

THE CONSCIOUS DEMOCRATS: THE POLITICAL ROLE OF
GROUP 47 IN WEST GERMANY, 1947-1967

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Margery Freeman Shroyer
January, 1969

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, German writers have remained aloof from social and political involvement. The policy of Gleichschaltung (1933-1945) shattered that tradition. Writers of Group 47 (1947-) became involved in the political and social life of postwar Germany. Heinrich Böll used his fiction to criticize accepted norms; Günter Grass took an active part in German politics. By 1965, Group 47 writers sensed that their social and political engagement was innocuous. Some agreed with Peter Weiss that new levels of political commitment were needed. After twenty years of public involvement, however, they no longer questioned the tradition of commitment.

PREFACE

Writers in modern Germany have rarely tried to determine the social and political course of their nation. From 1848 to 1945, German literati remained politically aloof from society, preferring to move in the more ideal realm of the spirit. Society, in turn, honored their lofty aspirations: it demanded no worldly commitments from them. Germany's most articulate individuals were among her least responsible citizens.

The tradition of professional detachment was shattered by Nazi totalitarianism (Gleichschaltung). The state invaded the writers' eclectic towers and destroyed them. In the post-World War II rubble, writer and ordinary citizen were indistinguishable.

Many young writers after 1945 were determined to build a new tradition of social and political commitment. They wanted the German people, not the state, to determine Germany's future. They hoped to be a vanguard of social democracy, of a society based on the equal participation of every citizen in the political process.¹ Group 47 drew together writers committed to the establishment of social

¹By social democracy these writers meant, in general, a society in which the social and economic life is determined through democratic processes for the good of all.

democracy in Germany.

The early participants in Group 47 were social critics. Heinrich Böll, for example, wrote books with realistic details of war, exploitation and dictatorship to express his anti-war sentiment, his apprehension about the materialistic spirit of the "economic miracle" (Wirtschaftswunder), his dismay over resurgent German chauvinism. He satirized the desire to escape into the "good old days." He exalted the virtues of honesty, compassion, integrity, and he affirmed the right of every man to live freely among equals.

By the mid-1950's, many Group 47 writers sensed that while their words were read by many Germans, their social messages were understood or heeded by very few. Seeking new means of expressing their beliefs, these critics often took political stances as individuals. Best known of these young "citizen-writers" was Günter Grass. Like many writers in Group 47, Grass wrote essays and signed manifestoes which appeared in newspapers and magazines. He joined radio discussions and university symposia. But Grass went further than most: he campaigned in elections and even wrote and delivered speeches for Social Democratic Party candidates.

By 1965, Group 47 writers had succeeded in making a place for themselves in their society. They had struggled against a tradition which excluded writers from participating in the affairs of their nation. For the first time in modern German history, the writer was at home in the

marketplace.

Yet this young generation of German writers discovered that their words and actions were not changing the Federal Republic. Though they had opposed the threats to democracy that appeared in postwar Germany and had openly supported progressive programs and politicians, writers of Group 47 were by and large ignored by policy makers. Instead of being the vanguard of social democracy, they found themselves witnessing the formation of a Grand Coalition of the Social Democrats with the dominant Christian Democratic Party.

Some participants in Group 47 began to question the effectiveness of merely criticizing or even of actively participating in the existing institutions of society. They began to challenge the monolithic authority of the state in order to persuade Germans of the danger in the centralized Grand Coalition. Such writers as Peter Weiss decided to commit their work itself to the political task of educating society to the needs of social democracy.

Throughout Germany, writers debated and argued about how better to influence the life of the nation. But by 1967, they no longer questioned the tradition of commitment which Group 47 had initiated twenty years before.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO 1945	1
II. <u>NULLPUNKT</u> AND THE EMERGENCE OF GROUP 47	12
III. GERMANY'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION	24
IV. GROUP 47'S EARLY YEARS: HEINRICH BÖLL, SOCIAL CRITIC	39
V. BONN VERSUS GROUP 47	53
VI. GROUP 47'S MIDDLE YEARS: GÜNTER GRASS, CITIZEN-WRITER	61
VII. THE PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM	70
VIII. GROUP 47'S LATE YEARS: THE CHALLENGE OF PETER WEISS	87
IX. THE DILEMMA OF POLITICAL POWERLESSNESS	98
BIBLIOGRAPHY	119

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO 1945

In the generation since World War II, Americans have grown accustomed to thinking of West Germany as a democratic republic. Like the United States, and in large part under United States' supervision, the German Federal Republic has developed a constitutional government; it holds regular national and state elections by universal adult suffrage; and its constitution guarantees its citizens their basic civil rights. West Germany is also closely bound, politically and economically, to the Western alliance system. Only history books and a few older statesmen remind us that Germany's first republic was also considered a western democracy.

If Bonn is not Weimar, the differences are more historical than structural. The Weimar governments used the army, rightwing political parties, and finally the dictatorial emergency powers of the constitution's Article 48 in their struggle to survive. The Republic fell in part because it was never able to gain the loyalty and support of its citizens.¹

¹Infra, pp. 8-12.

The Bonn government has continued to gain strength because Germans have supported it. That fact, however, has not necessarily made it democratic. Democracy requires citizens to be conscious of their responsibility to determine the functions of government. People in a democratic society select leaders to represent their political will and to insure their social well being. Despite its democratic structure, the government of the Federal Republic has tended to be controlled by ministers and officers who make decisions for a passive electorate which is largely unaware of the issues and policies involved.² This faltering pace of democratization in West Germany is a legacy of Germany's political traditions. When the leaders of West Germany, at the behest of the victorious powers, set out to build a democratic nation on the ashes of Nazism, they assumed the huge task of turning the course of modern German history.

The idea of a German nation took root among German-speaking people long before the political state had been created. Early in the nineteenth century, the political ambitions of German nationalists were thwarted, first by French domination and later by rival Prusso-Austrian control. Resentful of their nation's weak political position, patriotic German intellectuals fashioned a new "reality,"

²Infra, Chapter III.

a spiritual community (Gemeinschaft) in which people were united by a common "folk soul" (Volksseele) that was impervious to external events. Friedrich von Schlegel, for example, explained how a Volk has national memories which enable it to survive as an historical entity. Likewise, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn organized gymnastic societies (Turnerschaften) as the vanguard of a revitalized and aggressive national Volk.

Many Germans who turned away from the bleak political events of the day rediscovered in their medieval past a society which had been permeated by transcendent concerns. Folk literature such as the Grimm brothers' Fairy Tales (1812-1814) was heralded as the natural continuation of medieval German epics like the Nibelungenlied. Romantic idealists sought to create national unity not by political action or social reform but by integrating themselves into the "tradition and customs of one's own people."³

By the time Germany was actually unified as an independent nation-state, its tradition of cultural nationalism was firmly established and most Germans believed Nietzsche's maxim: "That which is great from the standpoint of culture was always unpolitical--even anti-political."⁴

³E. M. Arndt, cited in George L. Mosse, The Culture of Western Europe (Chicago, 1961), 112; hereafter cited as Mosse, Western Europe.

⁴Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted in Joseph Warner Angell (ed.), The Thomas Mann Reader (New York, 1950), 489.

Ironically, Bismarck, the unifier of Germany, did not subscribe to the idea of a binding national Volksseele. To him, the state's territorial and political power should precede its cultural predominance. His political schemes, however, did not include any plans for popular or representative government. To rule the German nation, Bismarck relied less on appeals to national pride and more on state-sponsored welfare programs and aggressive foreign policies that would quell or divert discontent, particularly that of the new industrial masses. He wooed the middle classes with tax privileges, tariff protection and a general policy of laissez-faire, and succeeded in wedding bourgeois security to national pride. The German burgher, certain that his future was in able hands, felt no compulsion to seek self-government. He mistook his free enterprise for real political freedom.

While most German artists and intellectuals abhorred Germany's rampant materialism which they feared would pervert the historical Gemeinschaft into a mundane and divisive Gesellschaft, they supported Bismarck's authoritarian rule since they feared the uncontrolled masses who might stifle the individual soul.⁵ Moreover, they welcomed the order imposed by such a rule, since it guaranteed them the tranquility they needed to create and study.

⁵Fritz Stern, "The Political Consequences of the Unpolitical German," History; A Meridian Periodical, III (September, 1960), 118.

As the German state rushed toward world power, German intellectuals continued to search and probe the romantic realms of the spirit. Schopenhauer's World as Will and Idea (1819) was rediscovered; his pessimistic view that man is guided by a purposeless will became the rationale for total retreat from social and political concerns to artistic and intellectual pursuits. By 1900, the entire intellectual community, with the exception of a few radicals, was apolitical. Even political theoreticians interpreted partisan education in non-social terms. In 1913, August Bebel, the Social Democratic Party chairman, said, ". . . Social Democrats want to strengthen these spiritual qualities of the Volk, upon which, as history teaches, the self-confidence of a nation rests."⁶

Political disinterestedness, however, did not prevent intellectuals and artists from becoming chauvinists when World War I broke out. Liberals, nihilists and idealists unanimously hailed Germany's war effort on the ethical grounds that the German Volk was defending its historical values "with its whole virtue and beauty" against an aggressive, mechanistic bourgeois democracy.⁷ German Kultur

⁶August Bebel, quoted in Mosse, Western Europe, 187-188.

⁷Thomas Mann, quoted in Ronald D. Gray, The German Tradition in Literature 1871-1945 (Cambridge, England, 1965), 39; hereafter cited as Gray, German Tradition.

had taken up arms against Western Zivilisation.⁸

After four dreadful war years, Germans witnessed their old order crumble under the weight of victorious Western democracy. They were appalled. Their confusion increased when suddenly the Kaiser abdicated and the challenge of government leadership fell to the Social Democrats.

To conservative idealists, social democracy meant rule by philistines who would crush the individual spirit in the name of equality. Older intellectuals were prepared to resist the "unGerman" republic which had been forced upon them by their conquerors. Men like Oswald Spengler repudiated "mundane" and "commonplace" political action in the name of an inevitably approaching doom manifest in the Weimar Republic. Young idealistic writers, on the other hand, created pacifist, socialist, and Christian utopias in which a "new man" would appear to spread the message of brotherhood and spiritual rebirth.

Only a few writers accepted the task of forging a social democratic consciousness among the citizens of the fledgling republic. For example, in November 1918, the poet Kurt Eisner proclaimed a Bavarian Socialist Republic, but he was assassinated during a counterrevolution three months

⁸Oswald Spengler made the distinction between Kultur and Zivilisation in his influential book, Decline of the West (1922). Kultur implied a live, growing metaphysical society, while Zivilisation connoted its moribund decline into materialism.

later. Another leader of the Bavarian revolution, the dramatist Ernst Toller, served five years in prison for his participation.

There were some social critics, to be sure. Alfred Döblin, for example, portrayed the lives of poor people in his novel, Berlin Alexanderplatz (1929). The pacifist Fritz von Unruh wrote anti-militarist plays and stories. Bertolt Brecht, in Baal (1922), Mann ist Mann (1927), and many other plays, strongly condemned the oppressive social structure of Weimar Germany. But men like Döblin, Unruh and Brecht were exceptions.

The chaos and insecurity of postwar Germany convinced most intellectuals that political action was absurd. Even the Social Democratic leaders wanted, in Rilke's words, "to persist and not to alter."⁹ Faced with the threat of a real social revolution in 1918-1919, these republican leaders turned to the old capitalist-Junker-military structure for support. This restoration of the old power structure, together with the "Versailles betrayal," embittered younger writers and artists, many of whom now rejected their earlier utopian dreams and mystical idealism for a "new realism." They turned to welcome the Nietzschean "new barbarian," emancipated by battle from bourgeois politics, who would lead ". . . a completely new race, cunning, strong, packed

⁹Rainer Maria Rilke, quoted in Gray, German Tradition, 47.

with purpose. . . ."10 Representative government would find no place in this new age of power.

War and the social upheavals of the new industrial age freed many young writers from the strictures of the old social and religious institutions. Some of them turned with disdain from republican politics to join the visionary Gefolgschaft of the poetic soothsayer, Stefan George, or to exalt power itself as a "higher wholesomeness" (Höhere Lebensgesundheit) as Ernst Jünger urged.¹¹

There were, of course, voices of reason and responsibility which urged the Germans to beware the elitist exhortations of men like Jünger and George. For some writers the war had revealed the shallow deceptions of romantic, reactionary nationalism. Thomas Mann, for example, took up the challenge of the new republic and wrote enthusiastically of the future when equality and individual freedom might be balanced in a liberal, humanitarian republic. His brother Heinrich Mann had for years defended freedom on a rational basis in the tradition of the French Revolution and continued to criticize his fellow-writers' neo-romantic flights from the realities of social upheaval. Hermann Hesse warned his fellow citizens of the dangers of a false pride in "German virtues" which were merely rationalizations for aggression.

¹⁰Ernst Jünger, Thunder of Steel (1919), quoted in Mosse, Western Europe, 297.

¹¹Gray, German Tradition, 59-62.

And Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front (1928) expressed for all of these men a passionate anti-war sentiment.¹²

But few writers who were conscious of the meaning in the violence and passion of Weimar society entered the arena of mundane political action themselves or approved the radical implications of mass political power. Though they foresaw the dangers of irrational ideologies which fed on violence, disillusionment and powerlessness, they argued that the necessity for creative detachment prevented them from "direct participation in the historical process."¹³ Like the archetypal German artist, Tonio Kröger, they believed "that he who lives does not work; that one must die to life in order to be utterly a creator."¹⁴

The romantic idealists who sought to transcend the reality of political and social imperatives were ultimately

¹²See Thomas Mann, Order of the Day; Political Essays and Speeches of Two Decades (New York, 1942); Alex Natan (ed.), "Heinrich Mann," German Men of Letters, II, Chapter 7; Hermann Hesse, "Zarathustras Wiederkehr: Ein Wort an die deutsche Jugend (1919); Hans Kohn, Mind of Germany; the Education of a Nation (New York, 1960), 225. Remarque's book was rejected by Fischer Verlag before finally being accepted by Ullstein. Fritz Ernst, The Germans and Their Modern History (New York, 1966), 83.

¹³Karl Mannheim, quoted in H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society; The Reconstruction of European Social Thought 1890-1930 (New York, 1961), 425.

¹⁴Thomas Mann, "Tonio Kröger," Death in Venice and Seven Other Stories, translated from the German by H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York, 1958), 94.

used and abused by the crude technicians of National Socialism. Hitler rallied to his cause the millions of Germans who had learned from their intellectual and political leaders to despise modern complexities, to seek their prewar national self-confidence in postwar, anti-Western chauvinism, to avoid the taint of involvement in weak republican politics, and to admire power.

National Socialism came to power legally in Germany when the parliament, supported by a mere handful of its own members, voted itself out of existence with the Enabling Act of 1933. The Third Reich was a logical culmination of the antithetical development of German culture and politics.

Soon hundreds of writers and artists realized that their intellectual elitism had created a chasm between them and the masses which Hitler was quick to fill. Too late, the dire consequences of the estrangement between power and spirit became clear. As Thomas Mann wrote from exile to the Dean of the University of Bonn's Philosophy Faculty after he had been stripped of his honorary doctorate, "A man's--and how much more an artist's--political opinions are today bound up with the salvation of his soul."¹⁵

Few important writers wanted to remain in Germany after 1933, and fewer still actively supported the new regime.

¹⁵Thomas Mann, Order of the Day; Political Essays and Speeches of Two Decades (New York, 1942), 84.

A large number of them were driven into exile.¹⁶ Others who were only vague opponents of National Socialism or who in fact, by their emotional appeals to an historical spirit or to self-realization of the soul had helped to create a mood among many Germans receptive to Hitler, chose "inner emigration." These authors "distanced" themselves from National Socialism by concentrating on mystical, historical or fantastic themes. Some of them subtly implied resistance to the Nazi regime in their writing.¹⁷

The Nazi leaders subordinated German literature and art, as they did all other economic, social and political life, to the demands of the Third Reich and the war. For most German writers, the devastation wrought between 1933 and 1945 reduced German life and letters to "zero point" (Nullpunkt).

¹⁶Some of the better known writers who left Germany in the 1930's were Johannes Becher, Bertolt Brecht, Ferdinand Bruckner, Alfred Döblin, Georg Kaiser, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Erich Maria Remarque, Ludwig Renn, Anna Seghers, Ernst Toller, Fritz von Unruh, Franz Werfel, Arnold and Stefan Zweig and Carl Zuckmayer.

¹⁷Writers tolerated by the Nazis included Gottfried Benn (until 1936), Hans Carossa, Ernst Jünger, Ricarda Huch, Elisabeth Langgässer (until 1936) and Ernst Wiechert.

CHAPTER II

NULLPUNKT AND THE EMERGENCE OF GROUP 47

The first surge of German writing after the Second World War reflected an uneasy hope for the future, but it did not probe the past. Themes of death, atonement and spiritual reawakening gave a religious caste to the early novels and poems. The "collapse of all physical, social and metaphysical coherence" was so complete that people turned to these books for comfort and solace, not for challenge and truth.¹ Secret anti-Nazi "bureau drawer" (Schublade) literature scarcely materialized, but it was not missed except by those who hoped to see the German people vindicated by the emergence of such hidden literature.

Writers in the west German zones at first showed little interest in tackling political themes since the occupation forces severely limited their range of political effectiveness. Many major non-Nazi writers were blacklisted in the general sweep of denazification; it seemed that any German writer who had remained alive in Germany during

¹Victor Lange, "Notes on the German Literary Scene, 1946-1948," Modern Language Journal, XXXIII (1949), 7; hereafter cited as Lange, "Notes on the German Literary Scene."

the Third Reich was suspected of Nazi sympathies.²

The Russians, on the other hand, established in Berlin as early as June, 1945, a "Cultural League for the Democratic Renovation of Germany." This Kulturbund published a literary magazine, Aufbau, to which even such conservative and religious writers as Ernst Wiechert contributed. Communist as well as non-Socialist writers who had political interests were encouraged to settle in the eastern zone where their views could be read and perhaps heeded. The Kulturbund's considerable influence in western Germany was cut short in November, 1947, when it was banned by the Allies in West Berlin.³

Important new literature in the early postwar years was scarce not only because some writers went east, but because many others emigrated from their starved homeland. In addition, writers who had lived abroad during the Nazi period and who might, because of origin or predilection, have returned to the western zones, often stayed where they were (in Britain, Mexico, and the United States, for example) because of the bleak prospect they saw of surviving in Germany without publishers and readers. Unknown writers

²Gerhart Hauptmann, Ricarda Huch, and Thomas Carossa were writers who were blacklisted although they had not been members of the National Socialist Party.

³Joachim Joesten, "German Writers and Writing Today," Antioch Review, XIII (September 1948), 361-363; hereafter cited as Joesten, "German Writers and Writing Today."

realized that they would have to wait, unpublished, while Germans read the works not only of previously banned German writers such as Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Stefan Zweig and Franz Kafka, but of famous foreign writers (for instance Camus, Hemingway, Joyce) who were being discovered for the first time.⁴

By the time the most elementary means of subsistence were re-established and aspiring writers were able to find paper and materials with which to carry on their work, a new atmosphere of disillusionment and fear had closed in on Germany, bringing with it a public clamor for new exculpatory and patriotic writing.

The Allied occupation's anti-Soviet attitudes emboldened former Nazis to defend the Third Reich, if not Hitlerian excesses, on the grounds that it was

⁴For broader accounts of the first postwar years, see Alfred Gong, "Out of the Cataclysm; Patterns and Trends in Contemporary German Fiction: A Critical Survey," American-German Review, XXX (1964), 4-10; hereafter cited as Gong, "Out of the Cataclysm"; Michael Hamburger, From Prophecy to Exorcism; The Premises of Modern German Literature (London, 1965); hereafter cited as Hamburger, From Prophecy to Exorcism; Karl August Horst, "German Literature; What Has Happened to It since 1945," New Statesman, LVIII (September 12, 1959); Frank D. Horvay, "Book Publishing in Germany in 1946," Monatshefte, XXXIX (February 1947), 134-139; Joesten, "German Writers and Writing Today"; Lange, "Notes on the German Literary Scene, 1946-1948"; Melvin J. Lasky, "Berlin Letter; Report on the German Intelligentsia," Partisan Review, XV (January 1948), 60-68; Hoyt Price and Carl E. Schorske, The Problem of Germany (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1947); hereafter cited as Price, Problem of Germany.

anti-communist. Memoirs appeared to prove their authors' innocence or ignorance of Nazi atrocities; military accounts boasted about Germany as the bulwark of Western freedom. Conservative religious leaders claimed that Germans had succumbed to Nazism's "irresistible demonic power," a theory which conveniently placed the blame for Nazism on spiritual failure rather than social ills. They advocated solving the problem of Nazism by building character rather than by transforming institutions.⁵ Even some anti-Nazi intellectuals failed to adequately criticize the society which had produced Hitler. Friedrich Meinecke's counsel to the German people in 1945 to rise up and build new Goethe Communities was nothing more than a wish for the "good old days" of cultural nationalism.⁶

Fear of Communism increased to such an extent by 1947 that the Western Allies grew increasingly cautious even about Social Democrats in Germany. Guided by pragmatic and ideological reasons, they turned for assistance to anti-Communist conservatives such as Konrad Adenauer and even to minor ex-Nazi Party members who had skills or information crucial to the reconstruction of a western-oriented,

⁵Price, Problem of Germany, 132.

⁶Friedrich Meinecke, The German Catastrophe (Boston, 1950), 120.

liberal, free-enterprise Germany.⁷

Democrats and socialists who had earlier welcomed the occupation forces, who had tried to convince the West to give Germany the same rights as the Allies, who had seen in the rubble and chaos of the devastated Third Reich an opportunity to create a new social and political order, deeply resented the Allies' suspicion of them. Such liberal intellectuals as Professor Carlo Schmid who joined the Social Democratic Party were mistrusted nearly as much as more orthodox socialists like the SPD leader Kurt Schumacher who advocated nationalization of major industries and who believed that a proletarian revolution was imminent.⁸

The position of social democrats was further weakened as Germany became more deeply divided into western and eastern zones. Many Protestants and Socialists who would have been members of the SPD were living in the Soviet zone and

⁷John Gimbel, A German Community under American Occupation; Marburg 1945-1952 (Stanford, 1961), passim; hereafter cited as Gimbel, German Community; Kay Boyle, "A Voice from the Future," Holiday, XXXVI (October 1964), 12-22; hereafter cited as Boyle, "Future Voice"; Michael Balfour, West Germany (New York, 1968), 184; hereafter cited as Balfour, West Germany.

⁸For discussion of the relationship of liberals and socialists to the dominant conservative forces in postwar Germany, see Balfour, West Germany; Gimbel, German Community; Peter H. Merkl, Germany Yesterday and Tomorrow (New York, 1965); hereafter cited as Merkl, Yesterday and Tomorrow; V. Stanley Vardys, "Germany's post war Socialism: Nationalism and Kurt Schumacher (1945-1952)," Review of Politics (University of Notre Dame), XXVII (April 1965), 220-244; hereafter cited as Vardys, "Germany's Postwar Socialism."

were prevented from participating in western-zone activities. The SPD strength in western Germany was thus considerably reduced.

Social democratic writers in western Germany, like their counterparts in other professions and trades, wanted above all to lay the foundation for a new society which would be conscious of its responsibility in the political and social development of Germany.⁹

As early as 1946, two of these writers began publishing in Munich a small literary magazine, Der Ruf, through which they hoped to foster a new postwar literature. Subtitled "The Independent Journal of the Young Generation," Der Ruf was sharply critical of conservative and religious writers like Ernst Wiechert and Hans Carossa who avoided writing about the Nazi cataclysm from which Germany had just emerged. It urged instead that Germans should not deny their guilt, nor should they confuse the pitiful postwar conditions with efforts to establish a democratic government.¹⁰ The editors of Der Ruf believed that "literature is created not by groups but by individuals, yet it can function only if

⁹Hans Werner Richter, "Fünfzehn Jahre," in Hans Werner Richter (ed.) Almanach der Gruppe 47, 1947-1962 (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1962), 8; hereafter cited as Richter, "Fünfzehn Jahre."

¹⁰Albert Soergel and Curt Hohoff, Dichtung und Dichter der zeit; Von Naturalismus bis zur Gegenwart, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf, 1963), 822; hereafter cited as Soergel and Hohoff, Dichtung und Dichter.

these individuals defend their vital needs by political means."¹¹

The two founders of the magazine, Alfred Andersch and Hans Werner Richter, had met during the war in an Illinois prisoner-of-war camp where together they had begun a camp newspaper. Both had returned to Germany after the peace, filled with hope for a radical, new beginning in which Germany would form part of a united Europe. Der Ruf was as nationalist as it was socialist in tone. The writers criticized the Allied occupation as colonial and inhumane, and they warned that the east-west split would divide Germany permanently and lead to the loss of the Oder-Neisse territory. Yet in April 1947, after sixteen issues, Der Ruf was suppressed by the American occupation for "unacceptable criticism."¹²

The suppression of Der Ruf was seen by some writers as a crucial turning point in the struggle for a new order, leading to the restoration of the old, authoritarian state.¹³

¹¹Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "A Propos of Group 47," Atlas, VII (April 1964), 247; hereafter cited as Enzensberger, "Group 47."

¹²Accounts of Der Ruf's history occur in Soergel and Hohoff, Dichtung und Dichter; Richter, "Fünfzehn Jahre"; "Gruppe 47," Der Spiegel, XVI (October 24, 1962), 91-106; hereafter cited as "Gruppe 47," Der Spiegel; and Heinz Friedrich, "Das Jahr 47," Hans Werner Richter (ed.), Almanach der Gruppe 47, 1947-1962 (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1962), hereafter cited as Friedrich, "Das Jahr 47."

¹³Friedrich, "Das Jahr 47," 18.

Western German authorities seemed to be reacting to the Soviet pressure on eastern zone writers to become sectarian publicists of Stalinism by censoring socialist as well as Nazi writings in the west.

Although Der Ruf was forbidden, the fifteen or twenty writers who had contributed to it were determined to keep open the channels of conversation and criticism necessary for young writers. In July 1947, Der Ruf's contributors met at the Bavarian publishing house of Stahlberg Verlag to discuss plans for a new journal, Der Skorpion.¹⁴ As the discussion drew to a close, Richter proposed, without thought of forming a regular organization, that they meet again to continue discussing their work and to edit Der Skorpion. After a trial issue of the new magazine had been printed, however, it was declared "too nihilistic" and was refused a licence by the occupation forces.¹⁵

When the group met a third time in early November 1947, they realized that their conversations and exchanges were valuable with or without a vehicle for publication. Richter, the central figure in the nebulous group, urged that they and others who might be interested meet regularly

¹⁴The meeting included Wolfgang Bächler, Maria and Heinz Friedrich, Walter Maria Guggenheimer, Walter Hilsbecher, Isolde and Walter Kolbenhoff, Friedrich Minnsen, Toni and Hans Werner Richter, Wolfdietrich Schnurre, Nicholas Sombart, Heinz Ulrich, Franz Wischnewsky, Freia von Wühlisch. Friedrich, "Das Jahr 47," 20.

¹⁵"Gruppe 47," Der Spiegel, 94.

once or twice a year for three days of reading, criticism, and informal exchange of ideas. One member of the group, Hans Georg Brenner, suggested that they call themselves "Group 47." Thus an institution was born which soon earned the title, "the central cafe of a literature without a capital."¹⁶

Since its Cheshire cat-like appearance on the German literary scene, Group 47 has tried to "level the wall that stands between German art and German society."¹⁷ Yet its purposes have never been fixed, and its participants have never had to meet established prerequisites for membership. One of its original members suggested that the group was a mutation resulting from the frustration of politically-active publicists who then turned to literature as a new vehicle of political expression.¹⁸ Others saw the meetings as natural cooperation of creative writers who were searching for new methods and new assumptions to cleanse the language of the Blut und Boden "slave speech" of Nazism, and of meaningless "calligraphy": the symbolic, stylistic verbosity which writers of the 1930's and 1940's had developed

¹⁶"das Zentralcafé einer Literatur ohne Hauptstadt," Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Die Clique," Hans Werner Richter (ed.), Almanach der Gruppe 47, 1947-1962 (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1962), 27; hereafter cited as Enzensberger, "Die Clique."

¹⁷Boyle, "Future Voice," 17.

¹⁸Friedrich, "Das Jahr 47," 21.

during their "inner emigration."¹⁹

Group 47's meetings have always been literary gatherings. Writers with wide-ranging ideas, styles, and abilities have continued their participation mainly because, as artists rather than co-thinkers, they have found the meetings interesting and meaningful. Many were bound by the need, in the early, lean years, to share in the development of an undefined literature, a purging (Kahlschlag) literature so realistic that it would in itself be an argument against tyranny. Even in the beginning, however, some writers came to the group's meetings with lyric poetry and mystical fairytales that were quite unrealistic or even surrealistic.²⁰

What, in reality, brought Group 47 together for its semi-annual or annual meetings was the invitation of Hans Werner Richter. By 1948 Richter was the actual if not the designated or elected chairman of the group. Forty years old, he was older than many of the participants in Group 47. Richter was a publicist from a working-class background who, by the time he was twenty, had become a journalist and a radical, political activist. His novel, Die Geschlagenen

¹⁹Richter, "Fünfzehn Jahre," 8.

²⁰Hans Magnus Enzensberger said with as much truthfulness as humor that the main job of Group 47 was to spare the public countless dreadful novels, plays, and poems by preventing their authors from continuing to read at the group meetings. Enzensberger, "Die Clique," 25.

(The Vanquished) (1948), was one of the earliest books of social criticism to appear in postwar Germany.

Richter brought both literary and political experience to the meetings of Group 47. As he himself recalls, the "arbitrary" issuance of invitations to the first few Group 47 meetings actually had certain guidelines. Aside from the numerous names suggested to him by those who already participated or the self-recommendations of otherwise unknown writers, Richter repeated invitations to those who were able to accept sharp criticism of their work without resentment. More importantly, Richter tended to invite writers and critics who sympathized with the political ideals of the original Ruf contributors, that is, men and women who were anti-authoritarian and anti-Nazi. Such a selection excluded (and still excludes) many who thought they had a right to come or a prior claim to an invitation.²¹

Most writers in Group 47 wanted to educate themselves as a group which could demonstrate in its own circle the practical applicability of political consciousness, in the hope that their experience might have long range and mass influence. It is evident that many of the men and women who attended the group meetings held common political opinions. For example, they condemned the Allied re-education and de-Nazification programs as hypocritical and harmful to the

²¹Richter, "Fünfzehn Jahre," 13.

growth of German democracy. Similarly, they criticized Soviet occupation dogma which deprived individuals of their civil liberties in the name of equalization. Just as strongly they rejected "restoration"--the reappearance of conservative religious and capitalistic leaders who threatened to restore the old power blocs and divide east and west Germany more deeply.²²

But the politically-oriented members of the group did not discuss their views in the meetings and Group 47 remained politically undoctrinaire.

²²Ibid; Friedrich, "Das Jahr 47," 17.

CHAPTER III

GERMANY'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION

The first post-World War II decade in West Germany was among other matters profoundly influenced by the development of "social market" economics and rearmament. Both became critical political issues, since they contributed to a split of East from West Germany by tying the Federal Republic to the western bloc of nations.

The divisions between east and west were economic as well as political. While Russian occupation authorities sponsored referendums for approval of laws to expropriate and nationalize all basic industries, the western Allies postponed decisions about nationalization until they could be made by an all-German government. The two major West German political parties after the war, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), favored public ownership of certain key industries, particularly since the collapse of the Third Reich had left a vast industrial empire to be managed. For example, the "CDU Economic and Social Program of 1947" attacked the unlimited rule of private capitalism; it advocated decartelization of big industry and the establishment of a planned cooperative economy which assured "social

justice"; finally, it called for the right of co-determination for workers in industry.¹

With the creation of Bizonia in 1947, an Economic Council was established which the CDU dominated by forming a coalition with the Free Democrats (FDP) and the German Party (DP) to the exclusion of the SPD. In March 1948, Ludwig Erhard, an enthusiastic advocate of private enterprise, was appointed to direct the Council. Under his tutelage, west German economic policies were turned away from socialist influences. At the same time, Marshall Plan aid from the United States and the currency reform of June 1948 helped to steer Germany into a pro-American economic course.

When, in 1949, the CDU under the leadership of Konrad Adenauer won a plurality of seats in the first West German election, the victorious party rejected not only nationalization but any government economic planning and control.²

¹Balfour, West Germany, 186.

²The Western Allies agreed in the spring of 1948 to permit West Germany to draw up a democratic constitution. On September 1, 1948, a sixty-five-member Parliamentary Council, elected by the state legislatures and representing party strength in each state, met in Bonn to draft a "Basic Law" (so-called to imply its temporary nature). Konrad Adenauer was chosen President of the Council and exerted considerable influence over its proceedings. Nearly nine months later, on May 23, 1948, the Basic Law was put into effect. A national election was held on August 14 and the first Federal Parliament met on September 7, 1949.

The Soviet authorities also took at least the formal steps for providing self-government in East Germany. In March 1948, a People's Council was set up by a People's Congress. One year later it approved the constitution of a German Democratic Republic. In May 1949, a third People's Congress was elected from a single Socialist Unity Party (SED) list, which then elected a new People's Council. This Council commissioned Otto Grotewohl, Chairman of the SED, to form a provisional government. Balfour, West Germany, 188-202.

Erhard was made Minister of Economics in Adenauer's first Cabinet. Under his direction, Germany's economy was gradually stabilized in a social market system (Soziale Marktwirtschaft). Erhard promoted "social self-government," a plan whereby government and private social security programs would provide enough for all through the continuous expansion of the economy.³

The political cold war in Germany was intensified by the divergent economic policies of the occupation authorities. After the formal establishment of two German governments, however, jurisdictional disputes arose which exacerbated the growing ill-will between East and West Germany. Crises such as the Soviet effort to take over Berlin through the device of the Berlin Blockade (1949) provided Adenauer with opportunities to move West Germany firmly into the Western camp.

Debate over remilitarization was precipitated in September 1951 when the western Allies notified Bonn that they would grant full sovereignty to the Federal Republic if Germany would contribute to a European Defense Community. People who for six years had been told repeatedly that they would never again be permitted to bear arms were suddenly being called upon to assume their part in the defense of the

³By 1959, Erhard had denationalized the former Nazi industries through a program of "people's capitalism," which enabled middle class Germans to buy shares in firms formerly owned by the government.

West. Although deliberation about details of the Allied proposal lasted for four years, on May 5, 1955, Germany gained independent control of her domestic and foreign policies (except in negotiations over Berlin and reunification) and became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.⁴ In the following year, the Bundestag amended the Basic Law to permit rearmament (March 6, 1956), and later in the year it voted to begin a military draft when it became clear that less than half of the designated 150,000-man quota could be filled by volunteers.⁵

These two major developments--rearmament and a social market economy--occurred without much use of democratic processes. "Chancellor democracy" flourished under Konrad Adenauer who deftly manipulated minority parties and interest groups to enhance his own power. Adenauer freely admitted that cabinet and constitution were convenient displays of democracy, but could not be allowed to interfere with policy-making. He rarely tolerated divergent opinions and saw his ministers as executors of decisions made by the CDU

⁴Shortly after Germany became a member of NATO, the Warsaw Pact was established. Clearly a military counterpart to NATO, it included all the states of Eastern Europe and the DDR.

⁵Federal Republic of Germany, Deutschland heute, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (eds.) (Bonn, 1965), 325-328; hereafter cited as Deutschland heute.

leadership.⁶ As the co-founder of the Christian Democratic Union commented in 1953:

Today it is fashionable in Germany to be a democrat. Every German is a good democrat as a matter of course --if you want to "belong" you have to be. But basically the Germans do not cherish democracy. They submit to it as perhaps people submit to a fashion, although deep inside they resent their uncomfortable plight.⁷

Political parties in West Germany were expected to promote popular participation in government. Yet the Bundestag deputies, nominated by state parties and elected in proportion to national party strength, tended to represent the party organization instead of their constituencies.⁸ Furthermore, the Federal government created "associations" to link parties to the government which became more like eighteenth century French estates than vehicles for popular influence. Grass roots political movements were discouraged by the "five percent clause," a federal law which enabled only

⁶Klaus Bölling, Republic in Suspense; Politics, Parties, and Personalities in Postwar Germany (New York, 1964), 159. after cited as Bölling, Republic in Suspense; T. H. Tetens, The New Germany and the Old Nazis (New York, 1961), 239-241; hereafter cited as Tetens, New Germany-Old Nazis.

⁷Friedrich von der Heydte, Rheinischer Merkur (April 5, 1953), quoted in Tetens, New Germany-Old Nazis, 255.

⁸Article 21 of the Grundgesetz states that parties shall cooperate in shaping the political will of the people, Deutschland heute, 283. Party control of the Bundestag shows itself in the fact that the Federal Government regularly finances parties which are represented in the Bundestag.

large parties to be represented in the Bundestag.⁹

The CDU under Adenauer's leadership absorbed virtually every party of the center and right. To insure the loyalty of many citizens who might otherwise have opposed both the Christian Democrats and the Federal Republic, Adenauer obtained passage in 1951 of a law which made all public officials who had held office during the Third Reich, except those actually serving prison sentences, eligible for reinstatement at their former rank.¹⁰ By the mid-1950's, a majority of senior Civil Servants in the Federal Republic had also held office under the Third Reich. These men and women were able successfully to frustrate efforts to extend and widen the elite, upper-class basis for public service.¹¹ After fifteen years of Christian Democratic leadership, Rudolph Augstein, editor of the influential weekly magazine Der Spiegel, observed: "We are moving steadily backward

⁹The Five Percent Clause, passed as part of Article 38 of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz), stipulates that a political party must obtain at least 5% of the national vote or win at least one seat by direct election in a constituency to be eligible for representation in the Bundestag. In 1956 this law was strengthened by increasing the necessary number of constituent seats from one to three. It was further strengthened in 1957 by a law stipulating that a party has to win a plurality on the first ballot of at least three Länder to be eligible for representation. Merkl, Yesterday and Tomorrow, 278; Balfour, West Germany, 301-302.

¹⁰Balfour, West Germany, 222.

¹¹Ibid., 223.

. . . to the rule of the civil servants whose mission is to serve and defend the ruling power (Obrigkeit)."¹²

If democracy was to survive and grow in West Germany, Germans needed to participate in public affairs; they needed to challenge and debate government officials whose watchword had become security but who really meant security for themselves. Most of all, they needed to overcome the tradition of unquestioning obedience to authority which had once led them to become "little domesticated monsters myopically intent on doing what they are told."¹³ If most Germans wanted only, as Karl Jaspers argued in 1954, "to be governed authoritatively but decently," then German democracy would never take root.¹⁴

In the postwar years, the Social Democratic Party was a natural rallying point for liberals and radicals seeking political expression for their opposition to Bonn's policies, not merely because it claimed to have an anti-Nazi record, but also because it was by tradition internationalist and socialist in orientation.

Within the SPD, however, significant changes were occurring which eventually would change the nature of its

¹²Rudolph Augstein, quoted in Arthur J. Olsen, "The Man Who Holds the Mirror to Germany," New York Times Magazine (February 7, 1965), 30; hereafter cited as Olsen, "The Man Who Holds the Mirror."

¹³Hamburger, From Prophecy to Exorcism, 161.

¹⁴Karl Jaspers, "The Political Vacuum in Germany," Foreign Affairs, XXXII (July 1954), 565.

relationship to the CDU government. The SPD was forced to rebuild its leadership ranks from the ground up, since many of its prewar leaders had been killed and the party had not existed openly since 1933. To attract large numbers of new voters and not just a small coterie of the intelligentsia, Social Democratic leaders chose to dilute their Marxist ideology which the growing anti-communist trend made impractical. Kurt Schumacher, the first postwar Party Chairman, challenged Social Democrats to take up the "historic task of winning the middle classes" by erasing the party's proletarian image. Class struggle, he maintained, endangers Germany's unity and democracy and must therefore be rejected.¹⁵ Furthermore, a resurgent religious fervor in Germany persuaded many SPD leaders to declare themselves ready to make peace with the churches. Carlo Schmid, one of the new SPD intellectuals, declared that the SPD would tolerate all ideologies from Christianity to atheism.¹⁶ Finally, Schumacher led his party to a frank embrace of nationalist ideas. He argued that since international proletarian solidarity was no longer the issue, the SPD could be consistently loyal to the German state. The quest for international brotherhood could be carried on through inter-governmental

¹⁵Kurt Schumacher, cited in Vardys, "Germany's Post-war Socialism," 232.

¹⁶Ibid., 232.

cooperation.¹⁷

These changes in the SPD were not taking place in a vacuum. Like most anti-Nazi Germans, Schumacher and the reformers who supported him were concerned above all with preventing a return of chauvinist sentiment. They believed that by championing national democratic institutions they could temper any aggressive anti-democratic tendencies which emerged. Furthermore, popular pressure after the gradual merger in 1946-47 of the East German SPD with the Communist-dominated Socialist Unity Party (SED) moved western Social Democrats to take a less doctrinaire and particularly an anti-communist stance.

Social Democrats were deeply divided among themselves over the reformist directions in which Schumacher was urging them. The division was an old one. August Bebel had observed even before the First World War that "Social Democracy finds itself being transformed from an agitating class party to a practical reform party. That explains much of the vagueness and contradiction in its politics."¹⁸ The two streams of thought which had fed the German Social Democratic

¹⁷Ibid., 236.

¹⁸"Die Sozialdemokratie befindet sich im Übergang von einer agitatorischen Klassenpartei zu einer praktischen Reformpartei. Daraus erklären sich manche Unklarheiten und Widersprüche ihrer Politik." August Bebel, quoted in Herbert Hupka, "Das neue Selbstporträt der SPD," Deutsche Rundschau, LXXXVIII (November 1963), 21; hereafter cited as Hupka, "Das neue Selbstporträt."

Party since its beginning in the 1860's--the liberal parliamentary socialism of Lassalle and the revolutionary Marxist socialism of Bebel--had already split the party once during the Weimar period.¹⁹ Postwar Social Democratic leaders were determined above all to avoid another such split. Consequently, SPD platforms in the early 1950's used the stock phraseology of traditional Marxist theory. But such concrete demands as the nationalization of major industries were tempered with liberal declarations including the right of everyone to enough private property to assure his economic security.²⁰

As the Christian Democrats veered sharply toward Erhard's plan for a social market economy, Social Democrats asserted that such a program hurt the wage earner. The alternative which they offered, however, was not socialism but co-determination by management and labor of economic policies; not state control but free competition with "as much planning as necessary."²¹

¹⁹For a history of the Social Democratic Party during the Weimar Republic, see Richard N. Hunt, German Social Democracy 1918-1933 (New Haven, Connecticut, 1964); hereafter cited as Hunt, German Social Democracy.

²⁰The 1956 SPD Program declared: "We Social Democrats demand a free economic development, free competition and private property conscious of its responsibilities to the general good." Merkl, Germany Yesterday and Tomorrow, 316.

²¹New York Times, September 7, 1953; December 13, 1953.

For many of its younger supporters, these changes in the SPD were difficult to comprehend. For them it was sufficient that the SPD should oppose the dominant CDU on such crucial issues as rearmament, reunification, and the restoration of old economic and political interests. Some believed in social democracy and overlooked the fact that the SPD had not constructed a clear and distinguishable program to support that goal. Others supported the party simply because of its demand that Bonn find a way to reunify Germany before tying the Federal Republic to the West.²²

The chief issue on which the two parties most sharply divided was rearmament. Schumacher was not, as many Germans were, opposed to the fact of rearmament but rather to the details which would not permit Germany to have control over her own military future.²³ By 1954, the SPD officially resolved, despite strong opposition from pacifist, left-wing members, that if the cold war continued then "the Social Democratic [Party] declares itself ready under [certain] conditions to participate in . . . the defense of freedom

²²Ironically, when the SPD opposed the ban on the Communist Party requested by Adenauer in November 1951, on the basis that it would hinder reunification as well as drive the Communists underground, their opposition was interpreted by conservatives as indicating that the SPD was an agent of the East German regime. The SPD did not oppose the ban on the Socialist Reich Party, a fascist organization which was banned in 1952.

²³Merkel, Germany Yesterday and Tomorrow, 314.

also with military measures."²⁴ The statement added, however, that Germany shall only be sovereign when she is again united in freedom, and it reaffirmed SPD opposition to the European Defense Community (precursor of NATO).²⁵

By 1955, however, the Social Democrats no longer opposed Germany's participation in NATO. In the following year, the SPD deputies in parliament used the rearmament bills as levers to exert pressure on the CDU.²⁶ They also welcomed the Bundestag debate on the bills--the first public debate to take place on the floor of the parliament--and used the opportunity to discredit the CDU for obstructing reunification.²⁷ But they approved the bills when the final vote was called.

In the 1957 election, the only issues which distinguished the SPD perceptibly from the CDU were its call for the abolition of conscription and its opposition to giving Germany nuclear weapons. Without directly opposing NATO, the Social Democrats urged that both NATO and the Warsaw

²⁴"... erklärt sich die Sozialdemokratie bereit, unter... Bedingungen an... der Verteidigung der Freiheit auch mit militärischen Massnahmen teilzunehmen. ..."
Jahrbuch der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands 1954/55 (Hanover-Bonn), 292.

²⁵Ibid., 291-292; New York Times, May 8, 1955.

²⁶For example, the SPD supported the Free Democrats in the latter's threat to oppose rearmament unless the new electoral law insured the survival of minority parties in the 1957 election. New York Times, February 22, 1956.

Pact be replaced with an all-European system of mutual security.

For many West Germans, prosperity was more attractive than the idea of rapprochement with the east: The CDU won its first and only absolute majority in the Bundestag. Because the SPD had sought to emulate the Christian Democrats in order to gain votes, the election had been reduced to slogans and personalities. The Germans had decided for the CDU's "no experiments."²⁸

Still, reformers in the SPD such as Fritz Erler, Carlo Schmid, Herbert Wehner and Willy Brandt insisted that the Social Democrats' only hope of winning even a plurality in the 1961 election lay in attracting more middle class votes. The Godesberg Program of 1959 brought this SPD reform movement to full fruition. The platform of Lassalle was now the official SPD platform. Personal freedoms such as free consumer choice, freedom of occupation, "free competition as far as possible," were emphasized; nationalization was recommended only for coal and nuclear energy. No longer was Marx the primary source of inspiration. The program asserted that socialism derives as well from "Christian ethics, humanism and classical philosophy."²⁹

²⁸New York Times, September 16, 1957; Karl Jaspers, The Future of Germany, translated and edited by E. B. Ashton (Chicago, 1967), 12; hereafter cited as Jaspers, Future of Germany.

²⁹Jahrbuch der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands 1958/1959 (Hanover-Bonn), 373.

The most significant change was the official declaration--fifty-two delegates cast dissenting votes--that national defense was the duty of every citizen.³⁰ No longer would the SPD oppose the Western alliance system, though it still called for a more flexible attitude toward the German Democratic Republic. As the SPD defense expert, Fritz Erler, said to the party congress in Godesberg:

We are not struggling against the state but for the state. . . . We are struggling for political power . . . and to gain it we need the trust of the people which we can win in sufficient numbers only when we show that we too are capable of being concerned with the problem of national defense, so that the people can put their destiny into our hands without worrying.³¹

As an idea, a philosophy, and a social movement, socialism in Germany was no longer represented by a Marxist political party.³² In fact the SPD leaders had since 1956 been weeding from the party roster the names of those who would give the party a "red" cast. Although they did not support the ban on the Communist Party (KPD) in 1956, on

³⁰Ibid., 376; New York Times, November 16, 1959.

³¹"Wir kämpfen nicht gegen den Staat, sondern um den Staat, . . . Wir kämpfen um die politische Macht. . . . und dazu bedarf es des Vertrauens des Volkes, das wir nur im nötigen Mass gewinnen werden, wenn wir zeigen, dass wir imstande sind, auch die Probleme der Landesverteidigung so anzugehen, dass das Volk unbesorgt sein Schicksal in unsere Hände geben kann." Fritz Erler, quoted in Theo Pirker, Die SPD nach Hitler; Die Geschichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands 1945-1964 (Munich, 1965), 282; hereafter cited as Pirker, Die SPD nach Hitler.

³²Douglas A. Chalmers, The Social Democratic Party of Germany from Working-Class Movement to Modern Political Party (New Haven, 1964), 228.

the grounds that it would merely go underground, the Social Democrats did expel about one hundred of their own members each year for communist affiliation.³³ In July 1959, in order to be freed of all communist connections, they disassociated themselves from the German Socialist Student Union (SDS), which had been growing steadily more Marxist.³⁴ Middle class citizens whose vote they needed for victory could rest assured that in the SPD, Marx was only history.³⁵

West Germany's political and economic development astounded the world with its strength and stability. Whoever looked for signs of weakness such as had destroyed the Weimar Republic--militarism, economic instability, political extremism--was disappointed. The Federal Republic was a member in good standing of the Western world. Few Germans worried about the fact that officials and industrialists of the old order had gradually reassumed their former power. The party which might have led a strong campaign opposing this restoration chose instead to make its own bid for state power.

³³SPD "officials," cited in New York Times, January 17, 1956.

³⁴Pirker, Die SPD nach Hitler, 275.

³⁵Hupka, "Das neue Selbstporträt," 22.

CHAPTER IV

GROUP 47'S EARLY YEARS: HEINRICH BÖLL, SOCIAL CRITIC

The young writers of postwar Germany who had looked ahead eagerly to a new democratic order in Europe and to a united Europe in which national conflicts would be vanquished, were shocked by the growing gulf between east and west and angered by the restoration policies of the Bonn government. They observed with dismay how many Germans who had suffered so long from poverty and hunger were prone to idolize the American-born materialism of the Wirtschaftswunder. In his frenzied rush to get his share of the new, modern goods, the German citizen seemed to push aside any thought of social justice and international understanding. "Das Volk der Dichter und Denker" appeared to become "das Volk der TV. und V.W."

Literature itself was caught up in the glitter of postwar affluence. Books were judged more by their elegant looks or their exotic themes than by their artistic or social merit. A boom in book-publishing (24,000 titles were published in the year 1949-1950 alone) created a literary facade that misled foreign observers into

believing in a German literary recovery.¹ Readers, however, were passive recipients of book choices made by businessmen who catered to mass tastes. This Kulturwunder did not reach the unknown writer who had to supplement the meager payments which small literary magazines offered by employment as journalists, translators, or by radio or publishing work.²

Yet there were writers in the Wirtschaftswunder society who sought to understand and describe the actions of a people who so recently had lived in a totalitarian state. Most of these social critics were young; many of them joined the meetings of Group 47. Few Group 47 participants were known outside Germany in the early postwar years, especially in England and America, where anti-German prejudice persisted well into the 1950's, carrying with it a reluctance to recognize new currents in German literature.³ But within Germany, Group 47 by 1951 had become a literary phenomenon.

¹New York Times, September 24, 1950, Section VII, 38; September 29, 1957; Michael Hamburger, "An Embattled Play-ground; The German Literary Scene," Encounter, XXVI (April, 1966), 55; hereafter cited as Hamburger, "Embattled Play-ground."

²Heinz Pointek, "How Does a West German Writer Live?" New Statesman, LVIII (September 12, 1959), 320.

³Stephen Koch, "Outgrowing Germany," Nation, CC (May 3, 1965), 484. For example, the first mention of Group 47 in an English-speaking publication did not occur until 1959, when an article by Karl Horst appeared in the New Statesman. Hans Mayer, "In Raum und Zeit," in Hans Werner Richter (ed.) Almanach der Gruppe 47 1947-1962 (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1962), 33.

In part, the Group was a succès scandale. Adenauer had been unfriendly to social critics from the moment he assumed office. He was suspicious of the traditional moral authority of German writers and was determined to wage an anti-intellectual campaign to root it out. In time the focus of his opposition was directed at Group 47, which he rightly considered a harbinger of CDU opponents who spoke openly against Chancellor democracy, church dominance, cold war diplomacy, and social market materialism. Adenauer and like-minded CDU deputies sought to discredit Group 47 by calling it "leftist," by which they meant to imply all that is bad and dangerous, and "intellectual" which they equated with snobbism, elitism, and arrogance. Although the phrase "left intellectual" was first used publicly only in 1957, the sense of the words was felt and conveyed throughout the Adenauer era. "Unchristian," "Jacobin," "fellow traveler" were epithets used by Adenauer conservatives to describe any writer who stood out against the Christian Democratic policies.⁴

⁴The Rheinische Merkur, reporting on a book by Erich Kuby on August 16, 1957, spoke of the "left intellectual opposition." Martin Morlock, "'Und wird die Schafe zu seiner Rechten stellen'; Links-Intellektuelle in der Bundesrepublik," Der Spiegel, XVII (October 23, 1963), 44-55; hereafter cited as Morlock, "Links-Intellektuelle." At least one member of Group 47 replied to the criticism with equal gusto: Hans Magnus Enzensberger wrote that the CDU cultural policy seemed to have been drafted by prelates and fascist aristocrats." Enzensberger, "Group 47," 247.

Although Group 47 received the brunt of the government's criticism, only some of its participants were leftist and many had never been to a university. Yet they refused to be frightened or intimidated by the campaign against the group. Even if they shared no clear political view, Group 47's members distrusted the conformism and restoration policies of Adenauer's rule.

There was, however, a more important reason why Group 47 gained fame (or notoriety) during the 1950's: the literary success of some of its members.⁵ The themes and ideas in the stories, novels and poetry of these well-known authors soon became identified in the public mind with the attitudes of Group 47 itself. The association was often accurate. For example Heinrich Böll, soon to become the most popular young writer in Germany, shared the social concerns of Richter and many others in Group 47.

It was natural that Böll should have been attracted to Group 47. He found in the group writers who wanted as he did to strip the language to its bones and to write clear accounts of present realities. This "rubble literature" (Trümmerliteratur) was criticized as "negative" and "defeatist" by conservative officials. Its authors, however, hoped that portraits of exhausted soldiers returning from battle

⁵Heinrich Böll, Günter Eich, Walter Kolbenhoff, Alfred Andersch, Ilse Aichinger, Ingeborg Bachmann, and Hans Werner Richter, among others.

to a grey and hungry Germany would confront people with the stupidity and senselessness of war and thus help to prevent its repetition.⁶ Böll's earliest stories and his first novel painted the inexorably cruel suffering of war in stark colors.⁷ Soldiers ate, moved, smoked and died with no apparent will, as if caught up in a huge, malicious machine.

Böll had been opposed to war and to its commandments --honor, order, patriotism--since he was a child. He was born in December, 1917, in Cologne, "where people pelted Hitler with bouquets, derided Göring publicly. . . ."⁸ His father, a Catholic stonemason, passed on to his son Heinrich a deep religious feeling tempered by an iconoclasm about established institutions (He called Wilhelm II "the imperial fool"⁹).

⁶Heinrich Böll, "Bekenntnis zur Trummerliteratur" (1952), Erzählungen, Hörspiele, Aufsätze (Cologne, Berlin, 1961), 339-343; hereafter cited as Böll, EHA.

⁷Der Zug war Pünktlich (short stories, 1949); Wanderer, Kommst du nach Spa . . . (short stories, 1959); Wo warst du, Adam? (novel, 1951).

⁸"Wo man Hitler mit Blumentöpfen bewarf, Göring öffentlich verlachte. . . ." Heinrich Böll, "Über mich selbst" (1958), EHA, 396.

⁹Ibid., 396.

Böll remained in school throughout the turbulence of depression and rising totalitarianism. He passed his Abitur in 1937, then served a brief apprenticeship with a book-seller before going to the university. A few months after he began his studies, however, the war broke out and he was immediately drafted.

Böll spent six years in the war, fighting on both eastern and western fronts. He was wounded four times and finally taken prisoner by the Americans. When it was all over he concluded, "War is not really adventure, it is merely a substitute for adventure. War is a sickness. Like typhus."¹⁰

In 1945 Böll returned to Cologne to find his family and his wife reduced nearly to starvation. He managed to get a job with an accounting firm, but at first the days were filled with hunger, black market bargaining, and an endless battle against loose plaster, leaking pipes. Even after 1948, when the currency reform brought neon lights and full, bright display windows, Böll continued to struggle for bare necessities. Despite these hardships, he began to write ("I always wanted to write, tried it early,

¹⁰"... der Krieg ist kein richtiges Abenteuer, er ist nur Abenteuer-Ersatz. Der Krieg ist eine Krankheit. Wie der Typhus." Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Flight to Arras, quoted as motto for Böll's first novel, Wo warst du, Adam? (Adam, Where Art Thou?)

but only found the words later"¹¹). His early stories, however, brought little income.

Hans Werner Richter invited Böll to the 1951 meeting of Group 47 on the basis of his novel, Wo warst du, Adam? (Adam, Where Art Thou?) that had just been published. The group had expected a war story, but Böll delighted them with a satire of postwar Germany. It was the story of a small, learned man with splendid plans but no respectable work; he was the disgrace of his family, yet he was more honest than any of them.¹² Group 47 responded by giving Böll the group prize--1000 DM, enabling him to begin a full-time writing career.¹³

As Böll's fortunes changed, so did his concerns. Although the war remained an essential part of many of his stories, he turned his attention also to the problems of postwar Germany. To Böll, the blind materialism of the economic miracle was the peacetime counterpart to war: both caused men to lie and to deceive, both fostered boredom and social indifference. In Billard um halbzehn (Billiards at

¹¹Böll, "Über mich selbst" (1958) EHA, 398.

¹²Heinrich Böll, "Die schwarzen Schafe," Hans Werner Richter (ed.), Almanach der Gruppe 47 1947-1962 (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1962).

¹³Because he was a Group 47 prize winner, Böll soon became widely known. At the same time, he began to publish with Kiepenheuer & Witsch, a liberal firm that was willing to promote his work. The combination of the Group prize and a sympathetic publisher made his first novel a financial success.

Half-Past Nine) the refugee Schrella returns to Germany in the mid-1950's and asks: "And am I kidding myself or aren't the people I've run into just as bad as those I left behind?"¹⁴

The glamor of sudden wealth as well as the shabbiness of continual poverty forced people to place material demands above human emotions. In Haus ohne Hüter (Tomorrow and Yesterday), a small boy, whose father has been killed in the war, tries to understand the "uncles" who come home with his lonely, desperately poor mother. His rich schoolmate, another fatherless boy, is plagued by a mad grandmother who continually forces him to eat exotic foods to make a man of him. The rich boy wistfully observes that his friend's family "ate potatoes every day; he envied them."¹⁵

The economic boom produced "stocky gentlemen with regular features who pronounced words like 'economy' in all seriousness and, without a trace of irony, discussed The Nation, and Reconstruction, and The Future."¹⁶ Hans Schnier, the central figure in Ansichten eines Clowns (The Clown), recalls:

I . . . once had an argument with Kinkel over his conception of "subsistence level." Kinkel was

¹⁴Heinrich Böll, Billiards at Half-Past Nine, translated from the German, Billard um halbzehn (1962) (New York, 1965), 247; hereafter cited as Böll, Billiards.

¹⁵Heinrich Böll, Tomorrow and Yesterday, translated from the German, Haus ohne Hüter (1954) (New York, 1957), 128; hereafter cited as Böll, Tomorrow and Yesterday.

¹⁶Ibid., 32.

supposed to be one of the cleverest experts in this field, and I believe it was he who worked out that the subsistence level for a single person in a city, not including rent, was eighty-four marks, later increased to eighty-six. I didn't even bother to point out that he himself, to judge by the disgusting story he had told us, apparently regarded thirty-five times that sum as his subsistence level. Such objections are considered too personal and in poor taste, but what's really in poor taste is that a man like that should tell other people what their subsistence level is.¹⁷

Böll was passionately opposed to the wakening of nostalgia for "the good old days" that accompanied economic recovery. Such distortion of reality was, he thought, a pathological wish to forget the German suffering.¹⁸ With grim satire, Böll tells the story of Aunt Milla, for whom the war was difficult because she had been unable to maintain traditional Christmas celebrations. At Christmas, 1945, nothing would do but to restore everything just as it used to be. But Aunt Milla insists on celebrating Christmas every day, which eventually drives her family to desperation: the husband takes a mistress, a son joins the Communist Party, and two children emigrate to Australia. A friend who has watched the family deteriorate announces

¹⁷Heinrich Böll, The Clown, translated from the German, Ansichten Eines Clowns (1963) by Leila Vennewitz (New York, 1966), 191; hereafter cited as Böll, Clown.

¹⁸Heinrich Böll, in Soergel and Hohoff, Dichtung und Dichter, 839.

"the end of a whole tribe's irreproachable correctness."¹⁹

The hypocrisy of restoration proceeding apace with democratization infuriated Böll. No one seemed more immoral than the stolid, respectable burghers who blotted out their pasts with efficient, time-saving devices, who found a sudden interest in modern art, and who cultivated proper attitudes toward democracy. ("Respectable, respectable, without a trace of grief. What's a human being without grief?" cries one old woman in Billiards at Half-Past Nine who has been committed to a mental hospital because during the war she had tried to board a train full of Jews.²⁰)

Böll's pages are full of opportunists like Herbert Kalick, the boy who denounced defeatists and Jews, insisted on ruthlessness when he was a Hitler youth, and who, twenty years later, received the Federal Cross of Merit for "his services in spreading democratic ideas among the young." Hans Schnier recalls meeting Kalick after twenty years:

. . . He had looked at me beseechingly and shaken his head, while he was talking to a rabbi about "Jewish spirituality." . . . Of course Herbert told everyone he met that he had been a Nazi and an anti-Semite, but that "history had opened his eyes." And yet the very day before the Americans marched into Bonn he had been practicing with the boys in our grounds and had told them: "The first Jewish swine

¹⁹Heinrich Böll, "Christmas Every Day" (1952) translated from the German, "Nicht nur zur Weihnachtszeit," by Denver Lindley, Partisan Review, XXIV (September 1957), 188.

²⁰Böll, Billiards, 230.

you see, let him have it."²¹

Again and again, Böll sought to expose the pseudo-Christian churchmen who preach forgiveness of old murders with "hypocritical pathos and seminary-trained rhetoric."²² He thought that "the great, the greatest fault of the Catholics began first after 1948, when the second accommodation, the second treachery of the bishops began."²³ Böll developed this theme in his books, particularly in The Clown:

It seemed to me that evening as if these progressive Catholics were busy crocheting themselves loincloths out of Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure and Pope Leo XIII, loincloths which of course failed to cover their nakedness, for--apart from me--there was no one there who wasn't earning at least fifteen hundred marks a month.²⁴

Church fathers, Böll asserts, have been reconciled with old Nazi leaders, with the Western Allies, with the Christian Democratic Union, "but not, of course, with those destructive powers which once again are threatening our culture."²⁵ In "Brief an einen jungen Katholiken" ("Letter to a Young Catholic"), Böll condemns the Church's alliance

²¹Böll, Clown, 168.

²²Böll, Tomorrow and Yesterday, 142.

²³"Die grosse, die übergrosse Schuld der Katholiken fängt erst nach 1948 an, wo auch die zweite Anpassung, der zweite Verrat der Oberhirten begann." Heinrich Böll, "Warum so zartfühlend," Der Spiegel, XXI (May 15, 1967), 142. (Böll's review of Carl Amery, Fragen an Welt und Kirche (1967)).

²⁴Böll, Clown, 18.

²⁵Böll, Billiards, 209.

with the CDU, the state, and thus with the Bundeswehr.²⁶ He then illustrates the effect of the Church's dogmatic anti-communism in The Clown when Hans and his brother discuss the army:

I said to Leo: "How about it? Are you really going into the army?" He colored and nodded. "We discussed it," he said, "in the study group and came to the conclusion that it's in the interests of democracy."²⁷

Böll is a believer, a Catholic, though he does not always interpret the world from a Christian viewpoint. The ideal Christian world is, to him, a world without fear of hunger, isolation or other men. In the real world, his sympathy lies with people who are passionate, who love, who are honest. His heroes are the oppressed and the outcast, like Hans Schnier who loses his common-law wife Marie since he refuses to compromise his integrity by taking vows prerequisite to a Catholic marriage. She is persuaded by her liberal Catholic friends to leave Hans so that she can have a "real marriage" with a "good Catholic." Desperate over his loss, Hans begins to drink, fails utterly in his work, and finally, painted as a death-white clown, begins to beg in the Bonn railroad station, singing, "Catholic politics in Bonn / Are no concern of poor Pope John. / Let them

²⁶Heinrich Böll, "Brief an einen jungen Katholiken" (1958), EHA, 379-395.

²⁷Böll, Clown, 58.

holler, let them go / eeny, meeny, miny mo."²⁸

Heinrich Böll's work carries no specific political message although it is permeated with the social gospel of Christianity, his belief in artistic freedom, and his abhorrence of established authority. To Böll, Hitler happened because of men's cowardice, indifference and compromise. The passive "lambs" as well as the active "beasts" were guilty, as he illustrates in Billiards at Half-Past Nine. Robert Faehmel blows up the abbey built by his father because the Abbot had "a taste of their [the Nazis'] sacrament, of respectability, orderliness and honor." He remembers how

they celebrated it, monks with flaming torches, up there on the hill with a view of the lovely Kissa Valley. A new age began, an age of sacrifice, of pain, and so once again they had their pfennigs for rolls of bread and their half-groschen for cakes of soap. The Abbot was astonished at Robert's refusal to take part in the celebration.²⁹

Böll feels an enormous burden of responsibility for the values expressed in his works, since words, he realizes, can cause individuals to act. That writers are ipso facto committed to free expression implies a degree of political commitment. Böll has never felt, however, that writers are

²⁸Ibid., 221.

²⁹Böll, Billiards, 137-138.

obligated to be politically active.³⁰ Like many members of Group 47, he opposed Germany's restoration policies and tried, by writing about actual conditions, to expose those trends in postwar Germany which seemed to endanger human freedom. He criticized his society in the hope that his words might add weight to the struggle for a moral and just world. After twenty years of writing, Böll summarized his idea about the position of the writer in society:

A writer can only have an indirect political effect [on society] and he must have confidence in this indirect effect or else he must become a politician. . . . The only duty a writer has is a self-chosen, self-imposed one: to write.³¹

³⁰Heinrich Böll, "Die Sprache als Hort der Freiheit" (1958) Der Schriftsteller Heinrich Böll, Ein biographisch-bibliographischer Abriss (Cologne, 1959), 17-23; hereafter cited as Böll, Sprache als Hort der Freiheit."

³¹"Als Schriftsteller kann einer nur mittelbar politisch wirken, und er muss auf diese mittelbare Wirkung vertrauen. Sonst muss er Politiker werden. . . . Die einzige Pflicht eines Schriftstellers ist eine selbstgewählte, selbstaufgelegte: zu schreiben." Heinrich Böll, "Interview von Marcel Reich-Ranicki" (1967), Böll, Aufsätze, Kritiken, Reden (Cologne, 1967), 502; hereafter cited as Böll, AKR.

CHAPTER V

BONN VERSUS GROUP 47

Ten years after they first met, Group 47 writers were generally known as Germany's political moralists. Their protests against such clear, recognizable grievances as the formation of neo-Nazi groups and the restoration to power of old Nazis aroused a new, critical consciousness in the reading public of the Federal Republic. By writing about their own society, they stimulated public discussion; by publicizing their own beliefs in the right of free thought and the necessity for democratic participation in the course of the nation, they tried to "clarify the will to political freedom and make it more resolute."¹

In order to have a real effect on society, however, these writers needed to convince their fellow citizens to take an active part in the affairs of the state. But a new realism had developed in German political circles of the 1950's which discouraged such civic participation. This realism, born of affluence and security, manifested itself in such events as the Godesberg Program of the Social

¹Jaspers, Future of Germany, 61.

Democrats and in Adenauer's prolonged "Chancellor democracy."² Its creed was order, conciliation and material progress. Groups to the left and right of center were abhorred, parliamentary squabbles were settled behind closed doors, while both foreign and domestic policies were formulated in order to maintain the status quo.³

As a consequence of this prevailing caution among German leaders, writers who argued for major social or political change became further separated from the center of German political life. The avenues of practical politics seemed clogged with old bureaucrats and new conservatives. Non-establishment young writers and intellectuals did not have the power which might influence the shape of national life.

To some Group 47 writers, however, the huge demonstrations organized by trade unions in 1955 to protest the Paris agreements on rearmament indicated that public action might eventually succeed in modifying government policy.⁴

²For example, Adenauer refused to relinquish the Chancellorship even after he had lost the support of much of his party because he believed he was the best possible leader for Germany. Balfour, West Germany, 228.

³Ibid., Chapter 10; Bölling, Republic in Suspense, Chapters 9, 10; Arnold J. Heidenheimer, The Governments of Germany (2d ed., New York, 1966), 52-79.

⁴Fifteen to twenty-five thousand people demonstrated in Munich alone on February 24, 1955, while smaller demonstrations took place in Bonn, Cologne, Opladen (in the Ruhr) and other cities. New York Times, February 25, 1955.

These writers began to search for more direct ways to give their ideas strength.

In February, 1956, a Munich SPD Land representative, Waldemar von Knöringen, invited Hans Werner Richter and a group of writers and publishers, many from Group 47, to a meeting underwritten by some Bavarian radio stations. This "homeless opposition," as they called themselves, decided to form a group along the loosely organized lines of Group 47 which would attempt to counter the anti-democratic tendencies they believed to be endangering the German republic.

The Grünwald Circle, as the group came to be known, feared that rearmament might precipitate a "fascist or chauvinistic adventure."⁵ By publicizing such developments as a growing book business which specialized in Nazi memoirs and apologias, these writers hoped to instigate legislation that would outlaw the dissemination of neo-Nazi writings.

Although the Social Democratic Party supported the Grünwald Circle in principle, it did not provide financial aid for it, so after the group had met four times in various German cities, it was allowed to cease, since it lacked the funds to continue. While the literary Group 47 was able to find private or public sources to insure its continuation,

⁵ein "faschistischen oder chauvinistischen Abenteuer" quoted in "Gruppe 47," Der Spiegel, 104.

such a political group of literati had apparently extended the writers' role in politics beyond attainable limits.⁶

A few months later, at the time of the Hungarian as well as the Suez crisis, a political manifesto by writers and artists appeared in several magazines, signed by a number of Group 47 participants including Heinrich Böll. The declaration deplored the helplessness of the United Nations to prevent the violation of Hungary and the Anglo-French aggression in Egypt. It asserted its solidarity with any peoples opposing totalitarian terror.⁷ This manifesto was the first of many political statements which participants of Group 47 signed.

In none of the direct political actions exemplified by the Grünwald Circle and the Hungarian Manifesto did Group 47 act as a unit. Rather, the actions were taken by individuals many of whom also attended Group 47 meetings. This distinction was often lost on the general public; consequently, the political activity of its members was attributed to Group 47 as a whole.

Early in 1958 a protest against atomic weapons for the German army was published in Die Kultur (Munich), signed

⁶Reinhard Lettau (ed.), Die Gruppe 47; Bericht, Kritik, Polemik (Berlin, 1967), 446; hereafter cited as Lettau, Gruppe 47; New York Times, June 17, 1956.

⁷"Erklärung zur ungarischen Revolution," Die Kultur (Munich, December 1956), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 450-451.

by many Group 47 members. The statement initiated Germany's "ban-the-bomb" movement which Richter organized formally in March 1958 as the "Committee against Atomic Arms." The movement gained momentum in Germany where rearmament had begun despite widespread misgivings and strong opposition, especially from young people. The Social Democrats at first applauded the new anti-bomb committee because its protests echoed SPD arguments that if Germany allied herself with the Western powers, East-West relations would deteriorate, reunification would be hindered, and a third catastrophe would be that much closer. Yet as the movement gained strength throughout Europe, the SPD drew back, leaving its 1500 German members in a financial lurch.⁸ The Committee against Atomic Arms continued to function for a while longer, but its activities terminated in 1959 with a large demonstration at the Frankfurt Paulskirche.⁹ The ban-the-bomb movement had no discernible political effect on Germany's military policy, but it created a new political consciousness

⁸Heinrich Böll "explained" the sudden change of heart in his novel, The Clown:

My mother had once been a ban-the-bomb campaigner for three days, but then when a president of something or other explained to her that a consistent ban-the-bomb policy would lead to a drastic fall in the stock market, she dashed at once--literally that minute--to the phone, called up the committee, and "disassociated" herself.

Böll, The Clown, 170.

⁹"Gruppe 47," Der Spiegel, 104; Lettau, Gruppe 47, 446; "Aufruf gegen die Atombewaffnung der Bundeswehr," Die Kultur (Munich, April 1, 1958), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 451.

among thousands of German citizens, particularly students.

Again and again during the late 1950's, Group 47 writers sought, through manifestoes and letters, to galvanize public opinion into action on issues vital to the nation. When French intellectuals were attacked by their government for publicly affirming their "right of disobedience" (das Recht auf Gehorsamsverweigerung) in the Algerian war, some German writers expressed sympathy for their French colleagues by declaring that the duty of all men is to stand by that right of disobedience.¹⁰ Others signed an open letter to André Malraux supporting not so much the right of disobedience itself as the right to express the idea. For their efforts, the writers were attacked in the German press as "negativists" (Nein-sager) who meddle in French politics when they cannot find things to oppose in Germany.¹¹ One columnist wrote that this "duty to disobey" statement was an "open declaration of war against Bonn" and an "appeal for the defense of an intellectual chaos against the freedom of order."¹²

¹⁰"Erklärung zum Algerien-Krieg, Die Kultur (Munich, November 1960), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 452.

¹¹E. Stindl, Deutsche Tagespost (Würzburg, November 9, 1960), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 467.

¹²"Das ist die offene Kampfansage gegen Bonn. . . . Das ist der Aufruf zur Verteidigung eines geistigen Chaos gegen die Freiheit der Ordnung." Ibid., 467.

Adenauer's attitude toward these protests was to ignore them unless they reached the general public. If that failed then the CDU tried to defame or discredit their authors. As radio (and later television) began to open channels for wide publicity of non-official opinions, the government started to take the intellectual stirrings seriously. A CDU official, for example, had the editors of a popular radio show, Panorama, fired. When word about the dismissals leaked out, causing an indignant outcry, the official replied in his own defense: "I wanted to expose the subversive activity of the leftist intellectuals in radio and television, and I stirred up a hornet's nest."¹³ To writers of Group 47, government officials seemed to use the charge of leftist against anyone who "consistently fought for middle class freedom."¹⁴

Authors who wrote for radio and television were naturally alarmed by the extent of government control over these media. In 1960, when Adenauer announced plans for a second federally-owned television station, twenty-one writers (mostly from Group 47) announced their intention to boycott the one existing television station, accusing its board of directors of threatening democratic development by using the station for the good of the CDU and

¹³Quoted in Norman Birnbaum, "Stirrings in West Germany," Commentary, XXXVII (April, 1964), 57.

¹⁴Enzensberger, "Group 47," 247.

pro-government interest groups. Their boycott, and their demands for publicly-controlled television helped to prevent the birth of a second government-controlled television station.¹⁵

Throughout the 1950's, writers of Group 47 continued, in their writing and in their joint manifestoes and actions, to create a counterweight to anti-democratic tendencies in Germany that would stifle freedom of expression in the name of national security or party loyalty.

In 1961, a few writers chose to enter the political arena itself when Willy Brandt invited them to help in his campaign for the chancellorship. Die Alternative, a book of essays which appeared in August 1961, included contributions from many Group 47 writers, each arguing for an SPD victory.¹⁶ One of the contributors who believed that the SPD was the best hope for German democracy was the young best-selling novelist, Günter Grass.

¹⁵"Erklärung zum 'Deutschland-Fernsehen,'" dpa (Frankfurt, November 23, 1960), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 454-455; Balfour, West Germany, 283.

¹⁶Martin Walser (ed.), Die Alternative (Rowalt, 1961). Contributors included Wolfdietrich Schnurre, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Hans Werner Richter, and Günter Grass.

CHAPTER VI

GROUP 47'S MIDDLE YEARS: GÜNTER GRASS, CITIZEN-WRITER

For Günter Grass, campaigning for the Social Democratic Party in 1961 was a natural expression of his attitude about the writer in society. Since 1954, when he began writing, he had always tried, even in his early poems and plays, to bridge the gap between literature and politics. For Grass, no artistic aloofness was possible, since

Before you can hope to
displace, to spew out fat fathers--
now that we too are fathers and putting on fat--
you've no choice but to open your mouths;

just as our children in time will
open their mouths, will displace,
will spew out the great caries,
the bad gold teeth, the fat fathers.¹

Like his older colleague, Heinrich Böll, Grass believed that writers must perceive the world with uncompromising honesty, must expose its evil and endure its horror.

Grass's first novel, Die Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum) created an enormous sensation as a ruthless portrayal of the

¹Günter Grass, "Little Address calling for a great opening of Mouths--or the Gargoyle speaks," translated from the German, Kleine Aufforderung zum grossen Mundaufmachen oder der Wasserspeier spricht, by Michael Hamburger, Selected Poems (New York, 1966), 56; hereafter cited as Grass, Poems.

vulgar and banal shoddiness of Nazism. Group 47 awarded Grass its prize for the novel in 1958, helping to establish him as a major German writer.

Günter Grass was born in 1927 to a Catholic working class family living near Danzig and was "reared between / the Holy Ghost and photographs of Hitler."² He was drafted at sixteen but was soon wounded and then captured by Americans so that he spent the last year of the war in a prisoner-of-war camp. After the war was over, Grass joined the stream of Germans who had been released from military service or prison camps and told to go home--although for most home no longer existed. Grass's home was now in Poland, so he stayed in West Germany, worked for a while on a Rhineland farm, then wandered north to Hildesheim where he found work in a potash mine.

The postwar guilt and confusion which disabled so many Germans and made them susceptible to lies and hypocrisy touched Grass when he re-entered school in Göttingen to prepare for his Abitur. On the first day, the teacher said to the class, "Well, where did we leave off? Right--the Ems dispatch."³ Appalled at such willful blindness, Grass walked out and did not return. Later, in his imaginary dwarfs and

²Günter Grass, "Kleckerburg," translated from the German by Michael Hamburger, Encounter (April, 1966), 58-59.

³Michael Roloff, "Günter Grass," Atlantic Monthly, CCXV (June, 1965), 22.

witches; he captured the poetic essence of that teacher and the thousands like him who were corrupted and stunted by the disease of fear. He showed how easily men succumbed to one man's will and how they must live with the knowledge of their weakness: "Who can sell back a doorbell, / withdraw, hat in hand, / lick from the fence his origin's chalk-mark."⁴

Unlike many of his fellow-writers who grew up in Nazi Germany, Grass was less concerned with death and destruction than with understanding why each individual doubted "his fellows' readiness to support him in a decent refusal."⁵ He concluded that Germans wanted to believe in good, in progress, in patriotism, so they carefully avoided ugliness and shunned responsibility for Nazi evils. Then they spun rationalizations for their turpitude as the plague advanced across the land: "When I light a pipe / and sit facing the lake / with a thick sound swimming over it, / I'm helpless."⁶

In 1948, the year in which Germans turned from silent guilt to busy themselves with reconstruction, Grass apprenticed himself to a stonecutter in Düsseldorf, carving tombstones. The experience aroused his interest in the plastic

⁴"The Doorbell," translated from the German "Die Klingel," by Christopher Middleton, Grass, Poems, 23.

⁵Paul West, "The Grotesque Purgation," Nation, CCI (August 1965), 81.

⁶"The Midge Plague," translated from the German "Die Mückenplage," by Christopher Middleton, Grass, Poems, 15; hereafter cited as Grass, "Midge Plague."

arts, and he soon took up sculpturing, then painting and, finally, writing. Three years later, he moved to Berlin, the symbol of postwar Germany, where he continues to live and work.

Much of Grass's writing is autobiographical. But he is able to see that "whatever happens or could happen in this world also happened or could have happened in Langfuhr" where he was born.⁷ His lively appreciation of the significance in ordinary events often takes ironical form in his books. For example, in Hundjahre (Dog Years) he recounts a liberal young German's attitude toward Jews:

Take the Jewish question. Such a thing could never happen in our generation. We'd have gone on discussing with the Jews until they emigrated of their own free will and conviction. We despise all violence. Even when we engage in compulsory discussion, the conclusion is in no way binding on the topic of compulsory discussion: when the discussion is over, he's perfectly free to hang himself or to drink beer if he prefers. We're living in a democracy after all.⁸

Above all other themes, Grass has been concerned with Nazism and its aftermath. He scoffed at denazification that went hand in hand with restoration: "A hard postwar winter has set in. Snow is falling for reasons of de-Nazification: everybody is putting objects and facts out into the severe

⁷Günter Grass, Dog Years, translated from the German, Hundjahre (1963) (New York, 1965), 317; hereafter cited as Grass, Dog Years.

⁸Grass, Dog Years, 498.

wintry countryside to be snowed under."⁹ He lamented the currency reform which replaced reflection with acquisitiveness and made the people listen "already conciliant [sic], to the new tone for busy."¹⁰ Most of all he mocked the old German motto, "Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht" (Silence is the primary duty of a citizen), which disabled the movement against rearmament and made parents warn their children against thinking and acting politically.¹¹

It's not the sting
No, but the sense that what's going on
is older than your hand--
and has every future in its grasp.¹²

Grass struck out at the arrogant citizen who seals his eyes to his own capacity for violence. In Dog Years children between seven and twenty-one years obtain "miracle glasses" which "uncover, recognize, worse unmask father and mother, in fact every adult who has reached the age of thirty." The knowledge produces some cases of illness, a handful of suicides as "the past flares up for a few months" and children see the violence "performed tolerated instigated" by their fathers during the war.¹³ But discretion, shame, or fear keep the children silent, and the "miracle glasses"

⁹Ibid., 384.

¹⁰Günter Grass, "Music for Brass," translated from the German "Blechmusik," by Christopher Middleton, Grass, Poems, 31.

¹¹Martha Gelhorn, "Is There a New Germany?" Atlantic Monthly, CCXIII (February 1964), 75.

¹²Grass, "Midge Plague," 15.

¹³Grass, Dog Years, 462-465.

fad soon fades.

Little by little this becomes the first principle of all concerned: Forget! . . . The mind should be occupied by pleasant memories and not by nasty tormenting thoughts. . . . We, here in the West, believe implicitly in freedom, always have. . . . In any event, activity! And what activity is more productive than forgetting!¹⁴

Grass uses satire throughout his prose and poetry, though often he disguises it by fragmenting his object or juxtaposing the fantastic on the familiar. In The Tin Drum, Oskar becomes a midget because, at three, he decides not to grow up in Nazi Germany. With his toy drum, the midget Oskar spends his time hiding under public rostrums, drumming Nazi rallies into chaos.

Have you ever seen a rostrum from behind? All men and women--if I may make a suggestion--should be familiarized with the rear view of a rostrum before being called upon to gather in front of one. Everyone who has ever taken a good look at a rostrum from behind will be immunized ipso facto against any magic practiced in any form whatsoever on rostrums. Pretty much the same applies to rear views of church altars, but that is another subject.¹⁵

Günter Grass creates absurd and grotesque situations because they "make people free from circumstance. As themselves, as ordinary people, they are prisoners of the world; in their fantastic incarnations, they are free to

¹⁴Grass, Dog Years, 468.

¹⁵Günter Grass, The Tin Drum, translated from the German, Die Blechtrommel (1959) (New York, 1963), 111-112; hereafter cited as Grass, Tin Drum.

see everything."¹⁶ In Schmuhs's Onion Cellar, for example, patrons spend twelve marks to cut onions. The onion juice "did what the world and the sorrows of the world could not do . . . it made them cry, properly, without restraint. . . ."¹⁷

Like many of his contemporaries, Grass is suspicious of political ideologies. He was raised in the Third Reich when individuals existed only for the Führer; he witnessed the Stalinist suppression of "counter-revolutionary" literature in East Germany. While listening to conversations after the war, he learned how quickly small Nazis and embittered Communists join to attack social democracy.¹⁸ Human freedom, he concluded, can be assured only when each person chooses to participate in the democratic processes of his society for the good of all.

It was to young liberals like Günter Grass that the Social Democratic Party addressed its challenge of reformed social democracy. After Willy Brandt emerged as the leading public figure of the SPD, Grass jumped on the political bandwagon to work for the party. More than any other major

¹⁶Keith Botsford, "Günter Grass is a Different Drummer," New York Times Magazine (May 8, 1966), 68; hereafter cited as Botsford, "Different Drummer."

¹⁷Grass, Tin Drum, 509.

¹⁸Günter Grass, "Ich klage an" Über das Selbstverständliche; Reden, Aufsätze, Offene Briefe, Kommentare (Neuwied und Berlin, 1965), 72; hereafter cited as Grass, Über das Selbstverständliche.

literary man in Germany, Grass "overtured his writing desk and busied himself with the hackwork of democracy."¹⁹

Electioneering and writing were not contradictory for Grass. "I live and pay taxes in Germany and not on some Parnassus," he explained.²⁰ As an artist he opposed the Christian Democrats' cultural policies and in return the conservative press condemned his novels as immoral and shocking. President Lübke once said of Grass's work, "He writes indecent things you can't even discuss with your wife."²¹ As a German citizen, Grass accused the CDU first of preventing reunification in order to maintain itself in power, and second, of restoring old Nazis to their former roles in society. For Grass, the only chance for a reunified Germany lay with the Social Democrats who Grass thought, would be less hostile to the Ulbricht regime in the east and thereby encourage a DDR liberalization policy necessary to reunification. The real attraction of the SPD for Grass was its

¹⁹"... Es gibt auch die Menge Schriftsteller . . . die . . . gelegentlich ihren Schreibtisch um werfen--und demokratischen Kleinraum betreiben." Günter Grass, "Vom mangelnden Selbstvertrauen der Schreibenden Hofnarren unter Berücksichtigung nicht vorhandener Höfe," Akzente, XIII (June 1966), 199; hereafter cited as Grass, "Vom mangelnden Selbstvertrauen."

²⁰"Grass takes to the Stump," America, CXIII (July 24, 1965), 89.

²¹"Der schreibt so unanständige Dinge, über die nicht einmal Eheleute miteinander sprechen." President Lübke, quoted in Der Spiegel, XVIII (May 20, 1964), 40.

clean anti-Nazi record. Only with such leadership, Grass believed, would German history be turned to a different course.

Citizen-writer Günter Grass shocked many Germans by his electioneering. As Grass observed, they preferred to make writers "more noble than they are; then they can safely ignore them."²² Whereas Heinrich Böll relied on the indirect effect of his social criticism to influence the course of the nation, Grass decided that a writer's effect was not enough. Böll believed that no writer was obligated to sign manifestoes, to support a political party, or to hold a political belief.²³ Grass asserted that a writer is still a citizen and should assume the political responsibilities which democracy requires for its success. During the campaign years of 1961 and 1965, he left his work to become a full-time political worker in the cause of German social democracy.

²²Günter Grass, quoted in Botsford, "Different Drummer," 63.

²³Heinrich Böll, quoted in Horst Bienek, Werkstattsgespräche mit Schriftstellern (Munich, 1962), 149; Böll, "Sprache als Hort der Freiheit."

CHAPTER VII

THE PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM

The Adenauer Era entered its controversial finale in 1960 when Der Alte chose to remain chancellor and to run in the 1961 election. Although his decision was opposed by a sizeable segment of CDU leaders who preferred Ludwig Erhard, party loyalty insured their support for Adenauer. Disaffection with "Chancellor democracy" might have brought victory to the Social Democrats if Germany had not been thrown into a turmoil by the erection of the Berlin Wall in August, 1961.

The Group 47 writers who were campaigning for SPD candidates suddenly found themselves deeply involved in the new Berlin crisis. Shortly after the wall was built, Günter Grass and Wolfdietrich Schnurre wrote an open letter to East Germany's foremost writer, Anna Seghers, demanding that the writers of the DDR publicly protest the wall.¹ No response

¹Wolfdietrich Schnurre (1920-) was one of the original members of Group 47. His literary work includes short stories, fables, poems, radio plays, essays and criticism. In their letter, Grass and Schnurre said "Wer schweigt, wird schuldig. . . ." Gerhard Schoenberger, "Von der Verantwortung des Schriftstellers," Vorwärts (Bonn, December 21, 1961), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 472; hereafter cited as Schoenberger, "Verantwortung des Schriftstellers."

to the letter came from East German writers though an official reply in their name asserted that they "support and sanction" the government.²

Some of the West German press accused Grass and Schnurre of being communists themselves, while other newspapers criticized them for taking a senseless act that could endanger the East German writers.³

Immediately after the East Germans officially responded to the Grass-Schnurre letter, West Germany's press reversed itself and accused Group 47 of being silent about the wall, noting that they were quick to criticize West German institutions or support the opposition party. This challenge from the conservative press which usually criticized authors for meddling in politics seemed to Heinrich Böll like occasions in East Germany when efforts were made to "activate the 'laggards'" (Bummelanten).⁴

Group 47 was meeting in Berlin in the midst of this furor. Twenty-three participants chose to respond to the Berlin crisis with an open appeal to the United Nations.⁵ Because the German cold war situation threatened the world, they asked the United Nations to seek its solution, and to

²Ibid., 472.

³Ibid., 472.

⁴Heinrich Böll, quoted in Schoenberger, "Verantwortung des Schriftstellers," 475.

⁵The letter was quoted in the Süddeutsche Zeitung (Munich, September 27, 1961), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 455-458.

grant Berlin a seat in the international organization as a first step toward the solution. Some writers had already made public statements on the crisis. Böll stated, for example, that West Germany needed more than ever to try and reach the Soviet Union--even when conditions were now less favorable than before.⁶

Response from conservatives and CDU supporters was strenuous. Forgetting that they had recently criticized the "silence" of "left intellectuals," they derided the United Nations appeal of Group 47 as political diletantism that simply confirmed the group as a "left liberal" clique. Neue Zeit, official CDU newspaper in Berlin, alluded to the "dangerous consequences" of the Group's efforts to seek a third course between the CDU-West and the SED-East, and added, "Writers in the Federal Republic should simply serve as ornamentation for the existing social order."⁷ Böll's own comment, the article pointed out, had been quoted by East Germans, which "clearly points out" how writers' political ideas are used to their greatest advantage in East Germany.⁸

⁶Heinrich Böll, cited in "Der dritte Weg führt nicht zum Ziel," Neue Zeit (Berlin, October 25, 1961), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 470; hereafter cited as "Der dritte Weg," Neue Zeit.

⁷"Schriftsteller dürfen in der Bundesrepublik eben nur der Ornamentierung der bestehenden gesellschaftlichen Ordnung dienen." "Der dritte Weg," Neue Zeit, 470.

⁸Ibid., 470-471.

Campaign controversy drew more writers than ever into the political arena. The degree and kind of involvement varied, however, from Grass who led SPD enthusiasts on the campaign trail, to Böll whose commitment remained to the free expression of ideas (he had signed every manifesto of Group 47) rather than to partisan politics. Yet none of the activities of the writers had had a perceptible effect on the policies of West Germany: the nation was armed, the Communist Party had been outlawed, the Christian Democrats had won every national election, and Germany remained divided.

The Spiegel Affair showed German writers and intellectuals for the first time that a politically conscious, articulate populace has the power to influence government policy, if it has the will.

In late October 1962, Der Spiegel published a documented article that indicated major shortcomings in the preparedness of the West German army. Defense Minister Josef Strauss responded to the exposure by authorizing midnight arrests of Spiegel editor Rudolph Augstein and four staff members. A raid of Der Spiegel offices and confiscation of the magazine's files was also approved by Strauss. He even called Madrid to request the arrest and extradition of one Spiegel correspondent. All action was taken on the basis of "suspicion of treason" and "criminal

gathering of misinformation."⁹

Immediately and spontaneously, people all over Germany cried out against the "Gestapo" tactics used by the government. Politicians (other than Christian Democrats), editors, professors, civic leaders spoke out with shock and anger at the clear threat to free speech implied in the attack. Students demonstrated in the streets for the first time since the ban-the-bomb movement in 1958.¹⁰

Group 47 had just begun its meeting in Berlin when Der Spiegel was attacked. In a statement that caused nearly as much furor as the Spiegel affair itself, thirty-six participants of the group, including Richter, drew up a declaration in which they expressed their solidarity with Augstein and demanded Strauss's resignation. The statement concluded by saying: "In a time which has made war as a tool of politics impractical, we . . . hold the appraisal of the public about so-called military secrets to be a moral duty which

⁹New York Times, August 6, 1966.

¹⁰Charges against Augstein and the other Spiegel staff members were quietly dropped after several years of litigation. The case was finally closed in August 1966, when the West German Constitutional Court ruled that the raid and arrests of the Spiegel staff were not in violation of the Basic Law. Since "suspicion of treason" had been one of the charges brought against Spiegel editor Augstein and his staff, the government had not abridged freedom of the press, it was reasoned, since the magazine was subject to treason laws. New York Times, August 6, 1966.

we will at all times fulfill."¹¹

CDU officials and press had been discomfited and embarrassed by the public protest against Strauss's action. What had especially dismayed them was the fact that intellectuals, with the help of television and some mass circulation newspapers could do much more than simply complain to each other. The radical implications of the Group 47 statement, however, caused many conservatives to turn the charge of treason from Augstein to the signers of the declaration themselves.¹² Such an outspoken challenge to state authority had either to be punished or ridiculed. Since the government chose not to enter another battle over free speech, conservatives waged a campaign to belittle the group. They argued that the fact that the government did not prosecute these writers for their stated willingness to "betray military secrets" was "the most crushing answer for the intellectuals:

¹¹"In einer Zeit, die den Krieg als Mittel der Politik unbrauchbar gemacht hat, halten sie die Unterrichtung der Öffentlichkeit über sogenannte militärische Geheimnisse für eine sittliche Pflicht, die sie jederzeit erfüllen würden." "Erklärung zur Spiegel-Affaire," Frankfurter Rundschau (October 29, 1962), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 458.

¹²One rather flamboyant reaction read: "Gute Nacht, Deutschland! Kindischer geht es nimmermehr! Die 'sittliche Pflicht' dieser verkümmerten Intelligenzbestien, nur um wenige Tage vorher praktiziert, hätte ihnen zweifellos ermöglicht, dass die heute zur Ordensverleihung anlässlich der Kapitulation Amerikas im Kreml antreten hätten können." Schongauer Nachrichten (October 31, 1962), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 479.

the state no longer takes them seriously."¹³

During the months after the Spiegel affair had brought such publicity to Group 47, conservative leaders continued their public attacks on the group's "thought terror" as a "literary police vigil."¹⁴ When the CDU Economic Minister Joseph Hermann Dufhues called the Group a secret Reichsschrifttumskammer (State Literature Board), Richter decided to try and heal the breach between the group and the state.¹⁵ He invited Dufhues to meet with Group 47 writers in order to clear the misunderstanding. The CDU minister replied several weeks later, but declined to meet with the writers until they disavowed their "belief" that "betrayal

¹³"Das ist die vernichtendste Antwort an die Intellektuellen: der Staat nimmt sie nicht mehr ernst." Wolf Jobst Siedler, "Der Spiegel und die Gruppe 47," Der Tagesspiegel (Berlin, October 30, 1962), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 481-482.

¹⁴Morlock, "Links Intellektuelle," 46. Ironically the group was also attacked by East German Communist Party ideologue, Kurt Hager. Hager accused Group 47 of being a CDU-sponsored fifth column trying to subvert the German Democratic Republic! Richter had provoked the East German ire by expressing to the writers of the DDR German Writers Union his hope that they try and obtain freedom of travel for east and west German writers. Der Spiegel, XVI (April 10, 1963); Die Zeit (Hamburg, November 16, 1962), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 497-498.

¹⁵In September 1933, Hitler announced the formation of a Reichskulturkammer, or National Culture Board, with Goebbels as its head. Under him was the Reichsschrifttumskammer, the "Auschwitz of German literature" which determined the fate of all writers during the Third Reich. Bruno Friedrich, Vorwärts (Bonn, January 30, 1963); Lettau, Gruppe 47, 503-506.

of military secrets" (Verrat militärischer Geheimnisse) is a moral duty. He accused the group of tending towards a "thought monopoly" (Meinungsmonopolen), and did not retract his earlier Reichsschrifttumskammer accusation.¹⁶

Even those writers who had not signed the Spiegel declaration were outraged by Dufhues' continuing slander. Thirteen writers, including Böll and Grass, filed a successful libel suit in Berlin against Dufhues, demanding that the minister formally retract his statement.¹⁷

Günter Grass had opposed the Spiegel resolution of Group 47 and had refused to sign it. For him, the Spiegel affair seemed to mark the emergence of a new civil consciousness which he welcomed. Since the Social Democrats had strongly condemned Strauss's actions, Grass chose to support the official SPD position. Sweeping condemnations of all power "makes no one feel uncomfortable," he said.¹⁸ Writers overestimate themselves when they issue joint manifestoes in the hope of obtaining serious results. The writer, he added, is not the conscience of the nation.¹⁹

¹⁶Exchange of letters in Gerhard E. Gründler, Die Welt (Hamburg, February 14, 1963), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 507-514.

¹⁷Lutz Krusche, "Schriftsteller über Erhards Kritik bestürzt," Frankfurter Rundschau (July 13, 1965), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 517.

¹⁸Günter Grass, quoted in Hamburger, "Embattled Playground," 62.

¹⁹Der Spiegel, XVII (September 4, 1963), 78.

Grass thought that parliamentary opposition was the only way to achieve democracy. To use the Spiegel affair as an extra-parliamentary rallying point for all who "regard the established political parties as depressing assemblages of self-serving, mediocre, do-nothing careerists"²⁰ would, in Grass's view, damage the finest institution of Germany, the Basic Law.²¹ At the Group 47 meeting in Berlin he went further: "There are two groups in West Germany that want to destroy the West German Constitution--the German nationalists and another group, present in this room."²²

As a political liberal, Grass opposed the radical form of his fellow writers' action. He nevertheless acted in behalf of all writers when Dufhues attacked their right of free expression.

Grass did not carry his active political principles into his writing. A writer, he explained, does not write from political belief any more than politicians ask writers for advice in running the state. This is because art knows no compromise; "yet we live by compromise. Whoever actively

²⁰Olsen, "The Man Who Holds the Mirror," 30.

²¹Günter Grass, "Loblied auf Willy," (1965), Über das Selbstverständliche, 22.

²²Günter Grass, quoted in Roloff, "Günter Grass," 95.

endures this tension is a jester and changes the world."²³ The tension which Grass sensed between his politics and his writing exemplified the tension which had grown up in Group 47 during the mid-1950's.

The initial Group 47 participants, writing in a devastated Germany, had been admittedly didactic. Böll, for example, used satire and critical realism to focus his readers' attention on moral truths essential to him as a Christian man. Other realists, like Richter, wove clear political messages into their work.

A new tendency of Group 47 writers emerged in a time of increasing material well-being, when literature was judged more by its artistic worth and less on the merits of its political ideas. Writers and critics returned to problems of style, language and form. Early realists like Böll were criticized as "hazy"--grey and formless.²⁴ New writers, Grass among them, concentrated on the requirements of literary production per se; the artistic demands of their work were never modified by preconceived ideological views. One Group 47 writer observed, "As literary techniques grew still

²³"... Das Gedicht kennt keine Kompromisse, wir aber leben von Kompromissen. Wer diese Spannung tätig aushält ist ein Narr und ändert die Welt." Grass, "Vom mangelnden Selbstvertrauen," 199.

²⁴Hans Bender, "Program and Prose of Young German Writers," Dimension, I/2 (1968), 277.

more differentiated, so the relationship between the political role of the postwar German writers and their work became more precarious."²⁵

Group 47 lost its political coherence as it became a social force that "had to be reckoned with, both by the parties and by the government."²⁶ By 1962, writers were assured an audience through radio, television, newspapers and a vast publishing boom. Liberal politicians sought their aid (though others still used the word "intellectual" as an opprobrious epithet); universities offered them lectureships; magazines featured interviews with them; publishers sponsored them on speaking tours. Ludwig Erhard declared, when he became Chancellor in 1963, "I call on the creative men in the Federal Republic to work together in this state."²⁷

The prominence of Group 47 compelled its participants to sharpen their political views which they had heretofore expressed for the sake of united opposition to Adenauer's autocratic restoration policies. The disagreement over the Spiegel resolution marked the beginning of political debate

²⁵Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "The Writer and Politics," Times Literary Supplement (September 28, 1967), 857-858; hereafter cited as Enzensberger, "Writer and Politics."

²⁶Ibid., 857.

²⁷"Ich rufe die schöpferischen Menschen in der Bundesrepublik zur Mitarbeit in diesem Staate auf." Ludwig Erhard, in Der Spiegel, XIX (July 21, 1965), 17.

among Group 47 writers. Some had hoped that Ludwig Erhard would bring fresh political ideas into German government, since he was "part of the German intellectual establishment" and "appears to be naïve because of his democratic faith in people. . . ." ²⁸ Instead, when he assumed office, Erhard replaced Chancellor rule with committee (that is, Cabinet) rule, while the Bundestag representatives remained oriented predominantly to the needs of party organization.

Because many Group 47 writers were traditionally Social Democrats, they looked forward to a 1965 SPD election victory that might open the way to the establishment of social democracy in Germany. In larger numbers than ever before, they entered the campaign to speak and write for SPD candidates.

The first sounds of election battles came from Günter Grass who wrote an open letter to Ludwig Erhard in January 1965, demanding his resignation because he had publicly supported an end to the statute of limitations for Nazi war crimes. ²⁹ In March, Grass turned down an invitation to read

²⁸Merkel, Germany Yesterday and Tomorrow, 267.

²⁹The twenty-year statute of limitations for German war criminals would have lapsed in 1965 unless the government extended it. After a heated public debate, a compromise was reached between those who wanted indefinite extension of the statute and those who, like Erhard, thought it should be allowed to lapse. The statute was extended for seven years. Grass's letter appeared in the Spandauer Volksblatt (Berlin), an independent newspaper which Grass helped to begin (February 14, 1965), reprinted in Grass, Über das Selbstverständliche, 6.

at a workers' educational and cultural organization in Bad Godesberg, explaining that he was going to give no more literary readings, but was only going to make election speeches.³⁰ He did, however, finish writing a new play--with a political theme--before he took to the stump for Willy Brandt. Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand (The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising) analyzed Bertolt Brecht's role in the June 17, 1953, East German uprising.³¹ Without trying to document the events, Grass wanted to show the disastrous outcome of a rebellion from which "intellectuals, the church, the bourgeoisie abstained completely."³²

The Plebeians, however, was not a meshing of Grass's art and his politics. The psychological and artistic problems of the play were just as important to the author as the political implications. Grass had to "overturn the writing desk" before he could assume his role as a political man.

³⁰Der Spiegel, XIX (March 17, 1965), 141.

³¹Günter Grass, Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand (1966). Translated from the German, The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising, by Ralph Mannheim (New York, 1966).

³²Günter Grass, cited in Botsford, "Different Drummer," 76. Brecht had not personally supported the German workers' rebellion in 1953. But his letter of criticism to Ulbricht had been published in an abridged form so as to make it appear to be supporting the regime. In Grass's play, the Boss (Brecht) comes face-to-face with the realities of life (the workers' delegation which comes, sweaty and inarticulate, to seek the Boss's support for their revolt). The Boss turns real events into a question of aesthetics: the workers seek assurance that they are right; the Boss puts them on his stage where they enhance his own production of Shakespeare's Coriolanus, a play about a plebeian uprising in Rome.

Not all writers shared Grass's enthusiasm for the Social Democratic Party. As early as 1962 Heinrich Böll complained that the "left" was nearly overtaking the left wing of the "right." Prophetically he wrote, "We are nearing the one-party state which permits the rustlings of a few little left-wingers."³³ While his Social Democratic colleagues cheered the increasing SPD support in the nation, Böll retorted,

It is either foolish or suicidal . . . to become the topknot of a party which is publicly ready . . . to arrange emergency laws, which is "more papal than the pope" about rearmament, which decorated its party meeting with banners "the boundaries of 1937;" . . . which out of opportunism betrayed the first and only anti-bomb movement in the Federal Republic, which

³³"Wir nähern uns dem Einparteienstaat, der ein paar linke Flügelchen rauschen lassen wird." Heinrich Böll, "Was heute links sein konnte" (1962), AKR, 127.

makes no secret of the fact that it is part of
a Grand Coalition. . . .³⁴

Turning to the influence of Group 47 in Germany, Böll charged that its writers are content to be "democrats" and "anti-fascists"--that they accept the honors heaped on them for speaking out on issues where criticism should be taken for granted, not praised. Writers, to be praiseworthy, need to recognize the "imminent, democratic, im Proporz established fascism of the apparatus." They need to restore their earlier political solidarity on a more immediate,

³⁴"Es ist ja auch entweder albern oder selbstmörderisch . . . einer Partei Sträusschen zu binden, die in puncto 'Notstandsgesetze' offensichtlich bereit ist, sich . . . zu arrangieren; die in puncto 'Wiederaufrüstung' päpstlicher ist als alle Päpste miteinander; die ihren Parteitag mit Transparenten schmückt 'Die Grenzen von 1937'; . . . die aus Opportunismus die erste und einzige Antiatombewegung in der Bundesrepublik verratten hat; die keinen Hehl draus macht, dass sie auf die grosse Koalition aus ist. . . ." Heinrich Böll, "Angst vor der 'Gruppe 47'?" (1965), AKR, 213. In explanation of Böll's allusions: 1) The Emergency Laws, giving the government extraordinary powers in times of national emergency, had been urged on Germany by France and the United States since 1958. The SPD opposition, based on the fear that the laws were the same sort as the infamous Weimar "emergency law" by which Hitler had come to power, prevented enactment of the law, though some SPD members were willing to consider such laws, provided they contained adequate protection against misuse. 2) Supra, 34-37. 3) At the 1964 Social Democratic Party Congress in Karlsruhe, the stage was decorated with a gigantic backcloth of the map of Germany with its 1937 boundaries and the legend, "Erbe und Auftrag" (Heritage and Mission); Gordon Smith, "The Future of West German Politics," Political Quarterly, XXXVII (January-March 1966), 86-95. 4) Supra, 57. 5) Böll's reference to a grand coalition before 1967 alludes to Brandt's comments since 1960 that a coalition would have to be formed. In March 1965, Brandt publicly stated he was considering a grand coalition since the time had come to "fight for a common front on all domestic and foreign policy questions." New York Times, March 28, 1965, 14.

radical level, to become once again non-conformists. Group 47, said Böll, is so like West German society, is so acceptable, that it is helpless to be a real opposition. It is in danger of becoming a functioning institution that the establishment need not fear.³⁵

Böll remained aloof from Social Democratic politics, preferring to express his political views in essays and speeches. The business of democracy involved risks, and the SPD was not an adventurous party. In his fiction, however, Böll continued to set forth with humor and satire his ideas of the good society. A new novel, Ende einer Dienstfahrt (End of a Mission) shows more clearly than his previous work Böll's distrust for the institutions of the Federal Republic, especially for that "democratic institution," the Bundeswehr. The novel recounts the trial of a man, Johann Gruhl and his son, Georg, an Army private first class, who are accused of willfully burning an Army jeep in order to create a Happening, a "liberating disorder." Georg has been on a mission, called "Use of a vehicle for speedometer adjustment," which involves racing the jeep up and down the highway to rack up mileage in preparation for a forthcoming inspection. The Happening is Georg's inspired attempt to deny the "pointlessness, unproductiveness, boredom, laziness" of the Army. Naturally, powerful forces conspire to ignore the trial: newspapers report only that

³⁵Böll, "Angst vor der 'Gruppe 47'?" AKR, 212-213.

"inexplicable behavior last June gave rise to considerable alarm in some quarters," and in the end, no ripple is created in the ordered progress of German democracy.³⁶

Heinrich Böll's belief, that a good society depends on the moral responsibility of every individual in it, remained the basis for his fiction. In response to the conditions of West Germany in the 1960's he had increased his criticism of such "German democratic institutions" as the Bundeswehr, the press, the universities, and the church. But Böll rarely extended his political commitment beyond written criticism of existing institutions. True to his belief that each writer is free to determine the extent of his political involvement, Böll refused to become actively engaged in politics. He explained, "I don't want to become pinned down as an established overseer, as part of the 'good conscience' . . . as a welcome villain who by his existence confirms over and over again how wonderfully free we are."³⁷

³⁶Heinrich Böll, End of a Mission, translated from the German, Ende einer Dienstfahrt (1967) by Leila Vennewitz (New York, 1968), passim.

³⁷" . . . ich [möchte] nicht als etablierter Aufpasser, als Teil des 'guten Gewissens,' . . . als willkommener Bösewicht, der immer wieder durch seine Existenz bestätigt, wie wunderbar frei wir sind, verschlissen werden. . . ."
Heinrich Böll, Interview von Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 503.

CHAPTER VIII

GROUP 47'S LATE YEARS: THE CHALLENGE OF PETER WEISS

The first person to break openly with both the political and literary premises of Group 47 was Peter Weiss. In March 1965, Weiss declared himself a revolutionary socialist. Two months later, at an "anti-Fascist Writers Congress" in Weimar, he quoted Brecht: "We must work as partisans in order to spread the truth," by which he meant that writers must commit their work to the promotion of social revolution.¹ After years of indecision, Weiss had concluded that socialism was the only alternative to a "death world" and that writers are free to create only when they have resolved the problem of their social function.²

Weiss was born in late 1916 near Berlin to a prosperous Hungarian manufacturer, a Jewish convert to Christianity, and his Swiss Lutheran wife. As he later recalled, "When my mother once told me the first words I ever said were what a nice life I have, what a nice life, in it I heard the ring of something that had been drummed into my

¹"Wie müssen als Partisanen arbeiten, um die Wahrheit zu verbreiten. Der Spiegel, XIX (October 20, 1965), 156.

²Peter Weiss, "Postscript" to A. Alvarez, "Peter Weiss: The Truths that are Uttered in a Madhouse," New York Times, December 26, 1965, Section X, 14.

head, parrot-taught, something with which I had wanted to amuse or mock those around me."³

In the starched and heavy atmosphere of big, monotonous houses, the boy Peter found breathing space within the shelter of painting and writing. "Only at night . . . I was alone in the rushing quietness of a vacuum, alone with my pictures and my written pages, alone with my books and my music."⁴ His parents were puzzled and disapproving of the boy's indolence. They attempted to make him come to terms with their reality by sending him to work in his father's factory, but Peter rebelled and refused to fit in to their bourgeois fabric of life. "I was a workman among workmen, but I was not one of them, I was the owner's son. But I had nothing to do with the owner. . . ."⁵

Weiss learned of his Jewish heritage from his stepbrother, but being Jewish simply confirmed the sense of loss and uprootedness he already knew.

In the midst of my security I had barricaded myself behind books and pictures. I had surrounded myself with totem symbols, to resist pressures from the outside. During the persecutions, which I became used to from the start, I did not see myself as member of a particular race, but as a kind of foreigner, an alien to the generality whom every

³Peter Weiss, Exile, translated from his two German works, Abschied von den Eltern (1961) and Fluchtpunkt (1962), by E. B. Carside, Alastair Hamilton and Christopher Levenson (New York, 1968), 7; hereafter cited as Weiss, Exile.

⁴Weiss, Exile, 70.

⁵Ibid., 84.

pack has to track down and yelp at.⁶

The Weiss family fled from Germany in the early 1930's, going first to England, then to Czechoslovakia. In Prague, Peter defied his parents' wishes for him and enrolled in the municipal Art Academy. In 1937, the elder Weiss's left Czechoslovakia and went to live in the comparative safety of Sweden, but their son Peter remained in Prague. Europe's divisions meant little to the boy whose commitment "was not to be engaged in a struggle which in my view was insane."⁷ Weiss saw no ideology worth fighting for. To survive, to be beholden only to himself, these were his goals.

After the Austrian Anschluss, Peter's school friends urged him to join his parents in Sweden. His decision, finally to leave Czechoslovakia, had less to do with a sense of personal threat than with an urge to begin a truly independent life as an artist. Protected by a Czech passport, and sure of obtaining a Swedish immigrant visa because his father was by then established as a textile manufacturer near Stockholm, Weiss left Prague in October 1938. The train on which he traveled passed through Berlin right after the Nazi Kristallnacht, but the young painter was thinking only of the free life ahead of him. The division of the

⁶Ibid., 95.

⁷Peter Weiss, "I Come Out of My Hiding Place," Nation, CCII (May 30, 1966), 652; hereafter cited as Weiss, "Hiding Place."

world into persecutors and victims depressed him, but he felt no compulsion to choose sides.

I felt no guilt about not participating in the war and showing no solidarity with any nation or race. I had attempted to break my last link and had left my parents' house in order to concentrate on my work. Political and ideological demands were insignificant beside the work that awaited me.⁸

Only later, after it was all over, did he remember people like Peter Kien who remained behind. "Peter Kien was murdered and burned. I escaped."⁹

Weiss did not want the world's miseries forced on him, but they would not leave him in peace. "The incessant pressure from the menace, the faint horror that we constantly carried about at the back of our minds, was part of our life."¹⁰ He tried to escape into the country deep into the Swedish woods as a lumberjack. Even there he could not avoid being touched by the harsh lives of his fellow laborers who knew no literature or art and who feared to protest against the miserable conditions of their lives. Though he felt no particular kinship with these men, he remarked that "a revolution had never taken place, the workers had once been granted all their rights and that was that. There was no call for any further protest."¹¹ Years later the memory of

⁸Weiss, Exile, 98.

⁹Ibid., 80.

¹⁰Ibid., 115.

¹¹Ibid., 151.

such a still-born revolution would return, but at the time, Weiss was still "the bourgeois who wants to become a revolutionary but is crippled by the weight of established convention."¹²

The war continued. Weiss returned to Stockholm to discover that two friends, refugees like himself, had committed suicide. He also learned that other friends who had remained in Germany and Czechoslovakia had disappeared into concentration camps. Bewildered and uncomprehending of the forces at work, unable to understand the despair of his friends in Stockholm, Weiss withdrew into the shelter of his art for the duration of the war.

I . . . tried to understand what the others out there must have been through, what others had endured, bound together in the madness of a common fate, I saw them crawling along toward each other, the brave ones, friend and foe, cannon fodder of changing ideals, saw how they murdered each other, how they made common cause so as to fall upon others, with whom they in turn again compacted, to set upon new adversaries. All I wanted was to defend my flight, my cowardice; I did not want to belong to any race, ideal, city or language, and I wanted to see strength in my detachment alone.¹³

Only in the spring of 1945 did he see "the end of the development in which I had grown up. On the dazzling bright screen I saw the places for which I had been destined, the figures to whom I should have belonged."¹⁴ The trauma of

¹²Ibid., 71.

¹³Ibid., 115.

¹⁴Ibid., 194.

guilt over having survived lay heavy on Weiss for months.

Had I not tolerated this world, had I not turned away from Peter Kien and Lucie Weisberger, and given them up and forgotten them? It no longer seemed possible to go on living with these inextinguishable pictures before my eyes. It no longer seemed possible ever to go out again, into the streets and up into my room.¹⁵

Slowly, Weiss began to try and understand the disaster which had passed him by. He saw how he had fled from the violence, "half-dead and half-blind under the rubble of prejudice, contaminated by a milieu and an upbringing."¹⁶ To free himself from his own self-exile, he decided to leave Stockholm --to thrust himself into the world.

Weiss went to Paris, and in the effort to speak a new language, he left behind all of his earlier pictures and words which seemed suddenly "no more than moments of a personal truth" which "had resulted only in safeguarding my own existence."¹⁷ Paris was the catalyst that loosed him from "every stay, every allegiance, released from all nationalities, races and human links. . . ." Buoyed by his new freedom, Weiss returned to the language of his birth and his exile. Germany

. . . now belonged to me alone. . . . At this moment the war became a thing of the past and I had survived the years of flight. . . . In the spring of 1947 . . . at the age of thirty, I saw that it was

¹⁵Ibid., 195.

¹⁶Ibid., 237.

¹⁷Weiss, "Hiding Place," 655.

possible to live and work in the world, and that I could participate in the exchange of ideas that was taking place all around, bound to no country.¹⁸

Peter Weiss spent many years working out the implications of his new embrace of the world. He returned to Stockholm and began again to study, write and paint. Two novels appeared,¹⁹ thinly disguised autobiographies of his earlier years of struggle, when "cries meant to wake me up, voices telling me that other people were there" could not "get through to me in my endless, shapeless conversation with myself."²⁰

As he worked, his political consciousness emerged as central to his perceptions of the world. Just as his earlier commitment to art, while aware of the desperate struggles around him, became a commitment to the desperation itself, so now he felt that not to rebel against oppression was to side with inhuman disaster. Yet existing socialist states repelled him with their heavy bureaucratic conformity that left no room for human creativity.

Marat/Sade was Weiss's first attempt as an artist to grapple with political and social problems.²¹ When he wrote

¹⁸Weiss, Exile, 243-245.

¹⁹Abschied von den Eltern (1961) and Fluchtpunkt (1962).

²⁰Weiss, Exile, 119.

²¹Peter Weiss, The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade, translated from the German, Die Verfolgung und Ermordung Jean Paul Marats dargestellt durch die Schauspielgruppe des Hospizes zu Charenton unter Anleitung des Herrn de Sade (1964), by Geoffrey Skelton (New York, 1965); hereafter cited as Weiss, Marat/Sade.

the play, he had not intended to be didactic, but to express a dialectic between individual freedom (Sade) and social revolution (Marat). Marat/Sade expressed Weiss's dilemma as an artist and a political man. Although "the things that Marat says should come through because . . . the things he says are right," Weiss explained, "Sade, in a sort of visionary way, can see already Stalin in the things Marat says."²² Sade opposes the revolution not because his ideals change, but because he cannot accept the further changes which would threaten his individual freedom of expression, "and he is always right in mentioning this."²³

Sade:

Now I see where
this Revolution is leading
To the withering of the individual man
and a slow merging into uniformity
to the death of choice
to self denial
to deadly weakness
in a state
which has no contact with individuals
but which is impregnable
So I turn away²⁴

Marat's commitment is no longer a question of resistance, but of choosing the difficult path of revolution.

²²Peter Weiss, in Alvarez, "Peter Weiss: The Truths that are Uttered in a Madhouse," New York Times, December 26, 1965, Section X, 5; hereafter cited as Alvarez, "Peter Weiss."

²³Michael Roloff, "An Interview with Peter Weiss," Partisan Review, XXXII (Spring 1965), 232; hereafter cited as Roloff, "Interview with Weiss."

²⁴Weiss, Marat/Sade, 74-75.

Marat:

If I am extreme I am not extreme in
 the same way as you
 Against Nature's silence I use action
 In the vast indifference I invent a meaning
 I don't watch unmoved I intervene
 and say that this and this are wrong
 and I work to alter them and improve them
 The important thing
 is to pull yourself up by your own hair
 and turn yourself inside out
 and see the whole world with fresh eyes²⁵

In the months after Marat/Sade appeared, Weiss strove to resolve in his own life that dialectic which he had left unfinished in the play. He studied classical works of political and social science and read extensively in the world press, clipping and filing items on human struggles for freedom from every continent. In the end he concluded that even the artist was not free until he "learned to see . . . learned to take sides."²⁶ Weiss sided with social revolution.

When Marat/Sade was staged in East Berlin, Weiss endorsed its interpretation of Marat as the hero. The stir which the play had created in West Germany was immediately enveloped in protest against Weiss's endorsement of the East German polemical treatment of his play. Betraying the

²⁵Ibid., 46.

²⁶Jacques Roux, a priest-turned-revolutionary who supports Marat's position in the play, cries out after Marat's death: "When will you learn to see! / When will you learn to take sides?" Weiss, Marat/Sade, 140.

writer's "duty" to "gather scraps of truth" and trust "the narrower truth,"²⁷ Weiss had asserted a new belief, that writers who empathized with the oppressed and exploited peoples of the world should stand up for them in their writing.²⁸ What angered West Germans most was that Weiss spoke on East German radio and criticized his West German colleagues who, despite their belief in democratic socialism, do not often take a political stand.²⁹

In September 1965, Weiss elaborated on his new political commitment in an essay, "Ten Theses of an Author in the Divided World." One must choose, he wrote, between two existing orders. Weiss saw in the socialist camp, despite its grave flaws, the only possibility of eradicating the existing inequalities in the world. Writers who persisted in remaining aloof from both camps were led "to a greater and greater invalidity" in their work.³⁰ Men and women must write from commitment to both human individualism and radical political change. Weiss stated, "The conflicts

²⁷"Immer wieder werden wir Bruchstücke von Wirklichkeit an uns reißen befeuert von ihrer Präsenz, werden ihr unsere Sprache geben und der geschmälerten Wahrheit vertrauen. Das ist die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers." Peter Härtling, "Gegen rhetorische Ohnmacht," Der Monat, XIX (Berlin, May 1967), 61.

²⁸Weiss, "Hiding Place," 655.

²⁹Der Spiegel, XIX (October 20, 1965), 157.

³⁰Ibid., 157; Eric Bentley, "Peter Weiss and Wolf Biermann," Nation, CCII (January 10, 1966), 31.

which arise out of this commitment will be part of our work, we will have to live with them, often they will furnish the very problems we try to solve in writing."³¹ With these words, Weiss challenged Group 47 to a re-examination of its premises about the writer in society.

³¹Weiss, "Hiding Place," 655.

CHAPTER IX

THE DILEMMA OF POLITICAL POWERLESSNESS

Peter Weiss's challenge to his fellow writers had little immediate effect on most members of Group 47. The coming national election seemed to many of them the last chance for the Federal Republic to take up the task of social democracy. In June 1965, Richter edited a collection of essays, Plea for a New Regime, or No Alternative.¹ Writers contributed endorsements of the Social Democratic Party (Grass) and criticisms of the current Christian Democratic rule (Weiss). Erhard, who only months earlier had been courting intellectuals, responded to the essays:

I must call these writers what they are:
philistines and inept men who judge things
which they simply don't understand . . .
There is a certain intellectualism which
turns into idiocy. . . . All that they say
is dumb stuff.²

¹Hans Werner Richter (ed.), Plädoyer für eine neue Regierung oder keine Alternative (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1965).

²"Ich muss diese Dichter nennen, was sie sind: Banausen und Nichtskönner, die über Dinge urteilen, von denen sie einfach nichts verstehen . . . Es gibt einen gewissen Intellektualismus, der in Idiotie umschlägt . . . Alles, was sie sagen, ist dummes Zeug." Ludwig Erhard, quoted in Der Spiegel, XIX (July 21, 1965), 18.

The Chancellor had discovered a difference between responsible intellectuals and "bloodless intellectualism without substance or sense."³ When Rolf Hochhuth's play, Der Stellvertreter (The Deputy), appeared, Erhard cried out against "degenerate art" (entartete Kunst), surprising even his own party members by his use of Nazi-style slander.⁴ CDU efforts to mend relations with Group 47 were unsuccessful.⁵ Böll called Erhard's comments "painful" and Grass condemned them.⁶

Four writers, including Grass, suggested to Willy Brandt that the SPD set up an Election Committee of German Writers which would try to win other writers to the campaign. By August 1965, seventeen Group 47 members were working full time for the Social Democratic Party.⁷

No writer campaigned harder for Willy Brandt's election than Günter Grass. Throughout the summer of 1965, to the

³"einem blutleeren Intellektualismus ohne Substanz und ohne Gesinnung." Ibid., 17.

⁴Lutz Krusche, "Schriftsteller über Erhards Kritik bestürzt," Frankfurter Rundschau (July 13, 1965), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 516.

⁵One Bundestag member, Berthold Martin, even invited the writers to Bonn for a talk to try and solve the misunderstanding between intellectuals and politicians. Der Spiegel, XIX (October 13, 1965), 25.

⁶Günter Grass, "Was ist des deutschen Vaterland?" (1965) Über das Selbstverständliche, 113; Heinrich Böll, in Der Spiegel, XIX (July 21, 1965), 18.

⁷Group 47 writers became so closely associated with Brandt that the SPD's chief of publicity, Karl Garbe, complained that the only way he could see Brandt on important party questions was to become a member of Group 47. Der Spiegel, XIX (January 6, 1965), 74.

discomfort of some Social Democratic leaders who preferred not to raise controversial issues in this campaign of respectability, Grass stumped throughout West Germany. He spoke in fifty-two cities on more than 250 occasions.⁸ He often departed from the official SPD party line since he was not a party member and did not believe a party should demand identical ideas from all its supporters. He criticized the tradition which made office-seekers beholden to their government through campaign subsidies. In keeping with this criticism Grass received no money from the SPD for his speaking tour.

He questioned the five per cent clause that permitted no representation of splinter groups, and the twenty-one-year-old voting age limit, whereas boys often became soldiers at eighteen. He brought up the touchy issue of the Oder-Neisse boundary, advocating a compromise settlement that might ease relations with East Germany.⁹ Most of all, Grass campaigned for Brandt who, he thought, embodied the crucial question: Can an emigrant be Chancellor in Germany?

Grass pleaded with Böll, Weiss, and other writers who criticized the SPD to be less harsh in their opposition.¹⁰

⁸Grass, "Rede über das Selbstverständliche" (1966), Über das Selbstverständliche, 88; Hamburger, "Embattled Playground," 55.

⁹Günter Grass, "Ich klage an," (1965), Über das Selbstverständliche, 80.

¹⁰Günter Grass, "Loblied auf Willy," (1965), Über das Selbstverständliche, 23.

He reached out to new voters, to the undecided, to the apolitical, asking their support for a party that traditionally had supported social reform and political democracy.¹¹

Erhard's victory was, Grass thought, a confirmation of German opportunism and materialism.¹² He lashed out at his fellow artists and intellectuals who had refused to publicly endorse the SPD. In a "Speech about the Obvious," delivered upon receiving the Georg Büchner prize in Darmstadt, Grass accused

. . . the arrogance of those professors and students to whom politics is mere party wrangling, for whom reality is loathsome and only utopia is sweet.

Where, Heinrich Böll, did your high moral demand make the bigoted Christians turn pale?¹³

The problems of political engagement were coming into focus.

Soon after the election, Peter Weiss's play, Die Ermittlung (The Investigation), opened simultaneously in East and West Berlin, dramatizing for all Germans the social and political issues which they faced in 1965.¹⁴ Weiss used the Frankfurt trials of Auschwitz war criminals as the

¹¹Grass's election speeches are collected and published under the title, Dich singe ich, Demokratie: die Wahlreden (Neuwied und Berlin, 1966). They are also included in Grass, Über das Selbstverständliche.

¹²Grass, "Rede über das Selbstverständliche," Über das Selbstverständliche, 89.

¹³Ibid., 94-95.

¹⁴Peter Weiss, The Investigation, translated from the German, Die Ermittlung (1965), by Jon Swan and Ulu Grosbard (New York, 1967); hereafter cited as Weiss, Investigation.

vehicle for his "collage of horrible facts."¹⁵ The result was a documentary drama, ninety per cent actual testimony, whose monotonous drone of facts confronted Germans with a trauma they had not dared to face before.

Some West German newspapers condemned Weiss for "blackening Germany's name in the interests of Communism."¹⁶ Nowhere was the play staged without part of the audience leaving before it was over. Germany's largest cartels, Krupp and Siemens, protested because their names were linked with slave labor and genocidal products. (Krupp's name was censored from the script during the Essen production of the play.) In other major cities, various parts of the play were cut, either because they were too gruesome to public taste or too offensive to important people.¹⁷

Weiss was not, however, concerned in The Investigation with Germany and Jews alone. To him the play expressed the "extreme abuse of power that alienates people from their own actions."¹⁸ Ordinary, good people participated in monstrous

¹⁵Peter Weiss, in Oliver Clausen, "Weiss/Propagandist and Weiss/Playwright," New York Times Magazine (October 2, 1966), 28-29; hereafter cited as Clausen, "Weiss/Propagandist." To prepare himself for writing the play, Weiss had attended the trials for several days, he had studied the entire transcript of the proceedings and had visited the Auschwitz concentration camp. After his visit to Auschwitz, Weiss wrote a moving account of his experience which he called "Meine Ortschaft." The story appears as "My Place" in Christopher Middleton (ed.), German Writing Today (Baltimore, Maryland, 1967).

¹⁶Clausen, "Weiss/Propagandist," 132.

¹⁷Der Spiegel, XIX (October 27, 1965), 152.

¹⁸Peter Weiss, in Clausen, "Weiss/Propagandist," 133.

crimes and felt no guilt for their actions. As one of the accused complains, "Personally / I always behaved decently / Anyway what could I do / Orders are orders / And now just because I obeyed / I've got this trial hung on my neck".¹⁹ Such brutal exploitation of one people by another was a logical extension, Weiss thought, of an exploitative society where people were constantly pitted against one another. The Third Witness, a political prisoner, explains:

Many of those who were destined
to play the part of prisoners
had grown up with the same ideas
the same way of looking at things
as those
who found themselves acting as guards
They were all equally dedicated
to the same nation
to its prosperity
and its rewards
And if they had not been designated
prisoners
they could equally well have been guards
We must drop the lofty view
that the camp world
is incomprehensible to us
We all knew the society
that produced a government
capable of creating such camps
The order that prevailed there
was an order whose basic nature
we were familiar with
For that very reason
we were able to find our way about
in its logical and ultimate consequence
where the oppressor
could expand his authority
to a degree never known before
and the oppressed
was forced to yield up

¹⁹Weiss, Investigation, 17.

the fertilizing dust
of his bones

The Council for the Defense replies: "We utterly reject / theories of this kind / theories that reflect / a completely distorted / ideological point of view".²⁰

Weiss tried in his play "to show the situation in which we live so strongly that if people read about it . . . they would go home and say, 'Well, we have to change this. It's not possible. We can't live on any longer like this.'"²¹ The Investigation stunned German audiences with its dramatization of Nazi crimes. Theater-goers were moved by Weiss's decision to contribute the resulting royalties to the victims of fascism.²² But the deeper message, that such crimes are a logical consequence of an exploitative society such as the Federal Republic itself, was rejected by most Germans as naïve and unrealistic.

Yet as Weiss was exposing the abuses of power which, he believed, were inherent in capitalism, the West German government was affirming its support of United States policy in Vietnam. Most German writers and intellectuals had opposed the Vietnam war since its intensification in February 1965. Their newly-elected government's endorsement of United States policy angered many of them, and they began to speak

²⁰Ibid., 107-108.

²¹Peter Weiss, quoted in Alvarez, "Peter Weiss," 6

²²Der Spiegel, XIX (June 2, 1965), 114.

out against the war. An advertisement was published in the New York Times signed by many European artists, including Grass and Böll, protesting United States policy in Vietnam. Shortly thereafter, many Group 47 writers issued a declaration about the war in Vietnam, identifying themselves with the American intellectuals who had demanded the war's immediate end. The declaration accused the United States of using Vietnam as a testing ground for new weaponry and of threatening the Vietnamese with genocide. Böll and Weiss signed this declaration, though Grass did not, because he thought that lending his name just once to the New York Times protest could be more effective.²³

The Vietnam issue gradually became the gauge against which political commitment was measured among German artists, students and intellectuals. It dramatically influenced the 1966 meeting of Group 47. The group had been invited to hold its spring meeting at Princeton University, the expenses of travel to be paid by Princeton and the Ford Foundation. Several writers, Böll among them, declined the invitation because of their opposition to the Vietnam war.²⁴ The rest, except for those East Germans who had not been permitted to

²³"Erklärung über den Krieg in Vietnam," konkret (Hamburg, December 1965), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 461-462. Lettau explains the reasons for signing and not signing in a footnote, 461.

²⁴Fritz J. Raddatz, "Die Bilanz von Princeton," Frankfurter Hefte, XX (July 1966), 496.

accept visas, were persuaded by Richter to attend the meeting in order to establish contact with American writers. Some, like Weiss, came to show their "sympathies with those who are fighting for another America."²⁵

The three-day Group meeting brought out not anti-American sentiment but "dammed up resentment of the mediocre and the literary entertainment industry" in Germany.²⁶ One critic observed that "Group 47's literary importance is highly esteemed, but . . . [its] social-political importance is not worth being highly esteemed."²⁷

The question of political commitment was pursued in a symposium on "Writers in the Affluent Society" which followed the meetings. During one discussion, Günter Grass reaffirmed his belief that writers cannot influence the state in the same way as political advisors do because as artists they are not capable of compromise. Since they are powerless as writers, they must sometimes leave their art--as Grass did in the 1965 election campaign--and as citizens,

²⁵Peter Weiss, in New York Times, April 22, 1966, 30. Group 47's participants decided not to issue any collective anti-Vietnam statement. Weiss, Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Reinhard Lettau, however, participated in a Vietnam discussion with several American writers after the Group's meetings were over.

²⁶Hanspeter Krüger, "Letter from Germany," Dimension, I/1 (1968), 12; hereafter cited as Krüger, "Letter from Germany - I."

²⁷Hermann Peter Pewitt, quoted in Krüger, "Letter from Germany - I," 12.

try to advise their government about the affairs of democracy.²⁸ Peter Weiss also spoke at the symposium. Like Grass, he acknowledged the conflict between the demands of art and the writer's wish to improve the human condition. Weiss, however, advocated that writers resolve the tension by making all their work into a political challenge, that is, by writing above all with the purpose of achieving a specific effect.²⁹ Günter Grass and Peter Weiss symbolized the breadth of Group 47's spectrum of political opinion.

As 1966 drew to a close and the Grand Coalition of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats appeared to be a certainty, many Group 47 writers felt the need to express their political beliefs more clearly. Grass feared that a coalition of the CDU and the SPD would force him and like-minded Social Democrats into a corner where they would be degraded into a counterpart of the right-wing National Democratic Party.³⁰ In open letters to Willy Brandt, Grass argued that twenty years of unsuccessful Christian Democratic foreign policy would be smoothed over by the coalition. When Brandt replied by saying that the coalition offered the SPD "a new beginning," Grass then urged him to demand the

²⁸Grass, "Vom mangelnden Selbstvertrauen," Über das Selbstverständliche, 195.

²⁹Weiss, "Hiding Place," 654.

³⁰Günter Grass, "Offener Briefwechsel mit Willy Brandt" (December 2 and 9, 1966); Grass, Über das Selbstverständliche, 121.

chancellorship so that the SPD might obtain control of the government.³¹

The letters fell on deaf ears. Convinced of the need to steady the German state by lending their weight to its rule, the Social Democratic leaders, amidst a flurry of high-sounding phrases, chose to become junior partners of a Grand Coalition.

The new Chancellor, Kurt Kiesinger, represented party regularity, not social reform. His "good Nazi" past symbolized to many opponents of the coalition a culmination of twenty years of German restoration. Critical opposition, which might have forced the party machines to transform themselves into viable organs of democratic government, no longer existed. The government now seemed to exist by itself and for itself.

The Grand Coalition brought each German writer sharply up against one main issue: Whether continued commitment to any one of the established parties would have a positive effect, or whether through such alignment the writer "merely delivers to the ruling powers an alibi for allegedly enduring democratic conditions."³²

³¹Ibid., 122.

³²"... der Schriftsteller den Herrschenden nicht lediglich ein Alibi für angeblich bestehende demokratische Verhältnisse liefert." Lettau, Gruppe 47, 449.

The Coalition leaders clearly did not need to appease minor interests in order to maintain their control of government. Kiesinger, in fact, moved early to strengthen the electoral laws so as to insure the existence only of the SPD and the CDU. The highly controversial emergency laws, which the philosopher Karl Jaspers declared "would protect our rulers not our people," seemed likely to pass.³³ SPD opposition to the laws had ebbed since it had become a partner in ruling.³⁴

In June 1967, the coalition government faced its first major crisis when, during a student demonstration in Berlin against the Shah of Persia, the police charged into the crowd, firing guns which killed one student and wounded forty-seven others.³⁵

Popular suspicion of and hostility toward the Coalition that had increased especially among students since the first of the year exploded into open protest in universities throughout Germany. Students' wrath centered upon the Springer publishing company, a nation-wide newspaper monopoly whose

³³Jaspers, Future of Germany, 44.

³⁴In May 1968, the Emergency Laws were passed. In the event of any external or internal threat, the government has the right to use the armed forces for civilian purposes, the right to open mail and tap telephones, the right to curtail states' rights. Although the Social Democrats continued to have "strong reservations," they were able to reach a compromise with the Christian Democrats "behind closed doors." New York Times, May 17, 1968.

³⁵Krüger, "Letter from Germany - I," 14.

owner, Axel Springer, had campaigned vigorously in his publications against student activism. Several writers, mostly from Berlin, issued a declaration laying the blame for the tragedy on Springer, the Berlin Chief of Police, and the Acting Mayor. "Whoever must rule with the clubs and pistols of police, with prohibitions of demonstrations and summary courts is not worthy to hold a public office in this city," the statement read.³⁶

During the summer of 1967, controversy over the increasingly monolithic government forced writers to articulate their differences. Most agreed that being "pro-democratic" was an inadequate response in a society whose democratic structure seemed almost as meaningless as that of the despised Stalinist People's Democracies. Social democratic writers sought new premises for opposing a government that now included the SPD. Some believed that the earnest commitment which intellectuals expressed in petitions and protests could eventually help to bring about desired changes in society.³⁷ They decided to campaign for a new "Union of the Democratic Left," whose program, including recognition of East Germany and discontinuation of West Germany's support for the Vietnam

³⁶"Wer mit Knüppeln und Pistolen der Polizei, mit Demonstrationsverbot und Schnellgerichten regieren muss, ist nicht fähig für ein öffentliches Amt in dieser Stadt." "Erklärung zum Tod des Studenten Benno Ohnesorg," upi (June 4, 1967), reprinted in Lettau, Gruppe 47, 463-464.

³⁷Martin Walser, quoted in Krüger, "Letter from Germany - I," 9.

War, might attract the left wing of the SPD.³⁸

There were, however, some writers who did not try to oppose the Grand Coalition through political parties. Heinrich Böll joined an increasing number of writers in support of a "non-parliamentary opposition" which was centered in the universities. As Böll explained, "In a country in which there is no longer a left, only left wings of three dominantly national liberal parties, it is senseless, a waste of time, to engage in party politics."³⁹

Germany's political developments led Böll to take a more explicit political stand than he had earlier. He no longer seemed satisfied to remain "on the restless edge of contemporary society, where security becomes brittle and self-assurance impossible."⁴⁰ Böll believed in a Christian socialist world, a world in which nationalism and imperialism play no part and people no longer fear religion and art.⁴¹

³⁸Ibid., 9; New York Times, November 23, 1967.

³⁹"In einem Land, in dem es keine Linke mehr gibt, nur noch linke Flügel von drei überwiegend nationalliberalen Parteien, ist es sinnlos, Zeitverschwendung, sich parteipolitisch zu engagieren." Böll, "Interview von Marcel Reich-Ranicki," AKR, 502.

⁴⁰"Am unruhigen Rand der Zeitgenossenschaft, wo Sicherheit bröcklig wird, und Selbstsicherheit unmöglich." Heinrich Böll, Büchner Prize speech (1967), quoted in Brigitte Mann, "From Trümmerliteratur to Establishment: The Way of Heinrich Böll (unpublished senior honors thesis, University of Houston, February 1968), 58.

⁴¹Böll, "Interview von Marcel Reich-Ranicki," AKR, 504.

But he had not extended his beliefs to his life as a political man. Böll began to wonder whether his social criticism was adequate in a world filled with war and oppression. "The society I live in makes it too easy for me to be brave," he wrote in 1967 to fellow writers in Czechoslovakia.⁴²

When Böll received the Georg Büchner prize in the fall of 1967, he used the occasion of acceptance for embittered criticism of the German trend toward autocracy. The deaths of the student Ohnesorg (during the Berlin demonstration) and the soldier Corsten (who was shot to death by guards when, under arrest, he tried to escape) were, said Böll, "monstrous cases of public murder by the force of the state."⁴³ The electoral process, he asserted, was simply a facade maintained by the autocratic Grand Coalition. To Böll, the students were justified in their rebellious street demonstrations. Unlike loyal supporters of the electoral process, they understood that the "little X of illiteracy" allowed them on election days would no longer suffice to bring about democracy.⁴⁴

The iconoclasm with which Böll had spiced his books for twenty years seemed to lead him in 1967 to oppose the structure of the state itself. To be sure, Böll was no orthodox

⁴²Heinrich Böll, "It's the 'Spirit' - East and West," Atlas, XIV (November, 1967), 58.

⁴³Böll, Büchner Prize Speech, quoted in Krüger, "Letter from Germany - I," 10.

⁴⁴Krüger, "Letter from Germany - I," 10.

Marxist, nor had he yet united his art with a political message to gain a particular political effect, as Peter Weiss advocated. Yet in his speeches and essays, Böll indicated that he sensed the inadequacy of criticism alone to safeguard free expression and to influence the direction of society.

To Günter Grass, Böll was simply going "in the wrong direction."⁴⁵ Though he himself acknowledged that parliamentary democracy was threatened with enslavement to a few special interests, Grass asserted that powerlessness could be changed to genuine strength if the opposition forces concentrated their skepticism, criticism, and active political dissatisfaction against the government's violations of the constitution rather than the constitution itself. The citizens of Germany would vote again in 1969. Only through the SPD could they be persuaded to vote in enough numbers to effect necessary changes. He did not believe in revolution as long as legal ways were free to re-establish parliamentary democracy by evolutionary methods.⁴⁶

Grass directed his words particularly to Germans whose protests against the Vietnam war made them "forget the re-establishment of democracy in their own land."⁴⁷ To oppose

⁴⁵Horst Krüger, "42 Ehrenwerte Zeugen," Der Spiegel, XXII (July 29, 1968), 88.

⁴⁶Günter Grass, "Zwischenbilanz" (1967), Über das Selbstverständliche, 226.

⁴⁷Krüger, "Letter from Germany - I," 11.

such anti-democratic developments as the emergency laws and the Springer monopoly was appropriate and healthy, Grass thought. Non-parliamentary opposition, however, might lead to intolerance or terrorism. Grass mocked those who proclaimed the death of the Federal Republic, who called for a new commitment to revolution and to the third world. ". . . this frivolous treatment of a recently won democratic freedom is traditional in Germany."⁴⁸ He concluded that only when German writers become influential in a parliamentary democracy which is not a slave to special interests will Germany have the strength to help the third world without bringing it into new dependence.⁴⁹

Because of his increased concern over the future course of Germany, Grass began to join his roles as writer and citizen more frequently. In his new volume of poems he described, for example, those who try to respond to problems of far away lands.

We read Napalm and imagine Napalm
 Since we cannot imagine Napalm
 we read about Napalm until we can
 imagine more about Napalm.
 Now we protest against Napalm

.
 We chew our nails and write protests
 But there are, we read,
 worse things than Napalm
 Quickly, we protest against worse things.

⁴⁸Günter Grass, quoted in Krüger, "Letter from Germany - I, 11.

⁴⁹Grass, "Zwischen bilanz," Über das Selbstverständliche, 218.

But finely-meshed and deliberate power takes effect outside.⁵⁰

Grass might well have had Peter Weiss in mind when he called on Germans to devote themselves to the development of better democratic and social relationships in their own land.

Weiss, however, felt estranged from West Germany which to him seemed "the most reactionary of all countries."⁵¹ Because he had never formed a close attachment for any nation, Weiss felt like a world citizen who identified as naturally with the third world as he did with Germany or Sweden. His play, Song of the Lusitanian Bogey (1966), for example, is about the evils of Portuguese imperialism in Angola. More recently, he wrote a similar anti-imperialist play about

⁵⁰"Wir lesen Napalm und stellen Napalm uns vor. / Da wir uns Napalm nicht vorstellen können, / lesen wir über Napalm, bis wir uns mehr / unter Napalm vorstellen können. / Jetzt protestieren wir gegen Napalm. . . . Wir kauen Nägel und schreiben Proteste. / Aber es gibt, so lesen wir, / Schlimmeres als Napalm. / Schnell protestieren wir gegen Schlimmeres. . . . Aber feinmaschig und gelassen / wirkt sich draussen die Macht aus." Günter Grass, "In Ohnmacht gefallen," Neues Forum, XIV (April-May 1967), 387.

⁵¹Despite his distaste for West Germany, Weiss confessed that he often went there from Stockholm "to keep in touch with the real world." Peter Weiss, quoted in Clausen, "Weiss/Propagandist," 126.

Vietnam.⁵² Most German critics were most unsympathetic to Weiss's radical documentary drama, in part because of its unremittingly polemical tone that made it uncomfortable for the audience. Weiss was not perturbed by such criticism. On the contrary, it was the sort of effect he tried to achieve. He wrote, "My work can make sense only if it is in direct relation to the world's positive forces. These are the socialist forces, whether they have already achieved power or are fighting for it in wars of national liberation."⁵³

If Peter Weiss is strongly committed to international socialist revolution, Günter Grass remains equally as loyal to the German Social Democratic Party, while Heinrich Böll wavers somewhere in the middle, as yet unsure about the efficacy of political activism. The political differences among these three writers illustrate the variety of opinions

⁵²Weiss participated in the Stockholm War Crimes Tribunal which immersed him in the Vietnam war. He read deeply in the sources about Vietnam, while his research assistant gathered materials for "Vietnam Discourse," a new play which was premiered in Frankfurt in March 1968, with the "Weiss-like" title, "Diskurs über die Vorgeschichte und den Verlauf des lang dauernden Befreiungskrieges in Viet Nam als Beispiel für die Notwendigkeit des bewaffneten Kampfes der Unterdrückten gegen ihre Unterdrücker sowie über die Versuche der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika die Grundlagen der Revolution zu vernichten." In English, the title reads, Discourse on the Antecedents and the Course of the Long-continuing War of Liberation in Vietnam as an Example for the Necessity of Armed Struggle of the Oppressed against their Oppressors, as well as on the Attempts of the United States of America to Demolish the Foundations of Revolution.

⁵³Peter Weiss, in Clausen, "Weiss/Propagandist," 128.

among members of Group 47.

Such developments as the Grand Coalition, the student unrest and the Vietnam war created strong tensions in recent Group 47 meetings, leading some participants to wonder if such events will not spell the end of their "fool's paradise for opposition writers."⁵⁴ At the Fall 1967 group meeting, many participants signed a resolution condemning Axel Springer's power as damaging to freedom of opinion and to parliamentary democracy.⁵⁵ This spirit of unity vanished, however, when a group of student socialists (SDS) demonstrated (belatedly) for an anti-Springer resolution during a group meeting. Some writers wanted to call the police, others wanted to ignore the disruption. When at last the students were invited inside for coffee, a few of the angered writers left the gathering.⁵⁶

When the meeting was over, one critic pessimistically concluded:

Their productions, hardly desired by the public, applauded by a small, educated elite stratum, remain totally without consequence politically, are endured for the sake of democratic appearances by the political cartel, and are integrated into the stale glamour of common agreement.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Enzensberger, "Writers and Politics," 858.

⁵⁵Der Spiegel, XXI (October 16, 1967), 182.

⁵⁶Ibid., 182.

⁵⁷Hanspeter Krüger, "Letter from Germany," Dimension, I/2 (1968), 191.

In contrast, Group 47 prize-winner Martin Walser, who had refused to accept the Princeton University invitation the year before, said, "It became more interesting. There are now sort of different wings in the group. I'm coming back again."⁵⁸

Group 47 writers have asked themselves whether a "diffuse, semi-conformist literary opposition" is adequate to the task of opposing the centralized structure of the German state.⁵⁹ They have begun to search for new approaches to the dichotomy between the requirements of art and those of social commitment, since criticism and political pronouncements do not seem to be sufficient responses to their world. In this search they act from a political and social consciousness which has emerged among German writers since Group 47 first met in 1947.

⁵⁸"Es ist interessanter geworden. Es gibt jetzt so etwas wie verschiedene Flügel in der Gruppe. Jetzt komme ich wieder." Martin Walser, in Der Spiegel, XXI (October 16, 1967), 182.

⁵⁹Enzensberger, "Writers and Politics," 858.

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