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Human Rights Activism in Occupied and Early West Germany: The Case of the German League for Human Rights*

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Human rights are formulated as universal, abstract principles. Those who wish to wield those principles, however, must fill them with specific content while preserving the power of that universalism. The history of putting human rights ideas into practice is therefore not universal at all, but rather a set of specific, contextual stories. This article analyzes how some Germans—returned émigrés as well as those who remained in Nazi Germany—used the language of human rights in the years immediately after the defeat of Nazism. While Nazi Germany usually appears in human rights histories as a spur to the creation of postwar human rights regimes, the story of how Nazi Germany's heirs themselves participated in that process is just beginning to be told.¹

How human rights principles are mobilized is a controversial matter, and indeed in the years after 1945 controversy and intrigue enveloped the German League for Human Rights (Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte, now known as the International League for Human Rights, Internationale Liga für Menschenrechte). Unlike other human rights organizations in West Germany's early years, which focused on domestic issues and were often inspired and funded by the U.S. Military Government (1945–49) or the civilian High

* I wish to thank the Center for Humanities Research and Department of History at Texas A&M University, the Humanities Research Center and Department of History at Rice University, the German Academic Exchange Service, and the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, for research funding. I thank the Leo Baeck Institute New York City, and Deutsches Exilarchiv, Frankfurt am Main, for permission to quote from their holdings. My thanks to Daniel Cohen, Carl Caldwell, and the *Journal of Modern History* readers. I could not have pieced together the complicated story of Alfred Götze without the generous assistance given to me by his son Gerd Goetze, for which I am very grateful.

¹ See, e.g., Silke Voss, *Parlamentarische Menschenrechtspolitik: Die Behandlung internationaler Menschenrechtsfragen im Deutschen Bundestag unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Unterausschusses für Menschenrechte und humanitäre Hilfe (1972–1998)* (Düsseldorf, 2000), and Jürgen Wüst, *Menschenrechtsarbeit im Zwielicht: Zwischen Staatssicherheit und Antifaschismus* (Bonn, 1999). An international “regime” is a set of principles and procedures accepted by states for a given issue (such as human rights). See Jack Donnelly, *International Human Rights*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO, 2007), 79.

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Commissioner for Germany (1949–55), the League had a long tradition inside Germany. It had been founded already in 1914 and had pursued an ambitious program not only of safeguarding civil liberties but also of international activism. In the interwar era, it was known above all as an organization committed to opposing the Nazi threat to Weimar democracy. After 1945 it attempted to establish continuity with its pre-1933 principles and also to adapt those principles to a new domestic and international situation. As it did so, however, it was vulnerable to political co-optation from the Right, which posed the problem of how to disentangle human rights claims from a self-exculpatory German nationalism, and from the Left, which threatened its readiness to criticize East German violations of human rights. It also faced efforts at co-optation from the anticommunist Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD), which drew the League into its cold war struggles in Berlin, and from Americans in or close to the occupation authorities who sought to detach it from its traditional pacifism. Its story demonstrates the difficulties of grafting the universalistic language of human rights onto the political struggles of postfascist West German society amid wartime destruction and cold war division. By the early 1960s, the League overcame those difficulties by making German responsibility for the Nazi past and its implications for politics in the present into the centerpiece of its human rights advocacy. While the League had always been known for its anti-Nazism, its recommitment to this now historical issue must be seen in the context of the struggles between 1945 and the 1960s, especially of its members who were Jewish and non-Jewish former émigrés.

After the Second World War, the Western Allies and leading West German politicians and intellectuals promoted “rights talk” as they sought to democratize West German society. They described Nazi acts as violations of human rights, for example, and encouraged West Germans to think of political issues in terms of rights.² Yet the universal, abstract quality of rights did not lend itself well to addressing responsibility, a central issue in a postfascist society like West Germany. The League confronted problems for which no abstract norm could provide guidance: what role was the past to play in current human rights advocacy? How was it to define victim and perpetrator? Who could be a human rights advocate, and for whom could a German one speak? For oneself, or only for others? All human rights organizations must place limits on the possible answers to these questions in order to establish sufficient

² Hermann-Josef Rupieper, *Die Wurzeln der westdeutschen Nachkriegsdemokratie: Der amerikanische Beitrag, 1945–1952* (Opladen, 1993), 69–70 and 286–333. On ex-Nazis’ rights talk, see, e.g., Eugen Kogon, “Der Kampf um Gerechtigkeit,” *Frankfurter Hefte* 2, no. 4 (April 1947): 373–83, and also the remarks on law and rights by Ernst von Salomon (to be precise, a conservative revolutionary, not an ex-Nazi) in his *Fragebogen* [The Questionnaire], trans. Constantine FitzGibbon (New York, 1955), 3.

stability for their work. As the League wrestled with defining suffering, negotiating between old-timers and newcomers, and giving both the past and the present their due, it also faced fraud and espionage, the side effects of running a highly politicized organization in unsettled times.

The League's newfound stability coincided with important political and social shifts around 1960 in West Germany, during what turned out to be the last years of Konrad Adenauer's chancellorship. Adenauer's long tenure provoked discussion of the state of West German democracy and the threat of "Portugalization"—that is, renewed dictatorship. With the banning of the German Communist Party (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD) in 1956 and the SPD's shift to the right, a new political space opened up to the left of the SPD that was not defined by political parties. Into this space stepped the movement against atomic weapons along with new human rights-related organizations of lasting importance, such as the West German section of Amnesty International (established in 1961 shortly after the organization was founded in Britain earlier that year) and the Humanist Union (Humanistische Union, also founded in 1961). Neither of these organizations took on the full range of domestic and international human rights issues at that time: Amnesty forbade members to investigate cases in their own countries, and the Humanist Union was at that time a purely domestic civil liberties organization, ignoring even East Germany. The history of those organizations illustrates what a new political climate offered by 1960. However, it is the history of the League, with its embrace of both domestic and international issues, that reveals the arduous conditions of human rights activism in the Federal Republic between 1945 and 1960. The later, more successful organizations may well have learned from the League's difficulties as they developed their own styles of human rights advocacy in the Federal Republic.

THE GERMAN LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS BEFORE 1945

The League has a long and distinguished history. Like the American Civil Liberties Union, it originated in pacifist circles during the First World War, when the state restricted dissent against the war so sharply that pacifism became a major civil liberties issue.³ It began as the New Fatherland League (Bund Neues Vaterland), founded in November 1914 to promote a peace without annexations and to reveal the truth about the German political leadership's role in starting the First World War.⁴ The organization linked do-

³ See chap. 3, on Crystal Eastman and the ACLU, in John Fabian Witt, *Patriots and Cosmopolitans: Hidden Histories of American Law* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), 157–208.

⁴ Erwin Gülzow, "Bund Neues Vaterland," in *Lexikon zur Parteiengeschichte: Die bürgerlichen und kleinbürgerlichen Parteien und Verbände in Deutschland (1789–1945)* (Leipzig, 1968), 1:179–83. The League before 1933 has been well researched.

mestic political reform to international peace. After the war, the New Fatherland League worked closely with the French League for the Rights of Man (Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, LDH), a Dreyfusard organization founded in 1898.⁵ In 1922 the New Fatherland League adopted the French League's name, becoming the German League for Human Rights, to reflect their common goal of German-French reconciliation. Politically, the League was close to the German Peace Society (Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft), founded in 1892, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit), founded in the Netherlands in 1915.⁶

During the Weimar Republic, the League sought to strengthen Germany's first democracy at home while pursuing international reconciliation abroad. It took the unpopular position in Germany that the conditions of the Versailles Treaty ought to be fulfilled and that good relations with France and Poland were paramount. In the domestic arena, it published exposés of rearmament in violation of the Versailles Treaty, the Weimar judiciary's "political justice" favoring the Right, far-Right "Feme" and later Nazi Party political murders, and excessive use of emergency powers in the late Weimar Republic. The League took a consistently strong stand against antisemitism in Germany. It also spoke out on behalf of persecuted radicals such as imprisoned revolutionaries in Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria and Sacco and Vanzetti in the United States. It provided legal aid to thousands of German defendants who suffered from a politicized judiciary or Nazi violence. The League's political affiliations were formally nonpartisan but distinctively Left. It was closely allied with the SPD and sometimes cooperated with the KPD. As the Nazi threat grew, some League members advocated a popular front against Nazism.

See Richard A. Cohen, "The German League for Human Rights in the Weimar Republic" (PhD diss., SUNY Buffalo, 1989); Werner Fritsch, "Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte (DLfM), 1922–1933," in *Lexikon zur Parteiengeschichte: Die bürgerlichen und kleinbürgerlichen Parteien und Verbände in Deutschland (1789–1945)* (Cologne, 1983), 1:749–59; Arthur D. Brenner, *Emil J. Gumbel: Weimar German Pacifist and Professor* (Boston, 2001); Lothar Mertens, *Unermüdlicher Kämpfer für Frieden und Menschenrechte: Leben und Wirken von Kurt R. Grossmann* (Berlin, 1997); and Istvan Deak, *Weimar Germany's Left-Wing Intellectuals: A Political History of the Weltbühne and Its Circle* (Berkeley, 1968).

⁵ On the LDH, see William D. Irvine, *Between Justice and Politics: The Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, 1898–1945* (Stanford, CA, 2007), and references cited there.

⁶ On the German Peace Society, see Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and a World without War: The Peace Movement and German Society, 1892–1914* (Princeton, NJ, 1975), and Stefan Appellius, *Pazifismus in Westdeutschland: Die Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft, 1945–1968* (Aachen, 1991). On WILPF, see Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ, 1997).

Some of the most famous radical and pacifist intellectuals of the era were League members, including Albert Einstein, the sexual rights leader Helene Stöcker, diarist Harry Graf von Kessler, journalist and civil servant Hellmut von Gerlach, the president of the German Peace Society Ludwig Quidde, journalist Carl von Ossietzky (editor of the *Weltbühne*), and satirist Kurt Tucholsky. The League was always small (in 1932 it had only about two thousand members), but that suited it well, as members did not wish it to be a mass organization.⁷ On the contrary, they wanted to make sure that all members were personally convinced of the importance of the group's goals and able to articulate them independently.

The League elicited the hatred of the nationalist Right and the Nazi party, both for its politics and for the prominence of Jews in its ranks. Within weeks of the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933, many League members fled or were arrested. Robert M. W. Kempner, head of the League's legal aid office and later a U.S. prosecutor at two of the Nuremberg war crimes trials, destroyed the League's files before fleeing in order to prevent the Nazis from finding information on their opponents. Soon afterward, the Nazis raided and closed the League office.⁸ Carl von Ossietzky, who had been a member of the League's board, continued to publish criticism of the Nazi regime and was arrested in 1933. He received the 1936 Nobel Peace Prize but was never freed, and he died in 1938.⁹

Shattered by political persecution and emigration, the German League for Human Rights ceased to exist except in name. One general secretary of its Weimar years, Kurt R. Grossmann (1897–1972), fled to Prague, on to France, and then to New York City. The other Weimar-era general secretary, Otto Lehmann-Russbuehdt (1873–1964), went to London. From there, Lehmann-Russbuehdt used the name “League in Exile” to refer to a tiny, loosely organized group of émigrés. In October 1944, he and a few others met in London to discuss refounding the League.¹⁰ Unlike other exiles who insisted on the existence of an “other Germany” (*anderes Deutschland*) that had survived the Nazi era morally unscathed and would restore an unbroken tradition of German civilization as soon as the Nazis were defeated, Lehmann-Russbuehdt argued that Nazism revealed deep flaws in German political and

⁷ Fritsch, “Deutsche Liga,” 749.

⁸ Robert M. W. Kempner, with Jörg Friedrich, *Ankläger einer Epoche: Lebenserinnerungen* (Frankfurt, 1983), 72, 90.

⁹ Elke Suhr, *Carl von Ossietzky: Eine Biographie* (Cologne, 1988).

¹⁰ Charmian Brinson, “‘Im politischen Niemandsland der Heimatlosen, Staatenlosen, Konfessionslosen, Portemonnaieelosen . . .’: Otto Lehmann-Russbuehdt in British Exile,” in J. Wallace, ed., *German-Speaking Exiles in Great Britain: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 1 (1999): 134–35.

cultural traditions.¹¹ Even as he and his circle committed themselves to advising and supporting a League to be refounded by Germans inside Germany, they were not very optimistic about its chances. At the same time, émigrés such as Grossmann and Lehmann-Russbueldt were not necessarily popular in Germany even after Nazism was defeated. Given these unpromising circumstances, how might Germans inside Germany build a post-Nazi human rights organization?

THE FRANKFURT AND WUPPERTAL LEAGUES AND THE PROBLEM OF “GERMAN HUMAN RIGHTS”

In May 1945, few German organizations could look back on an early, clear, and principled anti-Nazi position like the League's. Yet moral authority did not translate easily into organizational strength. The League's prestigious name made it attractive to those seeking private gain. After all, human rights organizations are conduits for money. As one longtime League member noted, unscrupulous persons founded nonprofit organizations in the economic hard times of the early postwar years for selfish or shady goals: “either they register their apartment as the organization's office, so as not to have to offer living quarters to the local housing office, or they allocate to themselves, as the ‘executive,’ a monthly income from the organization's funds, etc.”¹²

A more profound difficulty was how to match the political purpose of the League to the social and political conditions of defeated Germany. The prewar League had helped especially those who, as a result of their own political beliefs, were oppressed by agents of the state—much as the later Amnesty International has helped individual “prisoners of conscience.”¹³ Persons of strong democratic principles who are also outspoken in the face of danger tend to be few in number. The Weimar-era League was accustomed to helping a relatively small number of dissenters and victims of specific instances of unfair trials, and to acting as a watchdog regarding the state's abuse of power. After 1945, however, much had changed, and in a morally complex way. The Allies were the new powers in occupied Germany. They had accomplished the

¹¹ Jörg Später, “Die Kritik des ‘anderen Deutschland’: Otto Lehmann-Russbueldt, Karl Retzlaw, und Hans Jaeger im Londoner Exil,” in *Fluchtlinien des Exils*, ed. Jour Fixe Initiative Berlin (Münster, 2003), 89–112.

¹² Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main, Nachlass Veit Valentin (hereafter IfS NLV) S 1/1 309, Kudrnofsky to Lehmann-Russbueldt, December 25, 1947. Examples of early impostor human rights organizations that drew upon the League legacy are in: IfS Kulturamt 753, Bl. 8 and IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Kudrnofsky to Elias, February 17, 1948, and S 1/1 309, Freie Deutsche Liga—Kassel flier, October 16, 1947.

¹³ Ann Marie Clark, *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton, NJ, 2001), 5.

task of defeating Nazism, at which the German resistance, including the League, had failed. The League might have taken up again the basic task of acting as a watchdog organization regarding the state's abuse of power by exposing abuses of power by the Allied occupation forces. Yet that would ally the League with its erstwhile oppressors: the many Nazis and Nazi sympathizers who were now busy pointing out the Allies' shortcomings. Opposing state power held by the occupation forces could not be the centerpiece of the League's program.

Meanwhile, millions of Germans were experiencing very real suffering connected with defeat (the results of wartime aerial bombardment; expulsions from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere; postwar hunger), and they were formulating their suffering in terms of violated rights—but their predicament did not fit the League's model. Either such Germans had been sympathetic to Nazism and so their political beliefs were unworthy of defense, or they were politically inarticulate and so did not fit the "prisoner of conscience" model. Soon, another large group of German sufferers joined those whose homes had been bombed, those who fled warfare, and those who were expelled at the war's end: Germans leaving the Soviet Zone of Occupation and later the German Democratic Republic for the West. Again, these persons were sometimes politically articulate, but usually they were not.¹⁴ How was the League to maintain its continuity of purpose yet also to find a responsive audience after 1945, when it was surrounded by huge numbers of the "wrong" kind of victims?

Several local groups calling themselves the "German League for Human Rights" or some similar name and seeking contact with leaders of the Weimar-era League sprang up in the British and U.S. zones of occupation between 1945 and 1947.¹⁵ There was no central oversight for these Leagues; indeed, any political self-organization required Allied permission and was only gradually permitted to grow beyond the local level. Soon, some local League groups claimed the exclusive right to use the League's name and threatened to sue other groups who persisted in sharing that name. The Weimar-era members considered themselves the arbiters of which of these League groups

¹⁴ Helge Heidemeyer, *Flucht und Zuwanderung aus der SBZ/DDR, 1945/1949–1961: Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis zum Bau der Berliner Mauer* (Düsseldorf, 1994), 57.

¹⁵ There were attempts to found local leagues in the French and Soviet zones, but they failed. See, e.g., Deutsches Exilarchiv, Nachlass Karl Retzlau (hereafter DEA NLR), Lehmann-Russbueldt to Retzlau, June 30, 1947 (French zone), and IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Kudrnofsky to Scherr, February 3, 1948; Andreas Hilger, "Der Spion, der sich liebte: Wolfram von Hanstein," in *Sowjetische Militärtribunale*, vol. 2, *Die Verurteilung deutscher Zivilisten, 1945–1955*, ed. Andreas Hilger, Mike Schmeitzner, and Ute Schmidt (Cologne, 2003), 401 (Soviet zone).

were genuine—but they did not completely agree among themselves and in any case were scattered and had difficulty monitoring developments.

Two local groups indicate how differently the refounded League could develop: the Frankfurt League, led by a Weimar-era member, and the Wuppertal League, in the hands of newcomers. The Frankfurt League was constituted in June 1947 and run by Josef Kudrnofsky (1886–1950). Kudrnofsky had a typical League member's profile: a businessman, he had been a longtime member of the SPD, the German Peace Society, and the League. (In 1932 he left the SPD, criticizing it for having moved to the right.) He remained in Germany during the Nazi years. Briefly imprisoned in 1933 and interrogated by the Gestapo periodically thereafter, he managed to continue aiding pacifists. After 1945, he again joined the SPD and also helped refound the German Peace Society.¹⁶ Kudrnofsky formally shared leadership with a prominent Weimar-era pacifist and League member, Count Emil von Wedel, but von Wedel was too preoccupied with his civil service post as the Hessian representative at the Council of Southwest German *Länder* to offer much more than the prestige of his name.¹⁷

The Frankfurt League's 1947 program hewed closely to the Weimar-era League's pacifist and noncommunist Left commitments.¹⁸ "International reconciliation" and the "abolition of armed conflict" were prominent. References to Franklin D. Roosevelt's "four freedoms" and the United Nations Charter signaled the League's strong support for the United Nations.¹⁹ The League sought the "eradication" of "nationalistic and militaristic writings." The Frankfurt League held that capitalism promoted militarism, and therefore it advocated the "abolition of all rule by violence or class" and "a fair and

¹⁶ Appelius, *Pazifismus*, 720.

¹⁷ On von Wedel (1886–1970), see *ibid.*, 760–61.

¹⁸ See the Weimar-era League program in Otto Lehmann-Russbuehdt, *Der Kampf der deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte, vormals Bund Neues Vaterland, für den Weltfrieden, 1914–1927* (Berlin, 1927), 92–93, 129–31.

¹⁹ At the time of these statutes, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights had not yet appeared, but when it was presented in 1948 it became a major point of reference for the League. The early leagues saw the International League for the Rights of Man (ILRM) in New York City as their link to the United Nations. See Swarthmore Peace Collection, Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte (hereafter SPC DLM), Bielefeld League, Rundschreiben Nr. 7 (March 1947), 1. The ILRM had formed in 1942 as an exile organization of the Paris-based International Federation for the Rights of Man (Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme, FIDH), which had itself been founded in 1922 as an outgrowth of the LDH and then had to fold in 1940 when Nazi Germany invaded France. After the Second World War, the FIDH did not recognize the legitimacy of the New York group, and the two were apparently rivals for years. The Weimar-era League members active after 1945, whether émigrés or not, preferred affiliation with the ILRM, while several of the newcomers mentioned in this article preferred the FIDH. Both organizations still exist today.

humane economic order.” The Fabian Society, with its academic studies and experts, was its model. Kudrnofsky and his colleagues were no orthodox Marxists. Not class struggle, but rather persuasion—“campaigning for human rights and social justice by seeking to influence the press, parties and governments”—was their chosen means of social change. Their non-Marxist Left politics also appeared in the last point of their program, to promote “cultivation of the personality through the promotion of all intellectual [*geistigen*] and moral developmental possibilities of the individual person while emphasizing the common interest.”²⁰

In practical terms, the Frankfurt League set the goals of producing pamphlets, scholarly investigations, and expert opinions; holding discussion evenings, public lectures, and rallies; providing legal aid; and maintaining ties with similar organizations around the world. Only in 1947 did the U.S. Military Government permit the Frankfurt League to hold public events at all; by mid-1948, it had held forty-eight public assemblies.²¹ Its membership rules banned former Nazis and former members of Nazi organizations unless three League members vouched for them and they underwent a one-year probation.²² The Frankfurt League shared the above commitments with other local League groups that were led by Weimar-era members, such as the Bielefeld League led by Friedrich Welter and the Hamburg League led by Rudolf Herrmann, both of which were founded by 1947.²³

The Wuppertal League took a different approach to human rights advocacy in postwar Germany. Led by outsiders to the Weimar-era League, the Wuppertal League clashed with the Frankfurt, Bielefeld, and Hamburg Leagues over how to define victims, perpetrators, and the League’s audience. The Wuppertal League formed earlier than the others: already in 1945, one Heinrich Dietz gained Allied permission to form an organization, and he held the Wuppertal League’s constitutive meeting in February 1946. Dietz had had contact with the League during the Weimar Republic as a recipient of its legal aid services but apparently had not been a member.²⁴ It is unclear what he did during the Nazi years; he claimed to have kept the League alive inside Germany single-handedly, but neither Weimar-era members who stayed in

²⁰ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, “Programm,” June 14, 1947.

²¹ Kurt Grossmann Collection, AR 25032, Leo Baeck Institute, New York (hereafter LBI KGC), Kudrnofsky to Grossmann, July 18, 1948.

²² IfS NLV S 1/1 307, “Satzung,” June 14, 1947.

²³ On Welter, see IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Grossmann to Dietz, July 16, 1947, and Welter to Grossmann, March 17, 1947. On the Bielefeld statutes, see SPC DLM, Bielefeld League, Rundschreiben Nr. 7 (March 1947), 1–2. On Herrmann, see IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Herrmann to Dietz, March 8, 1948.

²⁴ Kurt R. Grossmann, “Die Brücke über den Abgrund,” in *Ich lebe nicht in der Bundesrepublik*, ed. Hermann Kesten (Munich, 1964), 63.

Germany nor those who emigrated had had any contact with him.²⁵ However, Dietz's Wuppertal League did include some prominent Weimar-era members, such as the pacifist journalist and priest Otto Maria Saenger and the journalist Jakob Stöcker.²⁶ Dietz even invited Kurt Grossmann, the Weimar-era League's general secretary who was living in New York, to serve as its first chairman. Grossmann responded in a letter that he also published as a statement on the predicament of German-Jewish émigrés. In it, he explained that as a Jew and as a new and loyal U.S. citizen, he would not return to live in Germany.²⁷ However, Grossmann did want to help the League in postwar Germany, and his correspondence shows that he invested considerable time in it. Grossmann and other Weimar-era League members took Dietz seriously as the new postwar leader of the League and genuinely appreciated Dietz's initiative.²⁸

From the beginning, however, there were signs that Dietz was not interested in preserving continuity with the Weimar-era League. First, he disregarded the League's traditionally democratic self-governance: he refused to consult his advisory board (which included Weimar-era League members) before embarking on campaigns, and he kept the Wuppertal League's finances secret.²⁹ Second, he sought a mass membership, a strategy with several ramifications that ran counter to League traditions. While the Weimar-era League had ensured political reliability by requiring any new member to be endorsed by two old ones, Dietz dispensed with that procedure even for former Nazis.³⁰ And while the old League had relied on individual members' willingness to dissent from majority views, the Wuppertal League offered charitable and fee-based services to members: help in locating apartments and jobs and in finding addresses of German prisoners of war, initiating a pen-pal program intended to persuade youth abroad to send food and clothing to Germany. Dietz even planned to open a for-profit business under the League's name aimed at ethnic German expellee customers, to sell tools to aid them in

²⁵ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Dietz to Saenger, March 10, 1948, and Grossmann to Dietz, March 6, 1948.

²⁶ IfS NLV S 1/1 310, Saenger to Grossmann, October 17, 1947. After 1945, Stöcker published books on democratic values aimed at a popular audience, including an impassioned defense of the Nuremberg trials: Jakob Stöcker, *Vor dem Tribunal des Weltgerichts: Streiflichter zum Nürnberger Prozess* (Hanover, 1946).

²⁷ Grossmann, "Die Brücke," 63–68; see also Mertens, *Unermüdlicher Kämpfer*, 87.

²⁸ IfS NLV S 1/1 304, Grossmann to ILRM, October 1, 1946, and S 1/1 307, Herrmann to Dietz, March 1948.

²⁹ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Herrmann to Oelze, December 16, 1947.

³⁰ On members' pasts: IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Dietz to Grossmann, July 16, 1947, and S 1/1 309, Kudrnofsky to Grossmann, December 3, 1947. On rejecting mass membership: IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Grossmann, newsletter (May 1948). On vouching for new members: S 1/1 307, Grossmann to Dietz, March 6, 1948.

resettlement.³¹ None of these projects implied any willingness on the part of members to dissent or indeed to articulate any political vision. Yet another ramification of Dietz's mass-membership strategy was that the quest for more members might drive his League's program. Two issues that were important and popular but fit poorly with traditional League priorities of international reconciliation were the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere, and the retention of German prisoners of war in Allied custody (especially in the Soviet Union). The Hanover League, under the influence of Wuppertal, drew large crowds with events such as a lecture on defeated Germany's status under international law. The speaker, Hamburg University international law professor Rudolf Laun, used that issue as the framework for his criticisms of the expulsions of ethnic Germans and the detention of German POWs.³² Indeed, international law had recognized the prolonged detention of prisoners of war as a human rights violation since 1907, and expulsions of civilian populations were coming to be seen as such during 1945 and are considered clear violations of international law today.³³ The prolonged detention of German POWs and the expulsion of ethnic Germans certainly constituted legitimate human rights issues and were much discussed in occupied and West Germany.³⁴ However, they were also the favorite issues of unreconstructed Nazis and nationalists, who invoked them to obscure the origins of the war, relativize Nazi cruelty, and shift blame to the Allies for the horrors of war. Older League members did not deny the

³¹ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Herrmann to Dietz, January 20, 1948; Kudrnofsky to Dietz, January 30, 1948; and Wuppertal League, "Öffentlicher Rechenschaftsbericht," November 1947; S 1/1 309, Dietz to Baldwin, August 14, 1947; and S 1/1 310, Welter to Lehmann-Russbuehlt, August 30, 1947, and Herrmann to Oelze, December 16, 1947.

³² SPC DLM, "Forderung auf Freigabe unserer Kriegsgefangenen," n.d. [February 8, 1948], and "Betr: Völkerrechtsfragen," May 1, 1948. Rudolf Laun was an important public and international lawyer in the Weimar Republic, Nazi era, and early Federal Republic who awaits adequate scholarly attention.

³³ On repatriation of POWs "as quickly as possible" or "as soon as possible after the conclusion of peace" (Art. 20 of the 1907 Hague Convention and Art. 29 of the 1929 Geneva Convention, respectively) and the application of this principle after World War II, see Geoffrey Best, *War and Law since 1945* (Oxford, 1994), 140–42. In summer 1945, forced population transfers were approved at the Potsdam Conference yet almost simultaneously defined as a "crime against humanity" in Art. 6 (c) of the Nuremberg Charter. The range of international law responses to the issue of the German expellees is clearly presented in Timothy William Waters, "Remembering Sudetenland: On the Legal Construction of Ethnic Cleansing," *Virginia Journal of International Law* 47, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 63–145.

³⁴ See Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945–1990* (Oxford, 2003); Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 2006); and Robert G. Moeller, "Germans as Victims? Thoughts on a Post-Cold War History of World War II's Legacies," *History and Memory* 17, nos. 1/2 (2005): 147–94.

importance of these issues, but they believed that the issues lent themselves all too easily to the expression of German nationalism and self-pity.³⁵ They insisted that such issues be discussed together with the fates of non-German POWs and refugees in order to express the League's internationalism rather than a concern with the interests of Germans only and demanded that these issues be put in the context of a wider condemnation of war.³⁶ Without such a context, Grossmann and others argued, the League was in danger of becoming an organization focused only on "German human rights."³⁷ Older League members also believed that suggesting to expellees that their return home was possible at all was mere demagoguery.³⁸

The Wuppertal League clashed with the other leagues most fundamentally over the question of defining victims. While Dietz saw Germans primarily as victims, the Weimar-era members saw Germans primarily as oppressors—including those Germans who had clearly suffered. Dietz invoked human rights as a source of entitlements for Germans, not as an ethical obligation, and he eagerly sought an international audience for his views. For example, Dietz complained to a British pacifist: "Outsiders are making a great many unfair accusations against the German people. Please note that these injustices which are being inflicted on our people today have led me to speak out on behalf of my countrymen, just as we in the League have spoken out on behalf of human rights wherever they are most cruelly violated, no matter by whom."³⁹ The universality of human rights, according to Dietz, compelled his attention to Germans (he did not specify the "unfair accusations" mentioned above). His colleague Karl Kny, a Sudeten German who oversaw expellee affairs in the Wuppertal League, likewise sought an international audience for an article in which he complained that Germans were being victimized and implied that there would be dire consequences if the borders settled at the Potsdam Conference were not redrawn in favor of the German expellees: "It is absolutely necessary to make a return possible for the expellees whose fields now lie fallow and call for their industrious hands. . . . There is no other way unless one wants to perpetuate present conditions, which would mean nothing

³⁵ SPC DLM, Bielefeld League, Rundschreiben Nr. 11a (November 1947); IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Herrmann to Oelze, December 16, 1947. Werner Oelze, in Hanover, who headed up a Lower Saxony group close to Dietz's Wuppertal League, took up the POW and expellee issues in 1947 and 1948.

³⁶ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Herrmann to Dietz, January 20, 1948. Kudrnofsky considered the League's involvement in expellee issues unnecessary because major organizations had already formed on the expellees' behalf. IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Kudrnofsky to Oehlschläger, January 30, 1948.

³⁷ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Grossmann to Welter, May 4, 1947.

³⁸ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Kudrnofsky to Oehlschläger, January 10, 1948.

³⁹ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Dietz to Bailey, National Peace Council, London, June 16, 1947.

less than a new catastrophe.”⁴⁰ The idea that Germans’ industriousness entitled them to Eastern European lands was a stock notion of German nationalism in the Nazi years and earlier. Kny’s invocation of “a new catastrophe” was both threatening and vague: did he mean that the expellees would again suffer on the scale of the original expulsions, in which 12 million had been displaced and half a million died?⁴¹ Or that the expellees would start a new war?⁴² Kny asked Grossmann to help place the article in the U.S. press, apparently oblivious to the fact that such statements made Grossmann and other Weimar-era members cringe.

The Weimar-era League members’ point of departure was that most Germans did not value democracy, did not know the full extent of Nazi crimes, and did not want to know. For these older members, German aggression in the Second World War had to be part of any discussion of postwar affairs. As the Bielefeld League put it: “Each one of us [in the League] must know that we are to work, within the scope of our organization, toward restitution, namely the restitution of damages done especially to the racially and politically persecuted. Collective responsibility need not be declared or accepted, but it must be uncontroversial among League supporters that all Germans have taken on a debt [*Schuld*] so great, that the sufferings of the years after 1945, undeniable as they are, really cannot be called a ‘reckoning,’ in order to be, as it were, even.”⁴³ (The post-1945 sufferings alluded to here were, for example, economic hardship, food shortages inside Germany, industrial dismantling by the Allies, and expulsions of ethnic Germans.)

These League members sought to make the League a means of confronting fellow Germans with the facts of the Nazi past and educating them to be democrats conscious of the human rights tradition. The Bielefeld League, for example, held discussion evenings on “the idea of human rights since Voltaire” and restitution to Nazism’s victims; circulated issues of critical and democratic periodicals such as the *Frankfurter Hefte*; and recommended to members Eugen Kogon’s *Der SS-Staat*, the earliest major publication on the

⁴⁰ IfS NLV S 1/1 309, Kny to Grossmann, December 10, 1947 (enclosure).

⁴¹ The most common statistics on the expulsions estimate 12 million displaced into East and West Germany and 2 million dead as a result of the expulsions. See, e.g., Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, 2002), 330. More recently, the mortality figures for civilian ethnic Germans have been revised downward, to half a million. See Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 21, and Rüdiger Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1999), 298–99.

⁴² A critical analysis of aggression in the expellee movement’s rhetoric is in Ralph Giordano, “Apropos ‘Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen’: Überfälliges Nachwort zu einem verkannten Dokument,” in *Die zweite Schuld, oder Von der Last Deutscher zu sein* (Hamburg, 1987), 281–309, esp. 294–95.

⁴³ SPC DLM, Bielefeld League, Rundschreiben Nr. 11a (November 1947), 1.

Nazi camp system.⁴⁴ The various Nuremberg Trials, which ran from 1945 until 1949, fit these members' views regarding the importance of documenting atrocity and assigning blame to specific individuals. Only those Germans who had resisted Nazism or who had educated themselves about the nature of Nazism ought to be spokespeople for human rights, they thought; otherwise the language of human rights inside Germany risked being discredited. A Bielefeld League newsletter expressed this idea when it stated: "the struggle for justice and human rights is completely justified in the case of Germany as well, but—and this is always decisive—it depends on *who* feels called upon to be a protector of human rights."⁴⁵

The older League members also presupposed a different audience for the League than did Dietz. While Dietz appealed to Germans who felt misunderstood by an unfriendly world, the older League members, with their experiences of exclusion and emigration, wished to use the refounded League as a "bridge to abroad"⁴⁶ to prove to the world that Germans had repented of their ways and had changed. On this view, the postwar League could be "in a certain sense a guarantee for our German people's democratic convictions and democratic constructive will."⁴⁷ Acutely aware of how German complaints were received abroad, older League members urged that the League not focus on controversial causes that would alienate its human rights counterparts abroad.⁴⁸ The German League "must fit itself harmoniously into the great circle of the other Leagues of the whole world," choosing the same goals, if it was to lay claim to defending human, as opposed to German, rights.⁴⁹ As Grossmann declared, "organizations like . . . the League for Human Rights . . . should try to find sufficient numbers of Germans, and especially

⁴⁴ SPC DLM, Bielefeld League, Rundschreiben Nr. 6 (February 1947), 1; Rundschreiben Nr. 7 (March 1947), 2; Rundschreiben Nr. 8 (March 1947), 1. The *Frankfurter Hefte* was a Left-Catholic political and cultural journal cofounded by Eugen Kogon that sought to fuse Christian and socialist ideas and to promote European unification and disarmament. Kogon (1903–87) was an active anti-Nazi and a survivor of Buchenwald, and later a political science professor. His book, *Der SS-Staat: Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager* (Munich, 1946), was based on his Buchenwald experience.

⁴⁵ SPC DLM, Bielefeld League, Rundschreiben Nr. 11a (November 1947), 2. This quote is from the unnamed old League member, probably Grossmann, who was drawing in turn on an unnamed article in the *Frankfurter Hefte*, probably Kogon, "Der Kampf um Gerechtigkeit."

⁴⁶ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Anlage 1. This document was signed by several Weimar-era members, including Lehmann-Russbuehlt, von Wedel, and Kudrnofsky.

⁴⁷ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Anlage 1. See also S 1/1 310, Stierwaldt to Grossmann, November 6, 1946, and S 1/1 309, Grossmann to Kupsch, February 22, 1947.

⁴⁸ For example, IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Herrmann to Oelze, December 16, 1947; SPC DLM, Bielefeld League, Rundschreiben Nr. 7 (March 1947), 1.

⁴⁹ IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Anlage 1.

influential ones, who are prepared to show the occupation powers through deeds, not words, that German circles are willing and committed to making good-faith sacrifices in order to prove their goodwill regarding peace in Europe.”⁵⁰ The older League members, and especially the émigrés, had in mind an audience for the League that extended beyond Germany or was even located primarily outside of Germany.

Both Dietz’s and the Weimar-era members’ approaches had their limitations. One of Grossmann’s most trusted League colleagues from Weimar days, Katharina Kupsch, pointed this out to him in 1947. She rejected Dietz’s approach of foregrounding Germans’ suffering. If the League wanted to do that, she commented sarcastically, “we could, for the sake of convenience, ask for the Nazi party’s membership list, publish a little appeal, and we’d have it made.” But she also rejected the idea of a League refounded for the sake of “moral and material restitution for the human rights violated by Germany.” That was “too retrospective.” “I believe that it is not pedagogically sound—not only in the case of children—to first count up all the instances of wickedness in order to show that one must behave better.”⁵¹ For Kupsch, one could not embark on human rights activism on Germans’ behalf only, but one could not do so against them either. She pointed out to Grossmann that many Germans, including politically sympathetic ones, were truly suffering in these postwar years and could not accept the idea that Germans were always and only victimizers.⁵²

Moreover, the two approaches were incompatible. Nonetheless, Grossmann in New York, Lehmann-Russbueldt in London, Kudrnofsky in Frankfurt, and the leaders of allied League groups Friedrich Welter in Bielefeld and Rudolf Herrmann in Hamburg all persisted for a surprisingly long time in seeking an accommodation with Dietz over the direction of the League. Dietz’s rude

⁵⁰ IfS NLV S 1/1 308, “Über die Selbstkenntnis.”

⁵¹ LBI KGC, Kupsch to Grossmann, April 25, 1947.

⁵² The experience of another postwar West German organization, the Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation (Gesellschaften für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit), conceptualized and funded by the U.S. occupation authority, suggests that Grossmann’s approach would have been ineffective. Historian Josef Foscith has shown how the societies were harmed in their early development by the desire to prove that Germans had overcome antisemitism and to improve Germany’s international reputation. The problem here was that insisting that antisemitism belonged to the past in fact served to shut down discussion of its nature and presence in postwar Germany, and even inside the organization itself. The societies in their early years devoted far more attention to, for instance, U.S. racism against black people than to antisemitism in Germany (very little) or the Holocaust (none). Josef Foscith, *Im Schatten der Vergangenheit: Die Anfänge der Gesellschaften für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit* (Göttingen, 1993), esp. 70, 91, 93–99, 184–85, 203. See also Frank Stern, *Im Anfang war Auschwitz: Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus im deutschen Nachkrieg* (Geringen, 1991), 280–98.

responses and threats of lawsuits finally caused a break.⁵³ Kudrnofsky and others wanted to sue Dietz for misuse of the League's name, but Welter pointed out the depressing truth: Dietz had the stronger case on formal grounds, because he had full permission as "the" League in the British zone, while Kudrnofsky's Frankfurt League was at that time still awaiting U.S. permission for its zone.⁵⁴ The Frankfurt League waited for almost a year after its founding in June 1947 to be granted a license by the U.S. Military Government in Hesse; the records of that entity indicate that this delay may have been due in part to denunciations from a far-right group close to Otto Strasser but also to cumbersome bureaucracy.⁵⁵ By the time it was licensed in April 1948, the imminent currency reform drained its resources. It never did sue Dietz, but it spread word informally that Dietz's group "is not our League."⁵⁶ At the same time that the conflict with Dietz was coming to a head, the older League members in the western zones of occupation faced another challenge, this time in Berlin. No longer primarily a struggle between old-timers and newcomers, this conflict pitted Weimar-era members against each other and even put the League's Weimar past on trial. At issue was how the League would respond to individual members' communist and neutralist opinions and the deepening cold war.

THE COLD WAR INSIDE THE BERLIN LEAGUE

In late 1945 in Berlin, a newcomer to the League named Theodor Kiendl gathered Weimar-era League members as well as other newcomers and applied for Allied permission to form a new organization. They called their group the International League for Human Rights.⁵⁷ They were joined a few

⁵³ See IfS NLV S 1/1 309, Dietz to Grossmann, November 29, 1946; S 1/1 307, Frankfurt League, "Resolution," n.d. [1947]; "Programm" and "Satzung" of the "Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte," June 14, 1947; Dietz to Herrmann, March 3, 1948; Herrmann to Dietz, March 8, 1948; Kudrnofsky to Grossmann, March 24, 1948; and Herrmann to Kudrnofsky, n.d. [March 1948].

⁵⁴ IfS NLV S 1/1 310, Welter to Lehmann-Russbueldt, December 31, 1947, and S 1/1 307, Ernst to Kudrnofsky, February 10, 1948.

⁵⁵ National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter NARA) RG 260, Office of Military Government, Hesse, Civil Administration Division, General Records, 1945–49, box 952 (hereafter RG 260 Hesse box 952), "Investigation Report," July 19, 1949, and OMGUS Hesse to Kudrnofsky, September 25, 1947.

⁵⁶ DEA NLR, Lehmann-Russbueldt to Retzlaw, May 3, 1950. However, as late as 1954, Dietz was still listed as the head of the Wuppertal chapter: *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 7 (October 1954): 10.

⁵⁷ NARA RG 260, Berlin Sector, Civil Administration and Political Affairs Branch, Allied Kommandatura's Records, 1945–49, box 77 (hereafter NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77), notarized record of a League meeting on November 23, 1945, and Kiendl

months later by a small League group of mostly Nazi-era racial and political persecutees who had gathered around the Weimar-era member Walter Persicaner. At first unaware of Kiendl's group, Persicaner gladly joined it, believing that Kiendl was closer to gaining a license.⁵⁸ As it happened, almost four years passed before a Berlin League was licensed, during which bitter struggles over communism took place inside the nascent Berlin League and the League itself was transformed into an instrument of the West Berlin SPD. These developments set the problematic course of the Berlin League through the 1950s.

It is not possible to reconstruct what Kiendl, a writer by profession, had done before 1945 or how he came upon the notion of founding a postwar league. Like Dietz and Kny, he claimed to have been a League member before 1933, but Grossmann and others had never heard of him.⁵⁹ Unlike them, he was no nationalist. His statements on the subject of human rights were sometimes naive or silly, but they generally conformed to the League's traditional goals.⁶⁰ Kiendl frequently expressed his opposition to communism in his letters to U.S. authorities in Berlin. But he seemed naive about the Soviets when he spoke airily of his plans to distribute a provocative flier on human rights inside the Soviet Zone. In spite of his open opposition to the Soviets, he insisted on applying for permission from all four occupying powers in Berlin.⁶¹ One of the U.S. Military Government officials who waded through Kiendl's extensive communications called him a "romantic or worse."⁶²

From the beginning Kiendl's League included vocal anticommunists as well as communists and neutralists. For example, the novelist Erik Reger belonged to the League board. Reger, a Weimar-era League member, was a

to Allied Kommandatura, Berlin, November 23, 1945. On "International" in name, see in same box: Kiendl to Allied Kommandatura, March 20, 1947.

⁵⁸ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Persicaner to U.S. Commandant, Berlin, February 8, 1946, and Persicaner to U.S. Civil Administration Branch, Berlin, May 8, 1946.

⁵⁹ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Internationale Liga für Menschenrechte to Allied Kommandatura Berlin, August 10, 1947; LBI KGC, Grossmann to Oehlschläger, July 7, 1947.

⁶⁰ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl to Biel, August 10, 1947, and Kiendl to U.N. Division of Human Rights, August 5, 1947.

⁶¹ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl to Biel, August 7, 1947. The flier is also there: "Liga-Erklärung: Wesen und Bedeutung der Menschenrechte." Kiendl applied for four-power permission in November 1945, June and September 1946, and March 1947.

⁶² NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Mathews to Butterwick, March 16, 1949. Lehmann-Russbueldt's daughter Ingeborg distrusted Kiendl's "personality and work." IFS NLV S 1/1 309, Lehmann to Kudrnofsky, December 23, 1947.

licensee of the newspaper *Tagesspiegel* and was unusually early and outspoken in his opposition to cooperation with the Soviets.⁶³ Yet Wilhelm Külz was also on the board. Külz had not belonged to the League before 1945. He had been a Minister of the Interior in the Weimar Republic and soon after 1945 rose to the top of the Soviet-approved Liberal Democratic Party of Germany (Liberaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, LDPD). He also participated in the People's Congress movement led by the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei, SED), the communist party that the Soviets had forcibly created in their zone out of the KPD and SPD—exactly the kind of cooperation Reger abhorred. Kiendl's group also included Weimar-era League members who were now SED members, like Paul Oestreich and Walter Persicaner, or who did not belong to the SED but advocated working with the Soviets, like Ernst Oehlschläger. Oehlschläger, who was also active in rebuilding the German Peace Society in Berlin, was one of a faction of Weimar-era members inside Kiendl's League that argued that true neutrality for the League required not only western but also Soviet permission. Founding the League in the western sectors only, they insisted, would make it a mere tool in the confrontation between East and West.⁶⁴ Kiendl, as we have seen, agreed with this course of action. But when the League's application finally reached the highest level of four-power rule in Berlin in February 1948, the Soviet representative refused to grant a license to the League, citing a technicality, even though the American, British, and French representatives approved of the organization.⁶⁵ The next month, in March 1948, the Soviet representative left the Allied Control Council altogether, never to return.

Now Kiendl of necessity gave up his quest for four-power permission and

⁶³ On Reger (1893–1954) in these years, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *In a Cold Crater: Cultural and Intellectual Life in Berlin, 1945–1948*, trans. Kelly Barry (Berkeley, 1998), 158–65. Reger withdrew by 1947 because Kiendl's League seemed too amenable to the Soviets. NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl to Biel, July 30, 1947. A similarly vocal anticommunist on Kiendl's early board was the art historian Edwin Redslob (1884–1973), another licensee of *Tagesspiegel* and cofounder of the Free University of Berlin, which was created in opposition to Soviet interference at the historic University of Berlin.

⁶⁴ On Ernst Oehlschläger (1897–1970), see Appellius, *Pazifismus*, 735. Oehlschläger channeled DFG members into the League. NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl et al. to Schützinger, August 24, 1948. See also IfS NLV S 1/1 304, Griesse to Grossmann, October 29, 1947; S 1/1 307, Kraschutzki to Lehmann-Russbuehlt, January 4, 1948; S 1/1 309, Persicaner to Welter, November 21, 1947; S 1/1 310, Oehlschläger to Grossmann, December 6, 1947, and January 5, 1948. On education reformer Paul Oestreich (1878–1959), who was an SED member, see Wolfgang Ellerbrock, *Paul Oestreich: Porträt eines politischen Pädagogen* (Weinheim, 1992), 99, 327. On Heinz Kraschutzki (1891–1982), see Appellius, *Pazifismus*, 193, 719.

⁶⁵ NARA RG 260, Records of Executive Office, Subject Files re: Berlin Sector 1945–49, box 562, memo of Allied Kommandatura meeting, February 13, 1948.

sought only a license from the western Allies.⁶⁶ Although stressing his own anticommunism, he defended the presence of communists on his board on the grounds that they were authentic members of the old League and in fact exerted little influence. The League was, he insisted, overwhelmingly SPD.⁶⁷ But in the tense atmosphere of Berlin in 1948—the time of the Berlin Blockade and airlift—the League appeared to the U.S. Military Government to be at least potentially a Communist organization.⁶⁸ (The British and French authorities continued to be willing to license the League.) The League came under immense pressure to purge its neutralists and declare itself unambiguously anticommunist.

The U.S. Military Government turned to the Berlin SPD, making it the arbiter of the League's political status.⁶⁹ Although the SPD party chairman, Franz Neumann, called the League a "camouflaged Communist organization," he apparently also indicated that, as a U.S. official summarized, "the SPD is not disinclined to support the League if a larger part of its sponsors were SPD members."⁷⁰ The SPD began to pack the League with people from Neumann's own circle, and apparently offered the League assistance with its license application and with funding.⁷¹

The transformation of the Berlin League into an anticommunist organization was also driven by Otto Lehmann-Russbueldt in London. Like Grossmann and Kudrnofsky, Lehmann-Russbueldt was irritated by the Berlin members who were "half or full-blood communists."⁷² To their old colleague Oehlschläger, Lehmann-Russbueldt and his allies in Germany argued that the

⁶⁶ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl to Clay, March 22, 1948.

⁶⁷ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl to Biel and Kellen, July 13, 1947.

⁶⁸ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Mathews to Butterwick, March 16, 1949 (on Oestreich, Oehlschläger, and another member, the author Bernhard Kellermann, being too far to the left).

⁶⁹ On connections between the League and Berlin SPD, see IfS NLV S 1/1 309, Kudrnofsky to Lehmann-Russbueldt, August 23, 1947; and NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, confidential memo of SPD meeting, July 15, 1947, and Kiendl to Allied Military Government, March 20, 1947. A related story of the instrumentalization of voluntary organizations in the interparty struggles of Berlin politics appears in Elke Reuter and Detlef Hansel, *Das kurze Leben der VVN von 1947 bis 1953: Die Geschichte der Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone und in der DDR* (Berlin, 1997), 183–88.

⁷⁰ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Henschel to Butterwick, March 17, 1949.

⁷¹ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, confidential memo of SPD meeting, July 16, 1947. The contact person at that meeting, Frau Heitmann, was Neumann's press secretary; Hellmut Lehmann, Ernst Siegfried, and Alfred Götze (of whom more below) were also close to Neumann. See in same box: Kiendl to Biel and Kellen, July 13, 1947.

⁷² NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77 (Lehmann-Russbueldt's protest regarding its authenticity); LBI KGC, Ernst to Grossmann, October 21, 1948 (quotation by Lehmann-Russbueldt's assistant, Alois Ernst).

Soviets would never permit the League in its genuine form because of the latter's entirely different notion of human rights and that Kiendl's International League was in fact a tool of the SED that was preventing a genuine League from coming to fruition.⁷³ As in the case of Kudrnofsky's confrontation with Dietz, in this confrontation Lehmann-Russbueldt had no legal priority over Kiendl and could not sue him for misuse of the League's name. The Weimar-era League had been legally dissolved under the Nazis, and until Lehmann-Russbueldt could reverse that dissolution by presenting the coercive conditions under which it had taken place, neither he nor Kudrnofsky nor any other Weimar-era member had legal priority over anyone else who might use the League name. Unlike Kudrnofsky in his confrontation with Dietz, Lehmann-Russbueldt faced an opponent who had a loyal following of authentic Weimar-era members. They could not be ousted on the grounds of being impostors. In May 1948, the Berlin court did reverse the Nazi-era deletion of the League's legal registration.⁷⁴ Now Lehmann-Russbueldt's allies in Berlin made their move, using anticommunism as the litmus test in a takeover from within. They publicly accused Kiendl of being responsible for the League's failure to obtain a license since 1945 and demanded that SED members Paul Oestreich and Walter Persicaner leave the League.⁷⁵ Certainly Lehmann-Russbueldt shared with the Berlin SPD a strong anticommunism: he wished to go to Germany himself to guide the "reconstruction of the League as a defence organisation on Western democratic lines against totalitarian movements" that had "special tasks for its vanguard in Berlin."⁷⁶ It is possible that he also benefited materially from its closer relationship with the Berlin SPD, which seems to have assured the new League's finances. Both he and his daughter Ingeborg, who lived in Berlin, subsisted in poverty and hoped for sinecures through the League.⁷⁷ After the League was remade as an anticommunist organization, it employed Ingeborg Lehmann as its secretary and invited Lehmann-Russbueldt to serve as honorary president. Lehmann-Russbueldt's

⁷³ IfS NLV S 1/1 309, Kudrnofsky to Lehmann-Russbueldt, December 25, 1947. See also IfS NLV S 1/1 307, Ernst to Grossmann, February 13, 1948, and DEA NLR, Senzig to von Wedel and Retzlaw, February 3, 1953.

⁷⁴ Mertens, *Unermüdlicher Kämpfer*, 89–90.

⁷⁵ Lehmann-Russbueldt's allies in Berlin included Hermann Schützinger and Erwin Berger. NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl et al. to Schützinger, August 1, 1948, and Kiendl to Biel, October 1, 1948; LBI KGC, Berger to Grossmann, April 7, 1949, and June 14, 1949.

⁷⁶ LBI KGC, Lehmann-Russbueldt and Ernst, "Concerning: German League for the Rights of Man," n.d. [ca. October 1948]. See also DEA NLR, Lehmann-Russbueldt to Retzlaw, November 2, 1953.

⁷⁷ LBI KGC, Oehlschläger to Grossmann, July 23, 1948, and Kupsch to Grossmann, April 25, 1947, and LBI KGC, Lehmann-Russbueldt and Ernst, "Concerning: German League for the Rights of Man," n.d. [ca. October 1948].

move to West Berlin in 1951 was made possible by a pension that Ernst Reuter arranged for him.⁷⁸

The Berlin League was finally granted a license by the three Western powers in Berlin in May 1949.⁷⁹ Struggles over its political direction continued right up to its constitutive meeting in November 1949. Oestreich and Alfred Kantorowicz (the writer and literary critic) tried to pull the League back to a more neutral, less anticommunist position, but failed. At the constitutive meeting, there was “stormy discussion of a resolution against the concentration camps, forced labor, and kidnapping of the Eastern Zone system.”⁸⁰ When this resolution passed with a strong majority, the communist members left, and the ensuing vote produced a new board that shifted the League leadership to the right of even the May licensee list. Six of the ten board members were in the SPD. These included the noted Berlin politicians Jeanette Wolff, a survivor of Stutthof, and Willy Kressmann, an émigré and now mayor of Kreuzberg. Oehlschläger was the only one of the old Kiendl group to remain on the board.⁸¹ As the League’s new chairman, SPD member Jochen Klaus Schaefer, noted, “any attempt to exert Communist influence on the League’s work was . . . completely eliminated.”⁸² The group, which adopted Lehmann-Russbueldt’s preferred name, German League for Human Rights, now gained the support of some of the most influential figures in Berlin, including Ernst Reuter, the hugely popular SPD politician who was mayor of West Berlin between 1948 and 1953.⁸³

There was one opinion that the communists and anticommunists in Berlin

⁷⁸ Brinson, “‘Im politischen Niemandsland,’” 136–37.

⁷⁹ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl et al. to Schützinger, August 24, 1948; Taylor to Reuter, May 4, 1949.

⁸⁰ Jochen Klaus Schaefer, “Zum 15. November,” *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 8 (November 1954): 8.

⁸¹ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Deutsche Liga to HICOG in Berlin, January 28, 1950. See also DEA NLR, Lehmann-Russbueldt to Retzlau, May 3, 1950. The most recent biography of Jeanette Wolff is: Birgit Seemann, *Jeanette Wolff: Politikerin und engagierte Demokratin (1888–1976)* (Frankfurt, 2000). Kressmann (1901–86), an émigré in the Nazi years due to his political activity, had returned to Berlin in 1947 and served as an immensely popular mayor of Berlin’s Kreuzberg district between 1949 and 1962. Known for his advocacy of a de-escalation of tensions between East and West and his irreverence, he was a Social Democrat but hardly in the strict anticommunist mold of Franz Neumann. In fact, the SPD rebuked him and deprived him of his mayoral post in 1962 for his statements blaming the West as well as the East for the Berlin Wall and condemning force whether used by East or West. Kressmann joined the German League board in 1949, but he was inactive, presumably due to his mayoral duties. See the Berlin SPD’s biographical sketch at <http://www.berlin.spd.de>, “Geschichte,” “Personen.”

⁸² Schaefer, “Zum 15. November.”

⁸³ Reuter had belonged to the First World War–era New Fatherland League, and he joined this League in 1950. DEA NLR, Lehmann-Russbueldt to Retzlau, May 3, 1950.

shared: that Berlin, not Frankfurt, was the rightful headquarters for all the leagues in Germany.⁸⁴ As the cold war intensified in 1947 and 1948, Berliners were anxious not to be abandoned by western Germany. Yet from the perspective of those in western Germany, it seemed foolhardy to assume that Berlin would remain outside the Soviet zone of occupation. This pitted the Berlin League members against their counterparts in western Germany. For example, Kudrnofsky's Frankfurt League opposed the communist-leaning Berliners for their politics, but it also saw the anticommunist Berliners as troubling rivals. As it happened, Berlin prevailed: the Berlin League gained new backing just as the Frankfurt League missed the chance to gain its own powerful ally.

It was really a second cold war story that sealed the fate of the Frankfurt League: the value of the League's past was dismissed in a demoralizing encounter with an American civil liberties leader. In fall 1948, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Roger Nash Baldwin, visited Germany at the invitation of Lucius Clay, the Military Governor of the U.S. Zone of Occupation. Baldwin was interested in tracking the civil liberties record of the United States as an occupying power. He recommended that the U.S. Military Government help found a civil liberties organization to promote Germans' sense of the importance of checking state power over the individual. Knowing of the German League of Human Rights from Grossmann and other émigrés in New York, he contacted Kudrnofsky.⁸⁵ Kudrnofsky immediately appreciated that Baldwin's support was a lifeline for the Frankfurt League. It had finally obtained a U.S. license in April 1948, but the currency reform in June 1948 rendered it unable to raise funds and it survived on volunteer labor, mostly Kudrnofsky's. With Baldwin's support, Kudrnofsky could hire personnel and bring Lehmann-Russbueldt to Frankfurt.⁸⁶

Kudrnofsky had an uphill struggle to convince Baldwin that the Frankfurt League could be the basis for Baldwin's planned civil liberties organization. Baldwin made clear that the Frankfurt League had to distance itself from communism. Unlike the Berlin League, however, the Frankfurt League apparently had no communist members. This was really an argument about the League's Weimar past. Baldwin repeatedly asked Kudrnofsky about communist influence on the League and did not accept the latter's assurances that the League "has never, since its foundation, been, or sympathized with a

⁸⁴ IFS NLV S 1/1 310, Persicaner to Welter, November 21, 1947; Oehlschläger to Grossmann, January 5, 1948; Grossmann to Oehlschläger, January 31, 1948; DEA NLR I.A.082, Lehmann-Russbueldt, "Erklärung," April 5, 1951.

⁸⁵ Baldwin knew several Weimar-era League members who lived as émigrés in New York because he belonged to their International League for the Rights of Man (ILRM).

⁸⁶ LBI KGC, Kudrnofsky to Lehmann-Russbueldt, October 8, 1948; Kudrnofsky to Welter, October 8, 1948; and Kudrnofsky to Baldwin, October 11, 1948.

Communist organization.”⁸⁷ Baldwin conceded that proximity to communists was inevitable in the years of fighting Nazism, but he could not get over the stumbling block of the League’s reputation for “fellow-traveling.”⁸⁸ Baldwin also listened to other Germans who warned him away from the League: both conservatives, who predictably called it too Left, too Jewish, and too intellectual, and those who were closer to the League politically but who told Baldwin that it could never exert the broad influence that a civil liberties organization modeled on the ACLU would need.⁸⁹ Baldwin ultimately decided to set the whole complicated question aside: “A fresh start had to be made.”⁹⁰ For Kudrnofsky and the other Weimar-era League members, of course, the League’s very history and politics were what made its name so valuable after 1945.

Kudrnofsky and Baldwin also differed in their strategic approach to human rights advocacy in Germany. Baldwin wanted to draw in as many Germans as possible. He was less interested in confronting them with difficult truths than in persuading them of the respectability of defending individuals’ rights against the state. To ensure such respectability, he objected to the League’s “political” program; its pacifism in particular was not “opportune.”⁹¹ Baldwin wanted his planned organization to focus purely on domestic civil liberties in order to appear as nonpartisan as possible. He also used the typical U.S.

⁸⁷ LBI KGC, Kudrnofsky to Baldwin, October 11, 1948. See also Kudrnofsky to Lehmann-Russbueldt, October 8, 1948. Lehmann-Russbueldt conceded communist infiltration in the context of past antifascist struggle, but he made clear that he saw communism as the League’s new opponent. Lehmann-Russbueldt and Ernst, “Concerning: German League for the Rights of Man.”

⁸⁸ Princeton University Library, Roger Baldwin papers (hereafter PUL RBP), “Reminiscences,” 565.

⁸⁹ These included the irascible Erik Reger, Annedore Leber (both in Berlin), and Toni Sender in New York. See Rupieper, *Die Wurzeln*, 304–8, and LBI KGC, Kudrnofsky to Lehmann-Russbueldt, October 31, 1948. Yet the Frankfurt League does not seem to have been in such bad shape as Baldwin’s interviewees suggested. See NARA RG 260 Hesse box 952, “Investigation Report,” July 19, 1949 (noting thirty members); “Bürgerliste,” January 28, 1948 (listing 102 persons vouching for the League); and handwritten internal note on results of poll, n.d. (in which a majority of public figures voted for Baldwin adopting the League as his new civil rights organization); and see LBI KGC, Baldwin to Kudrnofsky, October 27, 1948 (enclosure) and Kudrnofsky to von Wedel, November 18, 1948; and IfS NLV S 1/1 310, von Wedel to Kempner, May 30, 1949.

⁹⁰ PUL RBP, “Reminiscences,” 565. On Baldwin’s own ambivalence about communists’ civil liberties in the United States and inside the ACLU, see Robert C. Cottrell, *Roger Nash Baldwin and the American Civil Liberties Union* (New York, 2000), 310–42. Baldwin’s objections to the League are summarized in LBI KGC, Baldwin to Kudrnofsky, October 27, 1948, enclosure “Memorandum on German Activities for the Protection of Citizens’ Rights,” October 27, 1948.

⁹¹ LBI KGC, Grossmann to Kudrnofsky, January 6, 1949.

Military Government strategy of turning to local notables—in this case University of Frankfurt academics, Frankfurt-area lawyers, and the German-American Clubs—to spearhead a project. The idea here was that local notables' reputations would attract their conservative and apolitical neighbors.⁹² The clubs, a creation of the U.S. Military Government that was intended to ease the nonfraternization policy, were certainly no hotbed of critical opposition, and Kudrnofsky indignantly called the University of Frankfurt faculty "reactionary elements."⁹³ Kudrnofsky rejected the strategy of appealing to local notables or the apolitical public, believing that it would dilute the membership's commitment to League principles. Baldwin even encouraged Germans to lodge complaints about the U.S. occupation, as a way for them to hone their awareness of the individual's rights against the state.⁹⁴ Kudrnofsky rejected the idea of attracting new League members by inciting criticism of the occupation, which he associated with the behavior of former Nazis. From London, Lehmann-Russbuehlt ridiculed Baldwin's idea, writing: "I am tempted to write a satire on the outcome of this experiment."⁹⁵

The negotiations between Baldwin and Kudrnofsky dragged on until mid-1949, in part because Baldwin wished to make use of Kudrnofsky's connections and in part because Kudrnofsky hoped to still save something for the Frankfurt League. Baldwin failed to appreciate the depth of the conflict between Frankfurt League members like Kudrnofsky and Emil von Wedel, on the one hand, and the Frankfurt notables whom Baldwin was also cultivating for his organization, on the other. The two sides clashed in a humiliating meeting at which the League was dismissed as a relic from "bygone times" and "tending sharply to the Left."⁹⁶ It became apparent to Kudrnofsky and von

⁹² This was the strategy that the Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation and also Baldwin's later favorite, the League for Civil Liberties, used. Rupieper, *Die Wurzeln*, 316–17. A broader discussion of this strategy is in Rebecca Boehling, *A Question of Priorities: Democratic Reform and Economic Recovery in Postwar Germany; Frankfurt, Munich, and Stuttgart under U.S. Occupation, 1945–1949* (Providence, RI, 1996), esp. 63–71 and 116–55.

⁹³ LBI KGC, Kudrnofsky to Welter, October 8, 1948. See also LBI KGC, Lehmann-Russbuehlt to Grossmann, October 14, 1948. The Frankfurt faculty had rejected the permanent academic appointment of jurist Hermann Brill, an anti-Nazi, early outspoken opponent of Soviet rule in occupied Germany, and League supporter. LBI KGC, Lehmann-Russbuehlt to Grossmann, October 14, 1948. Brill's human rights-related priorities are set out in Hermann Brill, "Menschenrechte," *Das sozialistische Jahrhundert* 1 (1946): 6–8.

⁹⁴ Baldwin was especially critical of the nonfraternization policy, which in a poor analogy he called "Hans Crow." Rupieper, *Die Wurzeln*, 296–97.

⁹⁵ LBI KGC, Lehmann-Russbuehlt to Grossmann, October 14, 1948. See also LBI KGC, Gumbel to Grossmann, n.d. [ca. December 14, 1948].

⁹⁶ NARA RG 260 OMGUS, Civil Administration Division, Civil Liberties and Democratization Branch, box 201, "The Protection of Civil Rights in the American

Wedel that the League's name was to be exploited while the actual longtime League members were to be pushed to the side. Baldwin threw his support and that of the U.S. occupation (soon to change from a military to a civilian agency) behind a new, separate civil liberties organization, the League for Civil Liberties (Bund für Bürgerrechte). Perhaps Kudrnofsky's Frankfurt League would not have flourished in any case, but if Baldwin thought he had chosen a safer path, he was wrong. The new organization fell far short of Baldwin's vision for an overarching civil liberties organization that would help educate West Germans about their rights. It lasted only as long as the American money behind it, folding in 1954.⁹⁷

As we have seen, the Berlin League spent 1949 gaining its license and moving further in a pro-SPD and anticommunist direction. It was now poised to supersede the Frankfurt League as the headquarters for all League groups in West Germany. An ill Kudrnofsky spent the last months of his life engaged in a lawsuit against yet another shady group of League impostors in Frankfurt.⁹⁸ He died in 1950. Lehmann-Russbuehdt moved to Berlin in 1951 to become the honorary president of the Berlin League, having apparently decided that it was the most promising of the local groups.⁹⁹ Indeed, the Berlin League prospered financially after 1949, as its new glossy journal and extensive activities attested. It has not been possible to determine all its sources of funding, but the Berlin SPD, the city of Berlin, and (in the 1950s) U.S. funds via the High Commissioner for Germany seem the likeliest. It also received donations from the anticommunist German Trade Union Confederation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB).¹⁰⁰ The Berlin League strayed far from its old ideal of nonpartisan independence, according to which it was to reject any political party's endorsement or funding. Meanwhile, old problems—

Zone," minutes of meeting held on May 27, 1949, and IfS NLV S 1/1 310, von Wedel to Kempner, May 30, 1949.

⁹⁷ Rupieper, *Die Wurzeln*, 301–30.

⁹⁸ IfS NLV S 1/1 309, Kudrnofsky to Baldwin, July 1, 1950. They were using Kiendl's old name, "International League," and insisted that their group was the old League's true successor. Kudrnofsky won, but fraudulent use of the League name continued. See, e.g., DEA NLR I.A.082, Deutsche Liga Arbeitsbereich Hessen to Internationale Liga Frankfurt, September 3, 1951.

⁹⁹ He may have reached that decision when he learned that Baldwin would not invite him to Frankfurt (see LBI KGC, Kudrnofsky to Lehmann-Russbuehdt, October 31, 1948) or when it became apparent that no one in Frankfurt would be able to take up Kudrnofsky's work after his death.

¹⁰⁰ On the DGB, see Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte, ed., *40 Jahre Kampf um Menschenrechte, 1913–1953* (Berlin, 1953), 10. On HICOG, see NARA RG 466 HICOG, Security-Segregated General Records, 1949–52, 572, box 134, Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte to McCloy, May 15, 1950, and Baldwin to Gratton, June 9, 1950.

former Nazis in the League and the question of charity—in a new context of cold war plunged the League into its deepest crisis yet. The most pressing human rights issue from the standpoint of West Berlin in the 1950s was the repression all around it in the German Democratic Republic. Yet when the League threw itself into that work, it became entangled in the cold war intrigues of that city and was overwhelmed by powerful political and material interests. It proved unable to protect people who were both inside and outside the League.

THE LEAGUE IN 1950S BERLIN: ESPIONAGE AND CORRUPTION

Based in West Berlin, the German League for Human Rights had over a dozen chapters across the Federal Republic in the 1950s.¹⁰¹ Stressing its independence from political parties, governments, and religious affiliations, it issued statements against dictatorship, colonial exploitation, and violations of individuals' rights in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. It also emphasized the importance of educating the West German public about Nazi crimes. In 1953 it launched a new periodical, *Die Menschenrechte*, which critically discussed the Nazi past—for example, praising the Nuremberg trials and criticizing West Germany's decision to grant pensions to Condor League veterans of the Spanish Civil War.¹⁰² Such work carried forward the Weimar-era League's internationalist and democratic goals. The League also criticized the Soviet Union: conceding that the Western powers also posed a threat to peace, one article stated firmly that the lack of real democracy in the Soviet Union and East Bloc meant that a genuine peace movement could only exist in the West.¹⁰³ This was an accurate reflection of the position of older League members such as Kudrnofsky and Lehmann-Russbuedt.¹⁰⁴

However, by 1952 the West Berlin-based League exhibited some changes in political direction that disturbed older League members. In May 1952 members in West Berlin voted to support West German rearmament under the

¹⁰¹ By 1954 it had fifteen chapters. *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 7 (October 1954): 9–12.

¹⁰² See Michael Heinze-Mansfeld, "Kriegsverbrecher und Kollektivschuld," *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 9 (December 1954): 2–3, and also these items: *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 1 (January 1954): 3; no. 4 (May–June 1954): 1–2, 3, 7; and vol. 30, N.F. 3, no. 4 (October–December 1955): 27–28. This was the same title the Weimar-era League had used, and the high-volume numbers were intended to suggest continuity.

¹⁰³ K. K. [Karl Kasper], "Friedenskampf und 'Friedenskampf,'" *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 1 (January 1954): 4–5.

¹⁰⁴ DEA NLR, Lehmann-Russbuedt to Retzlaw, November 2, 1953, and Senzig to von Wedel and Retzlaw, February 3, 1953.

European Defense Community's plan for a European army.¹⁰⁵ This plan did offer an alternative to integrating West Germany into NATO (which in fact happened in 1955). It was also consistent with the League's now absolute anticommunism. (An example of that anticommunism was League chairman Schaefer's assertion that the Soviet Union had been seeking to dominate the entire world ever since the Potsdam Conference in summer of 1945.)¹⁰⁶ However, supporting rearmament violated the League's traditional strict pacifism. In 1953, the West Berlin leadership published a pamphlet celebrating the League's fortieth anniversary that publicized both that vote in favor of a European army and its abandonment of the old League statutes. Membership requirements were changed so that former Nazis could now join as long as they had the board's approval and "accepted the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948 without reservation"—hardly a strict criterion, given the general acclaim for that document at the time.¹⁰⁷ In the mid-1950s, the situations of German POWs and expellees reappeared as human rights issues in *Die Menschenrechte*.¹⁰⁸ In 1955, *Die Menschenrechte* began a regular feature that suggested that communist crimes were on a par with Nazi ones. Entitled "You Are Not Forgotten," it juxtaposed stories of victims of Nazism with stories of victims of East German Stalinism.¹⁰⁹

The most fateful change was the Berlin League's decision to establish hostels for East Germans who were fleeing the German Democratic Republic and arriving in droves in West Berlin. In 1952 the border between the two Germanies was sealed, making the island of West Berlin into East Germans' main outlet to the West. By early 1953, tens of thousands of East Germans arrived in West Berlin each month. Then a statewide uprising in East Germany broke out on June 17, 1953, leading tens of thousands more to flee into West Berlin. Over half a million arrived from East Berlin and the rest of East Germany in 1952 and 1953.¹¹⁰ West Berlin was overwhelmed. Over fifty

¹⁰⁵ *40 Jahre*, 11. See on this pamphlet DEA NLR I.A.082, Götze to Frankfurt League, December 17, 1952, and von Wedel to Retzlau, December 27, 1952. The European Defense Community was a plan that France proposed and then scuttled in 1954, after it had undergone many changes. In 1955, the Federal Republic both gained sovereignty and joined NATO. David Clay Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996).

¹⁰⁶ LBI KGC, Jochen Klaus Schaefer, "Verteidigungsbeitrag—Ja oder Nein?" December 1952.

¹⁰⁷ Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte, ed., *40 Jahre*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ For example, *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 5 (July–August 1954): 8; vol. 30, N.F. 3, no. 4 (October–December 1955): 23–25.

¹⁰⁹ See *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 30, N.F. 3, no. 1 (January–February 1955): 8–9, and issues thereafter.

¹¹⁰ Heidemeyer, *Flucht und Zuwanderung*, 338–39.

camps were set up in West Berlin for fleeing East Germans, and the League became one of many organizations seeking to help the refugees.¹¹¹ The League opened its first hostel in 1952, and by 1953 it was running four hostels.¹¹²

The hostels provoked a debate inside the League about whether charity was its proper task and whether the East Germans were indeed political victims. The Weimar-era League member Karl Retzlaw, now speaking for the Frankfurt League after Kudrnofsky's death, argued that the League was "not a welfare organization" and that fleeing East Germans, whose political views were unknown and who had in common only their material need, were unlikely to become principled defenders of causes beyond their own situations.¹¹³ In fact, the mass flight from East Germany did not fit well with the League's traditional, narrowly political definition of refugees: persons who had individually articulated their political opposition to a dictatorial regime. As historians have more recently shown, when interviewed upon arrival in West Berlin, most East German refugees did not give specific political reasons for their journey. It is notable that the West German state, which was otherwise eager to represent the mass flight as the result of East Germany's unfreedom, recognized only 14 percent of East Germans as official political refugees.¹¹⁴ Retzlaw believed that the cold war preoccupation with the East Germans was a way of turning attention away from still-inadequate restitution to victims of Nazism and the "renazification" of West German society: "Eastern Zone refugees are 'fashionable,' while we fighters against Hitler and the war are not only 'unfashionable' but also in the highest degree unwanted."¹¹⁵ For the West Berlin League, however, the

¹¹¹ For example, in late 1954, there were fifty-five camps in West Berlin for fleeing East Germans. Senator für Arbeit und Sozialwesen, ed., *Deutsche flüchten zu Deutschen: Der Flüchtlingsstrom aus dem sowjetisch besetzten Gebiet nach Berlin* (Berlin, 1956), table 12 (unpaged).

¹¹² These were: Hellmut-von-Gerlach-Heim, Cuvrystr. 34, in Kreuzberg (founded 1952, capacity of 1,000); Carl-von-Ossietzky-Heim, Quantzstr., Zehlendorf (founded 1953, capacity of 600); the Walther-Rathenau-Heim in Wannsee for victims of anti-Jewish persecutions in the GDR (founded 1953, capacity of 200); and the Hildegard-Wegscheider-Heim for children (founded in 1953 or 1954, capacity of 120). DEA NLR, Götze to Retzlaw, September 24, 1953.

¹¹³ DEA NLR, Retzlaw to Götze, October 6, 1953; see also Retzlaw to Lehmann-Russbueldt, March 10, 1954. Karl Retzlaw (1896–1979) broke with the SPD in the 1920s as a Trotskyist, emigrated in 1933, and returned to Germany in 1945. He was a journalist for the *Frankfurter Rundschau*. He is best known today for his memoir, *Spartakus: Aufstieg und Niedergang; Erinnerungen eines Parteiarbeiters* (Frankfurt, 1971). See also Später, "Die Kritik des 'anderen Deutschland.'"

¹¹⁴ Volker Ackermann, *Der "echte" Flüchtling: Deutsche Vertriebene und Flüchtlinge aus der DDR, 1945–1961* (Osnabrück, 1995), 109.

¹¹⁵ DEA NLR, Retzlaw to Götze, October 6, 1953; see also Retzlaw to Lehmann-Russbueldt, April 26, 1950.

East German regime deserved condemnation as much as Nazism.¹¹⁶ Their comparison was bolstered in late 1952 and early 1953, when the Paul Merker trial took place—an East German version of the anti-Jewish Soviet “doctors’ plot” and the Czechoslovak Slánský trial.¹¹⁷ Most East German Jews had fled by March 1953, and the League established a hostel especially for them.¹¹⁸

It proved perilous for the League to run these hostels in such a politically charged environment. The East Germans whom the League sought to help were magnets for spies from both sides. Soviet and East German intelligence agencies recruited fleeing East Germans to inform on each other in West Berlin reception camps, while Western intelligence agencies hoped to gain from the East Germans information about the internal affairs of the secretive new German Democratic Republic. U.S. intelligence officers, for example, demanded access to East Germans who were undergoing official West German review for recognition as political refugees.¹¹⁹ Some West Germans in militant anticommunist organizations also sought to use East Germans to distribute clandestine anticommunist literature to relatives and friends left behind in the GDR.¹²⁰ As money from the CIA as well as from West German political parties and other organizations flowed into militant anticommunist organizations and as the League moved into the orbit of those organizations,

¹¹⁶ *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 7 (October 1954): 10; Rainer Hildebrandt, “Der Umsturz im politischen Denken,” *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 8 (November 1954): 2–3. Rainer Hildebrandt (1914–2004) is best known for his work in the Fighting Group against Inhumanity (Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit) and his later museum at Checkpoint Charlie. He apparently became a League member in 1949 or soon afterward.

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey Herf, “East German Communists and the Jewish Question: The Case of Paul Merker,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (October 1994): 627–61.

¹¹⁸ League members interviewed them together with Suzanne Collette-Kahn of the Paris-based FIDH for a petition to the United Nations. Die Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (hereafter BStU) MfS AS 168/56 Bd. 3, Bl. 34–41.

¹¹⁹ Klaus Bade, *Homo migrans: Wanderungen aus und nach Deutschland; Erfahrungen und Fragen* (Essen, 1994), 48; Heidemeyer, *Flucht und Zuwanderung*, 120; and David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War* (New Haven, CT, 1997), 329.

¹²⁰ The organizations I am describing as “militant anticommunist” ones include the Fighting Group against Inhumanity, the Investigative Committee of Free Jurists (Untersuchungsausschuss freiheitlicher Juristen), and the June 17th Committee (Komitee 17. Juni), and also the Union of Victims of Stalinism (Verein der Opfer des Stalinismus), the Committee for an Indivisible Germany (Kuratorium Unteilbares Deutschland), and the June 17th League (Vereinigung 17. Juni). On their espionage-like activities, see Heidemeyer, *Flucht und Zuwanderung*, 317 n. 11, and Bernd Eisenfeld, Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, and Ehrhart Neubert, *Die verdrängte Revolution: Der Platz des 17. Juni 1953 in der deutschen Geschichte* (Bremen, 2004), 501, 511.

it was in danger of becoming a tool of cold war politics and, perhaps worse, a source of money for unscrupulous people.

Conflicts among League members over these issues came to focus on the person of the extraordinarily energetic Alfred Götze. He had been elected to the board at the constitutive meeting in November 1949 and then became vice president, serving under the League's president, Jochen Klaus Schaefer (a lawyer also apparently new to the League). Götze soon held simultaneous League posts as general secretary, head of the supplies department, and head of a department he created for refugees fleeing East Germany.¹²¹ It was Götze who was behind the project of the hostels: with the help of League members who held posts in the West Berlin government, such as his close friend Otto Bach, he arranged for the West Berlin Senate to allocate public monies to the League, as it did to other organizations that ran shelters for the refugees.¹²² Götze was the one who drew the Berlin League into the milieu of the militant anticommunist organizations.¹²³

Götze was also the author of the controversial fortieth-anniversary pamphlet. Its text foregrounded his own activities, especially regarding the hostels. In it, he mentioned having taken trips on behalf of the League to France each year since 1946 to meet with the French LDH and to work toward affiliating the League with the Paris-based International Federation for the Rights of Man (Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme, FIDH), which he accomplished in 1947.¹²⁴ As we have seen, however, the League hardly existed as a coherent organization in Berlin in those years. The French LDH was itself barely in existence at that time.¹²⁵ Moreover, Lehmann-Russbueldt and other Weimar-era League members intended the League to be affiliated

¹²¹ Jochen Klaus Schaefer, "Dank an Alfred Götze," *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 30, N.F. 3 (July–September 1955): 14. I have been unable to find biographical information on Schaefer. In 1951, he was elected vice-president of FIDH. *40 Jahre*, 9.

¹²² Otto Bach (1899–1981) was a journalist and Social Democratic politician in Berlin who held positions including Senator for Social Affairs (1951–53) and later served as a member of Berlin's Abgeordnetenhaus. The friendship between the Bach and Götze families was noted to me in a personal communication from Gerd Goetze, June 16, 2006.

¹²³ For example, the June 17th Committee (Komitee 17. Juni) was founded at a meeting in one of the League hostels. Eisenfeld et al., *Die verdrängte Revolution*, 505, 511, 512.

¹²⁴ *40 Jahre*, 9. Götze was especially close to Émile Kahn and Suzanne Collette-Kahn of the FIDH. The latter defended him and his faction of the League into the early 1960s, for reasons I have not been able to discover.

¹²⁵ The LDH was officially refounded in 1947. Éric Agrikoliansky, *La Ligue Française des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen depuis 1945: Sociologie d'un engagement civique* (Paris, 2002), 12, 33. The LDH's Web site indicates only very weak activity in the second half of the 1940s: http://www.ldh-france.org/connaitre_histoire.htm. The historian of the LDH, Wendy Perry, concurs with my judgment that Götze's descrip-

with the International League for the Rights of Man (ILRM) in New York City, not the FIDH.¹²⁶ Götze's pamphlet includes other statements that are not corroborated in old League members' correspondence and do not fit traditional League goals. For example, he claimed to have cooperated with the LDH to negotiate successfully with the French Ministry of War to ameliorate conditions for German POWs held by France and for Germans imprisoned and awaiting trial for war crimes in France. He even claimed to have helped secure the release of some of the latter.¹²⁷ Yet the traditional goals of the League did not include aiding Germans accused of war crimes. Götze's pamphlet provoked outrage from Frankfurt. Retzlau cited the rearmament vote, the hostels, the failure to exclude ex-Nazis from membership, and the numerous violations of League traditions as reasons for distancing himself completely from West Berlin. He forbade Götze to use the League name anywhere near Frankfurt.¹²⁸ Von Wedel wrote a furious public letter of resignation.¹²⁹ The Frankfurt League, refusing to cave in to the West Berlin League yet unable to stop it, became dormant.¹³⁰

Perhaps likewise provoked by the pamphlet, some members in West Berlin accused Götze in late 1953 of espionage and embezzlement at the hostels and of having concealed his membership in the SS.¹³¹ They demanded his expul-

tion of these cooperative undertakings mentioned below sounds unrealistic. Personal communication, July 7, 2006.

¹²⁶ DEA NLR, Lehmann-Russbuehdt to Retzlau, February 22, 1949. On these two federations, see n. 19 above.

¹²⁷ Götze also claimed credit, along with the LDH, for preventing the application of the "Lex Oradour" in French trials of Germans accused of war crimes. The Lex Oradour, named for the destroyed village and residents of Oradour-sur-Glane, held that it was only necessary to prove a person's membership in a unit that committed war crimes, not individual participation, to find the person guilty. *40 Jahre*, 9–10.

¹²⁸ DEA NLR, Götze to Retzlau, September 24, 1953, and Retzlau to Götze, October 6, 1953.

¹²⁹ DEA NLR, unlabeled newspaper clipping with von Wedel's signature dated October 13, 1953. The Frankfurt members only learned of the West Berlin League's vote in favor of German rearmament from the pamphlet *40 Jahre*. DEA NLR, von Wedel to Retzlau, October 13, 1953.

¹³⁰ DEA NLR I.A.082, Akten-Vermerk, November 2, 1953, and Senzig to von Wedel, November 7, 1953.

¹³¹ The available sources suggest two possible occasions for the exposure of Götze's past in the League. First, he applied to join another organization, and someone there linked him to an article in the Nazi newspaper *Der Angriff* (November 3, 1934) that stated that he had belonged to the SA, the NSDAP, and the SS and wrote him to reject his application for membership. See NARA RG 242 A3340-PK-D104 (NSDAP party correspondence). This file contains a long letter from Götze dated October 28, 1953, seeking to exonerate himself, and he notes that a carbon copy was sent to Ernst Carlbergh, who was one of Götze's opponents on the League board. Second, he

sion from the League. In early 1954 a committee assembled by Schaefer exonerated Götze. Oddly, the committee did not directly refute the SS allegation, but rather stated merely that he “need not reproach himself about his political past.”¹³² Götze’s wife, Anneliese, lost her post as overseer of the hostels, yet no reason was given. Götze’s critics on the League board did not accept the committee’s exoneration of Götze and resigned. Now that his most vocal opponents were gone, new elections to the board resulted in a strong mandate for Götze’s side. Schaefer even entrusted Götze with a tour of West Germany in late 1954 to strengthen the West Berlin League’s relationship with the various League groups on the basis of its cold war priorities, including the hostels. Otto Lehmann-Russbueldt then asked the new board to reopen the investigation into Götze’s record. When the board refused, he resigned as honorary president and publicly distanced himself from the League. This was a major embarrassment: Lehmann-Russbueldt was the most famous link to the League’s Weimar past.

Oddly, Götze’s past had only gradually come to light. A former Freikorps and SS member, Götze first appeared in the Berlin League in the summer of 1947, as one of SPD party chairman Franz Neumann’s circle who helped pack the League with SPD members.¹³³ He ingratiated himself with several of the authentic League members who opposed Kiendl, including Ingeborg Lehmann-Russbueldt.¹³⁴ Already then he was caught out by Kiendl and others in a lie about having been imprisoned in 1933 for League work; in fact, he had served time and been expelled from the SS for another offense entirely.¹³⁵ Götze refused to fill out a denazification questionnaire (required of everyone seeking to become a League licensee) and for that reason was only able to join the League board after it was licensed. Already in early 1949 the U.S. Military

apparently applied in fall 1953 for compensation for wartime losses under the 1952 Equalization of Burdens Law (*Lastenausgleichsgesetz*), after which he was found to have falsified his denazification questionnaire. See BStU MfS HA IX Nr. 3897, report dated July 30, 1954, Bl. 146.

¹³² *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 5 (July–August 1954): 7.

¹³³ NARA RG 242 BDC A3343 SSO-021A (SS officer’s dossier) and NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl to Biel and Kellen, July 13, 1947.

¹³⁴ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl to Dr. Biel, August 13, 1947, and Mathews to Butterwick, March 16, 1949.

¹³⁵ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Kiendl to Dr. Biel, August 13, 1947. Since the 1920s, Götze had been alleged by his colleagues in the Freikorps Rossbach of having betrayed the early Nazi hero Leo Schlageter to the French occupiers in the Ruhr in the “Schlageter affair.” While Götze was guilty of other things, this accusation was, in the judgment of historian Manfred Franke, false. Manfred Franke, *Albert Leo Schlageter: Der erste Soldat des 3. Reiches; Die Entmythologisierung eines Helden* (Cologne, 1980), 51–53, 116–27, 134.

Government had retrieved his SS record and noted him as a “doubtful element,” and it granted the League’s license on the condition that the organization be watched.¹³⁶ Apparently, an unintended side effect of marginalizing Kiendl (who knew the truth about Götze) and strengthening the hold of the SPD on the League was to render Götze’s position in the League more secure.

Götze was also apparently a spy for the Second Bureau (Deuxième Bureau), the French military intelligence agency. Anneliese Götze indicated that it had been French intelligence agents who approached him after 1945 with the suggestion of reviving the League.¹³⁷ This puts Götze’s energetic work for the League—especially his trips to France and interest in the hostels—in a different light. Apparently his value to French intelligence depended on the access to East Germans that the hostels provided. His espionage work was part of a web of anticommunist activism, corruption, and dangerous exposure to the Stasi. Under Götze and his supporters, the League sought to gather information from the GDR and to distribute illegal literature inside the GDR, and it recruited people to do this dangerous work. These people were to work in groups of three inside the GDR, with one serving as courier and bringing materials to the West Berlin apartment of a League employee. Götze, his wife, and their allies turned to the people in the hostels, who were dependent on and therefore vulnerable to those who administered them. Some were willing to participate, or could be persuaded when plied with food, drink, and payment. Official West German recognition of a person’s status as political refugee could be dangled before an East German as an enticement, or the possibility of its denial could be used as a threat (such recognition carried material benefits and, as we have seen, was relatively rare). Others were manipulated or even coerced into passing on information or recruiting their relatives who remained in the GDR. For example, addresses of a hostel resident’s relatives in the GDR were apparently conveyed to the League office without the hostel resident’s knowledge, and then the League sent requests for secret reports to those relatives in the GDR, giving the impression that the hostel resident

¹³⁶ NARA RG 260 Berlin AK box 77, Mathews to Butterwick, March 16, 1949; Local Government Committee Meeting, March 22, 1949; Local Government Committee Meeting, April 19, 1949.

¹³⁷ I have no direct documentary evidence that Götze was a French spy. Instead, I have two sources that suggest it, and that I find reasonably reliable. One is an interview with his wife and a family friend: Helga Hirsch, “Salz war die Währung in Galizien—das Leben der Elfriede G. [Anneliese Götze],” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (April 27, 2002). More background is in an interview by historian Thomas Sandkühler on which Hirsch’s article was partially based: “Judenrettung zwischen Lemberg und Kiew—die Rolle von Berthold Beitz,” July 18, 1992, supplied to me by Gerd Goetze. See also the following report held in the Stasi archive, whose author cannot be named under current law: BStU MfS HA IX Nr. 3897, report dated July 30, 1954, Bl. 145.

wished them to comply or would fare better in the West if they did. Affairs and even rapes (alleged of one hostel manager) arose out of these power imbalances. The hostels and espionage fed corruption. The Götzes apparently lived well, both from Götze's income from the French and from the funds for the hostels.¹³⁸ The hostel funds were apparently easy to augment by overreporting the number of residents (the Berlin Senate paid DM 2.50 per day for each) and inflating the number of employees maintaining them, while having the residents perform maintenance work for low or no wages. The Götzes' allies' loyalty could be secured by sharing the goods intended for hostel residents, and the Berlin official responsible for allocating residents was lavishly entertained to ensure that the League hostels continued to receive residents well after the 1953 uprising, when the overall number of refugees thinned.¹³⁹ How could the Götzes get away with it? According to an unofficial agent for the Stasi, "the League was financially supported in everything by the [West Berlin] Senate . . . but the Senate did not monitor where the money ended up"; the hostels were a "gold mine."¹⁴⁰

Götze's activities certainly did attract the attention of the Stasi. In December 1952, it caught six underground League members in the East German city of Chemnitz. The Stasi claimed that the League was developing a network inside the GDR for the distribution of anticommunist leaflets and for gathering information on the population's mood, on Red Army troops, and on industrial infrastructure. By early 1953, the League was, in the Stasi's eyes, a "neofascist" organization conspiring to overthrow the communist regime on "Day X" (*Tag X*).¹⁴¹ Then, in June 1953, an uprising really did take place in the GDR, surprising almost everyone in East and West. Now the Stasi, unable to accept

¹³⁸ See Hirsch, "Salz," and LBI KGC, Lehmann-Russbuehlt to Grossmann, September 30, 1955. Lehmann-Russbuehlt was astounded to learn that Anneliese Götze's salary for administering the hostels was DM 900 per month, which was indeed a very high amount.

¹³⁹ See BStU MfS HA IX Nr. 3897, report dated July 30, 1954, Bl. 145–46, 148, 151–52, and two additional internal Stasi documents that may be less reliable: BStU MfS AIM 6463/57 Teil I, Bl. 28–32 (a report by a former hostel resident who was an "unofficial agent" [*Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*] of the Stasi) and AS 168/56 Bd. 3, Bl. 317–22 (a collection of internal Stasi notes). Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, a historian at the Stasi archive who has wider access than is permitted to outside historians, used the files of the Stasi agent Harry Schlesing to uncover espionage and corruption in the June 17th Committee that appear similar to what I have found for the League. Schlesing also wrote reports on the League, but they were not made available to me. See Eisenfeld et al., *Die verdrängte Revolution*, 501–54.

¹⁴⁰ BStU MfS AIM 6463/57 Teil I, Bl. 32.

¹⁴¹ BStU MfS AS 168/56 Bd. 3, Bl. 174, 313, 322, 556–58. On the idea of "Day X," see Karl Wilhelm Fricke and Roger Engelmann, *Der "Tag X" und die Staatssicherheit. 17. Juni 1953: Reaktionen und Konsequenzen im DDR-Machtapparat* (Bremen, 2003), 19–31.

that the uprising was spontaneous, wove the League and other militant anticommunist organizations into its own explanation of the uprising. It claimed that Western intelligence agents had been planted in various locations in the GDR to attempt a coup and that the whole uprising had thus been organized from afar.¹⁴² In the months after the uprising, the East German state therefore targeted persons from the anticommunist organizations. One such person was Wolfgang Silgradt, who had come to West Berlin from East Germany in 1951 and was a caseworker in the League's department for East German refugees between August 1953 and February 1954, helping East Germans whose applications for asylum in West Germany had been rejected. In February 1954, he was kidnapped from West Berlin, taken to the GDR, and convicted as a provocateur of the uprising with three others who also worked in anticommunist organizations, in a show trial in June 1954. Silgradt served ten and a half years of a fifteen-year sentence before he was released to West Germany for payment.¹⁴³

The League had become caught in an awful symbiosis. From Götze's point of view, the League's cold war political work was probably attractive in the first place because it offered opportunities for personal enrichment and power over others. From the point of view of those League members who shared an ardent cold war orientation, the work of sifting through the refugees for information and maintaining a network in the GDR was important and Götze could do it effectively—so they were apparently willing to overlook or fail to investigate his troubling sidelines. Because documents are so few and scattered about the League in these years, it is not possible to reconstruct exactly what various League members knew about the Götzes and those who cooperated with them.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Fricke and Engelmann, *Der "Tag X,"* 76, 227.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 146, 224–30. His arrest was noted in *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 4 (May–June 1954): 2. He had worked for a number of anticommunist organizations, including the U.S. sector radio station RIAS, the FDP's Research Council for Reunification Matters (Forschungsbeirat für Fragen der Wiedervereinigung), and the Eastern Bureaus (*Ostbüros*) of the Christian Democratic Party (Christlich-Demokratische Partei, CDU) and Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP). The Eastern Bureaus were agencies of West German political parties that sought to sustain independent party activity inside East Germany.

¹⁴⁴ It is unclear whether Schaefer was intentionally cooperating with Götze or had been deceived by him. The report held in the Stasi archive mentions that Schaefer was a close friend of Götze but that he was very concerned with respectability and therefore unlikely to know of Götze's espionage and fraudulent activities. BStU MfS HA IX Nr. 3897, Bl. 144. It is also unclear why Götze's critics did not also take aim at Schaefer, his main protector. It is possible that Lehmann-Russbueldt felt dependent on Schaefer: he served as Lehmann-Russbueldt's lawyer and had secured a pension for the widow of Lehmann-Russbueldt's friend, the murdered pacifist Berthold Jacob. DEA NLR, Lehmann-Russbueldt to Retzlaw, November 24, 1952.

In the wake of Götze's supposed exoneration in 1954, League President Schaefer held a press conference and tour of the hostels to demonstrate that the League was in good working order. He stressed the importance of documenting human rights violations in the "Eastern zone" (GDR) and insisted that this work had nothing to do with espionage and that any reproaches to that effect were false.¹⁴⁵ Götze continued his work at the League for a year after his exoneration, then resigned as vice president and general secretary in August 1955.¹⁴⁶ In October 1955 the Götzes left abruptly for Beirut, Lebanon, where they lived until 1959. Anneliese Götze recalls that someone warned them that their children were in danger of being kidnapped by the Stasi.¹⁴⁷

Götze's actions and the internal disputes they caused did serious damage to the League. Many old League members became disaffected and left. Grossmann traveled through Germany in 1956 and noted that the League existed "only in name."¹⁴⁸ (After Götze's exposure, Grossmann of course rejected the Berlin League as an authentic successor.) The dormant Frankfurt League wearily took up its effort to topple the Berlin League as headquarters with a "West German League" (Westdeutsche Liga), and Lehmann-Russbueldt declared his support for it.¹⁴⁹ But its leader, the Weimar-era League member Guido Senzig, was ill and the initiative foundered. For the Frankfurt League, the mid-1950s were a new low point. As von Wedel told Grossmann, "The whole catastrophe is above all due to the chaotic Berlin situation with its atmosphere of espionage."¹⁵⁰ And the League remained in the sights of the Stasi.

The Stasi, having included the League in its official explanation of the 1953 uprising, now intensified its surveillance. In 1956 the head of the Stasi division for foreign intelligence, Markus Wolf, sent one of his top spies, Wolfram von Hanstein, into West Germany. Von Hanstein's career was even more complicated than Götze's. In Weimar days, he participated in the Kapp Putsch and Freikorps, but he also joined the League and became a communist; after the Second World War he spied for the Soviet Union and GDR as well

¹⁴⁵ *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 29, N.F. 2, no. 5 (July–August 1954): 6.

¹⁴⁶ However, he remained on the League board and on the board of the League Aid Works (Liga-Hilfswerk), an affiliated agency created to keep the hostels' finances separate from those of the League. Schaefer, "Dank an Alfred Götze"; on continued presence on boards, see *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 31, N.F. 4, no. 2 (April–June 1956): 30.

¹⁴⁷ Hirsch, "Salz."

¹⁴⁸ DEA NLR I.A.272, quoting from *Deutsche Rundschau* (June 1956).

¹⁴⁹ DEA NLR, Lehmann-Russbueldt to Retzlaw, June 8, 1956; Retzlaw to Lehmann-Russbueldt et al., August 16, 1956; Lehmann-Russbueldt to Retzlaw, August 28, 1956; I.A.082, Entwurf: "Programmatische Erklärung der 'Westdeutschen Liga für Menschenrechte e.V.'" n.d. [ca. 1953].

¹⁵⁰ DEA NLR, von Wedel to Grossmann, May 31, 1956.

as for the Social Democratic Party's Eastern Bureau and perhaps for France and the United States. He held the odd distinction of being convicted of espionage by both the Soviet Union and West Germany.¹⁵¹

In 1956, von Hanstein left East Germany for West Berlin and gained official recognition as a political refugee. He joined the Berlin League and rose rapidly in it, holding Götze's old posts of vice president and general secretary. Using his position, he gathered information on League members, other anticommunist groups, and West German politicians. He enjoyed the trust of unsuspecting East Germans helped by the League. And he sent information on all these contacts to the Stasi, which used it to kidnap East Germans who had fled.¹⁵² As one historian put it, the League was a useful "Trojan horse" for von Hanstein's espionage work in the Federal Republic.¹⁵³ Von Hanstein had been rumored to be a spy well before he was exposed. Yet Schaefer, still president, defended von Hanstein just as he had defended Götze. In December 1958, von Hanstein, with Schaefer's backing, carried out a coup. They held a meeting in Hamburg, which most Berlin members could not attend, elected a new board, and immediately recorded the result in the Hamburg court register for voluntary associations, making it legally binding. Von Hanstein then declared that all Berlin memberships were now invalid, and Schaefer put a new lock on the Berlin League's office so that no original board members could enter. Their plans behind these actions can no longer be reconstructed. At some point, von Hanstein stole the League's files from that office and delivered them to the Stasi. The League had lost all its records in 1933; now, it lost them again. Today, archivists of Stasi records believe that those files were destroyed in late 1989, when the Stasi rushed to prevent its information on West Germany from falling into Western hands.

Back in West Berlin, the old board members learned that the only way to undo von Hanstein's entry in the Hamburg register was a lawsuit. They decided not to waste money on a lawsuit, but rather to create a new organization—yet again. In January 1959 they founded the new International League for Human Rights (*Internationale Liga für Menschenrechte*), based in West Berlin, and affiliated it with the ILRM in New York.¹⁵⁴ The International

¹⁵¹ Grossmann greeted him in the 1950s as an old friend from the League: LBI KGC, Grossmann to von Hanstein, November 26, 1957. See also Hilger, "Der Spion," 397–415 (on his longtime League membership, see 399) and "Wolfram von Hanstein," *Münzinger Archiv*, obtained as fax on November 16, 2001.

¹⁵² Hilger, "Der Spion," 410. The anticommunist organizations affected included the Union of Victims of Stalinism, the Committee for an Indivisible Germany, and the Save Freedom Committee (*Komitee "Rettet die Freiheit"*).

¹⁵³ Hilger, "Der Spion," 399.

¹⁵⁴ *Internationale Liga für Menschenrechte*, Berlin, ed., *Warum Internationale Liga für Menschenrechte?* [ca. 1962], 3–4. They chose the same name as the defunct neutralist group, but there was no apparent connection.

League for Human Rights immediately distanced itself from von Hanstein—and just in time. When a Stasi agent named Max Heim defected to West Germany in May 1959 and denounced von Hanstein, the whole story hit the press. Von Hanstein was imprisoned, then escaped to the GDR in 1964 and died the next year. A remnant of von Hanstein's League still exists today.¹⁵⁵

CONCLUSION: THE LEAGUE FINDS A FUTURE

As we have seen, the League existed in many versions between 1945 and 1960 and faced crisis almost as many times. Yet the new, West Berlin-based International League for Human Rights has been able to sustain its work since 1959 and has prevailed as “the” league in Germany.¹⁵⁶ Positioned well to the left on the German political spectrum and never well funded, the International League has possessed little besides its moral authority and the prestige of its members. In other words, traditional League members would have felt very much at home. Its history in the post-1960 Federal Republic lies beyond the scope of this article, but some comments on its stabilization will conclude this account of the early League's struggles.

The League's stabilization depended most importantly on its now steady critical focus on the Nazi past, in the context of a new political space in West Germany that had opened up only in the late 1950s. This new political space was made possible by the rightward shift of the SPD (as signaled by the Godesberg Program of 1959 and the expulsion of the radical Socialist German League of Students [Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, SDS] in 1961). In the late 1950s a pacifist and non-KPD Left was taking shape that began to question the polarized political choices of the cold war and in particular Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's Western integration policy. In 1961, the erection of the Berlin Wall occasioned another round of debate on Adenauer's Western integration policy and his approach to dealing with East Germany

¹⁵⁵ The man who had been elected vice president in the deceptive Hamburg election, one Friedrich Haugg of Munich, sought to retain the arrangements created by von Hanstein. Oddly, FIDH leader Suzanne Collette-Kahn supported Schaefer and Haugg. *Warum*, 3–4. A Munich-based League and the Hamburg branch exist today, using the old name “German League for Human Rights” and claiming to be the authentic successors of the Weimar-era League. See the Wikipedia entry for “Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte” and links there. See also DEA, Nachlass Ossip K. Flechtheim, Liga files, “Vereinbarung” (September 1965); “Protokoll der Vorstandssitzung” (February 1, 1966); League chronology, n.d. [ca. 1984].

¹⁵⁶ Lehmann-Russbueldt, Grossmann, and Emil Gumbel all confirmed that it was the authentic successor to the Weimar-era League. *Internationale Liga für Menschenrechte*, Berlin, ed., *Warum Internationale Liga für Menschenrechte?* 5. See its Web site, <http://www.ilmr.org>. Its best-known event is the annual awarding of the Carl von Ossietzky Medal for work in human rights. It is now affiliated with both the ILHR (formerly ILRM) and FIDH.

and the Soviet Union. Two essay collections showcasing such discussions were League member Ansgar Skriver's *Berlin and No Illusions*, in which various authors advocated an easing of tensions between East and West that would later be called "détente," and Martin Walser's *Die Alternative oder Brauchen wir eine neue Regierung?* which argued that a new mobilization was needed to counter a creeping restoration of authoritarian rule under Adenauer's long term of office.¹⁵⁷ The underlying problem that these and other writings of the early 1960s addressed was the extent to which West German society had truly absorbed democratic ideas. It was no coincidence that two new human rights organizations emerged at this time in West Germany, both founded in 1961: Amnesty International's West German section, and the Humanist Union (Humanistische Union), a civil liberties organization whose founding statement appeared in Walser's volume.¹⁵⁸ Through these three organizations, as well as others, discussions of politics and culture took hold that were not immediately identified with any political party, though their participants were often—not always—located on the Left.

The International League was carried into the center of these vibrant discussions by a number of public intellectuals who also became members and even leaders of the League. They comprised a who's who of 1960s West Germany. Two academics on the League's board were especially prominent: Ossip K. Flechtheim and Margherita von Brentano. Flechtheim, targeted both politically and as a Jew by the Nazis, had fled to the United States, where he taught political science. In 1952 he returned to Berlin to teach at the German Institute for Political Science (Deutsche Hochschule für Politik), which became part of the Free University of Berlin. A Social Democrat and then a founding member of the Green Party, he was a prolific scholar of Marxism, political parties, peace studies, and futurology (a field he helped create).¹⁵⁹ Von Brentano (1922–95) was a philosophy professor at the Free University. As a political activist, she promoted the study of antisemitism, the antinuclear movement, and women in higher education and was influential in the Berlin student movement. It was she who urged a young Wolfgang Fritz Haug to take over the League's newsletter, *Argumente*, which he and Frigga Haug developed into *Das Argument*, the leading Left journal in West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶⁰ Several of the International League's most visible mem-

¹⁵⁷ Ansgar Skriver, ed., *Berlin und keine Illusion: 13 Beiträge zur Deutschlandpolitik* (Hamburg, 1962), and Martin Walser, ed., *Die Alternative oder Brauchen wir eine neue Regierung?* (Reinbek, 1961).

¹⁵⁸ Gerhard Szczesny, "Humanistische Union," in *Die Alternative*, 36–43.

¹⁵⁹ The most recent account of his career is Mario Kessler, *Ein dritter Weg als humane Möglichkeit? Zu Leben und Wirken von Ossip Kurt Flechtheim (1909–1998)* (Berlin, 2004).

¹⁶⁰ Wolfgang Fritz Haug, "Aus dem Innenleben eines Herausgebers vor vierzig

bers were Jews and scholars of the Jewish experience of Nazism. The League helped sponsor some of the most important early exhibits and publications that offered factual knowledge about Nazi crimes. One League member was Joseph Wulf (1912–74), a survivor of Auschwitz, the author (with the French historian of antisemitism Léon Poliakov) of the earliest documentary histories of Nazism and the Holocaust, and the original advocate of creating a museum and study center at the villa where the Wannsee Conference was held.¹⁶¹ Another was Gerhard Schoenberger, who has been a prolific writer on the Nazi past as well as the state of West German and unified German democracy (he contributed to both Skriver's and Walser's volumes). In 1960 he published *The Yellow Star*, a book of photographs and documents drawn from the League-sponsored exhibit *The Past Admonishes Us* (*Die Vergangenheit mahnt*). The exhibit aimed at educating a popular audience about Nazi crimes, and the League estimated that about 200,000 West Germans saw it.¹⁶² Still other members were Manfred Rexin and Ansgar Skriver, who jointly published a book on the history of antisemitism in Germany in 1960 and became prolific authors.¹⁶³ Reinhard Strecker, another League member, publicized continuities in leadership personnel between Nazi Germany and the Federal Republic. Two of his best-known efforts were an exhibit he opened in 1959 entitled *Nazi Justice Not Atoned For* (*Ungesühnte Nazijustiz*), which exposed

Jahren," <http://www.wolfgangfritzhaug.inkrit.de>, and Wolfgang Fritz Haug, "Zum Tode von Margherita von Brentano," *Das Argument* 37, no. 209 (1995): 174–75. Two board members from pre-1959 days stayed on: Joachim G. Leithäuser and Willy Kressmann. Leithäuser, a journalist who wrote for Melvin Lasky's *Der Monat* and was a prolific author on political and technological topics, now served as president. He had joined the German League board in 1956.

¹⁶¹ Nicolas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker: Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen, 2003), 337–70, 447–65, 594–615.

¹⁶² *Warum*, 8. On its reception, see Robert Sackett, "Pictures of Atrocity: Public Discussion of *Der gelbe Stern* in Early 1960s West Germany," *German History* 24, no. 4 (2006): 526–61. Gerhard Schoenberger, ed., *Das gelbe Stern: Die Judenverfolgung in Europa, 1933 bis 1945* (Hamburg, 1960), recently republished in English: *The Yellow Star: The Persecution of the Jews in Europe, 1933–1945* (New York, 2004). When the House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial and Educational Site was finally established in 1992, Schoenberger was its founding director. The original exhibit, *Die Vergangenheit mahnt: Geschichte der Juden und ihre Verfolgung im Dritten Reich*, appeared at West Berlin's Kongresshalle in 1960 and then toured West Germany and abroad. His essay in Skriver's volume is "Alte Illusionen—Neues Wunschdenken," *Berlin*, 83–93, and his essay in Walser's volume is "Zerstörung der Demokratie," in *Die Alternative*, 137–45.

¹⁶³ Manfred Rexin, radio and print journalist, active in antinuclear movements and in the SPD. Ansgar Skriver (1934–97) was political editor at West German Radio (Westdeutscher Rundfunk) in Cologne. Their book was *Der Weg zum Massenmord: Hundert Jahre Antisemitismus in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1960).

the cruel sentences imposed by Nazi-era judges who were still on the bench in the Federal Republic, and a 1961 book *Dr. Hans Globke*, documenting to similarly explosive effect the Nazi-era career of Adenauer's right-hand man, the State Secretary in the Chancellor's Office.¹⁶⁴ Of the events and campaigns that the League sponsored in its first few years, over half concerned Nazi crimes and their legacies; the remainder concerned issues related to decolonization and communism.¹⁶⁵

Clearly, anti-Nazi educational work provided the basis on which the League could engage controversy and absorb newcomers without facing co-optation and losing control of League ideals. Jews, the Holocaust, and anti-Nazi work were hardly popular causes in West Germany of the early 1960s. But the League no longer faced the problem of those who wanted to use its anti-Nazi reputation to hide or retouch their pasts, and it was now part of a wider indigenous (as opposed to Allied) confrontation with the Nazi past. For example, it could draw encouragement in its work of publicizing Nazi-era crimes from the Ulm Einsatzkommando trial (1958), the establishment of the Central Agency for the State Justice Administrations (Zentralstelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen) to prosecute Nazi-era crimes (also 1958), and the Auschwitz trial (which began in 1963). Likewise, Israel's Eichmann trial (1961) riveted the West German public. The League was no longer a lonely voice. Of course the League had its enemies, especially due to the exposés it sponsored. But enemies and unpopular stances had never been a problem for the League—false friends were.

The years of crisis in the League, documented mostly in scraps of personal correspondence, offer a case study in some fundamental dilemmas of mobilizing a universalist language in the practical, and highly political, world. By adopting various versions of the universalist language of human rights in postwar West Germany, the League experienced the very dangerous grasp of the Stasi. It also felt the overwhelming pull of the expellee and German POW causes and of anticommunism—truly popular movements that almost engulfed it. The history of the League between 1945 and 1960 reveals the fault lines on which most human rights organizations are built. These organizations depend on information and money, but both can damage their reputation for independence, which is the sine qua non for the public's reception of their

¹⁶⁴ Reinhard Strecker (1930–). His partner in arranging the exhibit, Wolfgang Koppel, published *Ungesühnte Nazijustiz: Hundert Urteile klagen ihre Richter an*, ed. Wolfgang Koppel (Karlsruhe, 1960). Reinhard-M. Strecker, ed., *Dr. Hans Globke: Aktenauszüge—Dokumente* (Hamburg, 1961). See Michael Kohlstruck, "Reinhard Strecker—'Darf man seinen Kindern wieder ein Leben in Deutschland zumuten?'" in *Engagierte Demokraten: Vergangenheitspolitik in kritischer Absicht*, ed. Claudia Fröhlich and Michael Kohlstruck (Münster, 1999), 185–200.

¹⁶⁵ *Warum*, 6–8.

work. An organization survives on these fault lines by avoiding the dangers of co-optation on the one hand and irrelevance on the other. Investigating the history of such organizations is complicated, for the usual tactic of human rights organizations when facing difficult questions concerning their own work is a sophisticated silence.

The League also posed a question still discussed today: how to compare Germans with others as perpetrators of human rights violations, as victims, and as advocates of human rights.¹⁶⁶ By the 1960s, the expellee cause had developed its own major institutions, and the League, as well as West Germany's chapter of Amnesty International and the Humanist Union, continued to set the issue aside. The debate on its place in the West and in the unified German human rights movement has remained, however. The latest major instance of this debate concerns the planned Center against Expulsions (Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen) in Berlin. Its anticipated centerpiece will be a museum presenting the experiences of ethnic German expellees alongside that of other twentieth-century European victims of deportation, forced transfer, or ethnic cleansing.¹⁶⁷ The controversy over this planned center has shown that no clear consensus regarding this question of situating Germans as victims of human rights violations has emerged. In fact, the very terms of the debate are reminiscent of the struggles in the League over "German human rights." The League's story reminds us that these conflicts regarding historical specificity and the universalist language of human rights had emerged already in the late 1940s and 1950s, as struggles over Germany's oldest human rights organization unfolded in occupied and early West Germany.

¹⁶⁶ See generally on this topic Bill Niven, ed., *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (Basingstoke, 2006).

¹⁶⁷ The foundation's Web site is <http://www.z-g-v.de>; two historians' contribution to the debate is Jürgen Danyel and Christoph Klessmann, "Unterwegs wie die Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen: Zur Debatte über ein europäisches Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51, no. 1 (2003): 31–35.