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One World, Or War? Politics, Science, and Popular Culture in the Transatlantic Resistance to the Cold War

From today's vantage point of the recent turmoil in transatlantic relations the Cold War presents itself as an era of remarkable stability. After the post-World War II civil wars had ended in the Balkans, Europe did not see a major military conflagration for more than forty years. When tensions were on the rise, such as during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis or the 1953, 1956, and 1968 Soviet crackdowns on Eastern European uprisings, common sense always prevailed. Hence, the "nuclear stalemate" led to the most prolonged period of peaceful coexistence in modern European history. While decolonization and U.S.-Soviet rivalry produced violent confrontations in the so-called "Third World," some smoldering for decades, the Cold War in Europe was notable for the absence of large-scale hot wars. Even the Arab-Israeli conflict was largely contained. Compared to what came later in places like the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Iraq, and most recently Syria, the postwar decades have attained the nostalgic tinge of a "long peace."¹

Of course, this was not the prevailing sentiment at the time. The post-1945 "Cold War order" was always contested, especially in divided Europe, but also in the United States.² In Europe, as well as in similarly divided East Asia, the consolidation of the two superpower empires meant that centuries-old lines of communication were cut, families torn apart, and people prevented from going about their businesses across newly erected borders. That was most visible in places like Berlin or the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), situated a few miles from Korea's historical capital. Vienna, too, moved from the center of Europe to the margins. As the Czech writer Milan Kundera lamented in his famous essay *Un occident kidnappé*, the "golden city" of Prague had once been a proud cultural,

¹ This being the title of Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis's iconic essay, which had been published even before the Berlin Wall came down; see Gaddis, "The Long Peace."

² Gassert, "Internal Challenges."

economic, and political crossroads of Europe. It was now relegated to the place of a provincial capital in an isolated Russian-dominated East, of which it never had felt to be part.³

Europeans, East Asians, and even Americans and Russians frequently detested and sometimes challenged this “unnatural” situation at ancient centers of European and Asian civilizations. While West Europeans and the people of Japan (as well as later the South Koreans, Taiwanese, Hong Kong Chinese, Greeks, Portuguese, and the Spanish) were living in relative prosperity, those living to the north and east of those borders were punished for Cold War stability, as were those living in the so-called “Third World” countries, where the superpowers were fighting “proxy wars.” Moreover, while many were going about their daily business, forgetting about the nuclear threat and the “division of the world,” others perceived the situation along the geopolitical fault lines as a dangerous powder keg that could detonate at any moment. Popular culture was rife with imaginations of accidental or not so accidental Armageddons.⁴ Millions took to the streets during the 1950s and 1980s to prevent impending nuclear doom. The “struggle against the bomb” became one of the most prolonged transnational social movements in history, finding supporters across the globe.⁵

This contribution looks at those American, transatlantic and European voices who opposed the status quo of the Cold War, which included political parties, social movements, artists, filmmakers, intellectuals, scientists, and politicians. While that opposition took up a range of issues, including a general critique of the militarization of societies, my focus is on the debate on “nuclear death.” The vision of total nuclear annihilation became the most powerful symbol of those critical of an international order that seemed to have become utterly unpredictable, dangerous, and inhumane. This debate played itself out in an interactive transatlantic and to some extent global framework. While opponents to governmental Cold War politics were often labelled “anti-Western” or “anti-American,” many were in fact deeply influenced by Henry David Thoreau, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and other protagonists of the nonviolent resistance tradition equally revered by the U.S. peace movement.⁶

³ Kundera, “Die Weltliteratur.”

⁴ Shapiro, *Atomic Bomb Cinema*; DeGroot, *The Bomb*.

⁵ Wittner, *Struggle Against the Bomb*.

⁶ Gassert, “Conflict.”

My general argument is that the Cold War should be conceived as much as the history of a transatlantic conversation among those opposed to the nuclear stalemate as it has been conceived as the history of the interaction of those who accepted the Cold War division of the world as the inevitable outcome of a power struggle between two military and ideological blocs. Therefore on many occasions a critique of the Cold War order included a critique of the domestic status quo in Western societies. During its first two decades (1940s and 1950s) as well as during the last decade (the 1980s) the main bearers of anti-nuclearism were political parties, activist political networks (including social movements) as well as popular culture, with the last playing a much more prominent role in “bringing the war home” during the 1980s than during previous decades. During the middle decades (1960s and 1970s) the main opposition came from academic peace research. In this context, intellectual networks played a most significant role. While neither social movements nor producers of nuclear catastrophes in popular culture were in a position to bring the Cold War to an end, they were part and parcel of “making sense” of what they perceived as a senseless and dangerous order.

FOR THE UNITY OF MANKIND: EARLY CHALLENGES TO THE COLD WAR ORDER

On both sides of the Atlantic, the early resistance to the Cold War and a looming arms race was mostly taken up by established political figures. They tended to cling to those visions of “one world,” with which World War II had been fought and to some extent been won. Yet, given the difficulties of peacemaking in Yalta and Potsdam, they could not be sustained long beyond the cessation of hostilities.⁷ The idea that in “Yalta” the potential for a “better world” had been in the balance, would fire up those who during the Cold War period were convinced that the West had betrayed the Eastern Europeans in Yalta.⁸ And whereas international relations “realist” thinkers conceived the Soviet-American rivalry as a natural outcome of the power vacuum that had opened up in Central

⁷ Numerous publications include Miscamble, *From Roosevelt to Truman*; Neiberg, *Potsdam*.

⁸ Roberts, “Antipodes or Twins.”

Europe after the fall of Hitler's Germany, others resisted the idea that a new conflict was a historical given.⁹

One prominent American example is that of Henry A. Wallace, a staunch New Dealer, former Secretary of Agriculture and Vice President during Roosevelt's third term as President. After briefly serving as Secretary of Commerce in the first Truman administration, Wallace became notable for his unwillingness to accept force and heightened conflict as the way things were going in Soviet-American relations. Even though his 1948 third-party presidential bid would be unsuccessful, he served as a figurehead for those questioning the Cold War paradigm, that by the late 1940s had become so firmly entrenched among the members of the administration. In particular, Wallace opposed Winston Churchill on the premises of the latter's 1946 "Fulton Speech," in which the former British Prime Minister had warned of aggressive Soviet tendencies. Churchill, who had spoken at the invitation of Truman, also popularized the term "iron curtain," referring to the barrier which had supposedly "descended across the continent."¹⁰ Wallace went against this reasoning in full force, and soon found many detractors and enemies in the U.S. as well as in Europe.

Although Wallace was a very peculiar American mixture of mid-Western Presbyterianism and progressivism, globalist idealism, and naivety toward Joseph Stalin, he developed his critique of the Truman administration's growing hostility toward the Soviet Union to some extent in a dialogue with Europeans who were opposed to the Cold War as well. Among them he found more sympathetic and enthusiastic audiences than back home. After having been ousted by Truman, Wallace accepted the position of editor of the progressive-leaning magazine *New Republic*. In this capacity he traveled to Europe, speaking in England, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and France. There, he advertised his vision of a united postwar world, which would share the secrets of atomic energy and the bomb.¹¹ As he said to a cheering crowd in London: "The world is devastated and hungry; the world is crying out, not for American guns and tanks to spread more hunger, but for American plows and machines to

⁹ Cortright, *Peace* 109-10.

¹⁰ Churchill, "The Sinews of Peace."

¹¹ Shimamoto, *Wallace* 158-9; Walker, *Wallace* 170-2.

fulfill the promise of peace.”¹² While aiming at the American presidency, Wallace felt that he had to interact with those Europeans who supported him in his conviction that the world could not be saved if Europeans and Americans did not show “belief in the unity of all mankind.”¹³

A second increasingly harsh critic of Churchill’s and Truman’s fixed belief in an “iron curtain descending across Europe,” and their exhortations that the Soviet Union must be confronted, was the journalist and writer Walter Lippmann. Truly a transatlantic intellectual, he had been a member of the 1918-19 U.S. Armistice Commission, traveling frequently to Europe during the interwar years. In 1938, with the threat of Fascism looming large over Europe, he co-sponsored the famous Paris Colloquium that came up with the term “neo-liberalism.”¹⁴ Shortly after Churchill’s 1946 Fulton speech, Lippmann went on a five-week trip to Europe, stopping in Paris, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Prague, Rome, and Florence. While Lippmann did not harbor any illusions about Soviet intentions, he urged his compatriots to resist the temptation of “talking tough” to the Russians. Like Wallace, he contradicted Truman’s and Foreign Secretary George C. Marshall’s idea that Soviet intentions were aggressive and that the American people must prepare for the consequences.¹⁵

After visiting Europe for a second time in 1947, Lippman summarized his findings in a series of articles, which were published in a small booklet bearing the eponymous title *The Cold War*.¹⁶ He did so, however, from a critical, “one world” perspective. Lippmann argued that the Russians had already lost the “Cold War.”¹⁷ The West should back down, remain confident, and relax tensions. Cooperation with the Soviets would be entirely in the interest of the United States. Reacting to former U.S. deputy chief of mission in Moscow and then State Department Policy Director

¹² Quoted in Walton, *Wallace* 153; on the trip to Europe see Walker, *Wallace* 149-65.

¹³ Wallace, *Toward World Peace* 117-18.

¹⁴ Although, in 1938 the term “neo-liberal” had a very different meaning from today: then it referred to a new thinking with regard to the failures of liberals to oppose Fascism, Communism, and totalitarianism effectively; see *Walter Lippmann Colloquium*.

¹⁵ Steel, *Lippmann* 430-1.

¹⁶ Lippmann, *Cold War* 42-5; while he did not invent the term “Cold War,” he certainly popularized it.

¹⁷ Steel, *Lippmann* 447.

George F. Kennan's famous "Mr. X" article, which provided the intellectual underpinnings of the policies of containment,¹⁸ Lippmann did not think that the conflict with the Soviet Union was imaginary. Having traveled to Europe, however, he was convinced that "the strength of the western world is great." The Red Army was in no way in a position to occupy Western Europe: "Though impoverished and weakened, the nations of the Atlantic community are incomparably stronger, richer, more united, and politically more democratic and mature than any of the nations of the Russian perimeter." The Soviets could keep their grip on Eastern Europe with military might only. Therefore, it made no sense to aim "to make Jeffersonian democrats out of the peasants of eastern Europe [...], but to settle the war and to restore the independence of the nations of Europe by removing the alien armies – all of them, our own included."¹⁹

Similarly, in Europe much of the early opposition to the Cold War was to be found less within civil society, than within established Social Democratic Parties and Labor Unions. West German unions in particular, even though they were critical of the Stalinization of East Germany, were strongly opposed to the rearmament of the country and sought allies within the American political establishment.²⁰ Yet, neither in the U.S. nor in Western Europe could Social Democratic and Communist parties win majorities with campaigns against nuclear armament. Conservative leaders such as Konrad Adenauer in Germany, Alcide de Gasperi in Italy, and Winston Churchill in England combined the promise of stability, security and prosperity in a nascent consumer society with a firm commitment to prioritize Western integration as well as anti-Communism over "one world" and the overcoming of the division of Europe. In most of Western-leaning, liberal Europe, with the exception of maybe Austria, the "peace party" remained in a minority position. Nudged on by U.S. labor unions and anti-Communist "Cold War liberals," West European labor unions as well as Social Democrats moved toward the center during the second half of the 1950s, basically accepting the premises of the Cold War.²¹

¹⁸ X, "Sources of Soviet Conduct"; for Kennan's original Moscow Embassy "Long Telegram" see Etzold 50-63.

¹⁹ Lippmann, *Cold War* 15, 26, 44-5.

²⁰ Fichter, "Support and Dissent" 572.

²¹ Angster, "Finest Labor Network" 110-11.

Thus, during the 1950s, “prosperity,” “freedom,” “anti-Communism” and “Cold War” came to trump “peace” and “one world,” or, to be more precise: Fears of a new, possibly catastrophic nuclear war never were strong enough to overcome skepticism toward those parties who were arguing in favor of an East-Western rapprochement and decisive moves toward détente. The political reactions to the testing of a hydrogen bomb at the Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific by the U.S. in 1954 is a good example: it certainly led to rising public concerns over the long-term health effects of nuclear radiation, when 28 Americans, 239 Marshall Islanders, and 23 crew members of a Japanese fishing boat, the *Lucky Dragon*, were contaminated by nuclear fallout. Soon, nuclear fiction was on the rise in both the U.S. and Europe. Japanese as well as American movie production companies reacted with a spectacular series of movies. That same year, the first *Godzilla* movie came out in Japan. Shortly thereafter, against the backdrop of the debates about nuclear fallout and its effect on human genetic material, mutants became endemic in Hollywood.²²

Yet trashy movies like *Them!* (1954), *The Monster that Challenged the World* (1957) or even the more upscale, Kafkaesque story in the *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) did not lead to any prolonged resistance to “nuclearism” and the Cold War. In her famous essay, “The Imagination of Disaster,” the journalist and philosopher Susan Sontag has argued that popular science-fiction scenarios have the potential to normalize and trivialize real dangers.²³ And even though she was roundly criticized for her argument, there may be some truth in it, when we look at the paradoxical situation in the late 1950s: Popular culture was rife with scenarios of nuclear apocalypse. Moreover, Europe saw the rise of serious postapocalyptic “atomic literature” as well as the “physicist dramas,” in which concerned and torn scientists like J. Robert Oppenheimer figured prominently.²⁴ Even though the ethics of atomic science was hotly debated, political resistance to the Cold War and the armaments race died down. While many, in theory, supported a test ban treaty as well as the prohibition of nuclear arms, the struggle for peace became the project of specialized organizations and social movements as well as the province of scientists.

²² Weart, *Nuclear Fear*.

²³ Sontag, “Imagination of Disaster”; Broderick, “Surviving Armageddon.”

²⁴ Stölken-Fitschen, *Atombombe*; Krahl, *Weltuntergangsszenarien*.

Despite the sensational reports on nuclear testing, the transatlantic peace movements reached their low point during the mid-1950s. Later in the decade, a new type of peace organizations, which we today would call “social movements,” such as the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) in the United States and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in Britain renewed the “resistance to the bomb.” British activists, who had been involved with American peace networks before, as well as the traditional Labour politics, took the lead with the first march from London to Aldermaston at Easter 1958. It adopted the symbol that has become the emblem of peace movements on both sides of the Atlantic: a circle encompassing a broken cross. The West German Easter March Movement, which originally grew out of the Social Democratic opposition to NATO’s decision to arm West German forces with U.S. nuclear weapons, copied the CND.²⁵ But the very fact that they had sprung up outside the realm of established parties, was very telling with regard to the political salience of “peace” during the 1950s and early 1960s.

During the 1950s, in the U.S. domestic and international peace organizations, such as War Resisters’ International (WRI), the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFR), and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) renewed demands for nuclear disarmament. They clearly questioned the underlying paradigm of an arms race borne out of superpower rivalry.²⁶ And even though the 1963 Test Ban Treaty fell short of the expectations of peace activists, protesters could claim that they had contributed to a growing pressure forcing U.S. and Soviet governments to achieve a breakthrough at the negotiating table.²⁷ By politicizing a generation of young people and developing new forms of political action, the anti-nuclear campaign set the stage for the protests against the Vietnam War. The British CND as well as the German *Ostermarsch* movement, both were incubators of the movements of “1968.” While the new protest movements of the late 1960s continued to challenge the Cold War status quo, they moved away from “peace” between “East” and “West,” and tended to focus on decolonization and the “North-South” questions instead.²⁸

²⁵ Nehring, “Searching for Security.”

²⁶ Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb* 10-14.

²⁷ Rubinson, “Crucified on a Cross of Atoms.”

²⁸ Klimke, *Other Alliance* 236-41.

In the mid to late 1960s transatlantic social movement activists began to prioritize “Third World” questions at the expense of campaigns “against the bomb.” During the late 1960s, they mostly demonstrated against U.S. imperialism and the American War effort in Vietnam, and they sympathized with the efforts of Eastern Europeans to give Socialism a “human face” as happened during the Prague Spring in 1968. Therefore, during the 1960s, the social sciences emerged as the main agent of the opposition to the Cold War and the logic of mutually-assured destruction. In contrast, the “1968” student movements largely ignored nuclear death and sometimes acted as if the East-West conflict was already history. During the late 1960s, the North-South question took precedence, with student rebels mostly bored by the debates of the 1950s. On both sides of the Atlantic, the movements of 1968 focused on personal liberation, civil rights, and a Marxist critique of society, letting the East-West conflict fall by the wayside.²⁹

AGAINST THE BOMB: THE RISE OF PEACE RESEARCH IN THE SHADOW OF DÉTENTE

Early on transatlantic scientific networks had been prominent in the struggles “against the bomb” and “for peace.” Britain’s anti-nuclear activists urged their government not to develop the hydrogen bomb as early as 1950. A key figure was the British mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell, whose BBC radio address on 23 December 1953 attracted international attention. It led to the creation of the Pugwash Movement, which was supported by a number of leading physicists, including several Nobel laureates on both sides of the Cold War barrier. Influenced by Western colleagues, Soviet physicists such as Andrei Sakharov apparently warned their government of the dangers of nuclear testing.³⁰ Across the Western world scientists made themselves heard with the Russell Einstein Manifesto, signed by many leading nuclear scientists on both sides of the Atlantic. Speaking as “members of the species Man, whose continued existence is in doubt,” the signers urged people to set aside the strong political feelings, which the “titanic struggle between Communism and anti-Communism” engendered. Instead, they should

²⁹ Wittner, “Nuclear Threat Ignored.”

³⁰ Rotblat, *Scientists*.

consider themselves “only as members of a biological species which has had a remarkable history, and whose disappearance none of us can desire.”³¹

As social movement activism of the 1960s moved away from issues related to the Cold War and nuclear death, Peace and Conflict Studies (*Friedens- und Konfliktforschung*) became the main agent of the “resistance to the bomb.” This scholarly field had originally emerged within both international relations theory and empirical social sciences. When it comes to the transatlantic circulation of ideas, Theodore Lentz’s book *Towards a Science of Peace* (1955) was of particular importance. It earned him the title of “father of peace research.” Lentz, a professor of Education at Washington University in St. Louis, had been born in Missouri, served in the U.S. military during World War I, and received his Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1925. First, he worked in “character studies,” but by the mid-1930s he began circulating questionnaires to measure conservative-to-radical political opinions.³² In the wake of the tumultuous end of World War II, he had established the Peace Research Laboratory. As a result during the final years of his tenure Lentz devoted most of his time to promoting peace research as a scientific discipline.³³

In *Towards a Science of Peace* Lentz took what he called a “global perspective” (ix). His stark apocalyptic predictions had a normative basis in Wilsonian, or in that case rather “Rooseveltian” ideas of “one world,” which had been the bedrock of Henry Wallace’s critique of Truman’s confrontational stance toward the Russians. Lentz suggested that while humanity had the scientific knowledge to move “toward a new worldwide golden age,” this was not what was actually happening: “There is an extreme danger that the road we now travel will suddenly carry us over the cliff and into an abyss from which it would require centuries to recover, if ever. Amidst the dreams and hopes and promises of one world, we face the possibility of no world at all. The creative genius of man has fostered a towering structure of technology now threatened with cataclysmic

³¹ “Russell Einstein Manifesto.”

³² Biographical information on the website of the State Historical Society of Missouri, Theodore Lentz Papers, <https://collections.shsmo.org/manuscripts/stlouis/s0435.pdf> (18 November 2019).

³³ Gleditsch, Nordkvelle, Strand, “Peace Research” 147.

collapse. Civilization seems to hang in the balance, sick and ill-suited to choose between sanity and suicide.”³⁴

Lentz’s urgent call for action came at about the same time as the publication of the Russell Einstein Manifesto, taking a similar line. Both had a decisive impact in Europe. As David J. Dunn reports in *The First Fifty Years of Peace Research*, Lentz’s book was read by a Lancaster physiotherapist, Patrick Deighan, who would soon become the founder of the Peace Research Center at Lancaster University. The Lancaster project, in turn, “was a seminal moment in the development of peace research in Britain.”³⁵ At the same time, the Center for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences was started at Stanford, where, among others, the Austrian émigré Paul Lazarsfeld played a leading role. Among the first visiting scholars was the British political scientist Harold Lasswell, who took an interest in peace research there. These activities coalesced around the founding of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. In 1957, it began to appear under the auspices of the University of Michigan. Peace and Conflict Studies now had a highly visible platform for international scholarly exchange.³⁶

During the second half of the 1950s and during the 1960s, Peace and Conflict Studies were able to gain a precarious foothold in American and European universities. The activities of concerned nuclear scientists, which peaked around the Einstein Russell Manifesto in Britain and the U.S. as well as the *Göttinger Appell* in West Germany, were coming together with the ambitious plans of social science entrepreneurs such as Theodore Lentz to make the new field of scholarly investigation permanent. However, one should not underestimate the difficulties. The beginnings of the “science of peace” had been so precarious, because “social science” itself was a problematic term during the late 1950s, often having to fend off the assumption that “social science” equaled “socialist science.” It was with the Norwegian social scientist Johan Galtung that peace researchers were by and large able to shed the image of being “fellow travelers.”

In 1960, Galtung, who had taught at Columbia University during the second half of the 1950s, returned to Norway to establish the International

³⁴ Lentz, *Towards a Science of Peace* 1; tellingly, the book was first published in Britain.

³⁵ Dunn, *First Fifty Years* 47.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 48.

Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO). The timing was auspicious. The second Berlin crisis (1958-1962) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) kept people on their toes. Political efforts were gaining speed in Western Europe, the United States as well as the Soviet Union, to slow the arms race and to establish procedures in order to prevent potentially catastrophic developments. The ensuing politics of détente, which became such a prominent feature during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, opened up the space for a major social science research effort to help overcome the East-West conflict in the name of peace.³⁷ While the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963 did not satisfy most peace activists, it was an important first step toward détente. While it could not stop the build-up of nuclear arsenals, the end of testing in the atmosphere reduced a serious health hazard that for some time had been a concern to scientists and Western public opinion. Moreover, it was an important first step toward slowing nuclear proliferation.³⁸

The transatlantic field of Peace Research soon went much further. During the 1960s, many of its practitioners took not only a decisive turn against the confrontation between the blocs and the atomic arms race. On both sides of the Atlantic, the “armaments race” was increasingly seen not as the result of the rivalry of great powers (as the “realist school” of international relations would have explained it), but related to the inner-societal causes of the Cold War. In 1969, in a seminal essay, Galtung popularized the idea of “structural violence” that was at the core of modern societies.³⁹ The German political scientist, Dieter Senghaas, spoke of an “organized lack of peace” (*organisierte Friedlosigkeit*).⁴⁰ Later, during the second “nuclear scare” of the 1980s, the psychologist Robert Jay Lifton and the political scientist Richard Falk compared “nuclearism” to a psychological dysfunction in Western societies (basically to madness) and made a strong connection between the arms race and the persecution of European Jews during the Holocaust.⁴¹

³⁷ Galtung, Fischer, *Johan Galtung* 6-9.

³⁸ Schrafstetter, Twigg, *Avoiding Armageddon* 120-1.

³⁹ Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research.”

⁴⁰ Senghaas, *Abschreckung und Frieden.*; on early German Peace Research see Weller, Bösch, “Friedensforschung und Gewalt“; Wasmuth, *Geschichte*; Hauswedell, *Friedenswissenschaften*.

⁴¹ Lifton, Falk, *Indefensible Weapons*.

As the political scientist, peace studies pioneer, and founder of the “Correlates of War” project at the University of Michigan, J. David Singer, observed in 1963, U.S. intellectuals had finally adopted the notion “that we are drifting toward nuclear cataclysm and that the intellectual should – and perhaps can – do something about it.”⁴² Yet, during the 1960s, anti-nuclear activism was mostly limited to social scientific networks of inquiry. While social movements focused on American civil rights, the Vietnam War, and “Third World” liberation, the fight against the arms race continued in academic circles on both sides of the Atlantic, yet gained little traction in the wider public. Thus, the counter-hegemonial ideas of the peace movement of the 1950s, after having lost track in the political realm, became re-incarnated in the peace research of the 1960s. Peace research, however, acquired a leftist bent, which it had not yet had when Lentz came out with his manifesto in 1955: What became dominant during the 1970s and 1980s was the social-critical approach, that was represented by Galtung in Norway, Senghaas in Germany, and Falk in the U.S.⁴³

Thus, by the 1980s, the now institutionalized Peace and Conflict Studies had become a highly politicized scholarly field. When the debate over nuclear weapons reached a new urgency during the “rearmament debate” of the 1980s and Ronald Reagan’s “Star Wars” program, concerned scientists were ready to weigh in. Again, physicists played an important role. In 1983, for example, a meeting of natural scientists, organized by the German physicist Hans-Peter Dürr, released a joint declaration, the Mainz Appeal, which called for a European peace order. It was supported by American scientific royalty such as the Nobel Laureate Linus Pauling and the Austrian-born émigré Victor F. Weisskopf, who had been involved in the Manhattan Project and became a founding member of the Union of Concerned Scientists in 1969.⁴⁴ But whereas during the 1950s physicists had been the main bearers of a critical stance toward nuclear arms, the 1980s saw political scientists, social psychologists, and medical doctors in a much more prominent role. More than ever, knowledge was something the peace movement marshalled as a means to make its critical positions heard.⁴⁵

⁴² Singer “Peace Research.”

⁴³ Dunn, *First Fifty Years* 94-6; Weller/Böschen.

⁴⁴ Dürr, *Verantwortung*; Moore, *Disrupting Science*.

⁴⁵ Zepp, “Rationality of Fear”; on doctors and psychologists: Kemper, “Nuclear Arms Race.”

THE RETURN OF APOCALYPSE: THE 1980S AND THE REDUCTION OF THE SUPERPOWERS

When the thaw in superpower relations was giving way to new tensions during the late 1970s and early 1980s, many West Europeans and North Americans were not prepared to accept silently that a new cycle of a heightened Cold War confrontation was inevitable. During the late 1960s, while *détente* had been high on the minds of Western and Eastern politicians, first NATO and later the Soviet Union had begun to modernize their nuclear arsenals. This so-called “revolution in military affairs” forced military planners to come up with new ideas and weapons to keep the system of deterrence going. During the late 1970s, NATO members were increasingly at odds over strategy. These internal disagreements led to the so-called “NATO Dual Track Decision,” which threatened the Soviets with the deployment of new medium-range nuclear missiles, if the U.S.S.R. did not stop its nuclear build-up.⁴⁶ Then, the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in December 1979 and, most importantly, Ronald Reagan’s election to the American presidency in November 1980, once again provoked mounting fears of nuclear Armageddon in East and West.⁴⁷

The 1980s peace movement was not an exact rerun of the peace movement of the 1950s. Most importantly, the context had changed. The superpowers had lost their dominance. During the 1960s and 1970s, allies of both the U.S. and to a more limited extent of the U.S.S.R. had made headway vis-à-vis the two hegemonic powers. The Soviet relationship with Poland was in a precarious state. As early as the late 1950s, the Sino-Soviet rift had severely limited Moscow’s future capabilities in East Asia. China was becoming a full-blown nuclear power and was seeking a rapprochement with America. Western Europe, too, was much less dependent on America. Gaullist France went its own way. West Germany, Japan, but also smaller allies like the Netherlands and South Korea were flexing their economic muscles, while the U.S. seemed to be in economic decline.⁴⁸ The Federal Republic of Germany now made a huge military,

⁴⁶ Spohr “Conflict and Cooperation”; *Euromissile Crisis*; Geiger, “NATO Double Track Decision.”

⁴⁷ Becker-Schaum, “Introduction.”

⁴⁸ Kennedy, *Rise and Fall*; for the 1980s debate on “American decline” Gassert, “Erzählungen vom Ende.”

economic, and increasingly political contribution to the Western alliance. With regard to the NATO Dual Track Decision, West European leaders like Prime Minister Callaghan of Britain, Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany, and President Giscard d'Estaing of France exercised leadership, while U.S. President Carter seemed to lack the resolve to lead the West.⁴⁹

Moreover, the nature of anti-nuclear protest movements had changed. The European peace movements of the 1950s by and large had been nurtured by traditional parties and organizations of the "Old Left," including unions, the Labour Party in Britain, Social Democrats in continental Europe, and dissidents within the Democratic Party such as Henry A. Wallace, who wanted to stay true to Roosevelt's promises of "one world." The 1980s peace movements were connected to these older campaigns for peace, but their make-up resembled those of the new social movements that had come up during the late 1960s. While social movements have a long and rich history going back to the nineteenth century, Western societies had changed to an extent that the "new social movements" that had sprung up in the wake of the late 1960s protests were more global and more "single-issue"-minded than their predecessors in the "Old Left." To some extent, "protest" became "project driven," with the dynamic and fluent protest networks and social movements working along a shorter time scale.⁵⁰

Protests against "nuclearism" and the Cold War "belligerence" exploded about two years after NATO's decision in 1979 to introduce a new generation of intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Europe if the Soviet Union did not remove its own nuclear armed SS-20 medium-range missiles. This second great anti-nuclear campaign in postwar history received most domestic support in Belgium and the Netherlands, where governments agreed to delay the NATO deployment schedule. In Britain CND was rejuvenated. The high point occurred in the fall of 1983, in the months and weeks before the deployment of NATO's new missiles was scheduled to begin if the disarmament talks between the U.S. and the

⁴⁹ Scholtyseck, "United States."

⁵⁰ To differentiate between an "Old Left" and a "New Left" is highly contentious. It has been argued that it mirrors the normative positions of the first generation of social movements scholars of the 1970s and 1980s, who followed modernization-theory approaches and were stressing the "newness" of their object, out of sympathy with the New Left; on the debate and the potential of social movement history for global history see Berger, Nehring, "Introduction."

Soviet Union did not yield any meaningful results. Millions demonstrated on both sides of the Atlantic. During the “hot autumn,” as it was called in West Germany, the media overflowed with photos of human chains, sit-in blockades in front of military installations, and enormous rallies, which filled the *Hofgarten* in Bonn, the established space for large-scale demonstrations at the seat of the West German government, to capacity.⁵¹

Like the first anti-nuclear campaigns of the 1950s and the protests against the Vietnam War, the 1980s European peace movements did not originate in the United States. Yet, European protagonists more overtly stressed the fact that they were demonstrating in unison with their American peers as well as their peers in Eastern Europe. West European peace activists highlighted “transatlantic anti-nuclear unity” in order to combat the ubiquitous criticism of conservatives that they were visceral anti-Americans and Communist “fellow travelers.” As the German-American peace activist, founding member of the German Green Party, and *Bundestag* Deputy Petra Kelly put it in a speech to parliament: “We are not standing alone, but together with the Freeze Movement in the U.S.A., with many Congress members and Senators, with our friends in [the Polish labor movement] *Solidarność*, the [Czechoslovak dissident group] *Charta 77* as well as the Swords-To-Ploughshares Movement in the GDR, and activist networks all over the world. We also will do our duty to show civil disobedience.”⁵²

Thus European protesters saw themselves allied with American peace groups such as the National Freeze Campaign. But they also took a more pan-European approach to peace that transcended the East-West divide. In the 1980s, an originally British intellectual network, founded by the historian Edward P. Thompson, his wife Dorothy Thompson, and the social scientist Mary Kaldor, even succeeded in creating a transnational European protest movement, the European Nuclear Disarmament (END). The END founding pamphlet *Protest and Survive* was immediately reprinted in the U.S., with a foreword by the prominent military analyst and peace activist David Ellsberg (of *Pentagon Papers* fame).⁵³ END aimed at bringing Cold War dissidents on both sides of the “Iron Curtain” together. While END remained small and was criticized by Eastern European dissidents for being blind with regard to the repressiveness of

⁵¹ Fahlenbrach, Stapane, “Visual and Media Strategies.”

⁵² Kelly, Speech in the Federal Parliament, 4 May 1983.

⁵³ *Protest and Survive*.

Communist regimes, it created a unique transatlantic and trans-European intellectual network for peace that allowed pacifist and anti-hegemonial ideas to transcend national borders.⁵⁴

Popular culture too, took on a much larger role in the debates over nuclear weapons than had been the case during the 1950s. It took a turn toward representing nuclear death in stark “realistic” ways. During the 1960s, many European and American intellectuals had been skeptical with regard to the role of popular culture in communicating political dissent and making people aware of social and political dangers of nuclear weapons. Many followed Susan Sontag’s line quoted above that imaginations of disaster were distracting from the real issues and helping to normalize threats. As the historian Philipp Baur has argued, 1980s producers of popular culture were quite aware of this early criticism: “A vast majority of nuclear disaster films of this period do not portray the survival of humankind.”⁵⁵ In this respect the 1983 James Bond movie *Octopussy* was unusual, because the world is spared a nuclear war thanks to the skills of the famous British agent. In another 1983 movie, *War Games*, computerized nuclear warfare is stopped at the last second. But that was not how nuclear war was typically portrayed during the 1980s. Most movies were much less metaphorical and fantastical than the 1950s monster movies, and talked about nuclear death in much more direct ways.

The most prominent example of the realist apocalyptic nuclear disaster movie scenario was put forward by *The Day After* (1983). It played in American and European prime-time television and made a splash in various European countries as well as in North America. It reconstructs a nuclear exchange between the Soviets and the Americans in graphic detail. When it shows bomber pilots taking to the skies and getting ready to drop their nuclear payload, it is totally free of the kind of irony that made *Dr. Strangelove* such a huge artistic success. We see soldiers doing their duty, even though they have doubts. We also see how “middle America,” the town of Lawrence, Kansas, is struck by nuclear weapons. We experience how people perish in this inferno, while others die a slow and painful death after they have been exposed to radiation.

The *Day After* also demonstrates that 1980s “peace” and “anti-nuclear” activism had a different relationship to emotions than previous

⁵⁴ Burke, “European Nuclear Disarmament.”

⁵⁵ Baur, “Nuclear Doomsday Scenarios” 324.

movements. During the 1950s, activists had often resisted notions that they were effeminate and emotional. They had relied on the scientific basis of their resistance against the bomb. The anti-nuclearism of the 1980s often stressed the emotional qualities as well as the “rationality” of emotions in combatting the nuclear armament race. Left-liberal German journalists such as Ulrich Greiner, writing in the Hamburg weekly *Die Zeit*, were critical of the general thrust of the *Day After* and other apocalyptic nuclear fiction because they thought that “fear” prevented people from working toward the abolishment of nuclear weapons. Yet, even Greiner accepted that the movies as well as the proliferating apocalyptic literature of the 1980s had “broken a taboo” by showing the unimaginable and thus bringing the effects of nuclear war closer to home.⁵⁶ This new realism was further accentuated by using documentary material, when showing the launches of nuclear missiles.⁵⁷

The shifting transatlantic balance of power within the narrative and discursive realm shows itself in the growing importance of European popular music and cinema as part of an emerging transatlantic nuclear culture. During the 1950s, with the exception of the Japanese *Godzilla* movies, popular nuclear fiction had been largely American in origin. In the 1950s the Europeans tended to specialize in high-end nuclear culture such as Friedrich Dürrenmatt’s play *Die Physiker*. That changed during the 1980s, when Americans had already become used to mostly British, but also other European rock bands. The British animated movie *When the Wind Blows* (1986) became a classic of transatlantic atomic culture, also because of its harrowing soundtrack, which had been contributed by David Bowie and Roger Waters. The German singer Nena’s hit *99 Luftballons* may be the most well-known anti-nuclear song of the 1980s and has been a rare German exception insofar as it reached number two on the American Billboard charts.⁵⁸ That nuclear death sold well is shown by the unlikely success of the German disco formation, Boney M., with *We Kill the World*. Even Europe’s greatest summer hit of the early 1980s, *Vamos a la playa*, which was probably hummed by many beach-going Americans as well, talks not about the pleasures of vacationing by the sea, but about the

⁵⁶ Greiner, “Apocalypse Now.”

⁵⁷ Shapiro, *Atomic Bomb Cinema* 186; Baur, “Nuclear Doomsday Scenarios” 324.

⁵⁸ Baur, “Nuclear Doomsday Scenarios” 332.

nuclear contamination of the oceans. Because it was sung in Spanish, not many caught the true meaning of the lyrics.⁵⁹

How the critique of nuclearism had become more broadly imbedded in popular culture during the 1980s, is also obvious how Ronald Reagan's "Strategic Defense Initiative" (SDI) was perceived in the eyes of the public and how it was framed by its critics. Dubbed "Star Wars," it acquired the name of the George Lucas movie series to show that it was either out of reach of reality or part of a sinister plot to destroy the earth.⁶⁰ Even though the SDI was never realized, it received an extraordinary amount of public attention in both Europe and the United States. It served as a rallying cry for critical scientists and peace researchers. The astronomer Carl Sagan, who had originally worked for NASA, but had become the popular host of the PBS television show *Cosmos*, used his star power and membership of the Union of Concerned Scientist (UCS) to coordinate a campaign against "Star Wars." He was frequently quoted by German activists. In German-speaking countries he became well-known for popularizing the term "nuclear winter."⁶¹ As the historian William Knoblauch has shown, the UCS went to great lengths popularizing its stance against Stars War, by enlisting James Earl Jones, the voice of Darth Vader in the original *Star Wars* trilogy, which was easily recognizable to American but also to European audiences.⁶²

CONCLUSION

By the 1980s, transatlantic responses and resistance to the "Cold War order" and opposition to ideas of "Mutually Assured Destruction" as well as the "armaments race," had come to rest on a much broader base than during the 1950s. This can be demonstrated by the growing mass appeal of nuclear popular culture. The 1950s had been the decade of a "peace opposition" to the Cold War that recruited itself mostly from "established" political parties, labor unions, and networks of scientists, most of them nuclear physicists, who did not oppose nuclear energy in principle, but its weaponization. The 1960s saw the rise of a social science critique of the Cold War order in the form of the emerging transatlantic field of Peace

⁵⁹ Gassert, "Popularität der Apokalypse."

⁶⁰ Kalic, "Reagan's SDI Announcement."

⁶¹ Sagan, *Atomkrieg und Klimakatastrophe*; Ehrlich, Sagan, *Die nukleare Nacht*.

⁶² Knoblauch, "Selling Star Wars."

and Conflict Studies. While the latter was grounded in the disciplines of International Relations, Political Science, and Political Psychology, it was unique in how it connected the social sciences as well as the natural sciences, but also how it came into existence thanks to an intensive transatlantic dialogue. Many protagonists in the field, such as Johan Galtung in Norway and Dieter Senghaas in Germany, had built academic careers on both sides of the Atlantic. Important publications such as Theodore Lentz's book *Towards a Science of Peace* fell on fertile ground abroad.

These various strands of transatlantic conversations and exchanges of ideas coalesced into one big anti-nuclear field during the 1980s. While it would be misleading to speak of "one movement," there was a lot of cross-pollination between various actors. First, there were peace activists, who took to the streets in protest against NATO's Double Track Decision, Reagan's SDI, or in the case of the National Freeze Campaign against the Reagan build-up of intercontinental arsenals by the U.S. While specific grievances were not identical in Europe and the U.S., activists were in close interaction across national borders. Secondly, by the 1980s, peace and conflict studies had matured and to some extent become institutionalized. They also contributed to many theoretical and practical exchanges across the ocean. And finally, the media as well as popular culture had become much more international with regard to who would read, watch, and listen to "imaginings of disaster." Again, there were many national peculiarities in how the issue of "nuclear death" was framed by producers of popular culture. *When the Wind Blows* was very British in how it related a coming nuclear war to experiences during World War II, especially the Blitz. *The Day After* was very American, too, by taking nuclear war to Kansas. Yet, these movies were understood and consumed by Western European audiences as were the books by authors like Carl Sagan or Richard Falk.

People, social movements, and experts often make sense of their own situation by referring to ideas and visions that had first been expressed in a different national context. When ideas cross national borders, they often gain in legitimacy. During the Cold War, which heightened domestic as well as international conflicts over "freedom" and "peace," it was of particular importance for activists to show that they were in line with critics of governmental politics in other countries. The Cold War and most particular the fear of nuclear war provided a common framework and

threat-perception for people in the U.S. as well as in Europe. The perceived discursive and political necessity to refer to outsiders often helped to speed the exchange of ideas, texts, images, sounds across the Atlantic Ocean. While in the end the critics did not really carry the day and could not prevent the nuclear arms race, they still made a contribution to the spreading of ideas of “one world” and of a transnational, “global” future into the post-Cold War period, whether they were politicians, movement activists, academics, authors or artists.

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