalism, or a "Heimat" movement, first began to develop without the influence of parties. This emphasis on grassroots, bottom-up reform carried over into the Weimar Republic, where extra-parliamentary organizations offered ideological solutions to the state's democratic flaws.⁸⁴ Whether conservative or liberal, these groups revealed the alleged misconceptions and failures of Weimar democracy. New Forum's apolitical Third Way is, to some degree, a continuation of the political criticisms of reform initiatives in these historical eras.

While related to the apolitical aspect of dissident movements in the GDR, the goal of social reform was perhaps the beginning of what came to be the East German revolution. Reform movements in the GDR provided a channel for dissatisfied citizens to participate in political change without the immediate risk of SED suspicion or retaliation. Whether it concerned the status of women, the rights of workers, or the rights and special needs of disabled individuals, reform was an essential component of New Forum's political platform. Wilhelmine Germany was one of the more socially progressive states within modern Europe, and its educated bourgeoisie spearheaded many reform movements, which pertained to a variety of social ills. With the ultimate goal of creating positive, meaningful change for all sectors of German society, the Wilhelmine reform movement extended from ideas like physical health to land reform. This enlightened approach to social change constituted an attempt to sidestep an authoritarian and undemocratic political system.⁸⁵ Like the East German Third Way, it was a bourgeois movement, led by educated individuals and with less appeal for workers. In Weimar Germany, reform initiatives such as the

⁸⁴ Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

⁸⁵ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 4.

Garden city movement sought to improve the quality of life through architecture and urban planning, thus reducing social tensions while strengthening a sense of community.⁸⁶

A final component of the German Third Way that was sustained throughout the twentieth century is a self-awareness of its alternative, counter-cultural identity. During Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, "naturalists," as they were called, resided in commune-like settlements, such as the Eden commune on the outskirts of Berlin, where they practiced socialist alternatives to the authoritarian state.⁸⁷ In the GDR, it was difficult to avoid the constant censorship of the SED, yet many artists and dissidents somehow managed to carve out a space for alternative lifestyles, most famously in the poor yet trendy "Prenzlauer Berg" neighborhood of East Berlin.⁸⁸ By no means representing a single alternative to the East German norm, the dissident counter-culture consisted of intellectuals, artists, vegetarians, and many other individuals who struggled to maintain a unique identity within an oppressive political system. Using Berlin as a case study for this counter-cultural aspect of the Third Way, this chapter will attempt to show the continuity of the apolitical discourse as it was expressed throughout German history. Although this chapter lists environmentalism, grassroots politics, reform movements, and counter-cultures as the defining elements of the German Third Way, this is by no means an exhaustive list of common themes. Rather, these threads represent several of the defining features of this alternative

⁸⁶ Iain Boyd Whyte and David Frisby, *Metropolis Berlin: 1880-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 267-268.

⁸⁷ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 26.

⁸⁸ Sello, interview, July 18, 2013.

ideology, which, through dictatorships and democracy, has continued to resonate within German politics.

From Nature Conservation to Environmentalism

Today, Germany is regarded as having one of the greenest economies in the developed world, and the progressive party Alliance '90/The Greens has a strong presence in parliamentary politics. Although worldwide developments in renewable energy and resource conservation have influenced Germany to become greener, the preservation of nature has been a fundamental political issue since the middle of the nineteenth century. Hence, despite changing environmental concerns, the contemporary German Green movement continues to draw upon existing institutional networks, a long tradition of sentimentalizing nature, and an informed public discourse on environmental issues.⁸⁹ Although the GDR's communist government may not have cared much for nature, as it made abundantly clear through toxic levels of air and water pollution, the concern and even enchantment with nature was sustained in pockets of East German subculture. While several dissident organizations such as Environmental Library and Arche Nova committed their efforts entirely to issues of conservation and environmental safety, even New Forum dedicated a considerable amount of attention to issues like nature conservation and atomic energy. While not always entirely rational or pragmatic in their discussion of environmental issues, this tendency of New Forum thus reflected continuities of enchantment with nature throughout modern German history.

⁸⁹ Thomas M. Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 256.

For German thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, man's relationship to nature was an existential question that provoked a wealth of literature and philosophical texts. Much of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poetry consisted of musings on the immense wholeness and power of nature. In "Aphorisms on Nature," he writes,

Nature lives in her children only, and the mother, where is she? She is the sole artist, - out of the simplest materials the greatest diversity; attaining, with no trace of effort, the finest perfection, the closest precision, always softly veiled. Each of her works has an essence of its own; every shape that she takes is an idea utterly isolated; and yet all forms one.⁹⁰

Out of this philosophical tradition, early German conservation movements adopted almost spiritual overtones, in which preservation of the natural landscape (or rather the imagined natural landscape) became a personal obligation for nature enthusiasts. Hence, conservation began as a sentiment, not a social movement, although it quickly spilled over into the *Heimatschutz* (homeland protection) and *Naturschutz* (nature protection) apolitical organizations of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany.⁹¹ While operating within a vastly different context, New Forum's language mirrors that of its Romantic foundations. Writing that "Man, as a part of nature, is only viable when he succeeds in preserving natural resources like air, earth, and water,"⁹² New Forum

⁹⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Aphorisms on Nature," in *The Maxims and Reflections of Goethe* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), 208, <https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=CMZJAAAAIAAJ&rdid=book-CMZJAAAAIAAJ&rdot=1> (accessed April 8, 2014). "Sie lebt in lauter Kindern; und die Mutter, wo ist sie? – Sie ist die einzige Künstlerin: Aus dem simpelsten Stoff zu den größten Kontrasten; ohne Schein der Anstrengung zu der größten Vollendung – zur genauesten Bestimmtheit, immer mit etwas Weichem überzogen. Jedes ihrer Werke hat ein eigenes Wesen, jede ihrer Erscheinungen den isoliertesten Begriff, und doch macht alles eins aus."

⁹¹ Uekötter, *The Green and the Brown*, 17.

⁹² *Programmerklärung des Neuen Forum* [Problem Explanation of New Forum], 1989, Bärbel Bohley, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Der Mensch ist als Teil der Natur nur dann lebensfähig, wenn es ihm gelingt, Lebensgrundlagen wie Luft, Boden und Wasser zu erhalten."

emphasized the interconnectedness of nature and man, while acknowledging the normative superiority of natural resources over commercial goods.

As an ideology, Wilhelmine nature conservation was more than just the act of preserving nature; it was the emotional, visceral connection to the natural world that, at times, transcended rational environmental practices. When transposed onto political platforms, the richness of this ideology tended to dwindle as the Romantic enchantment with nature was difficult to translate into actual political causes.⁹³ Yet, in literature and throughout intellectual circles, conceptions of nature extended well beyond practical applications of conservation and into the realm of utopian, pre-modern societies. In the 1854 book *Naturgeschichte des Volkes* (Natural History of the People),⁹⁴ Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl celebrated rural life, the German forests, and a "natural right to wilderness,"⁹⁵ but his ideas on conservation were not limited to maintaining the natural environment. Rather, Riehl, "put forward a harmonious ideal of social relations, with nature being a harbinger of peace,"⁹⁶ that bears a striking resemblance to New Forum's idealized notions of a Third Way.

In New Forum's "Program Explanation," the group emphasizes the intimate relationship between a healthy natural environment and the fate of humanity, claiming, "We want to live in solidarity with our world."⁹⁷ Yet, despite New Forum's emphasis on a harmonious relationship with nature and its emotional calls for environmental reform, the group's ecological platform is remarkably vague. Despite

⁹³ Uekötter, *The Green and the Brown*, 18.

⁹⁴ Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, *Naturgeschichte des Volkes* [Natural History of the People], ed. David J. Diephouse, (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1990).

⁹⁵ Uekötter, *The Green and the Brown*, 17.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Programmerklärung* [Programm Explanation], 1989, Bärbel Bohley, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Wir wollen in Solidarität mit unserer Umwelt leben."

their insistence on a balanced relationship between ecology, economy, and social concerns, the organization's leadership never offers sound policy justified by rational scientific or economic arguments. Like the early conservationists with their Romantic ideologies, New Forum had difficulty translating their concern for nature into viable environmental policy.

Although New Forum may have been less than successful in producing concrete ecological measures, it was effective in publicizing the need for environmental reform and in organizing a national movement of ecological conscientiousness. While partially a result of the momentum of the West German Greens, New Forum's environmental fervor is related to a long tradition of German nature conservation.⁹⁸ In the late 19th century, new associations, which called themselves *Naturschutz* or *Heimatschutz* organizations, began to form in a "back-to-the-land" impulse that eventually led to a widespread conservation movement with tens of thousands of followers.⁹⁹ Comparable to modern-day ecological groups, these organizations conducted research, lobbied government agencies, and raised public awareness about nature conservation.¹⁰⁰ Thus, *Naturschutz* organizations, such as the youth *Wandervogel* movement, viewed their activities as apolitical in that they protected a national good, which (to them) was above the interests of partisan politics (nature belonged to the realm of *Überparteilichkeit*). However, like New Forum, these organizations ultimately found it impossible to remain neutral to a variety of constituents, and were quickly swept up by the political tide of parties on the left, as well as the National Socialists. Even the enchanted issue of nature was ultimately not

⁹⁸ Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, 3.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

above political debate, and both Wilhelmine *Naturschutz* organizations and East Germany's New Forum found it difficult to keep nature within the realm of apolitical social reform.

For both Wilhelmine conservation groups and East German dissidents, environmental issues were not just scientific; they were intertwined with the ideology of a utopian society in which humanity and nature were free from conflict. This fascination with an environmental ideal is perhaps best illustrated in the organization known as the *Wandervogel* movement, founded in 1889, which began as a hiking club for German youths.¹⁰¹ Although initially just a group for young people enjoying the outdoors, the *Wandervogel* quickly developed an ideology of its own, namely that a return to the land was the ideal path to social and cultural reform."¹⁰² Hans Mommsen characterizes the *Wandervogel* tradition in ways that echo themes of New Forum to an uncanny degree: "The great majority of the *bündisch* youth thus organized itself outside of the existing political parties, which it denounced in unequivocal terms and to which it opposed its own vision of an integral and organic society that was free from internal conflict."¹⁰³ Although drastically different in origin, both the *Wandervogel* movement and New Forum shared idealism for the possibility of an ecological utopia free from the corrupt influences of partisan politics.

In reference to the Third Way, New Forum leaders often spoke of an "Ecological Socialism," an amalgam of communism and capitalism that prioritized environmental reform above other social measures.¹⁰⁴ Both *Heimatschutz*

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰² Ibid., 70.

¹⁰³ Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, 309.

¹⁰⁴ Pfaff, *Exit-Voice Dynamics and the Collapse of East Germany*, 194.

organizations such as the *Wandervogel* and East Germany's New Forum shared similarities in the language of an ecological socialism and in their rejection of an anthropocentric worldview. Yet, an environmental Third Way was not merely championed by progressive individuals on the political left. The following chapter will further investigate the history of the German Green party, its contentious relationship to National Socialism, and its ideological connection to the German Third Way.

Grassroots Organization: An Apolitical Strategy

A second common theme of German alternative reform movements, a commitment to apolitical or even anti-political methods reveals a sense of disenchantment with the political status quo. Although apolitical activists in a sense "give up" on the ability of their government to provide for its citizens, the reformers of imperial Germany, the Weimar Republic, and East Germany viewed their activities as productive, not reactive. These movements utilized a language of idealism in order to provoke new understandings of social change. In fact, one could argue that it was the profound optimism of this ideological language that enabled apolitical movements to hold such weight throughout German history, to retain their vitality well into the 20th century, and even to exist today.¹⁰⁵ Whereas New Forum's Third Way arose as an opportunity for a better society amidst the crumbling political system of the GDR, the Wilhelmine reform movement did not aim to replace the Kaiserreich. Rather, through apolitical initiatives such as scientific studies, privately run seminars, model

¹⁰⁵ Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins; the German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 96.

institutions, alternative lifestyles, and a variety of other strategies, Wilhelmine reformers aimed to sidestep bureaucracy and create immediate change.¹⁰⁶ In the Weimar Republic, extra-parliamentary organizations were intended to revise flaws within the parliamentary order, while representing the interests of neglected constituencies.¹⁰⁷

A central component of New Forum's Third Way program, the idea of party-less candidates stems from a philosophical tradition that actually found great popularity during the Weimar Republic. During this relatively short period of parliamentary democracy, criticism of the party system was common among anti-liberal forces, but it extended to the left as well. These ideas were expressed in the commentary of the political analyst and journalist Hans Zehrer, who claimed in an article entitled "The End of the Parties" that "today the Bund belongs to the future, the party to the past."¹⁰⁸ The political Bund or "league" was intended to replace traditional political parties as a sort of civic association reminiscent of pre-constitutional structures.¹⁰⁹ Although it is important to note that the Weimar Republic was, unlike the GDR, technically a democracy, advocates of party-less candidates had similar arguments in both political contexts. Most important among these was the argument that political candidates acted in the interests of the wealthy and other special interests, and did not, in fact, answer to citizen requests. In "Theses for the New Forum," the organization writes,

How can a political office become an office of honor? How can one ensure, that the best of a community, a state, or a country compete for public office?

¹⁰⁶ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, 230.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Party members make up only 4% of the public. How did 4% of the public claim the right to represent the other 96%? The parties can only be reclaimed through party-less candidates. Then the party members would have to surrender to the experts. For example, in the elections for a specific office, every party should nominate two candidates: one member of the party and one party-less candidate.¹¹⁰

Of course, no such system was ever put in place, but the extreme nature of the demands illustrates a deep-rooted mistrust for politicians, which was in part due to the corrupt nature of the SED. However, the idea for party-less candidates speaks to earlier eras in German history, during which unaccountable and failing political systems led citizens to look beyond the party-political framework in search of voices that actually represented their views.

Although critics of the parliamentary system in both Weimar Germany and East Germany mistrusted the motives of politicians, their work was, to some degree, also defined by the need to work in collaboration with political officials. For New Forum specifically, its simultaneous hatred for and collaboration with the SED became a contentious issue since many of its more radical followers felt disillusioned with the group's reconciliatory aims. Within the context of the Round Table forums of 1989 and 1990, this contradiction between an exclusively anti-political way and the need to interact with parties was illustrated through the divided body of its representatives. Of the thirty-three organizations with voting rights at the Central Round Table of 1989, seventeen of them identified as new oppositional groups,

¹¹⁰ *Thesen für das Neue Forum* [Theses for New Forum], 1989, Press Releases, Christian Tietze Papers, RHA. "Wie kann ein politisches Amt ein Ehrenamt werde? Wie kann man erreichen, daß sich die besten einer Gemeinde, einer Stadt oder eines Landes um öffentliche Ämter bewerben? Parteimitglieder machen nur 4% der Bevölkerung aus. Woher nehmen die 4% das Recht, auch die übrigen 96% zu repräsentieren? Nur durch parteilose Kandidaten können die Parteien auch wieder aufgewertet werden. Denn dann müssen sich die Parteikarrieristen auch den Fachleuten stellen. Also z.B.: Bei der Wahl eines Kandidaten für ein bestimmtes Amt, muß jede der berechtigten Parteien zwei Kandidaten vorschlagen; ein Mitglied der Partei, ein weiterer parteiloser Kandidat."

whereas the other sixteen were from parties that had interacted with the East German government, including the SED.¹¹¹ Although New Forum had initially protested the SED regime for its enormous breach of basic human rights, it ultimately needed the support and approval of officials to pass legislation. However, participating in the Round Tables was also a way for the SED to appear more liberal in the eyes of the West and the East German public, so its collaboration with New Forum was probably less meaningful than the group would have liked to believe. Of the apolitical activists in the Weimar Republic, even the leading proponents of party-less candidates and *Bünde* sought influence within the parties or even campaigned on their behalf.¹¹² Thus, although grassroots in their organizational strategies, the Third Way reform movements of the twentieth century were not always as apolitical as they claimed to be.

A critical feature of grassroots politics throughout German history has been conceptions of regionalism, which allowed dissident leaders to build up nationwide movements that were simultaneously rooted in the identities of individual communities. In *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*, Celia Applegate describes the German *Heimat* movement of the nineteenth century, which went "beyond the particularities of regionality and the generalities of nationality to rest finally on what both region and nation have in common - the effort to maintain community."¹¹³ Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a variety of grassroots movements utilized conceptions of regionalism and a German *Heimat*

¹¹¹ *Antrag an den Runden Tisch* [Application to the Round Table], December 18, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

¹¹² Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, 193.

¹¹³ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 4.

identity in order to make their organizations far-reaching and effective. In the late nineteenth century, this trend is illustrated through *Heimatschutz* and *Naturschutz* organizations, which were quite successful despite their pluralistic nature and lack of a universally binding canon of conservation ideals.¹¹⁴ Instead, the variety of conservation approaches was reflected in regional environmental organizations, all of which were intrinsically connected through their greater belief in conservation. Even a century later, New Forum utilized existing understandings of regional identity in cities, regions, and states, by founding local branches of their organization. Like the *Heimat* movement of the 19th century, this was primarily an organic, bottom-up process in which the communities themselves initiated New Forum groups or renamed existing dissident organizations to the title of New Forum. Hence, while New Forum was surprisingly successful in the breadth of its popularity, this was in large part due to the strength of local communities, which were willing to incorporate the grassroots movement into their regional identities.

Perhaps the most striking comparison between the Wilhelmine reform generation of 1890 and the dissidents of New Forum is their excitement with the sense of transition and liminal quality of their political surroundings. In *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, Kevin Repp writes, "the generation of 1890 saw itself as living through a turning point in the times, an epochal caesura at which rapid transformations in the social, economic, and political structures of the new Empire could lead either to progress or to ruin."¹¹⁵ Indeed, Wilhelmine Germany has been characterized as a center of modernity, a place and time during which the

¹¹⁴ Uekötter, *The Green and the Brown*, 19.

¹¹⁵ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 227.

pace of material production and cultural change was almost uncomfortable for its inhabitants. The pace of transformation is illustrated through an unprecedented annual rate of population growth (it averaged 12.6% in Prussia between the years 1871 and 1910), as well as the exponential growth of cities fueled by a rise in new technologies and modes of industry.¹¹⁶ For participants of the Wilhelmine reform milieu, extra-parliamentary reform provided an opportunity to involve oneself in the cultural, social, and technological changes of the time.

In comparison, the final year of the SED regime was, for most East Germans, the most politically tumultuous time they had ever experienced. As political protests grew in size and frequency, dissident activists could be certain that drastic changes lay not far ahead. This sense of new beginnings is expressed in the language of New Forum's first publications. In "Program Explanation of New Forum," the sub-title is "Our Land at a New Beginning".¹¹⁷ Hence, not only was New Forum acutely aware of the shifting political climate, it aimed to utilize this sense of transition to attract a larger membership base and to rally its existing followers behind the Third Way cause. Amidst immense economic and political change, reformers of the Wilhelmine era and dissidents in East Germany believed that their historical moment constituted a critical turning point within German history. Hence, for citizens throughout German history, grassroots organization provided a means of affecting the course of the nation, even when authoritarian systems made direct political involvement impossible.

¹¹⁶ "Overview: Wilhelmine Germany, 1890-1914," German History in Documents and Images, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/chapter.cfm?subsection_id=65 (accessed April 8, 2014)

¹¹⁷ *Programmerklärung des Neuen Forum* [Problem Explanation of New Forum], 1989, Bärbel Bohley, New Forum Papers, RHA.

Social Reform

Although New Forum concentrated its efforts on the Third Way philosophy and constitutional political change, the group was grounded in a history of reform initiatives that dates back to the beginning of the GDR. In a public document "Believe in the Distinct Power,"¹¹⁸ New Forum includes a section on social justice, which details the inalienable rights of East German citizens, as well as the group's major social concerns. Included among these rights were a right to employment, a right to housing, a right to health insurance and welfare, and a right to education, while the issues of women in society, senior citizens, people with disabilities, single parents, and art and culture are listed as areas of major social concern.¹¹⁹ Although these issues belong to a canon of basic human rights for most nations in the Western world, reform initiatives have found a special place within German history. In earlier historical contexts, such as the reform milieu of Imperial Germany, apolitical reform was the only means of changing the social sphere. Since East German dissidents and Wilhelmine reformers lacked the democratic structures to enact parliamentary reform, they turned to social reform instead.

A prime example of East German social reform is the invention of *Kindertagesstätte (Kita)* or preschool child education, which became institutionalized in the GDR, but was first explored in the context of Wilhelmine Germany through

¹¹⁸ *Vertrauen in die Eigene Kraft* [Believe in the Distinct Power], January 28, 1990, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, "Recht auf Arbeit, Recht auf Wohnraum, Recht auf umfassende Medizinische und Soziale Betreuung, Bildung und Erziehung, Die Frau in der Gesellschaft, Alte Menschen in der Gesellschaft, Behinderte und Geschädigte Menschen in der Gesellschaft, Alleinerziehende und Kinderreiche, Kunst und Kultur."

social services such as nurseries and popular education clubs.¹²⁰ An influential figure within German pedagogy, Friederich Fröbel was an advocate of preschool education and even coined the term *Kindergarten* in 1840 after a daycare institute he had founded.¹²¹ Just one of many reform sub-groups, which included alternative lifestyles, clothing, interior design, urban planning, and animal rights, preschool education illustrates the long history of apolitical reform as it developed throughout 20th century Germany.¹²² Although some social services, such as pre-school education, were promoted by the SED, many social reform issues were taken up by apolitical grassroots initiatives.

Within the vast world of Wilhelmine reform movements, three distinct areas can be related to similar categories of civic organization within the GDR. One component of Wilhelmine reform, *Lebensreform* or "life reform" movements, referred to groups that sought alternative modernities through life improvements such as physical health, temperance, vegetarianism, education, clothing and interior design, and even nudism.¹²³ The Orchard Colony of Eden, located on the outskirts of Berlin and still in existence today, consisted of several hundred so-called "naturalists," who practiced a variety of these life reform techniques, including temperance, vegetarianism, and abstinence.¹²⁴ On the more liberal end of the life reform spectrum were thinkers such as Karl Mann, who in *Kraft und Schönheit* [Vigor and Beauty] suggested that nudism had moral and health benefits that would contribute to the

¹²⁰ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 213.

¹²¹ Britannica Academic Edition, s.v. "Friedrich Froebel," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/220593/Friedrich-Froebel> (accessed April 8, 2014).

¹²² Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 4.

¹²³ William H. Rollins, *A Greener Vision of Home: Cultural Politics and Environmental Reform in the German Heimatschutz Movement, 1904-1918* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 73.

¹²⁴ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 26.

overall wellbeing of the modern man.¹²⁵ In the late 1980s, East German reform groups organized themselves around specific issues, such as environmental protection, education reform, or lifestyle preferences, thus evoking the tradition of Wilhelmine apolitical activism. Certain life reform initiatives, such as nudism, became immensely important to East Germans for being one of the few popular movements not domineered by the SED regime.¹²⁶ Thus, since the late 19th century, nudism (or naturalism) has been part of a movement to get back to nature.¹²⁷ Although differing in several of its specific initiatives, the reform climate of the GDR was comparable to that of Wilhelmine Germany because of its propensity for alternative modes of living through apolitical initiatives.

In addition to direct continuity between the life-style preferences of Wilhelmine reformers and East German dissidents, similarities existed in the organizational strategies of both reform milieus. The foundational element of change in both contexts, bottom-up, grassroots systems of organization fostered communities in which individuals came together around common concerns with no apparent hierarchy of leadership. In the first issue of the alternative newspaper "Die Andere," New Forum leader Reinhard Schult responded as follows to a question regarding the structure of the group: "People who share interest on a specific topic should come together. For example: popular education, the economy, the environment, or

¹²⁵ "Overview: Wilhelmine Germany, 1890-1914," German History in Documents and Images, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/chapter.cfm?subsection_id=65 (accessed April 8, 2014).

¹²⁶ Roger Boyes, "The Ideology of Nudism in Germany," Goethe Institute, <http://www.goethe.de/ges/mol/typ/en3097399.htm> (accessed January 1, 2014).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

something entirely different. However, it should not be an elite group."¹²⁸ Like life reform movements in Wilhelmine Germany, the reform milieu in East Germany was entirely dependent on the interests and concerns of individual citizens. Yet, despite the breadth of life reform initiatives in both historical contexts, individual groups sought to create overarching connections by using similar titles. In 1910, many alternative lifestyle clubs began renaming themselves to include the phrase "life reform" for publicity and networking purposes.¹²⁹ This trend of renaming bears a strong resemblance to the rise of New Forum when regional dissident groups adopted the organization's name in the fall of 1989. In comparison to typical parliamentary representation, life reform groups were wary of allocating too much power to one individual, and remained seemingly egalitarian in organization. More concerned with lifestyle preferences than legislation, German life reform movements did not necessarily require political affiliations, or at least not initially.¹³⁰

A second area of Wilhelmine reform was land reform, which consisted of efforts to ensure that both the German countryside and its quickly growing cities were utilized to their maximum potential. Thus, whereas life reform initiatives concentrated on the betterment of the individual within society, land reform sought to direct the land use, agricultural production, and architectural development of the nation as a whole. The need for reform was nowhere more apparent than in overcrowded cities such as Berlin, where the suffering of millions, and especially of women and children, suggested the need for a more sustainable system of

¹²⁸ Interview with Reinhard Schult, *Die Andere* [The Other], 1989. "Da sollen sich Leute zusammenfinden, die Interesse an einem speziellen Thema haben. Also: Volksbildung, Wirtschaft oder Umwelt. Oder was ganz anderes. Das sollen aber keine Elite-Gruppen sein."

¹²⁹ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 266.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 266.

development.¹³¹ East Germany, in comparison, although a developed nation, was decades behind its Western counterpart. A visit to Berlin made this clear to most visitors: whereas the West had dozens of green spaces and was economically booming, the East was considerably drabber and its residents lived in tight quarters.¹³² New Forum (like most of East Germany's citizens) recognized the poor quality of life, and attempted to create basic standards for the residents of East German cities. In one list of demands, the group writes, "The right to decent and adequate housing must be constitutionally guaranteed... The poor need to be supported through rental subsidies, and should be protected from eviction by law."¹³³ Although the land reform movement of Wilhelmine Germany concentrated its efforts on the sustainable development of the land, while New Forum focused on cities, their end goal was the same. By improving the general quality of life and ensuring that all citizens had access to employment, housing, and recreational areas, reformers aimed to create a positive difference that could be achieved through mostly non-political avenues.

A final area of reform that was maintained throughout the 20th century, the women's reform movement in both Wilhelmine Germany and East Germany was more of a social endeavor than a political one. In the GDR, women faced a unique set of issues that were arguable atypical of problems faced by women in most undemocratic nations. Although most women worked (and at an even higher percentage than that of women in the FRG), they struggled to gain recognition for

¹³¹ Ibid., 86.

¹³² Sello, interview, July 18, 2013.

¹³³ *Vertrauen in die Eigene Kraft* [Believe in the Distinct Power], January 28, 1990, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Die Recht auf menschenwürdigen und ausreichenden Wohnraum muß verfassungsmäßig garantiert sein... Soziale Schwächere müssen über Mietsubventionen unterstützt werden. Der Kündigungsschutz für diese Personengruppen muß gesetzlich gesichert sein."

their more domestic and maternal roles, a problem that was due to the neglect of gender differences under communism. In "Program Explanation of New Forum," the group advocated for *Mutterschutz* or the protection of motherhood: "New Forum cannot support a society that exists at women's expense... We need more part-time employment and the recognition of child rearing as a real social contribution."¹³⁴ Thus, in the GDR, the women's movement was arguably atypical of other contemporary feminist movements. Rather than pushing for amendments in education or the work place, many female activists sought to illustrate the unique contribution of motherhood, which often went unappreciated or unrecognized in East Germany.

Although many female activists of the late 19th century called for the political emancipation of women, others considered the women's movement to be a social issue.¹³⁵ Among such activists was Helen Lange, a teacher at a girls' school in Berlin, who believed that while political activism was unnecessarily masculine, social reform afforded a more moderate path towards gender equality.¹³⁶ By calling for the recognition of the "special nature" of women and emphasizing anti-political initiatives such as improved professional training, Lange paved the way for a women's movement that supported the special contribution of motherhood.¹³⁷ In the context of East Germany, historical voices such as Helen Lange strengthened the argument for a culture that valued the unique contribution of women in society.

Although dissident groups such as New Forum were often unaware of their

¹³⁴ *Programmerklärung des Neuen Forum* [Problem Explanation of New Forum], 1989, Bärbel Bohley, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Eine Gesellschaft, die auf Kosten der Frauen existiert, lehnt das Neue Forum ab... Wir brauchen... mehr Teilzeitbeschäftigung und die Anerkennung der Kinderziehung als gesellschaftliche Arbeitsleistung."

¹³⁵ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

ideological predecessors, a tradition of German apolitical reform served as an invaluable foundation for the theoretical claims and methodological practices of East German civic initiatives.

A German Counter-Culture

A final component of the apolitical Third Way ideology, a German counter-culture embodies the alternative nature of grassroots politics and the reformers' self-awareness of their status as outsiders. A microcosm of nationwide apolitical movements, Berlin has been a hub of dissident activity and alternative lifestyles since the 19th century. During the Wilhelmine era, self-declared "naturalists" experimented with socialistic alternatives on the outskirts of Berlin.¹³⁸ The most popular naturalist community, the Orchard Colony of Eden, consisted of 55 hectares to the north of Berlin, where residents of 189 homes practiced vegetarianism and temperance, while supporting themselves through the sale of apple butter and other products in health food shops known as *Reformhäuser* or "reform stores."¹³⁹ Throughout the 20th century, Berlin became a military headquarters, a site of war-torn destruction, and a politically divided city, but it sustained its alternative aura nonetheless.

In the 1980s, Prenzlauer Berg, one of the poorest neighborhoods in East Berlin, became the headquarters for much of East Germany's dissident activity. Home to the Environmental Library's illegal printing press in the basement of the Zion Church, Prenzlauer Berg was also a site of underground cafés, discos, and a variety of meeting places where young people conversed and socialized. In "Semantic and

¹³⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 266.

Symbolic Strategies in the Founding Call of New Forum," the group describes this alternative youth culture: "The emergence of alternative groups during the early 1980s consisted of an amalgam of Protestant, social-utopian, and democratic elements that were substantially influenced by a language of youth."¹⁴⁰ A key component of the underground political developments of the late 1980s, a youth counter-culture fostered the sort of intellectual discussions and practices that enabled real grassroots change later on. Although New Forum is most famous for its role at the Monday night demonstrations in Leipzig, the historically alternative city of Berlin fostered an underground social environment in which the seeds of the Third Way first took root.

A source of pride in modern-day Germany, Avant-garde artistic movements have run a tumultuous course throughout German history and its intellectual leaders have often borne the brunt of immense persecution. Bruno Taut, an architect of the Weimar period, who fled Germany in 1932, illustrates the idealism central to both the artistic production and theoretical contributions of the Avant-garde. His political philosophy depicts a utopian social state in which art would become a source of both individual expression and a means of unpretentious fraternity between citizens. Within this ideal society, Taut posited architecture as the main tool for creating an aesthetically superior and more humane community embedded in nature.¹⁴¹ Thus, for Taut and other architects of the Weimar era, apolitical life improvements constituted a way to reduce social tensions and class conflict.

¹⁴⁰ *Semantische und Symbolische Strategien im Gründungsaufwurf des Neuen Forums* [Semantic and Symbolic Strategies in the Founding Call of New Forum], 1989, Bärbel Bohley, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Mit der Entstehung der alternativen Gruppen entwickelte sich Anfang der 80er Jahre ein sprachliches Amalgam aus protestantischen, sozialutopischen und bürgerlich-demokratischen Elementen, das vertikal wesentlich durch die Jugendsprache geprägt wurde."

¹⁴¹ Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 171.

It comes as no surprise that the East German counter-culture also included the arts among its primary social concerns. As critics of the oppressive SED regime, dissidents believed that art was an important channel of protest, and many visual artists, playwrights, and poets used media to express their discontent with the GDR. In fact, some of the most important figures within East German opposition were originally artists, including Bärbel Bohley, a renowned painter and co-founder of New Forum. The centrality of the arts and culture within New Forum's apolitical program is articulated in much of the group's literature. In "Believe in the Distinct Power," New Forum states, "In times of transition, culture is generally ignored - but the neglect of culture represents the descent into barbarism... We request the independence and autonomy of the cultural and spiritual life."¹⁴² Hence, for New Forum, as for Bruno Taut, culture was not merely an entity of aesthetic enjoyment or entertainment. Rather, the arts had deeply spiritual and yet also political implications, and the inclusion of unrestricted culture within a Third Way democratic program implied a more free and progressive political future.

In addition to youth and artist counter-cultures, the university sphere was an important arena for German intellectuals to discuss their more radical political ideas without fear of persecution or censorship. In *Decline of the German Mandarins*, Ringer traces the history of German university culture from 1890-1933, describing German intellectuals or "Mandarins" as "a social and cultural elite, which owed its status primarily to educational qualifications, rather than to hereditary rights or

¹⁴² *Vertrauen in die Eigene Kraft* [Believe in the Distinct Power], January 28, 1990, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Im Aufbruchzeiten bleibt die Kultur meistens auf der Strecke, aber ein Schritt weg von der Kultur ist ein Schritt in die Barberei... Wir verlangen die Unabhängigkeit und Selbstständigkeit des Kultur-und Geisteslebens."

wealth."¹⁴³ Hence, academics of the university counter-culture in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany believed they were different from other members of the middle class, because, unlike landed officials, their social influence was based on their education and ideas. Whereas politics required courage and zeal, academia was a realm in which individuals could improve their society through *Wissenschaft* (science) and philosophy. Although New Forum might have liked to see itself as representing the masses of East Germany, it too relied upon a highly educated membership base in order to produce the grassroots ideology of the Third Way. As outlined in chapter two, New Forum's membership consisted primarily of highly educated intellectuals, with 75% educated to the tertiary level.¹⁴⁴ Although the group would sometimes downplay its intellectual nature for strategic purposes, it also prided itself on its progressive and idealistic vision for a non-partisan future. Hence, like the academics of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany, many East German oppositionists sought an enlightened, apolitical path towards a more ideal political state.

Within the Wilhelmine counter-cultural milieu, nothing was more essential than the bonds of individual relationships, and dissidents in East Germany would undoubtedly have said the same. Repp writes that, "what held the milieu together was relationships: relationships to the practices of social and cultural reform, to the discourse of alternatives modernities, to the space of anti-politics."¹⁴⁵ Although the Wilhelmine reform movement was home to countless different sub-cultures, organizations, and political beliefs, what held the movement together was the personal relationships that overlapped between separate spheres. What can be

¹⁴³ Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 5.

¹⁴⁴ Dale, *Popular Protest in East Germany*, 171.

¹⁴⁵ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 229.

described as a "matrix" of counter-cultures,¹⁴⁶ the reform initiatives of the late 19th century were never quite distinct — although seeking different outcomes, each sub-genre, whether conservationist, aesthetic, or intellectual, in some way intersected with the territory of another.

Although the main goal of opposition in East Germany was arguably more unified, there were still dozens of grassroots dissident organizations, all of which had different social and political concerns. Yet, despite their differences, East Germans shared a common identity and had undergone the same suffering, so that, in 1989, they were able to come together around a single cause. Tom Sello of Environmental Library describes the communicative and interpersonal dynamic of opposition in this way: "People met in private places or sometimes in churches, where they spoke about the issues, swapped stories, and shared information."¹⁴⁷ For Tom Sello, as for many others, personal ties first led him to join the opposition movement, and it was those ties that ultimately strengthened his commitment to reform. As in Wilhelmine Germany, apolitical reform was a deeply personal endeavor, which, more than anything, relied upon the bonds of friendship and fraternity to strengthen its effects and spread the cause.

Having outlined several of the key features of German grassroots organization, the following chapter will provide a more thorough investigation of how these features were manifested in specific reform movements. Hence, the four elements of environmentalism, grassroots organization, social reform, and counter-

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 227.

¹⁴⁷ Sello, interview, July 18, 2013. "Haben sich Leute in privaten Kreisen getroffen oder manchmal in Kirchengemeinden, und haben sich über bestimmte Probleme unterhalten, haben sich ausgetauscht, und haben die Information, die sie hatten, ausgetauscht."

culture will be explored within a variety of political contexts throughout German history. Although these movements are in some ways remarkably different from New Forum, similarities in organizational strategies, anti-political theories, and alternative modes of living demonstrate continuity of the grassroots throughout German history. Furthermore, by investigating a variety of apolitical reform groups, it becomes possible to locate the specific contribution that was New Forum's Third Way.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL INSTANCES OF GERMAN APOLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Within the broad spectrum of dissident groups in East Germany, New Forum was unique, not only in the size of its membership and its nationwide following, but in its commitment to remaining apolitical. New Forum's apolitical program is defined by a belief in the overarching concept of a third or middle way, which represented a revitalization of what had become a degraded form of socialism. This commitment to apolitical reform was considerably progressive and even modern in its advocating a new, more direct form of participatory democratic government. But New Forum was by no means the first organization in German history to advocate for apolitical grassroots reform. In fact, movements on both the political left and right have championed the considerably utopian belief that Germany might forge an uncharted path towards a democratic ideal outside of parliamentary politics. This chapter will serve as an investigation of four very diverse reform movements in order to illustrate the extent to which this tradition of extra-parliamentary reform is embedded within the German political identity.

A Brief History of Apolitical Reform

The belief in a third or higher non-partisan system of government has occupied intellectual and dissident circles since as early as Wilhelmine Germany. Although the authoritarian political climate of imperial Germany was, in many ways, quite unlike the socialist context of the GDR, dissident counter-cultures of the two periods share striking similarities, most notably in their affinity for apolitical methods

of change. Whether through scientific studies, legal investigations, community proposals, private seminars, community service, or alternative lifestyles, members of the Wilhelmine reform milieu aimed to improve their social sphere through grassroots initiatives.¹⁴⁸ Yet, as in the case of New Forum, this reform milieu often sought greater influence through political avenues, using existing parties as a vessel for enacting legislation or voicing their social concerns. Even before the first officially democratic Germany (the Weimar Republic), the Wilhelmine civic sphere provided an emergent democratic framework within which activists tested the bounds of the authoritarian state.¹⁴⁹ Thus, a comparison between the civic movements of imperial Germany and communist East Germany reveals that, in both contexts, dissident circles sought to change their realities through apolitical reform while experimenting with democratic concepts and procedures.

During the brief existence of the democratic Weimar Republic, an extra-parliamentary offensive of organizations on both the political left and right revealed the government's failure to adequately represent its constituencies. Several political trends, namely the *Überparteilichkeit* of elected president Paul von Hindenburg, the movement to replace parties with regulatory *Bünde*, and the ideology of "economic democracy," suggest that the democracy was not functioning as intended. First, the election of von Hindenburg as a non-party candidate and his portrayal as "someone who stood above parties," implies a defamation of the party system itself.¹⁵⁰ Fritz

¹⁴⁸ Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity*, 14.

¹⁴⁹ Brett Fairbairn, "Membership, Organization, and Wilhelmine Modernism," in *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930: Essays for Hartmut Pogge Von Strandmann*, ed. H. Pogge von Strandmann, Geoff Eley, and James N. Retallack (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 34-50.

¹⁵⁰ Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, 237.

Schaeffer, a politician of the Bavarian People's Party, even stated that Hindenburg's candidacy was born out of the, "misery of Germany's party politics."¹⁵¹ A second symptom of the Weimar Republic's democratic shortcomings was the conservative movement to replace parties with *Bünde* or organizations structured around a corporatist order that merged "neighborhood with leadership principle."¹⁵² This system was intended to make parties superfluous in the near future, an idealistic goal that foreshadows the intentions of New Forum, although the *Bünde* movement avoided associations with socialism. Finally, the political theory of "economic democracy" aimed to gradually reform the private enterprise system in the direction of socialism through increased state ownership, more state involvement in economic planning, and the creation of institutions for economic self-administration.¹⁵³ Although conservative intellectuals tended to advocate for *Bünde*, whereas "economic democracy" became the project of the left, both initiatives revealed that the Weimar government was not effectively representing its citizens.

Somewhat of a continuation of the Wilhelmine reform milieu, the existence of extra-parliamentary organizations in the Weimar Republic suggests that creating a functional democratic system in Germany was problematic well before the illegitimate rule of the SED. The fact that the president of the Weimar Republic was considered to be "above parties" demonstrates that government officials did not give much credence to the importance of partisanship within a representative democracy. Yet, the solutions offered by conservative and liberal extra-parliamentary groups also did not fully address issues of government fraud and misrepresentation, nor did they

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 237.

¹⁵² Ibid., 231.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 263.

appear to understand what a functional democracy might look like. For example, the ideology of *Bünde* was ultimately too idealistic; it assumed that the neighborly qualities of German citizens were sufficient to organize systems of government. On the other hand, proponents of "economic democracy" overestimated the role of the market as a controlling mechanism while wrongly assuming that state intervention in economic processes would be wholly welcomed.¹⁵⁴ In less than fourteen years, the Weimar Republic was toppled and the ensuing Nazi dictatorship obliterated all democratic institutions, as well as most civic initiatives. Thus, the problem of democracy (and the incentive to reform it) has occupied reform movements and dissident organizations throughout 20th century German history. New Forum's Third Way merely represents one movement that was offered as a solution to a failed parliamentary system. Operating under authoritarian, corrupt, or oppressive political structures, civic movements throughout German history have viewed grassroots organization as the most feasible or, at times, the only option for political involvement.

Anti-Politics and Alliance '90/The Greens

Germany's Green party, Alliance '90/The Greens has a strong presence in local and federal politics, arguably much more so than ecological parties in other developed nations. In the 2013 federal elections, the Green party won 8.4% of votes and 63 out of 630 seats in the *Bundestag*.¹⁵⁵ Today, supporters of more direct citizen

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 264.

¹⁵⁵ "Clear Victory for Merkel and CDU/CSU," German Missions in the United States, http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/__pr/P__Wash/2013/09/23-Election-Results.html (accessed April 8, 2014).

representation and ecological initiatives, the German Greens and their predecessors have a long and complicated history of political involvement in both progressive and rightwing movements. Perhaps the most troubling phase in the ecological/environmental movements of the 1920s and 1930s, affinities to the National Socialists, reveals the potential for political flexibility of German conservation ideology. Both the National Socialists and nature conservationists shared a common dislike for metropolitan expansion and Western materialism, while emphasizing the virtues of the organic and the value of natural landscapes.¹⁵⁶ In addition to passing a national conservation law in 1935, many top ranking officials of the Nazi Party expressed interest in environmental issues, including Herman Göring, a passionate hunter who was responsible for the development of the Schorfheide nature reserve, among other conservation projects.¹⁵⁷ Thus, although the official Green party was not founded until 1980, nature conservation had become a political issue many years earlier. By demonstrating its applicability within the political platforms of parties on the left and right, the German Green movement began as a nonpartisan initiative that interacted with the government only when it displayed a commitment to conservation legislation.

The political relationship between nature conservationists and Nazi officials is undoubtedly the most disturbing period in the history of the German Green movement. In general, conservationists were not active supporters of National Socialism, but they did demonstrate a willingness to overlook racist or authoritarian

¹⁵⁶ David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York: Norton, 2006), 279.

¹⁵⁷ Uekötter, *The Green and the Brown*, 33.

policies so long as their own environmental agenda was implemented.¹⁵⁸ Within the groundbreaking national conservation law of 1935, one clause in paragraph 24 stipulated that the government could designate any piece of land a nature reserve or prohibit alterations of the landscape, and the owners of the land could not protest or sue for monetary compensation.¹⁵⁹ Although entirely undemocratic, conservationists favored this clause because it prioritized landscape protection. Hence, although Alliance '90/The Greens of modern-day Germany is a staunch advocate of participatory democracy, this has not always been the case among nature conservationists throughout German history. In fact, it was in the FRG during the 1970s that German environmental movements first began to merge with the more liberal agendas of international peace and democratic reform.

In West Germany, the origins of the Green party resemble those of the East German opposition movements in the late 1980s. Throughout the 1970s, the Green movement was something of an environmental milieu, with activists organizing themselves among dozens of groups, all of which advocated slightly different programs concerning ecological conservation, alternative living, and international peace. It was not until 1980 that The Greens were founded to give the ecological milieu more political solidarity, as well as parliamentary representation. Ten years later, a similar organizational process occurred in the East, when New Forum, Democracy Now, and Human Rights Initiative (three of the largest opposition groups in the GDR) announced their support for the progressive party Alliance '90. In 1993,

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 65.

Alliance '90 merged with The Greens to combine the two formerly separate ecological reform movements within unified Germany.

When New Forum chose to engage in the GDR's political system, it trusted the German Green party (and not the SPD or other left-leaning parties) to support and reflect its reformative Third Way message. In a document titled "Semantic and Symbolic Strategies," a leading member of New Forum writes, "The language of the West German Greens and its citizen movement could be determined as a suitable source of external influence."¹⁶⁰ Thus, New Forum found a source of inspiration in the environmental and peace activism of the West, but had a special affinity for the West German Greens.¹⁶¹ Although operating within significantly more oppressive political circumstances than were activists in West Germany, New Forum's oppositional platform tended to mirror the ecological initiatives of the German Greens, both of which were informed by a long history of nature conservation.

Several features of the West German Greens were influential for the environmental and political program of New Forum. First, several historians have considered the German Greens to be the original "non-party" or "anti-party," in that they wanted a complete overhaul of the structure of and purpose behind representative government. Whereas traditional parties were preoccupied with economic growth, stable prices, and strong military defense, the Greens wanted to replace these concerns with a program that instead emphasized ecology and participatory democracy. Hence, ecological imperatives would guide economic

¹⁶⁰ *Semantische und Symbolische Strategien im Gründungsaufwurf des Neuen Forums* [Semantic and Symbolic Strategies in the Founding Call of New Forum], 1989, Bärbel Bohley, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Als Außeneinfluß ließ sich die Sprache der westdeutschen Grünen bzw. Bürgerbewegungen feststellen."

¹⁶¹ Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature*, 344.

decisions, while the rights to political participation and the freedom to realize alternative lifestyles would be extended to all West German citizens.¹⁶² What has also been termed "New Politics,"¹⁶³ the prototype of the anti-party began to evolve during the 1970s and 1980s as the Green movement transitioned into the realm of parliamentary politics. Involving a fundamental critique of mainstream growth politics,¹⁶⁴ this revolutionary conception of government found a receptive outlet in the East. Throughout the 1980s, civic organizations of the GDR advocated for a shift in the ecological and democratic priorities of the government. Finally, in 1989, New Forum became the foremost anti-party of the civic movement by registering as an organization (and not a party) that championed participatory democracy and responsible economic decision-making above all else.

A second component of the West German Green movement, which was influential for civic groups in the East, grassroots organization was a fundamental standard for all efforts undertaken by the party. Hence, the movement advocated for *Basisdemokratie* (grassroots democracy), a model for society in which small organizational units constituted the building blocks of political life.¹⁶⁵ In 1990, the theory of *Basisdemokratie* was taken up by New Forum, which published a document entitled "The Approach of Grassroots Democracy," listing the basic tenets and goals of the political philosophy.¹⁶⁶ Originally, ecological activism in the FRG stayed outside the realm of politics, as conservation movements throughout German history

¹⁶² Thomas Poguntke, *Alternative Politics: The German Green Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 10.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁶⁴ Margit Mayer and John Ely, *The German Greens: Paradox between Movement and Party* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 6.

¹⁶⁵ Poguntke, *Alternative Politics*, 138.

¹⁶⁶ *Ansätze zur Basisdemokratie* [The Approach of Grassroots Democracy], 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

have tended to do. Because most West German activists disapproved of the central political ends of economic growth and military security (among others), they initially did not respect traditional modes of partisanship. Hence, "it was far from evident that the social movements of the 1970s would produce a political *party*."¹⁶⁷ Yet, eventually the Green movement hit a wall, realizing that there were political limits to demonstrations and extra-parliamentary reform. In founding a Green party, the movement attempted to reform the parliamentary system and its political priorities from within, while maintaining a tradition of grassroots democratic organization.

In the GDR, grassroots activism was both a product of regional initiatives and the outside influences of West German ecological and peace movements. Thus, as in the West, grassroots organization was a defining feature of both social reform and, in later years, the opposition movement. Marianne Birthler of reform organization Solidarity Church and politician of Alliance '90/The Greens, lists several titles that reform organizations used, including *Basisgruppe* (grassroots group), in order to avoid SED suspicion and censorship.¹⁶⁸ Hence, as in the West, grassroots organization was a defining feature of extra-parliamentary reform as it allowed activists to tap into the real issues experienced by East German citizens. During 1989 and 1990, New Forum was also influenced by the West German concept of grassroots democracy. Throughout the Round Table forums of 1990, the organization utilized strategies that were similar to those of the West German Green movement, namely tactical cooperation with the powers that be. Instead of trying to overthrow existing parliamentary systems, both the Greens and New Forum employed methods of

¹⁶⁷ Mayer and Ely, *The German Greens*, 5.

¹⁶⁸ Birthler, interview, July 23, 2013.

negotiation in an attempt to create compromise with the established parties. Thus, the Third Way, as it was understood by the two anti-parties of East and West, involved communication and reconciliation with established political parties in order to gradually achieve the desired democratic and ecological reforms.

Despite the ecological focus of the West German Greens, the party has always championed a variety of social and political issues, many of which are unrelated to its environmental concerns. Among these, the belief in participatory or direct democracy has served as a guiding principle within the program of the German Greens (today Alliance '90/The Greens). In comparison to the usual choice between political programs (which might then be enacted in any number of ways by politicians), participatory democracy was intended to provide the lower units of society with more extensive decision-making powers.¹⁶⁹ Thus, for the German Greens, participatory democracy was intended to be the original, ideal version of democracy, instead of the more abstract and mediated variety that was the West German *Bundestag*. New Forum describes its interpretation of the West German theory of grassroots democracy in "The Approach of Grassroots Democracy": "In the discussion of theories that affect the self-image of the group, that have far-reaching consequences, or that cause varying degrees of fear among the members of the group, it is probably better to be look for a version that can endorse all members of the group."¹⁷⁰ Hence, the theory of participatory democracy considered the democratic ideal to be political

¹⁶⁹ Poguntke, *Alternative Politics*, 37.

¹⁷⁰ *Ansätze zur Basisdemokratie* [The Approach of Grassroots Democracy], 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Bei der Diskussion von Thesen, die das Selbstverständnis der Gruppe berühren, die weitreichende Konsequenzen haben oder die unterschiedliche Graden von Angst bei den Mitgliedern der Gruppe auslösen, ist es wahrscheinlich besser nach einer Fassung zu suchen, die alle Mitglieder der Gruppe mittragen können."

solutions that all members of a group could agree upon. When New Forum advocated for "democratic socialism" in the fall of 1989, its understanding of "democratic" was in line with the participatory version espoused by the West German Greens. While the West German Greens championed a truer, more ideal form of democracy, New Forum intended to reinstate a more ideal form of socialism that incorporated the institutions of participatory democracy.

Although New Forum's Third Way is often presented as a short-lived phenomenon, there is more evidence to suggest that the Third Way is part of a longer intellectual heritage. Just as earlier apolitical or anti-political grassroots movements advocated similar reforms to those of New Forum, it can be argued that the modern-day party Alliance '90/The Greens still promotes an apolitical Third Way. One of the very first press releases of the newly formed party, a call for "the incorporation of grassroots democratic elements,"¹⁷¹ illustrates an overarching affinity for citizen initiatives. Marianne Birthler, a politician of the original Alliance '90 party, who later went on to represent Alliance '90/The Greens in the state parliament of Brandenburg, describes the political ideals of her party in 1990 as "human rights, democracy, ecology, gender equality, social justice, and freedom from violence."¹⁷² Of course, Alliance '90/The Greens has changed somewhat over the last fifteen years, but its commitment to grassroots democracy has not waned. Today, the party continues to advocate for more direct democracy through its recent proposal of an upper house to the *Bundestag*, made up of a citizen roundtable, and by fighting to reduce thresholds

¹⁷¹ *Presseerklärung Bündnis '90/Die Grüne* [Press Release of Alliance '90/The Greens], May 16, 1990, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA. "Einarbeitung von basisdemokratischen Elementen."

¹⁷² Birthler, interview, July 23, 2013. "Das war Menschenrechte, Demokratie, Ökologie, Gleichstellung der Geschlechter, soziale Gerechtigkeit, und Freiheit von der Gewalt. Das waren die wichtigsten politischen Ideen, die wir auch bis heute haben."

for citizen signatures.¹⁷³ Hence, Alliance '90/The Greens illustrates that the grassroots initiatives of New Forum did not arise in a vacuum; rather, the group was influenced by the West German Green movement, with which it eventually merged.

Weimar Political Philosophy and the Concept of Wholeness

In Weimar Germany, a conservative university culture began to experiment with concepts of wholeness and synthesis as they applied to social and political systems. Dissatisfied with the bureaucratic failings of the parliamentary system, academics invented new intellectual methods for achieving the ideal form of government. One theoretical tool, the concept of "synthesis technique" involved the rejection of two stated alternatives in favor of a third choice, which was intended to unite the advantages of the two defeated possibilities on a higher plane.¹⁷⁴ Applicable to a variety of subjects, synthesis ideology was often used to theorize about idealistic political and social systems. For example, in philosopher and psychologist Eduard Spranger's essay on the principles of education, a supposed conflict between individualistic liberty and socialistic equality was overcome through the concept of fraternity.¹⁷⁵ Although Weimar intellectuals such as Spranger were operating within a conservative university culture, their ideology of a middle or third solution to opposing entities bears a striking resemblance to New Forum's Third Way. Furthermore, Weimar intellectuals were not the creators of the concept of a higher third. "The symphonic analogy, like the concept of wholeness, certainly did not

¹⁷³ Louise K. Davidson-Schmich, *Becoming Party Politicians: Eastern German State Legislators in the Decade Following Democratization* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 108-113.

¹⁷⁴ Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 395.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

originate in the 1920s. One might say that it was always implied in the German intellectual tradition."¹⁷⁶ Whereas East German dissidents advocated the Third Way as a means of reforming socialism, conservative intellectuals of the 1920s would have used the higher third to criticize ineffective democratic institutions of the Weimar Republic. Thus, although their political goals were entirely separate, Weimar-era intellectuals and East German dissidents utilized surprisingly similar theoretical tools in order to achieve these ends.

In addition to synthesis ideology, the Weimar era saw the production of a variety of other idealistic political and scientific thought. One such theory, Gestalt psychology, founded by Max Wertheimer before WWI and then further advanced in collaboration with other intellectuals throughout the interwar years, literally translated to "form" or "configuration."¹⁷⁷ Central to the theory was the relationship between *Gestalt* and wholeness; *Gestalt* was intended to be the ordering principle within wholeness, creating a plurality of interconnected wholes. Although Gestalt psychology was, on the one hand, a theory of the mind, it also had direct applications to political and social issues. Hence, proponents of the theory argued that there was a possibility of retaining a place for human significance within nature, that community could fit comfortably within nation, and that (as the popular saying goes) the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.¹⁷⁸ To summarize, Gestalt psychology was intended to reassure German citizens that community and culture would not be swallowed up within the tide of cosmopolitanism and modernity; there was a place for everything

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 396.

¹⁷⁷ Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 103.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 104.

within the greater whole of human existence. The idealism of this theory illustrates the historical notion of the possibility for a better or higher way. Hence, New Forum was not necessary delusional when it suggested that perhaps there was an alternative to reunification. Rather, the group wanted to preserve components of East German society, which it perceived as essential to the whole.

What literary historian Keith Bullivant terms the "Conservative Revolution," the theoretical contributions of conservative Weimar intellectuals, in many ways, parallel the apolitical, reform-oriented platform of New Forum.¹⁷⁹ One similarity between the two movements involves a disdain for traditional party politics and an emphasis instead on the transformative potential of ideology. Thomas Mann was one of several intellectuals who, disillusioned by WWI, initially identified as a "nonpolitical man."¹⁸⁰ Yet, as he became acclimated to the democratic institutions of the Weimar Republic, Mann began to urge other members of the conservative university milieu to support their new government and to overlook its shortcomings with the aim of improving the political system from within.¹⁸¹ Thus, for Mann, the "middle way" involved becoming aware of political inadequacies and working to reform them without destroying democracy, as the National Socialists aimed to do. Like New Forum during the Round Table forums of 1990, Thomas Mann supported internal reform, communication with parliamentary representatives, and reconciliatory political legislation to massive political upheaval.

¹⁷⁹ Keith Bullivant, "The Conservative Revolution," in *The Weimar Dilemma: Intellectuals in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Anthony Phelan (Dover, NH: Manchester University Press, 1985), 47-70.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* [Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man], (New York: F. Ungar, 1982).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

Although the synthesis ideology of Weimar intellectuals was useful in its theoretical applications, its inability to translate into real political change indicated that the ideology (similar to that of New Forum's Third Way) would remain in the intellectual sphere. In most demonstrations of the synthesis technique, the resolution of the two opposing entities tended to be much less precisely defined than its foundational elements.¹⁸² This weakness of the "higher third" can be observed in Spranger's notion that fraternity was the middle road between individualism and equality. Although the concept makes sense in theory, it is difficult to explain exactly what a "fraternal" society might look like. Similarly, New Forum received much criticism from both East German dissidents and Western activists for not being able to clearly define its Third Way or to translate it into practical terms. Marianne Birthler described her discontent with New Forum: "Conceptually, I found New Forum pretty diffuse. They wanted everything and nothing. It had, for me, no clear contours. They only named problems, but didn't provide solutions."¹⁸³ Thus, it appears as if a central problem within both the Third Way and the "higher third" was that, while it could criticize existing systems, it had more difficulty articulating a feasible solution. In addition to its vague character, this tradition of idealist thinking in Weimar Germany was, as Bullivant writes, "no match for the brown battalions."¹⁸⁴ As in the case of the East German Third Way, utopian ideologies of a predominantly intellectual movement were not able to compete with real political organization. Ultimately, the idealistic aspects of the synthesis ideology were overshadowed by the

¹⁸² Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 395.

¹⁸³ Birthler, interview, July 23, 2013.

¹⁸⁴ Bullivant, "The Conservative Revolution," 69.

rise of the Nazis, while its more conservative components were incorporated into the totalitarian message of Hitler's regime.

The Avant-garde and the New German City

The Garden city movement of the Weimar Republic constituted an attempt to revive the German city while reducing social tensions and minimizing conflict. The Garden city movement, a method of urban planning that began in the United Kingdom during the late 19th century, combined a variety of architectural, agricultural, and industrial techniques with the aim of beautifying and revitalizing cities within a greener setting. In Germany, Garden city movements quickly caught hold as avant-garde architects such as Bruno Taut and Martin Wagner began to incorporate its hygienic and aesthetic lessons within their own theories of urban development. Although dedicated to the integration of nature within the urban environment, Taut and Wagner, who applied Garden city techniques to the city of Berlin throughout the 1920s, utilized a considerably more modern architectural approach than their British contemporaries. It could even be argued that the Garden city trend in Berlin became a movement of social and political reform. In addition to its aesthetic applications, German architects sought to apply the movement's lessons to political life, demonstrating an effort to reduce social tensions through meta-political means.

Although much of the Weimar Garden city movement was concerned with zoning, landscaping, and construction, all of its more practical endeavors rested on a utopian socialist theory in which life in the garden cities would lead to a more

peaceful and harmonious existence. Among its circle of architects, Bruno Taut was perhaps the most engaged with the idea of the Garden city, and much of his writing is concerned with the relationship between environment, building, and life.¹⁸⁵ In "The Falkenberg Garden Suburb near Berlin," Taut wrote, "Life in the garden suburb has a vigorous pattern of both coexistence and mutual sharing, which reduces the social divisions and creates civilized values."¹⁸⁶ Hence, Taut believed that by improving the social and physical environment, it was possible to foster a more communitarian style of living and decrease social tensions. Like the leaders of New Forum, Taut abstained from the use of the word "socialism" in this passage, but the concepts of mutual sharing and coexistence undoubtedly imply a belief in a more egalitarian way of life.

Taut believed in socialism in an unpolitical sense, meaning "a society free from every form of domination and characterized by the simple, unpretentious relationships of people to one another."¹⁸⁷ By creating a close-knit, aesthetically appealing environment in which people were forced to rely upon one another for their basic commodities, Taut postulated that individuals would actually become more caring, empathetic, and community-oriented. For Taut, the ideal economic system would thus involve many communities of small producers, in which no money was needed and goods were exchanged on a local scale.¹⁸⁸ Bearing a strong resemblance to what one might describe as a commune, Taut's ideas had political implications, yet were achieved through the nonpolitical route of architecture and urban planning.

¹⁸⁵ Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 183.

¹⁸⁶ Whyte and Frisby, *Metropolis Berlin*, 268.

¹⁸⁷ Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 175.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

Although technically the first parliamentary democracy in German history, the Weimar Republic was far from resolving the majority of social tensions. A significant cause of social division, economic inequality led millions of workers to strike — over 13 million annually from 1920 to 1924.¹⁸⁹ Thus, social upheaval and mass demonstrations indicated that there was considerable improvement to be made in standards of living. As a solution to these inadequate standards, Avant-garde artists and architects such as Taut and Wagner believed in a middle way towards reducing conflict, which was to be achieved through the improvement of both public and private living spaces. As sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf wrote in *Society and Democracy in Germany*, "the institutions revealed a strangely rigid attitude, shifting between unreserved retention of the status quo and a grasp for the stars."¹⁹⁰ Hence, the apolitical solutions of Avant-grade artists provided a solution that was both realistic yet optimistic. Through the creation of a functional and communal social environment, these thinkers attempted to reduce social tensions and their unwanted political manifestations. In Germany, the Garden City movement was perhaps less of an aesthetic movement and more of a push to create feasible, extra-parliamentary solutions to social divisions.

Of course, there are many obvious differences between the Weimar-era Garden city movement and New Forum's apolitical Third Way. Whereas one was concerned more with aesthetics, the other put a premium on political reform and its potential to change a society. Furthermore Bruno Taut and Martin Wagner were by no means political actors; they merely aimed to inspire social cohesiveness through

¹⁸⁹ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1967), 166.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

visually appealing yet functional public and private spaces. Yet, the German Garden city movement is no different from later anti-parties in its idealistic pursuit of the social good through nontraditional means. In a press release of Alliance '90/The Greens in May of 1990, the original "anti-party" lists sustainable urban development, public transportation efficiency, improvement of waste disposal, new zoning initiatives, and energy saving strategies as key priorities of its political agenda.¹⁹¹ Hence, for both the architects of the German Garden city movement and the leaders of Alliance '90/The Greens, the sustainable development of Germany's cities was a foremost concern - not just for aesthetic and ecological reasons, but for the socially positive effects of a clean, healthy, and beautiful environment as well. Although neither New Forum nor Garden city architects were overt about their political preferences, both groups valued the communitarian ideals of socialism and espoused its social and economic benefits, even if in an apolitical sense.

Reforming Socialism: A German Tradition

For almost as long as the theory of socialism has existed, the desire to reform and revise its basic program has occupied the work of German scholars and politicians alike. This tendency began with the work of theoretician and politician Eduard Bernstein, who, in the late 19th century, promoted the reexamination of Marxist tenets in favor of a less orthodox form of socialism.¹⁹² Bernstein's revisionism differed from traditional Marxist thought in a number of ways, but his (and other revisionists') most valid criticisms concerned the negativity of Marxism,

¹⁹¹ *Presseerklärung Bündnis '90/Die Grüne* [Press Release of Alliance '90/The Greens], May 16, 1990, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

¹⁹² Andrews, "Criticism/ Self-Criticism in East Germany," 34.

that is, the necessity of political destruction in the name of its rebirth. In addition, the revisionists of the Wilhelmine period questioned whether classical Marxists had a practical strategy to achieve their desired aim of a socialist state.¹⁹³ Thus, the sentiment that socialism, as a political system, was somehow incomplete, or might not be functioning as well as it could, was felt long before the dissident movement of East Germany. But coupled with this critical perspective was a very real commitment to the idealistic destination of Marxist ideology, and Bernstein and other revisionists by no means meant to do away with the theory entirely. Sharing a similar goal to the dissidents of East Germany, the revisionists hoped to offer a middle way between bourgeoisie capitalism, on the one hand, and revolutionary Marxism, on the other.¹⁹⁴

A major proponent of Marxist revisionism during the 1960s, East German chemist and activist Robert Havemann would later become a source of inspiration to East German dissidents and countless others throughout the Eastern Bloc. His critique of socialism as it existed in the GDR focused on two major problems: the one being its neglect of legitimate democratic institutions, and the other its obsession with emulating the capitalist advances of the West. For Havemann, socialism was inherently democratic, and its neglect under the SED government had caused the nation to suffer, both economically and with regard to its international reputation. "The abolition of democratic rights and liberties... is the underlying cause both of the economic failure of socialism hitherto, and of the progressive erosion of its international standing."¹⁹⁵ Hence, Havemann believed that socialism, as it existed in

¹⁹³ Roger Fletcher, "British Radicalism and German Revisionism: The Case of Eduard Bernstein," *The International History Review* 4, no. 3 (1982): 340.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁹⁵ Andrews, "Criticism/ Self-Criticism in East Germany," 142.

the GDR, was not legitimate, because it merely faked democratic elections, and failed to give voice to the interests of the people. Yet, as Havemann professed in an interview with journalist John-Pierre Hammer in 1978, "this does not mean at all that I am a supporter of the capitalist system."¹⁹⁶ Rather, Havemann continued to advocate for internal reform of the socialist GDR.

The second main component of Havemann's critique, the GDR's obsession with emulating capitalist systems, constituted, for him, a moral weakness of contemporary socialism. Hence, "socialism should offer human beings different perspectives. Not those of greater consumption but of greater liberty and development."¹⁹⁷ Instead of emulating West Germany through the production of luxury goods such as the automobile (of which East Germany was an objectively terrible manufacturer), Havemann believed that the socialist country should invest in more progressive ventures like high-efficiency public transportation.¹⁹⁸ Thus, long before the Third Way of New Forum, dissidents like Robert Havemann had begun to critique East German socialism for its lack of democratic institutions and to offer feasible solutions for its economic and political reform.

Following in the footsteps of revisionists like Eduard Bernstein and Robert Havemann, the activist leaders of New Forum espoused neither the capitalist institutions of the West, nor the oppressive socialism of the SED, but a reformed, more democratic renewal of socialism. Compared to activists in other Soviet states, East German dissidents alone thought that they were fighting a pro-socialist

¹⁹⁶ Robert Havemann, Jean-Pierre Hammer, and Jack Zipes, "Interview with Robert Havemann," *New German Critique*, no. 15 (1978): 37-46, here: 44.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁹⁸ Andrews, "Criticism/ Self-Criticism in East Germany," 141.

revolution, in which the founding principles of Marxist ideology might be saved from its corruption under the SED regime.¹⁹⁹ This belief that socialism could somehow be rescued from its present state was, in part, due to the lack of violence accompanying the downfall of the SED regime. Whereas other countries in the Soviet Bloc had undergone bloody revolutions, and vowed never to return to socialism, East Germany had experienced a much milder shift in political power. Thus, many of its dissident groups were more willing to engage in a dialogue with SED officials, as the New Forum leadership did at the Round Table forums throughout 1990.

In addition to the relatively nonviolent nature of the East German revolution, many dissidents remained committed to socialism because it had played a large role in the history of their country. When asked exactly what a revised socialism might look like for the GDR, New Forum leader Bärbel Bohley responded: "There would have to be changes in the direction of more sovereignty for the people, less emphasis on consumer goods, and a recognition that there are other problems confronting us — that the Germans are not the center of the universe."²⁰⁰ Thus, for Bohley and others, there was no need for extreme changes within East Germany. Rather, increasing democratic liberties, revising economic policies, and reorienting the state on a more open path, would be enough to straighten out the uneven course of East German history. The Third Way, as New Forum understood it, required the incorporation of the socialist ideology within a new democratic system, and not its total eclipse by the capitalist West.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 130.

²⁰⁰ Michael Lucas et al., "Germany after the Wall," *World Policy Journal* 7, no. 1 (1989): 189-214.

Despite the trend towards revisionism within East German opposition, many organizations were very careful about how they articulated their political demands. As East German activist and politician of Alliance '90 Marianne Birthler explains, "No one would have called themselves a resistance group in the GDR. We called ourselves grassroots groups, freedom groups, or research organizations, but we never had the idea that we were opposing the government."²⁰¹ For many dissidents, political protest did not mean that they were attempting to overthrow the government; rather, they wanted to engage in communication with their leaders and to reform the socialist structure of the state. By identifying themselves as *Basisgruppen* [grassroots groups], organizations such as New Forum and Human Rights Initiative were able to both sidestep persecution by the SED regime while contributing to the social reform of East Germany. In comparison to the socialist revisionism of Bernstein and later Havemann, opposition organizations in 1989 were wary of using Marxist language, fearing that they might appear too revolutionary to the East German public. In its founding statement titled "Awakening '89," New Forum never actually used the term "socialism" to express its political aims.²⁰² Whereas groups such as Democracy Now openly endorsed a renewal of socialism through statements like: "We want to see the socialist revolution, which has stagnated under state control, endowed with new life,"²⁰³ New Forum chose to avoid what some might deem revolutionary language, instead focusing on the disrupted communication between state and society.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Birthler, interview, July 23, 2013. "Niemand hat sich Widerstandsgruppe genannt in der DDR. Wir nannten uns Basisgruppen, Friedensgruppen, oder Arbeitskreis, aber wir haben niemals den Begriff Oppositions benutzt... Unser Selbstverständnis war das von Basisgruppen."

²⁰² New Forum, *Aufbruch '89* [Awakening '89], September 9, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

²⁰³ Andrews, "Criticism/ Self-Criticism in East Germany," 145.

²⁰⁴ *Aufbruch '89* [Awakening '89], September 9, 1989, New Forum, New Forum Papers, RHA.

Although vague political language frustrated some of New Forum's followers, the group's emphasis on democratic reform, instead of Marxist ideology, helped it to maintain credibility within a variety of political circles.

Anti-politics and the Third Way

The apolitical Third Way is a vague idea in itself, and it would be relatively easy to apply its utopian, idealistic principles to a number of social movements, both within Germany and throughout the world. Yet, the conception of a middle road towards change has repeatedly manifested itself throughout German history and to such an extent that it would be difficult to discount its relevance within German grassroots politics. The political philosophies of Weimar intellectuals, who advocated the "higher third," is perhaps the most obvious theoretical connection between New Forum's unrealized Third Way and apolitical reform initiatives of the past. Yet, the West German Green party, socialist revisionism, and the German Garden city movement all possessed a striking resemblance to the idealistic yet apolitical ambitions of East Germany's New Forum. Although New Forum members might feel somewhat uneasy about being compared to such disparate reform movements when their political agenda applied primarily to the GDR, it is important to note that apolitical ideas must necessarily transcend the boundaries of partisan interest. Thus, it is less important whether apolitical grassroots groups identified with the right or left, and more telling that they understood themselves to occupy the realm above party politics, the realm of *Überparteilichkeit*. Ultimately, New Forum's apolitical Third Way movement should not be considered a failed attempt at grassroots change.

Although manifested in different ways, grassroots apolitical reform continues to live on in Alliance '90/The Greens, and, to some extent, has always been a foundational component of the German political identity.

CONCLUSION

In *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Ralf Dahrendorf investigates the German political identity, asking: "But who is the political German? Where do we find him at work?"²⁰⁵ The aim of this thesis was not, as Dahrendorf writes, to examine the political German, but rather to examine the apolitical German. Why have citizens throughout German history consistently organized themselves outside of political life, seeking instead to transform their societies through grassroots reform? Although this thesis began with the aim of understanding why the opposition organization New Forum remained dedicated to extra-parliamentary, apolitical reform, it has led to an historical investigation of the apolitical German.

New Forum's apolitical identity was both a product of the social and political conditions of East Germany during the late 1980s and part of a greater tradition of German grassroots reform. Thus, New Forum's disdain for parliamentary politics as they had existed within the GDR led the group to register as an organization and not a political party. In the Third Way, the group saw an alternative to the capitalist might of West Germany and the oppressive rule of the SED. Yet, the political circumstances surrounding the Revolution of 1989 do not provide a complete explanation of New Forum's apolitical character or its utopian Third Way. Rather, one must look to historical apolitical and philosophical movements in order to fully understand the reasoning behind New Forum's apolitical stance. As was explored through a discussion of German nature conservation and the West German Green Party, environmental movements in both West Germany and throughout German history had

²⁰⁵ Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany*. 330.

a tremendous influence on the character of New Forum. The West German Greens, the original "anti-party," were a key factor in New Forum's decision to oppose traditional parliamentary systems. By adopting their strategy of grassroots organization and belief in participatory democracy, New Forum was able to strengthen and solidify its role as the leading apolitical organization in the GDR.

Although West German activism influenced the apolitical path of New Forum, this was not the only source leading the organization to resist participation in party politics. In addition to the Green Party, there were a variety of historical apolitical movements that influenced the organization and philosophy of New Forum. Among these, the ideology of socialist revisionism, which dates back to the nineteenth century, influenced New Forum to question the socialist institutions of the GDR, while remaining wary of West German democracy. Dissatisfied with the existing forms of representative government, New Forum instead advocated a new, more direct political system. Labeling itself as a platform for open discussion and debate, New Forum became the apolitical prototype for a reformed socialist state.

This thesis offers a very general investigation of apolitical reform movements throughout German history as they relate to East Germany's New Forum. Yet, several important political (or apolitical) topics have not been explored. Although most reform initiatives in the Third Reich were all but destroyed under National Socialism (with the exception of nature conservation), a worthwhile topic of further research would be the apolitical activism of citizens under National Socialism, the most oppressive political period of German history. This thesis illustrated the continuity between several apolitical reform movements before the division of Germany and the

civic movement of the GDR. Although discussed briefly through a comparison between the West German Green Party and New Forum, the relationship between political activism of West Germany and East Germany remains largely unexplored. Further research might investigate discrepancies between the official political relationship of the FRG and the GDR and the somewhat underground relationships of apolitical activists within the two countries.

New Forum did not arise in a vacuum and it was not solely a product of the communist GDR. Rather, this apolitical organization was part of a greater German tradition of grassroots organization that dates back to Wilhelmine Germany. Operating under oppressive political systems, movements such as the Wilhelmine reform milieu and the East German opposition turned instead to strategies of grassroots organization and extra-parliamentary reform. Hence, to some degree, the apolitical Third Way is a symptom of authoritarian political systems throughout German history. The concept of the anti-party and its manifestation in groups such as New Forum and Alliance '90/The Greens in no way reflects the desire of German citizens to withdraw from political life. Rather, the apolitical Third Way reflects the historical incentive to transform, revitalize, and reclaim ineffective systems of parliamentary government under authoritarian rule.

Today, the utopian idealism of grassroots activity and Third Way thinking continues to characterize aspects of German democracy. One of the defining features of German apolitical organization, an ecological platform, no longer belongs solely to Alliance '90/The Greens. Rather, parties across the political spectrum have embraced environmental politics, leading Germany to become one of the greenest democracies

in the world. Thus, in some areas of grassroots reform, such as environmentalism, apolitical initiatives were able to transcend political parties and create a super-partisan consensus. By viewing social and economic issues through an apolitical lens, grassroots movements created a metapolitical milieu that could relate directly to regional, local, and personal experiences. Throughout the 20th century, grassroots movements (including New Forum) drew upon long-standing local and regional sources of identity. Rather than just identifying with the German nation, German citizens continued to identify with their locality and region, retaining a sense of permanency despite rapid political change. Tied to these regional understandings of Germanness, grassroots movements have allowed citizens to implement reform outside of federal politics. German reunification did not necessarily affect the strength of these regional sources of identity, nor their efforts at grassroots organization. Today, these deeply-rooted sources of German identity have made increasingly possible what the West German Greens and New Forum once called *Basisdemokratie* (grassroots democracy) by allowing politicians to tap into the actual interests of German citizens more directly.

While this thesis set out to resolve the problem of New Forum's apolitical identity, its secondary goal was to reclaim the organization that has been labeled a political failure by so many historians. Although participation in partisan politics has obvious advantages, this should not imply that grassroots movements are inferior to their parliamentary counterparts. By viewing New Forum in terms of what it could not do (compete with West Germany in a hasty process of German unification), the organization appears weak and ineffective. Hence, when one understands apolitical

movements as the antithesis of party politics, one tends to notice their limitations, both financial and organizational. Yet, this perspective does not give enough credit to the power of grassroots organization. Perhaps a better way of understanding the grassroots is as a method of organization and a vehicle of reform entirely outside political systems. While New Forum was never able to implement the Third Way, the utopian idealism inherent to Third Way movements has created a basis for a more directly responsive democratic system in modern-day Germany.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unpublished Sources

Robert Havemann Archive (Berlin), Materials on East German Opposition

Folder: *Neues Forum* [New Forum]

Ansätze zur Basisdemokratie [The Approach of Grassroots Democracy], 1989.

Antrag an den Runden Tisch [Application to the Round Table], December 18, 1989.

Aufbruch '89 [Awakening '89], September 9, 1989.

Die Mauer ist gefallen [The Wall has Fallen], November 12, 1989.

Erklärung des Neuen Forum zum 40. Jahrestag der DDR [Statement of New Forum on the 40th Anniversary of the GDR], October 10, 1989.

Grundsatzpapier [Founding Statement], January 16, 1989.

Offener Problemkatalog [Open Problem Catalogue], October 4, 1989.

Presseerklärung Bündnis '90/Die Grünen [Press Release of Alliance '90/The Greens], May 16, 1990.

Vertrauen in die Eigene Kraft [Believe in the Distinct Power], January 28, 1990.

Zum Wiedervereinigungsplan der Pluralistischen Rechten [On the Reunification Plan of Pluralistic Rights], October 28, 1989.

Zur Bildung eines gemeinsamen deutschen Staates [On the Creation of a United German State], December 18, 1989.

Folder: *Bärbel Bohley*

Bürgerbewegung: Interessenpolitik oder integrale Politik? [People's Movements: Interest-politics or Integral Politics?], 1989.

Gegen eine Spaltung des Neuen Forum [Against the Disintegration of New Forum], January 3, 1990.

Programmerklärung des Neuen Forum [Program Explanation of New Forum], 1989.

Semantische und Symbolische Strategien im Gründungsaufwurf des Neuen Forums [Semantic and Symbolic Strategies in the Founding Call of New Forum], 1989.

Thesen für das Neue Forum [Theses for New Forum], 1989.

Folder: *Pressearbeit* [Pressreleases]

Diskussion: Partei oder nicht Partei [Discussion: Party or Non-party], 1989.

Published Sources

Primary:

Interview with Reinhard Schult, *Die Andere* [The Other], 1989.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. "Aphorisms on Nature." In *The Maxims and Reflections of Goethe*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906.
<https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=CMZJAAAAIAAJ&rdid=book-CMZJAAAAIAAJ&rdot=1> (accessed April 8, 2014).

Mann, Thomas. *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* [Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man]. New York: F. Ungar, 1982.

Riehl, Wilhelm Heinrich. *Naturgeschichte des Volkes* [Natural History of the People], edited by David J. Diephouse. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1990.

Secondary:

Andrews, Molly. "Criticism/ Self-Criticism in East Germany: Contradictions between Theory and Practice." *Critical Sociology* 24, no. 1-2 (1998): 130-53.

Applegate, Celia. *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Blackbourn, David. *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany*. New York: Norton, 2006.

- Boyes, Roger. "The Ideology of Nudism in Germany." Goethe Institute, <http://www.goethe.de/ges/mol/typ/en3097399.htm> (accessed January 1, 2014).
- Bullivant, Keith. "The Conservative Revolution." In *The Weimar Dilemma: Intellectuals in the Weimar Republic*, edited by Anthony Phelan, 47-70. Dover, NH: Manchester University Press, 1985.
- "Clear Victory for Merkel and CDU/CSU," German Missions in the United States, http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/__pr/P__Wash/2013/09/23-Election-Results.html (accessed April 8, 2014).
- Dahrendorf, Ralf. *Society and Democracy in Germany*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967.
- Dale, Gareth. *The East German Revolution of 1989*. New York: Manchester University Press, 2006.
- . *Popular Protest in East Germany, 1945-1989*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Davidson-Schmich, Louise K. *Becoming Party Politicians: Eastern German State Legislators in the Decade Following Democratization*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.
- Fairbairn, Brett, "Membership, Organization, and Wilhelmine Modernism." In *Wilhelmism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930 : Essays for Hartmut Pogge Von Strandmann*, edited by H. Pogge von Strandmann, Geoff Eley, and James N. Retallack. New York: Berghahn Books, 2003.
- Fletcher, Roger. "British Radicalism and German Revisionism: The Case of Eduard Bernstein." *The International History Review* 4, no. 3 (1982): 339-70.
- Fulbrook, Mary. *History of Germany, 1918-2000: The Divided Nation*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002.
- Harrington, Anne. *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Havemann, Robert, Jean-Pierre Hammer, and Jack Zipes. "Interview with Robert Havemann." *New German Critique*, no. 15 (1978): 37-46.
- Jarausch, Konrad H. *The Rush to German Unity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

- Joppke, Christian. *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989: Social Movement in a Leninist Regime*. New York: New York University Press, 1995.
- Lekan, Thomas M. *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Lucas, Michael, Adrienne Edgar, Bärbel Bohley, Harald Lange, Karsten Voigt, and Yuri Davidov. "Germany after the Wall." *World Policy Journal* 7, no. 1 (1989): 189-214.
- Mayer, Margit, and John Ely. *The German Greens: Paradox between Movement and Party*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Mommsen, Hans. *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- "Overview: Wilhelmine Germany, 1890-1914." German History in Documents and Images, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/chapter.cfm?subsection_id=65 (accessed April 8, 2014).
- Patton, David F. "Annus Mirabilis: 1989 and German Unification." In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, edited by Helmut Walser Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Peukert, Detlev. *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Pfaff, Steven. "Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilization: East Germany in 1989." *Social Forces* 75, no. 1 (1996): 91-117.
- . *Exit-Voice Dynamics and the Collapse of East Germany: The Crisis of Leninism and the Revolution of 1989*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Poguntke, Thomas. *Alternative Politics: The German Green Party*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993.
- Pond, Elizabeth. "A Wall Destroyed: The Dynamics of German Unification in the GDR." *International Security* 15, no. 2 (1990): 35-66.
- Repp, Kevin. *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

- Ringer, Fritz K. *The Decline of the German Mandarins; the German Academic Community, 1890-1933*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1969.
- Rollins, William H. *A Greener Vision of Home: Cultural Politics and Environmental Reform in the German Heimatschutz Movement, 1904-1918*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Uekötter, Frank. *The Green and the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Weitz, Eric D. *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Whyte, Iain Boyd, and David Frisby. *Metropolis Berlin: 1880-1940*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.