
Making friends in the GDR

Dutch and East
German Catholics
in contact,
1980 - 1990

Judith Huisman

RMA Thesis
History: Cities, States and Citizenship

Utrecht University – Research Institute
for History and Culture

February 2013

Supervisors
dr. Jacco Pekelder
prof. dr. Beatrice de Graaf

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 5 |
| State of the Art..... | 5 |
| Structure and methodology of the thesis..... | 11 |
| The world they lived in | 19 |
| Détente in Western Europe | 21 |
| Economic decline and <i>Perestroika</i> in the USSR | 24 |
| The Universal Church in West and East | 28 |
| From het <i>Rijke Roomsche Leven</i> to the Do-it-yourself Church | 28 |
| The Second Vatican Council and the Pastoral Council in Noordwijkerhout..... | 28 |
| Rome puts the brake on the progressive forces..... | 31 |
| The start of the Do-it-yourself Church | 33 |
| The Christian Peace movements and the 8 May movement | 35 |
| A minority in seclusion..... | 38 |
| <i>Kirchlich und Staatlich in Diaspora</i> | 39 |
| The Alternative: <i>Kirche im Sozialismus</i> | 42 |
| The pastoral letter <i>Katholische Kirche im Sozialistischen Staat</i> – a new direction? | 45 |
| On the road to the right track | 49 |
| From a spiritual peace movement to active engagement | 50 |
| A committee trying to find its way..... | 51 |
| Defining “friends” in Eastern Europe..... | 53 |
| The two-track policy: easier said than done..... | 57 |
| A true two-track policy | 59 |
| Finding openings in a closed community..... | 62 |
| Overwhelmed by Peace? | 64 |
| The CIZOW: clear and principal choices?..... | 65 |
| <i>Loyale Opposition or Instrumentalisierung?</i> | 67 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Anti-fascist upbringing and a progressive education | 68 |
| The <i>Berliner Konferenz</i> | 70 |
| Lap dogs to the communist regimes | 72 |
| ... or loyal oppositionists? | 76 |
| You shall love your neighbour as yourself | 80 |
| Protestant <i>gemeentekontakten</i> | 81 |
| Pax Christi's 'Eastern Europe Desk' and the 'East West Desk' | 82 |
| Conclusion | 102 |
| Pax Christi, the <i>Berliner Konferenz</i> and the parish contacts: friends or foes? | 102 |
| After the <i>Wiedervereinigung</i> | 112 |
| The Christian Peace initiatives in the context of the Cold War | 115 |
| Bibliography | 118 |
| Archives | 118 |
| Interviews | 118 |
| Periodicals | 118 |
| Literature | 119 |

Introduction

State of the Art

Setting the stage

“Wie zijn je vrienden in Oost-Europa?”

Jan ter Laak, *Trouw*, 1985¹

“Wie zijn je vrienden in West-Europa?”

Yosé Höhne-Sparborth, de *Bazuin*, 1985²

“Christen-zijn is, voor mij althans, onlosmakelijk verbonden met het omarmen van de wereld, en proberen deze wereld te verbeteren. Waar mensen met een verschillende achtergrond elkaar ontmoeten, elkaar leren kennen, dáár wordt deze wereld een betere wereld.”

Jan Huysmans, pastor in the students' parish in Nijmegen, 1982-1995³

Berlin, 1986. Fifteen young members of the students' parish of the Catholic University of Nijmegen spend a week at a *Bildungszentrum* in West-Berlin, which offers them and other European students a course on Youth culture in the GDR. During their time in Berlin the students visit East Berlin with a one-day tourist visa, and are amazed by the arrears in technical development, the stench, “miserable” living conditions and the “glaring” and “grotesque” way the *allseitig entwickelte sozialistische Persönlichkeit* is promoted. They have “enervating” meetings with *Ostmenschen*, who can be found

¹ *Who are your friends in Eastern Europe?* Bert de Jong, *Wie zijn je vrienden in Oost-Europa?* (Amsterdam: Trouw/Kwartet; Stichting informatie over Charta '77, 1985).

² *Who are your friends in Western Europe?* José Höhne-Sparborth, ‘Wie zijn je vrienden in West-Europa? - Pleidooi voor een open dialoog in de vredesbeweging’, *De Bazuin*, 68 (1985), July pp. 4–5.

³ To me, being a Christian is inextricably linked to embracing the world, trying to make the world a better world. Where people meet, get to know each other, that's where this world becomes a better world. Huysmans, Jan. Interview by author, digital recording, Nijmegen, 18 September 2012

“anywhere, in a pub, on the street, or in a shop” and sometimes turn out to be “fundamentalist communists.” They find out that, in this grisly, walled-in city you can get fined just for crossing the street. East Berlin is a different world, which, even if you would want it to, could never become your own simply because you are made to leave it before the end of the day. “The confrontation with your own position, your way of viewing society, and your own philosophy about life is enormous in this divided city”, reflects the students’ pastor four months later.⁴

Berlin, 2013. The Wall is a worn-out looking concrete canvas to an open air art gallery. “Check point Charlie” is a place where tourists from Russia, the USA, and Japan queue up to take their photographs with young Berlin men, dressed one day as an American soldier; as a Soviet soldier the next. A few kilometres away, tourists can chose between the “East Berlin museum” where one finds replicas or “relics” of “typical” GDR products from such as the *Ampelmann* or the *Trabant* cars. Somewhat more to the East, a handful of tourists visit the prison that once belonged to the ministry for state security, the *Stasi*, where former prisoners try their best (but to no avail) to let visitors understand what it was like to be considered an “enemy of the state” and be held captive and (mentally) tortured. At night, tourists and Berliners visit the movies and clubs at the Sony Centre on the Potsdammer Platz, build on the former “death strip” between the Wall and the Eastern Part of the city. Merely twenty years after the reunification of the two Germans, the Berlin Wall, and with it, the Cold War, has gone from a division between two separate worlds to a historical artefact.

The Cold War drew on for five decades. Short enough for people to remember that it was once different, long enough to make sure that the vast majority of society has lost all hope for a dissolution of the conflict during their lifetime. During, and even before⁵ the Cold War era, the conflict was discussed by journalists and historians. Within a decade after the end of the Cold War, the ‘standard’ of discussing the conflict as a political conflict between two superpower states driven by either ideology or desire of power was abandoned in favour of a more nuanced look on the *multipolar* conflict, seen now as fuelled by a complex combination of a clash of ideologies, lust for power, and mutual misunderstandings. At the same time, space for a multi-disciplinary approach which included not just the political events and crises which were a direct outcome (and

⁴ Jan Huysmans “Oost-West groep Berlijnreis 10-16 februari 1986” *Ingeschreven* (1986) June pp. 8-9

⁵ George Orwell, ‘You and the Atom Bomb’ *Tribune*, 19 October 1945

would define the course of) the Cold War, but also events and developments 'on the side', both in terms of geographic location and place in society, was created.⁶

In the last ten years, we recognize a growing interest in the experience of the Cold War by the common people. In these studies, the experiences of those living in the Soviet (vassal) states are granted far more attention than the experiences of people in the West.⁷ Still, the Cold War has affected more lives than just those on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain. This paper will discuss how common people from the West, in this case the Netherlands experienced the Cold War. More specifically, it will try to offer a portrait of Dutch Catholics who, through various means and with different motivations, tried to find friendly contacts with other common people in the GDR.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were never really friendly. On the contrary; the Dutch government refused to even recognize the GDR before 1973, and more than ten years after that it agreed to the positioning of NATO-weapons directed at (among other states) the GDR. Conversely, Warsaw Pact weapons facing the Netherlands were positioned on GDR soil. This relation barely got warmer during the *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* reforms of Gorbachev.⁸ However, when one reads the reports written by Dutch Catholics who visited the GDR, or interviews these people thirty years later, all hostility and distrust seems to vanish completely. Travellers remember friendly contacts, good conversation, a growing respect for "those on the other side", and an even stronger realisation that the positioning of (nuclear) weapons in their country, facing their new friends was not their decision and not right.

The reports and interviews, however, do not just reveal friendly contacts with the GDR. The Catholics active in the Peace movement(s) disagreed about which members of the GDR society should be contacted and supported. Were their friends among the Catholics cooperating with the communist authorities; among the independent opposition in and outside the Churches; or among the common Catholic parishioners?

⁶ For more on the historiography of the Cold War see below, and: Jacco Pekelder, 'Na het strijken van de Sovjet-vlag - Geschiedschrijving over de Koude Oorlog sinds 1989/1990', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 114 (2011), 227–249; Odd Arne Westad, 'The Cold War and the international history of the Twentieth Century', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol I: Origins*, ed. by Melvyn P. Leffner and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1–19; 'Bibliographical Essay', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by Melvyn P. Leffler and Arne Odd Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) <http://histories.cambridge.org/extract?id=chol9780521837217_CHOL9780521837217A027>.

⁷ Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War generation* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Babett Bauer, *Kontrolle Und Repression: Individuelle Erfahrungen in Der DDR, 1971-1989* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Gary Bruce, *The Firm: The Inside Story of the Stasi* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2012).

⁸ Jacco Pekelder, *Nederland En De DDR: beeldvorming En betrekkingen 1949-1989* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1998).

Underlying this question were different ideas on which option would promote peace, and the more fundamental question of what constituted “peace”. In the second part of the 1980s, the peace movement Pax Christi defined “peace” as “indivisible”, meaning that peace would only be achieved when all citizens could live without having to fear persecution by their governments. For others, “peace” meant détente between the two power blocks, and the integrity of sovereign states. Some combined this with the contention that the socialist state of the GDR was on a clearer, better, course to avoid another war from German soil than the capitalist FRG. Others, having lost their faith in “détente from above” (achieved by diplomatic negotiations) claimed that peace was achieved through “détente from below”, by exchanges between commoners, and that a (too) clearly voiced preference for socialism (the East) or individual freedom (the West) would harm the possibility and the a-political character of these exchanges.

The differences in opinion were grounded on ideas shaped by differences in ideology, political-philosophical ideas and religious-political ideas. These ideas and convictions, in turn, were shaped by events in international, national and Church politics.

This paper aims to provide an overview of the various choices Dutch Catholics made in their contacts with Christians in the GDR between 1980 and 1991. What moved them to go, which choices did they make and how did they motivate these choices?

By answering these questions it hopes to offer new insights on the lives of the people in a divided Europe, and provide an onset to a more versatile image of contacts between Dutch people and the people in the GDR.

Status Questionis

Contacts between Dutch Catholics and the Catholic minority in the GDR have not been researched before; earlier publications on contacts between Dutch and German churches focused on Protestant communities.⁹ Although considerably smaller in number, the Catholic exchanges cannot just be added to the bulk of Protestant visits. We will see that the Dutch and German Catholics faced problems and discussions very different from the Protestants/Evangelicals.

The (Dutch) Peace movement and the role of the Christian groups in the movement has been covered in the past year by various Dutch and international

⁹ Beatrice de Graaf, *Over De Muur: De DDR, De Nederlandse kerken en de vredesbeweging* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2004).

scholars.¹⁰ The development of an Eastern Europe policy was covered in various publications by the Peace activists themselves¹¹, in a collection of articles as appeared in the newspaper *Trouw*¹², and in the extensive study *Bewegen binnen smalle marges – Pax Christi Nederland 1965 – 1990*, carried out by graduate students of the Catholic University Nijmegen.¹³ The *Kommunikatieblad*, magazine for members and benefactors of Pax Christi offers an overview of those activities Pax Christi considered fit for publishing. Interviews and editorials reveal the image Pax Christi wished to create for itself.¹⁴ All these publications, however, devote only a small proportion of their text to the activities of Pax Christi in the GDR, and focus mostly on Pax Christi's activities in Poland and Czechoslovakia and their connections with the "dissidents" from *KIK* (a group of Catholic intellectuals in Poland) and *Charta '77*. Very little has been published about the *Berliner Konferenz*; which aimed to be a peace platform for European Catholics (laics and priests). So far, the *Chronik*, a chronological listing of all the activities, is the only standard work.¹⁵ The book was published by the same man who had been the general secretary of the *Konferenz* for years before 1989. In 1992 *Trouw* "revealed" that the *Berliner Konferenz* was "supervised" by the *Stasi*, but this was no new information at all for those who had visited the sessions and colloquiums and were acquainted with the organization. They furthermore claimed that it was meaningless information. The 'real' work of the *Berliner Konferenz* was, according to them, done in the smaller meetings, of which the proceedings could not be published because of the censorship laws in the GDR.¹⁶ In 2005 a biography of Karl Derksen, unofficial leader of the Dutch adherents of the *BK* and member of the international committee appeared. One chapter is devoted to his work for the *Berliner Konferenz*, but this, again, reveals very little new information, nor does it use any previously unavailable sources.¹⁷

¹⁰ Remco van Diepen, *Hollanditis: Nederland en het Kernwapendebat, 1977-1987* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2004); Ronald Jeurissen, 'De Kerkelijke Vredesbeweging', in *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II tot Acht Mei beweging*, ed. by Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Salemink (Amersfoort/Leuven: De Horstink, 1988), pp. 136–150; Ben Schennink, *In beweging voor de vrede: veertig jaar Pax Christi: Geschiedenis, werkwijze, achterban en invloed* (Nijmegen: Pax Christi, 1988). L S Wittner, *Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971-Present* (Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 2003).

¹¹ J Laak, *Reiziger in Vrede: Dagboeknotities* (Kok, 1994); Jan ter Laak, 'Op zoek naar bondgenoten - Pax Christi en IKV in Oost-Europa', in *Katholieken in Oost-Europa - Opleving, getuigenis en engagement*, ed. by Cor Arends and Geert van Dartel (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, i.s.m. Koinonoyntes/Communicantes & Pax Christi Nederland, 1989), pp. 200–220. Dion van den Berg, *IKV 1966-2006: Veertig Jaar Mobiliseren Voor Vrede* (The Hague: IKV, 2006).

¹² Jong, *Wie zijn je vrienden in Oost-Europa?*

¹³ Niek Megens and Hilde Reiding, *Bewegen Binnen Smalle Marges: Pax Christi Nederland, 1965-1990* (Nijmegen: Studiecentrum voor Vredesvraagstukken, KU Nijmegen, 1999).

¹⁴ *Pax Christi Kommunikatieblad* – For this study the volumes 1982 – 1989 were consulted.

¹⁵ Hubertus Guske, *Chronik Der Berliner Konferenz Europäischer Katholiken 1964-1993* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 1999).

¹⁶ Kerkredactie, 'Katholieke Berliner Konferenz Stond Onder Controle Van Stasi', *Trouw*, 1992, p. 9; José Höhne-Sparborth, 'Bewondering Voor Mensen, Niet Voor Staat', *Trouw*, 1992, p. 10. Yosé Höhne Sparborth, Interview by the autor. Digital recording, Utrecht, 26 November 2012

¹⁷ Jan Ernst, *Geleefde theologie: Het verhaal van Karl Derksen, Dominicaan* (Gorinchem: NARRATIO, 2005).

Since 1989, various articles on the attitude of the Lutheran churches in the GDR, and their role in the peaceful course of the revolution have been written.¹⁸ Despite the fact that Catholics were only a small minority in GDR society, the history of the Catholic church and the Catholic people has been described in various monographs, and, earlier, some collections.¹⁹ These books, however, devote little attention to the opposition movements of Catholic laics such as the *Aktions Kreis Halle*. This paper might fill in this gap slightly, but, since the focus lies on contacts between the Dutch and Eastern Germans, and not on the history of the German movements themselves, no more new information can be offered than what was found in archives of the Dutch movement Pax Christi. The tumultuous history of the Dutch Catholics has not yet been covered in any recent scholarly publication. A few contemporary publications; broadcasts of the historical TV-program *Andere Tijden*, and the book on the relation between Pope John Paul II and the Dutch, however, do provide us with some information of the progressive part of the Dutch Catholics *milieu*.²⁰ The periodical *De Bazuin* and newsletters of several progressive parishes, all available at the *Catholic Documentation Center* of the University of Nijmegen are illustrative of how developments at the top (in the ecclesial hierarchy, and at the theology departments of the Catholic universities; both discussed in *De Bazuin*) were received and discussed in the progressive parishes.²¹

As noted before, the context of the Cold War, interpreted as “an ideological confrontation which defined patterns of alliance, models of state-building, and discourses on society”²², is crucial to understand the motivations of the main actors in this paper. By doing so, the introductory chapter stands on the shoulders of

¹⁸ John S. Conway, ‘The “Stasi” and the Churches: Between Coercion and Compromise in East German Protestantism, 1949 - 1989’, *Journal of church and state*, 36 (1994), p725, 22p; Gerhard Besier, *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche 1983 - 1991*: (Berlin: Propyläen, 1995); John P. Burgess, ‘Church-state Relations in East Germany: The Church as a Religious and Political Force.’, *Journal of church and state*, 32 (1990), p17 [Review], ‘Church and Stasi.’, *Wilson quarterly*, 19 (1995), p.150; Beatrice de Graaf, *Eine Protestantische Revolution?: Die Rolle der Ostdeutschen evangelischen kirche in Der Wende 1989/1990* (Unpublished Thesis, Utrecht University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of German Language and Culture, 1998); Katharina Kunter, *Erfüllte Hoffnungen Und Zerbroschene Träume: Evangelische Kirchen in Deutschland Im Spannungsfeld von Demokratie und Sozialismus(1980-1993)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

¹⁹ Roland Cerny-Werner, *Vatikanische Ostpolitik Und Die DDR* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2011); Ute Haese, *Katholische Kirche in der DDR: Geschichte einer politischen Abstinenz* (Patmos, 1998); Christoph Kösters and Wolfgang Tischner, *Katholische Kirche in SBZ und DDR* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005); Johannes Ester, *Dies ist nicht unser Haus*: (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992); Bernd Schäfer, *Staat und Katholische Kirche in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999); Reinhard Grütz, *Katholizismus in der DDR-Gesellschaft 1960-1990: Kirchliche Leitbilder, theologische Deutungen und lebensweltliche Praxis im Wandel* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004).

²⁰ Michel van der Plas, *Uit de grond van ons hart: Open brieven aan Paus Johannes Paulus II* (Weesp: Agathon, 1985); Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Salemink, *De Vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II Tot Acht Mei Beweging* (Amersfoort/Leuven: De Horstink, 1988); Paul Ruigrok and Laura Van Hasselt, ‘Andere Tijden - De Paus in Nederland’ (VPRO - Geschiedenis 24) <<http://www.geschiedenis24.nl/speler.program.6937969.html>>; Paul Ruigrok and Mirjam Gulmans, ‘Bisschop Gijsen’ (VPRO - Geschiedenis 24, 2007) <<http://www.geschiedenis24.nl/andere-tijden/afleveringen/2007-2008/Bisschop-Gijsen.html>>; Tom H. M. van Schaik, *Bedankt voor de Bloemen - Johannes Paulus II en Nederland* (Tielt: Terra - Lannoo, 2005).

²¹ Order of Dominicans, *De Bazuin – Opinieweekblad voor kerk en samenleving*. For this study volumes 64 – 73 (1981 – 1990) were consulted. Newsletters of the Student parish Rotterdam (1980 – 1990) and the Student parish Nijmegen (*Informatiekrant*, later *Ingeschreven*) (1975 – 1990) were examined.

²² Odd Arne Westad, ‘The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century’ pp. 19.

conceptualist scholars who consider ideology to be an underlying factor in the conflict, providing ground to sets of ideas and concepts which defined the different groups (states, NGO's, citizens in East and West) in the Cold War era.²³ For a discussion of the events in Europe between 1968 and 1990, as interpreted through this scheme, the articles in the third volume of *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*; Tony Judt's *Postwar*; and the Routledge collection of essays in *Europe and the end of the Cold War* were used.²⁴

Structure and methodology of the thesis

Demarcation in time

This paper ranges from 1981 to 1990. 1981 marks the year in which US President Reagan was elected after an anti-détente campaign. He would pursue the NATO armament plans already set in motion in 1979. It furthermore marks the rise of the *Solidarnosc* movement Poland and the reaction of the communist regime to this made many in the West realise that détente between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact would not necessarily lead to an improvement in the human rights situation of the common people east of the Iron Curtain. In the Netherlands, *IKV* organised the first mass-demonstrations against the deployment of the NATO-weapons, and plans for the national committee *Komitee Kruisraketten Nee* were made. However, by 1983, the Peace movements had already realised that the protests would not lead to a complete abandoning of the Two Track decision. This led to an increase of Pax Christi activities in the GDR, and the start of the *Werkgroep gemeentekontakten* and the *Oost Europa Desk*, which would improve the organisation and increase the number of common congregations and parishes traveling to the GDR.²⁵ The extension to 1990, the year after the revolution in the GDR, allows us to make a comparison between the experiences before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Dutch Catholics going to the GDR

The form of presentation of this research project demands a structure of some kind. A categorisation- and thus, inevitably, a generalisation – of the Catholics traveling to the GDR must be made. This is not easy, partly because, as we will see, polarization among

²³ Jacco Pekelder, 'Na het strijken van de Sovjet-vlag' 227–249; Odd Arne Westad, 'The Cold War and the international history of the Twentieth Century' pp. 1–19.

²⁴ Marie-Pierre Rey, 'Gorbachev's New Thinking and Europe, 1985-1989', in *Europe and the end of the Cold War: a reappraisal*, ed. by Frederic Bozo (New York: Routledge, 2008); Jan-Werner Müller, 'The Cold War and the Intellectual History of the Late Twentieth Century', in ; Matthew Evangelista, 'Transnational Organizations and the Cold War'; Rosemary Foot, 'The Cold War and Human Rights'; W John Young, 'Western Europe and the End of the Cold War, 1979-1989', all in: *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by P Melvyn Leffler and Arne Odd Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York Penguin Press, 2005).

²⁵ See the next introductory chapters

the Dutch Catholics in the 80s was strong, and people were keen to think independently, and to let their voice be heard. In many circles, the idea that everyone's individual opinion was as valuable as the others' was very strong, which resulted in as many different opinions and ideas as people. Moreover, as we will also see, not everyone's ideas and opinions were as structured, thought-out or coherent as the categorisation might suggest.

With these reservations kept in mind, I nevertheless hope to show that the categorisation made to structure this paper is legitimate. It is based primarily on the experience of those who were active in the movements themselves. As already hinted upon in the first paragraphs of this thesis, they were the first to notice the differences and disagreements. Although the differences might not have been as fundamental as perceived by the contemporaries, they nevertheless based their actions and alliances upon them, which increased the importance of the differences. In line with the peace activists, I thus, divide them into three categories:

1. The *Committee for International Affairs, East-West* (CIZOW) of Pax Christi Netherlands, closely linked (in the organisation, and because of the many men who filled two positions) to the national and executive board. They worked in close cooperation with IKV, but nevertheless tried to hold on to their own voice and policies. After years of discussions in the early 1980s, a consensus grew about the "indivisibility" of peace, meaning that peace was not just "no war", but included a respect for human rights. The true loyalty of the committee was with the "independent" opposition movements, but as a Roman Catholic movement with a bishop chairing the national board, the movement hoped to remain in contact with the bishops in the GDR. Most of the Pax Christi members would not consider themselves capitalists, but had even less faith in communism. The most out-spoken ones considered dictatorship and oppression as immanent to the system.²⁶
2. Those Dutch Catholics who made a clear choice in favour of state socialism as a better alternative to capitalism, and were looking for ways to combine a Christian identity and Christian way-of-life with an active engagement in the socialist state. By joining the *Berliner Konferenz Europäischer Katholiken* (BK), whose plenary sessions were funded by public money from the GDR mass organisation *Nationale Front*, they hoped to contribute to the building of a socialist state. By

²⁶ See the chapter "On the road to the right track"

voicing their 'loyal opposition' they hoped to engage in a critical dialogue with the communist authorities, and, thereby, improve the "real existing socialism" as already established in the GDR. This group was not as structured as the CIZOW, and was, in the Netherlands, considerably smaller. Whereas in the GDR, the *BK* was virtually isolated from the rest of the Catholics, in the Netherlands, contacts between the CIZOW and the *BK* existed, particularly through the two 'leaders' of the movement; Karl Derksen and Yosé Höhne-Sparborth, who would remain in contact with the Pax Christi CIZOW up until 1988.²⁷

3. The Catholics who considered intercultural exchange the most important factor of their visit. 'Common' parishioners most of whom agreed with the ideals of the Peace movements, but were no activists themselves. The main motivation for their trips was curiosity about the "other side"; they would not consider themselves to pro- or anti-communists. The Peace movement Pax Christi assisted in the organisation of these trips, and considered them an important vehicle for the breaking of hostile prejudices.²⁸

As stated above, this paper aims to focus on the way the Cold War conflict was experienced by the common people. "Common people", in this case, does not mean 'those without a voice' – ethnic minorities, members of the working class, or women – on the contrary: the main actors in the thesis were, almost without exception, white, University-trained men. Some were older students, most were theologians (educated in the seminaries or at the university departments), political scientists, or polemologists. Especially those higher up in the ranks of the peace movements and the Catholic church succeeded in making themselves heard in newspapers and publications by Pax Christi. In these publications, and in the historical literature published since, the actors are most of the times the movements or organisations; not the persons themselves. With this paper, I hope to offer a first impulse to a discussion which includes the personal motivations of the people active in the organisations.

In the (relatively) short research period available for this thesis I was able to interview five individuals and one married couple. A tape of an older interview with Karl Derksen, by Jacco Pekelder was used as well. Together, the interviews cover all three of the categories.

²⁷ See the chapter "*Loyale Opposition or Instrumentalisierung?*"

²⁸ See the chapter "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*"

Jacques van der Meer studied political sciences in Amsterdam in the late 1960s. During this period, he was an active member of the Dominican parish in the city centre, at the time coordinated by a group of young, progressive Dominican priests, and was the chairman of the Pax Christi-core of Amsterdam. In this position, he cooperated with the Communist Party and Christians for Socialism, and became member of the National board of Pax Christi. In the late 1970s he started to organise pilgrimages in Poland. He then became member of the CIZOW, and would later man the “Eastern Europe Desk”, which assisted in the organisation of common parish contacts in Eastern Europe. **Cor Arends** was a theology student in Nijmegen and lived in the Dominican community where he became acquainted with men working in the top of Pax Christi. His first activities for Pax Christi were informative talks on the arms race in parish houses all over the Netherlands. Later he would become the right hand of both Jan ter Laak (in the CIZOW) and Jacques van der Meer (at the Eastern Europe Desk) on matters concerning the GDR. He visited the GDR frequently between 1985 and 1990, and was the first to organise a Pax Christi trip for youths to Leipzig in 1986. **Yosé Höhne-Sparborth** was born in East Berlin, but moved with her mother and sister to the Netherlands in 1953. As a young woman and member of the congregation of the sisters of Divine Providence she was active in the international groups of theologians, women and youths of the *Berliner Konferenz*. **Karl Derksen** died in 2006, but was interviewed in 1995 by Jacco Pekelder. He was a prominent Dominican and a vanguard of the *Basisbeweging*, the democratisation movement in the Dutch Catholic Church. He was a member of the international committee of the *Berliner Konferenz* and of the World Peace Council. **Wim Muijrs** became a member of the CIZOW after he had arranged a trip to a Catholic Parish in the GDR in the early 1980s. He visited a plenary session of the *Berliner Konferenz*, and, would later organise more visits to the Catholic Student parish in Eastern Berlin by the student parish of the University of Nijmegen. **Serge Roufs and Elly Kok** were members of the “Oost-West group” in Nijmegen, and visited East Berlin during the trips organised by Wim Muijrs in ’85 and ’86. Both were born in traditional Catholic families, but were interested in the progressive theology as preached in the student parish, and considered themselves member of the “8 May movement”. **Jan Huysmans** was one of the student pastors in Nijmegen. He was a married priest and was in the late 1970s one of the first to open the discussion about the emancipation of homosexuals in parish life. He considered political engagement an important aspect of his Christian identity, and travelled with ‘his’ students to Berlin in ’85 and ’86.

On the use of interviews

Since the Cold War is not discussed exclusively as a political conflict anymore, historians have started to look for the effect of the Cold War on fields outside international politics. A popular method among historians in this school is Oral History, in which the researcher interviews witnesses of the “history” he is looking for: daily life in circumstances different from today’s.²⁹ The practice of Oral History is contested because of the epistemological problems (cultural) historians have noted. Oral History assumes that what the interviewee has to tell is valuable, and – in one way or another – *reliable*. The epistemological assumption stemming from the reliability of the interviewee’s narrative made by all practitioners of Oral History, is that the researcher is able to understand and interpret the memory of the interviewee – that he can *rely* on the narrative offered by the interview, and that no vital information is lost when the oral source (the interview) is transformed to a written source: a transcript of the interview, and later an article or publication. Some oral historians have contested this themselves³⁰, and it has been an important issue for critics of Oral History.³¹ However, all these reservations could be made for written sources as well (after all, most written sources were once oral accounts noted down), which is why many historians have put aside the criticism and have continued to use interviews as a way to “fill in the historical record”.³² Like every other historical primary source, the oral accounts pose challenges to the researcher: one source can never be held “representative” for any kind of collective of sources. Furthermore, every source is “biased”; spoken or written from the perspective of one person or group.

In addition, Oral Historians are challenged by problems specifically posed by oral sources. A person’s memory is not infallible; people can forget the correct courses of events, can forget important aspects, or an event altogether. Moreover, memories can be

²⁹ Bauer; Bruce; Paul Betts, ‘The Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 72 (2000), 731–765.

³⁰ Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, Second Edi (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 32–42.

³¹ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History: Theory into Practice* (Taylor & Francis, 2008); Ronald J. Grele, ‘Oral History Theory’, *Oral History Review*, 38 (2011), 354–359; Andrew J. Dunar, ‘History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology Thinking About Oral History: Theories and Applications’, *Oral History Review*, 36 (2009), 103–107; Lutz Niethammer, ‘Oral History as a Channel of Communication Between Workers and Historians’, in *Our common history - the transformation of Europe*, ed. by Paul Thompson and Natasha Burchardt (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982), pp. 23–37; Alistair Thomson, ‘Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History’, *Oral History Review*, 34 (2007), 49–70; Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2000).

³² Thompson, *The voice of the past* p. 26. In many cases the historical ‘gap’ was too large to be filled in; women, blacks, immigrants, or other minorities had, hitherto not even made it to the historical records at all. It is therefore claimed that Oral History did not just change the content of the written history, but also the process of doing historical research: Thomson ‘Four Paradigm Changes’, 49–70. However, the accounts of those active in the political spheres still fascinates historians, as is shown, for instance, by books with ‘personal stories’ of *Stasi* agents: Anna Funder, *Stasiland - True Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall* (London: Granta Books); Bruce, *The Firm*.

altered, subconsciously over time, under the influence of public memory, or even on purpose by the interviewee himself, because the real memory is too painful, shameful, considered uninteresting, or because the interviewee does not trust the researcher.³³ Even if the memory has stayed intact, people can change their opinion or perspective – resulting in the portrayal of new perspectives on events in the past.³⁴ Closely related to these problems is the question as to who “speaks” in the research process. The interviewee might be the one who is actually speaking; the researcher is guiding the talks, asking the questions, and noting down the report. An interviewee, furthermore, might understand what the researcher wants to hear, and tell exactly this – even if it does not correspond with his or her own memories. These reservations, again, lie close to reservations which should be made when working with written sources as well. Any researcher should be aware of his own position, while trying his best to give an account which is as unbiased as possible – whether by giving a complete image of the written source at hand (instead of a selective reading) or by making sure that the questions he asks are broad, and do offer space for a story he might not agree with, or think fitting in his thesis.

In 1979 the Australian scholar O’Farrell stated that that Oral History was moving into “the world of image, selective memory, later overlays and utter subjectivity (...) And where will it lead us? Not into history, but into myth.”³⁵ Because it can so easily be tempered with, Oral History would not lead to facts, but to subjective account of people who created their own myths. The Italian historian Portelli, however, claimed that the unreliability of oral sources was no problem, and possibly even a strength. “Oral history tells us less about events, than about the meaning of events.”³⁶ According to Portelli, every oral account of an historical event is true, in the sense that it is a true account of how the interviewee phrases what he has to tell about the past events, about the meaning he attaches to the event:

Oral sources are credible but with a different credibility. The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no ‘false’ oral sources. Once we have checked their factual credibility with all the established criteria of philological criticism and factual verification which are required by all types of sources anyway, the diversity of oral

³³ Niethammer, ‘Oral History as a channel of communication’ pp. 23–37.

³⁴ Many interviewees, however, are very capable of recounting their own ideas and ideals, and show why something which is regarded ‘wrong’ by now was acceptable back then.

³⁵ Patrick O’Farrell, ‘Oral History: Facts and Fiction’, *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, 5, 3–9.; as quoted in Thomson, 49–70.

³⁶ Portelli, ‘Oral History: Facts and Fiction’ pp. 32–42 (p. 36).

history consists in the fact that ‘wrong’ statements are still psychologically ‘true’ and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.³⁷

As long as the oral historian is not looking for facts but looking for meaning, oral sources are thus a very strong source. Portelli furthermore stressed that “written and oral sources are not mutually exclusive. (...) They have specific functions which only either one can fill.”³⁸ Written and oral sources can thus be combined and strengthen each other: an oral account can make a written account understandable; a written account can give grounding to an oral account, and if necessary serve as a check-up, in case the memories or accounts of the interviewee appear incorrect. In the latter case, interesting new questions arise: how or why has the memory (or the account) of the subject changed, and what does this tell us about the changing perception of certain events over time?

This study will combine written accounts, in the form of reports of trips to the GDR, with the oral accounts of the interviewees.³⁹ By doing so, gaps in the written archives can be filled, the accounts as recorded in the fall of 2012 can be checked with the reports made in the 1980s, and incongruences between the accounts can be noted. All this will result in an image as complete as possible.

Discours analysis

For the three “core chapter,” the sources will be used to reconstruct the motivation of the subjects. By constantly asking questions to a text (whether a written report or a transcript of an interview), one can detect the meaning and motivation of the author, the speaker. Questions should include “who is speaking?”; “can the speaker speak openly or should he obey to a censure?”; “What are his ideas on the course of European 20th century history?”; “Does he use ideology-laden vocabulary?”; “What does he mention explicitly, and what is left out?”; “Why is this left out?”.

Answers to these questions provide us with new questions, which will allow us to compare the three categories. Who are, in the eyes of the speaker, at the right and the wrong side of morality? Which characteristics does he apply to himself? What distinguishes the author from the “others”? Is he willing to make compromises to his

³⁷ Portelli, ‘Oral History: Facts and Fiction’ pp. 34.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 32–42.

³⁹ Reports of trips to the GDR were found mainly in the CIZOW section of the archive of Pax Christi Netherlands, available at the Catholic documentation centre in Nijmegen. Inventory numbers 710-715, 2119, 2136, 2655 (‘documents regarding the GDR’, ‘travel reports GDR’) were consulted, as well a 287 – 293 (minutes of meetings of the CIZOW, with attachments), and 1756-1757 (Photo exhibitions *Vredesbewegingen in Oost-Europa*) and 635 (Oost-Europa Desk), 2152 (Jongerenproject CIZOW), 2646 (Oost-West Buro). Other reports were found in the personal archive of Jan ter Laak, available at the IISG in Amsterdam. Inv. No 40-43 (‘documents regarding GDR’) were consulted; many of these pieces were also found in the Pax Christi archives. More travel reports were found in the already mentioned newsletter of the Student parish of the University of Nijmegen *Ingeschreven*.

own convictions, and if so, in which direction? Which topics and issues does he consider taboo? How are terms as “peace”, “détente”, “Socialism” or “Catholic” defined according to him?

By defining a profile of the three groups, and comparing these profiles, the *Weltanschauung* of the subjects can be (partly) reconstructed. In order to fully understand their *Weltanschauung*, however, we need to position them in the historical context of the Cold War and the developments in Church politics in the Netherlands and the GDR.

The world they lived in

Europe and Europeans in the last years of the Cold War

Ik ben verzekerd van succes, tegen brand en voor mijn leven

Ik heb van alles maar geen tijd, ook niet voor heel even

Ik moet aan mijn salaris denken, en aan mijn relaties

Maar liever weet ik wie jij bent , voordat het te laat is.

Laat maar vallen dan, het komt er toch wel van,

het geeft niet of je rent

Doe Maar, 'De Bom' (1982)⁴⁰

The Cold War conflict forms a significant part of the history of the twentieth century and is an important ingredient in most of its other parts. (...) As an ideological confrontation with two powerful states at its center, the Cold War defined patterns of alliance, models of state-building, and discourses on society on a global scale during the fifty years between the US entry into World War II and the Soviet collapse in 1991.

Odd Arne Westad 'The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century'⁴¹

In 1982, the Dutch rock band *Doe Maar* scored a number one hit with their song "De Bom". The lead singer sings about his busy, responsible life, making a career and taking care of his insurances. Meanwhile, he wonders what it's all worth: the Bomb would be dropped at any moment anyway, and that would make everything he worked for meaningless. For decades, Europeans had lived in a world divided by the Cold War. Most people had given up hope that the conflict would be resolved during their lifetime.

In the 1970s, the *détente* in the relation between the US and the USSR had occurred. Furthermore, "Mutually Assured Destruction", the idea that both superpowers

⁴⁰ Ernst Jansz, 'De Bom', *De Bom* (1982)

⁴¹ Odd Arne Westad, 'The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century' pp. 19.

had enough weapons to completely destroy the other party and would thus be very reluctant to deliver the first blow, had reduced the feeling of immediate danger. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1973-1975) increased stability on the European continent (and therefore the rest of the world). But the optimism of the CSCE and its aftermath did not last long. In late 1979 the détente was threatened from multiple angles: the NATO made its “Double-Track decision” stating it would deploy intermediate-range (nuclear) weapons in Western Europe unless the Soviet Union agreed to dismantle its weapons aimed at Western Europe.⁴² In the same year, the USSR invaded Afghanistan, an invasion which the Western world regarded as a blatant violation of the national sovereignty of Afghanistan and (thus) as communist imperialism. In early 1980 the NATO condemned the Soviet invasion, and US president Jimmy Carter responded with a boycott of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, and economic sanctions against the USSR. Later in 1980, Republican Ronald Reagan won the presidential elections after making anti-détente policies an important factor of his campaign. Super power détente had been under pressure in the late 1970s; by 1980 all hope seemed to be gone.⁴³

Nobody foresaw that within another ten years, the Berlin Wall, ultimate symbol of a divided world would fall, leading to the collapse of communism in Europe and the end of the rivalry between the USA and the USSR. Though the abrupt and (relatively) peaceful events in 1989-1991 were *unforeseen*, many politicians and civilians had continued working towards resolving the tensions throughout the 1980s. At the frontline of the conflict, European political leaders and European citizens played a special part in the end of the Cold War. In the course of the 1980s they became increasingly capable of formulating their *own* voice. This chapter will try to provide an overview of how

⁴² The NATO two-track decision of 1979 was supported by all European members. The decision was formulated to sound reasonable. The cruise and Pershing missiles would not be installed if the Soviet was prepared to reduce the number of weapons it had deployed in Eastern Europe; the Soviet Union, thus, had the deployment of NATO weapons ‘in its own hands’. However, it would imply that the SU would dismantle the costly weapons it had already stationed, while the NATO missiles had yet to be built (and paid.) After the Soviet invasion, the election of Reagan and the subsequent low point in the arms-control talks, it became increasingly unlikely that Moscow would agree to this. In the first years of the 1980s, the NATO ministers thus found themselves continuing with the preparation of the implementation of the decision. See, among many other sources: John W. Young, “Western Europe and the end of the Cold War, 1979-1989” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War – Vol III: Endings* ed. By Melvyn P. Leffner and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Olav Njølstad, ‘The Collapse of Superpower Détente, 1975-1980’, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by Melvyn P. Leffner and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Friso Wielenga, *Nederland in De Twintigste Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Boom Onderwijs, 2009); Diepen, *Hollanditis*.

⁴³ Olav Njølstad, ‘The Collapse of Superpower Détente, 1975-1980’, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by Melvyn P. Leffner and Odd A. Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Warren I. Cohen, ‘The Rise and Fall of Détente’, in *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations - Vol IV: America in the Age of Soviet Power, 1945-1991*, ed. by Warren I. Cohen, Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Beth A. Fischer, ‘US Foreign Policy Under Reagan and Bush’, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by Melvyn P. Leffner and Odd Arne Westad, Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Europeans on both sides of the Iron Curtain turned the Cold War into more than a bilateral conflict between two super power states.

Détente in Western Europe

In Western Europe, détente had always meant something different than it did for the superpowers.

John W. Young 'Western Europe and the End of the Cold War'⁴⁴

The fact that most Western European countries remained loyal members of NATO during the 1980s does not mean that their leaders blindly backed Washington on every issue. With the missiles directed at them from behind the Iron curtain and Soviet army bases in the GDR, from where one could fly to Paris or London within an hour, Western leaders considered a dialogue with the Kremlin essential. This had been the case since the 1950s, and remained so when the "new Cold War" was triggered in '79-'80. In his article about the position of Western Europe in the end of the Cold War, John W. Young shows how the European leaders were not always content with American policies and often felt misunderstood, if not ignored.⁴⁵ Although differences among the Western European leaders existed, all of them, including Margaret Thatcher, agreed that Reagan's hardline policy would not bring peace on the European continent any closer. In 1980, both Giscard and Schmidt held summits with Brezhnev, and their successors would continue to do so with him and Gorbachev. The willingness to talk to the 'other side' had nothing to do with sympathy for the communist ideology; the small Western European economies simply needed access to the Eastern European markets and the concern about nuclear weapons on their doorstep was genuine. All Western European states remained loyal members of the NATO, the US could generally count on West European support when it came to its policies in the Middle East, and when Carter announced the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics, three NATO members joined in, and the rest showed their sympathies. Over all, Young evaluates the Western European policies as

having contributed significantly to the way the Cold War ended. (...) [The] combination of strength and a willingness to talk to the other side allowed West European governments to

⁴⁴ Young, 'Western Europe and the End of the Cold War', 291

⁴⁵ Ibid. q.v. J. Carr *Helmut Schmidt: Helmsman of Germany* (London, 1985), 178

remain popular at home, to maintain security abroad, and to pursue a dynamic policy in the Cold War, one that did much to secure a resolution on Western terms.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the people in Europe felt that the two blocks – the NATO and the Warsaw Pact – were playing with their safety, and that the arms race was getting out of hand. More and more people wanted an immediate halt to the arms race.

Transnational movements on both sides of the Iron Curtain were crucial in the molding of public opinion on this issue. Matthew Evangelista defines these ‘transnational movements’ as non-state organizations where

ordinary citizens involved themselves in issues that used to be the exclusive preserve of governments, or promoting new issues, such as the environment or human rights, onto the agenda of interstate relations.

According to him, these movements

helped to keep the Cold War from turning into a hot war and contributed to the peaceful resolution of the East-West conflict and the nuclear arms race that represented its most dangerous component.⁴⁷

The differences in objectives, size, methods and ideology between these movements were countless, yet a *Leitmotiv* was the stress on the recognition of a common humanity and the importance of (non-governmental) communication across borders.⁴⁸ In Western Europe in the first half of the 1980s, many of these movements focused on the NATO double-track decision. Although triggered by the same abhorrence to the arms-race, the peace movements had very different opinions about what would be the right solution, and the ideal path to this solution. These differences were, mostly, shaped by ideological convictions. The Warsaw Pact authorities tried to exploit this popular support by transferring money, and sending undercover agents. They also convinced some of the Western members to become *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* who secretly informed the *Stasi* or other secret services.⁴⁹ The Soviets hoped that the peace movements would take a more pro-Soviet position, which would mean a call for a unilateral start in disarmament in the West, or even to refrain from criticizing the Soviet SS-20 missiles. Right-wing supporters of the NATO decision were keen to hint at and exaggerate the Soviet influence on the peace movements, but the Soviets’ attempts largely failed. In the 1960s and 1970s,

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 289.

⁴⁷ Evangelista, ‘Transnational organizations and the Cold War’ 400

⁴⁸ Ibid, 402; Beatrice de Graaf, Duco A. Hellema and Leon van Damme, *Civic Diplomacy: Diplomatie Tussen Macht En Mensenrechten* (Utrecht: SIM, 2011).

⁴⁹ Evangelista ‘Transnational organizations and the Cold War’, 415; van Diepen, *Hollanditis* ; de Graaf, *Over De Muur*

communist parties West of the iron curtain had enjoyed some popular support, particularly in southern Europe. After the repression of the Prague spring in '68, however, much of this support faded. In the last years of the 1970s, the miserable state of the Western European economies and high unemployment rates had made Communism appear as an attractive alternative to capitalism. But while martial law was declared in Poland to suppress popular uprisings, the Western economies and their welfare systems slowly but steadily recovered, and the little faith in communism as an (essentially) benevolent system which Westerners still had quickly faded.⁵⁰ Young characterizes the average member of the Western European peace movement as “middle-class liberals, genuinely concerned about the dangers of nuclear war, rather than apologists for Communism.”⁵¹ We will come back to the ideological differences between the peace movement members, but for now it suffices to say that most western peace movements regarded the missiles on the other side of the Wall as just as (if not more) immoral and dangerous as the NATO missiles.⁵²

Contributing to the negative image of the Communist regimes among Western Europeans was easier access to information about Eastern European oppositional movements. In his evaluation of the decrease in ‘faith’ in communism in Europe in the last decades of the 20th Century, Tony Judt states that “it was *East* of the Iron Curtain that truly original and significant change was now under way.” More and more people in the communist states realized that the oppression of the individual’s rights and freedom was inherent to communism. According to the Hungarian intellectual Miklós Haraszti the civil rights movement in the East was “the acknowledgement that the necessary corrective to Communism’s defects was not a better Communism but the constitution – or reconstruction – of civil (i.e. ‘bourgeois’) society.” Opposition movements in the East (re-)claimed, or, “asserted”, as Judt phrases it, an autonomous public sphere.⁵³ In claiming their right to speak and publicize freely, they were backed by the Helsinki agreements, which supposedly granted civil rights to all peoples, and which were signed by their own governments. When members and supporters of *Charta '77*, a Czechoslovakian movement, claimed to be “living the truth” when they published a document arguing (among other issues) for the release of the band *Plastic People of the*

⁵⁰ Judt, *Postwar*, 566

⁵¹ Young, ‘Transnational Organizations’, 298

⁵² See van Diepen, *Hollanditis*; de Graaf, *Over De Muur* but also readers’ letters to the Pax Christi *Kommunikatieblad* and the left-wing Catholics periodical *De Bazuin* (1982-1984)

⁵³ Judt, *Postwar* 565 - 569.

Universe and signed it with their own names, they thus expressed that they were living up to the “truth” of the Helsinki agreements. Similarly, the members of the Polish workers’ union *Solidarnosc* claimed the right to organize themselves in a trade union.⁵⁴ *Charta’s* publication, however, was considered a political crime, and in 1981, the *Solidarnosc* uprising was beaten down violently by the Polish government. All around the Eastern Bloc opposition groups popped up demanding free speech and organization. At least until 1985 opposition was oppressed fervently, and with great violence. The secret police in the Eastern blocs did succeed in demoralizing some of the protestors, and, especially in Eastern Germany seriously frustrated the work of the groups. But the opposition did not die down; instead, most movements grew stronger, in number and in the conviction that the communist system was *fundamentally* flawed and that radical changes were needed. In East and West, opposition and peace movements began to link ‘peace’ with ‘freedom of expression’, claiming that the first could not exist without the latter.

Economic decline and *Perestroika* in the USSR

It is necessary to seek – and to seek jointly – an approach toward improving the international situation and building a new world. (...) It is evident, for example, that force and the threat of force can no longer be, and should not be instruments of foreign policy. (...)

The compelling necessity of the principle of freedom of choice is also clear to us. The failure to recognize this, to recognize it, is fraught with very dire consequences, consequences for world peace. (...) Freedom of choice is a universal principle to which there should be no exceptions.

Michael Gorbachev, Speech to the 43rd U.N. General Assembly, December 7, 1988⁵⁵

In the course of the 1980s, the gap between the economies of Western Europe and the Eastern bloc widened. The discrepancy between the affluence in the West and the scarceness of even the most basic goods in the East fueled protests against the Warsaw Pact regimes. The economy of the Soviet Union had been supporting the economies of the ‘brother nations’ for decades. In the early 1980s, the financial departments of the

⁵⁴ Judt, *Postwar*, chap. XVIII – The Power of the Powerless.

⁵⁵ Mikhail Gorbachev, ‘Address to the 43rd U.N. General Assembly Session’ (New York), p. 7 <http://isc.temple.edu/hist249/course/Documents/gorbachev_speech_to_UN.htm>.

Soviet communist party had voiced their concerns, and in March 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev became the general secretary of the party. Shortly after, *Perestroika* was announced, reforms in the economy which would offer some space to private entrepreneurship and property. These were not the only reforms Gorbachev announced. In 1988 he introduced *Glasnost*; the aim for transparency in Soviet policies, both in national politics and foreign relations. Fear of an all-destructive nuclear war motivated reforms which were supposed to lead to a decrease of ideologically driven international politics. This meant that Gorbachev announced unilateral steps towards disarmament, and stressed the right of a people to determine its own political system. The Soviet Union, he announced in July 1988, would not invade any country to (re-)establish communist authority.⁵⁶ In his first years as general secretary, Gorbachev saw Western Europe as a tool to influence the US. The Western leaders would be used to influence US policy, most notably the SDI, the “Star Wars” shield the US were planning. From 1987, Gorbachev’s strategy changed. Now, instead of hoping to drive Europe away from the US (as the USSR had tried in influencing the peace movements), Gorbachev stressed the ‘common identity’ of Europe as a whole. Using the metaphor of the ‘European house’, he dreamed of a “Europe that would span from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains”. While maintaining to their political systems, all European countries would contribute to the “common” house, using disarmament and economic cooperation as “bricks”.⁵⁷

The response of the EEC leaders was hesitant and at first rather skeptical. Thatcher stated that Gorbachev was in no way “less committed to the Soviet system, or less nationalistic” than his predecessors; Mitterrand warned that “it is precisely because he wants to see a powerful and respected USSR that he will try to modernize his country”; and Kohl said that he felt a “skeptical sympathy” for Gorbachev: “Some people think that he wants to establish a democratic republic. As for me, I think that he only wants to establish an efficient communism. This will increase the Soviet power of seduction.”⁵⁸ This skepticism notwithstanding, the EEC-countries continued to hold on to their strategy of a combination of dialogue with the Eastern bloc and upheld a strong military defense.

In the course of 1988 and early 1989, Gorbachev and the Western European leaders, most notably Mitterrand, found each other in their ideas on the “German question”, which – as we have seen – had become the ultimate symbol of the division of

⁵⁶ Rey, ‘Gorbachev’s New Thinking and Europe’ 27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 28-29

⁵⁸ Thatcher (August ’86), Mitterrand (July ’86) and Kohl (March ’87), as cited in *Ibid.*, 26-27.

the world, caused by the Cold War. By the late 1980s, Gorbachev and the EEC considered the division of Germany “unnatural” and, thus, unification inevitable. The unification, however, should be embedded in the wider process of relieved tension between the two blocks: improved and closer relations between the two Germanies could function as an example to the rest of the world, yet was only thinkable in the context of relieved tensions in Europe as a whole. As late as December 1989, Mitterrand stated that

it is necessary to make sure that the all-European process develops more rapidly than the German question and that it overtakes the German movement.⁵⁹

By late 1989, however, the ever-increasing forces of the opposition movements in the Warsaw pact countries had become too strong to allow gradual developments in Europe possible. Born out of the promises of the Helsinki agreements, the oppositional movements could fully develop under promises of *Perestroika*, *Glasnost*, non-intervention by the Soviet Army, and increased inter-bloc contacts. Authorities in the Warsaw-pact had, however, not been so keen on Gorbachev’s reforms.

In the GDR in particular the reaction of the SED and the *Stasi* to opposition became increasingly frenetic. On the one hand, Stasi-manpower was increased after 1985, and censorship rules on the (Christian) media were (re-)enforced.⁶⁰ On the other hand, restrictions on traveling and emigration from the GDR were released. The result was a massive increase of *Ausreis*-requests, leading up to the *Ausreiswelle* when visa-restrictions for Hungary and Czechoslovakia were lifted and the FRG-embassies could be reached without any restrictions. Another result was a call for reforms voiced stronger and more publicly every month between 1987 and 1989.

The evangelical pastors played a very important – if not decisive role in this process. They enjoyed (relative) freedom of speech and attracted many more than just the pious Evangelical believers to their churches with sermons on loyal opposition, non-violent protests, and the importance of staying in the GDR.⁶¹

The GDR-authorities, reacting increasingly frenetic to the protests, rapidly lost credibility, not only in international politics, but inside the GDR as well. Ultimately, this

⁵⁹ Rey ‘Gorbachev’s New Thinking and Europe’, 31.

⁶⁰ See de Graaf, *Over De Muur*, chap. ‘Honecker “mauert wieder.”. The renewed censorship on the Christian media in the GDR was followed with great concern by the CIZOW of Pax Christi: Archives Pax Christi NL, Inv. 711

⁶¹ See the chapter “Dieses Haus bleibt uns ein fremdes Haus”. The GDR was not the only Warsaw Pact country where the Christian churches played an important role at the end of the communist regime. See: Philip Walters, ‘The Revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Beginnings of the Post-communist Era’, in *Cambridge History of Christianity - IX World Christianities c.1914–c.2000*, ed. by Hugh McLeod, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 348–365 <doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521815000.020>.

led to an insecure (non-)reaction to the October marches in Leipzig, and the abrupt (announcement of) the lifting of the travel restrictions between the GDR and the FRG. The Wall fell without any bloodshed. This had, however, not so much to do with the realism of the GDR authorities, but with the statesmanship of Gorbachev, the Western European stress on a dialogue and inter-block trades, and the perseverance of the oppositional movements. "Few foresaw the peaceful end of the Cold War, yet many worked for decades to achieve it."⁶²

⁶² Evangelista, 'Transnational organizations' 421

The Universal Church in West and East

Dutch and Eastern German Catholics between the Second Vatican Council and the end of the Cold War

Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.

“And I believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church” – *Credo*, Christian affirmation of Faith.

This thesis discusses contacts between Dutch and Eastern German Catholics between 1980 and 1990. The phrasing of this question, however, can be misleading. The classification “Catholic” suggests two sorts of uniformity which, did not, or at least not fully, exist. Firstly, it suggests that the Dutch visitors and the German hosts, as Catholics, shared values and ideas about a respectable lifestyle, shared their religious beliefs and all felt part of the Universal Roman Catholic Church. Secondly, it might suggest that there were no (significant) differences among the Dutch Catholics, or among the Catholics in the GDR. There were, however, many. This chapter will attempt to give an overview of these differences among the Dutch and among the Germans, and between the Catholics in West and East. It aims at an understanding of the Catholic *milieu* in the two countries which will help us understand the different choices the Dutch visitors made.

From het *Rijke Roomsche Leven* to the Do-it-yourself Church

Dutch Catholics between 1960 and 1989

The Second Vatican Council and the Pastoral Council in Noordwijkerhout

Dagen waren het van opleven, uitzicht en hoop. (...) In zijn dagen belichaamde hij voor mij en godweet hoeveel anderen de kans op vernieuwing van de rooms-katholieke kerk, en de redelijkheid van de hoop.

Huub Oosterhuis recounts the days of bishop Bekkers, bishop of Haarlem, 1960-1966⁶³

⁶³ *Days of revival, perspective and hope. For me, and God knows how many others, he embodied a chance of renewal of the Roman Catholic Church, and the reasonableness of this hope.* Huub Oosterhuis, *Twee of Drie - Voor En over Kritische Gemeenten: Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis Sinds Bisshop Bekkers* (Baarn: Amboboeken, 1980), p. 7.

To understand the situation in the Dutch Catholic *milieu* of the 1980s, one needs to go back to the early 1960s, or even before. In the first 15 years after the Second World War, the pre-war pillarized society had been re-established. Protestant, Catholics and socialists lived their life as law-abiding citizens, safely secluded in the pillars. By the late 1950s, the Catholic pillar seemed stronger than ever. The seminaries were full, boarding schools filled, and the Catholic People's Party (*KVP*) held a steady position as the largest political party. Cracks in the walls of this bastion were, however, appearing. The 1954 episcopal charge had laid bare that there were the discussions looming among the Dutch Catholics. The document argued for active Catholic participation in society, and dissuaded - even condemned - association with socialist organisations such as the political party *PvdA*, listening to the socialist broadcasting company *VARA*, membership of the labour union *NVV*, the Dutch Society for Sexual reform (*NVSH*), and the Humanist association.⁶⁴ The condemnations by the bishops reveal the wishes of many Catholics for a greater social engagement, a stronger position for the worker, a modernization of sexual morals, and a greater attention to and valuation of independent thought, as well as a rapprochement to other (Christian) religions. In the second half of the 1950s, the discussions loomed on, yet did not come to the surface.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, the self-image of the Dutch people had started to change; socio-cultural factors as varied as an increased social mobility and the rise of television (with one national channel shared by all broadcasters) caused them to see themselves no longer as "member of the Catholic pillar" first, and Dutchman later. Dutch society as a whole was developing into an assertive nation of people, reaching above the restrictions set by their pillars, slowly but steadily preparing to throw off their conservative morals and standards.⁶⁶ When in January 1959 the Second Vatican Council was announced, the road was cleared for the Dutch bishops to join the progressive developments in their own country.

The Council, it was announced, would "open the windows of the Church" and "bring the Church up to date with modern times" (*aggiornamento*). It hoped to establish new ideas on the *servicing* role of the Church in the modern world. Expectations among the

⁶⁴ Johannes de Jong and de Nederlandse Bisschoppen, 'De Katholiek in Het Openbare Leven Van Deze Tijd: Bisschoppelijk Mandement 1954', in *Mandementen van de Nederlandse bisschoppen*; 10, 1954.

⁶⁵ James C. Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw: Nederland in de Jaren Zestig* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1995).

⁶⁶ Hans Righart, *De eideloze Jaren Zestig: Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1995); Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw*; Wielenga, *Nederland in de Twintigste eeuw*.

progressive Dutch Catholic elite were high.⁶⁷ They hoped that reforms in liturgical regulation would bring the priest closer to the people, and would offer laics more space for participation during Mass. Some went further in their hopes and expected the Council to speak out on issues regarding contraception, the position of women in the Church (including the possibility of female clergy); and celibacy. The Council was followed eagerly by the Catholic media, which formed a forum for a public discussion about new Catholic life by experts, both Catholic intellectuals and the clergy. In hindsight, it may be clear that the statements of these “experts” were far more progressive than what was actually discussed at the Vatican. In 1963, for instance, bishop Beckers stated on national television that “family planning [and the use of contraception] was a private business, and not something a priest should interfere in.”⁶⁸ This was, however, never an issue during the Council Sessions. Five years later, the new Pope Paul VI would even speak out against contraception in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.⁶⁹

The progressive forces in the Netherlands, however, interpreted the Council’s constitutions *Gaudium et Spes*, (on the position of the Church in the Modern World), *Lumen Gentium*, (on the structural organisation of the Church); and the various decrees, most notably *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, on the apostolate of the laity, as confirmations of their stance. Shortly after the Council was closed, the Dutch bishops announced the “Pastoral Council of the Dutch Ecclesiastical Province”⁷⁰ which would investigate how the resolutions of the Council could be implemented in the Dutch parishes. The bishops chaired the meetings and prepared drafts for the council’s statements, but the commissions discussing these statements were compounded of members of the religious orders, laics, and even representatives of other (Christian) confessions. In the closing ceremony of the first session in 1966 Cardinal Alfrink stated:

Wij hebben samen [het] nieuwe kerkbeeld trachten te beleven, zoals dat in de dogmatische constitutie over de kerk [*Lumen Gentium*] oprijst. Niet meer het beeld van de hiërarchische

⁶⁷ Jan Y.H.A. Jacobs, *Met het oog op een andere kerk, Katholiek Nederland en de voorbereiding van het Tweede Vaticaans Oecumenisch Concilie, 1959-1962* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1986); Michel van der Plas, *Dagboek Van Het Concilie* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1963). Among the ‘common’ Catholics it took some time before the Council’s reforms would filter through in the parish churches. See Judith Huisman, ‘Jong En Jezuïet in De Jaren Zestig’ (Utrecht University, 2009) 17.

⁶⁸ Kennedy *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw*

⁶⁹ Pope Paul VI, ‘*Humanae Vitae* - Encyclical Letter on the Regulation of Birth’ (Holy See, 1968) <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html>.

⁷⁰ The name ‘council’ was at that time already considered to be quite bold. Some claimed that “National pastoral consultation” would have been better. The name “pastoral council” was chosen, however, to imply continuity with the Second Vatican Council, ‘pastoral’ was added to show that it was a consultation of all believers, i.e. clergy and laity. L. Laeyendekker, ‘Van Kardinaal Alfrink naar Kardinaal Simonis’, in *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II tot Acht Mei beweging*, ed. by Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Saleminck (Baarn: De Horstink, 1988), 196.

opgetrokken en statische kerk, maar het dynamische beeld van het volk Gods in zijn geheel waarbinnen de hiërarchie een legitieme plaats heeft en een eigen authentieke opdracht heeft.⁷¹

The Pastoral Council touched upon the fundamentals of Catholic organisation and is said to have “kicked upside down the whole of Catholic life”. This all was carried out by “a motivated and eloquent group of intellectuals whose voices were heard widely in the Catholic media, and who were able to increase their public influence considerably.”⁷² The Council sessions and the media discussed a broad range of issues: “authority and the perception of authority”; development aid; “the decent lifestyle of Christians in the world, marriage and family”; modern spirituality; relations between Christians and Jews; the Oecumenical movement; and Peace.⁷³ They reveal the task the Catholic intellectuals saw ahead of them: still strong in number, the Dutch Catholics could now become the initiators of a progressive movement both in the Netherlands and in the rest of the Catholic World. They would be the first to show that the Catholic Church was *not* a doctrinal and tyrannical institute, and the first to show what the Vatican Council *really* was about. The message may have been changed, but the pre-war idea of *Hollandia docet* still stood.⁷⁴

Rome puts the brake on the progressive forces

“Wat echt in beweging komt, gaat verder”

Cardinal Alfrink, 1970⁷⁵

“Rome moet nu echt ingrijpen”

Bishop Gijssen, in *Elsevier Magazine*, 1979⁷⁶

This *Hollandia docet* attitude, however, was seen by many others as a dangerous radical movement.⁷⁷ Soon, the Pastoral Council’s statements went (far) beyond the ideas of the

⁷¹ Together, we have tried to experience the new face of the Church, as rises in the dogmatic constitution on the Church. Not the image of a hierarchical and static Church, yet the dynamic image of God’s people, in which the hierarchy has its legitimate place and its own authentic calling. Cardinal Alfrink, closing speech Pastoral Council, Noordwijkerhout 1966, as cited in: Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Saleminck, ‘Van Pastoraal Concilie Tot Acht Mei Beweging’, in *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II tot Acht Mei beweging*, ed. by Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Saleminck (Amersfoort/Leuven: De Horstink, 1988), pp. 13–30.

⁷² van Schaik, *Bedankt voor de bloemen* 59

⁷³ Laeyendekker, *Van Kardinaal Alfrink naar Kardinaal Simonis* 197.

⁷⁴ *Hollandia Docet*, it is said, was the phrase Pope Pius XI used to praise the pious and obedient Dutch Catholics in 1925. Hans de Valk, ‘Hollandia Docet? Cardinal Van Rossum and the Catholic Missions in the Dutch East Indies’, *Trajecta - religie, cultuur en samenleving in de Nederlanden*, 19/20, 143–157. For *Hollandia docet* in the Post-Vatican II context: van Schaik, *Bedankt voor de bloemen* 60.

⁷⁵ *That what is really set in motion, will continue* Cardinal Alfrink, 1970 as cited in Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Saleminck, *Van Pastoraal Concilie Tot Acht Mei Beweging* pp. 13–30 (p. 27).

⁷⁶ *Rome will have to interfere now* Rex Brico, *Dossier Gijssen* (Amsterdam: Elseviers Magazine, 1979).

Vatican Council. The clearest example is the Pastoral Council's call to end the mandatory vow of celibacy. In one of the last sessions, the Council had agreed to an 'advice' to the Vatican to abandon celibacy, at least in the Dutch Church province. The text of the report was based on a survey, held among all priests in the Netherlands. In accordance with the 'spirit of the Sixties', every priest, both bishops and common parish priests had been allowed to voice their opinion. All were heard and their ideas were incorporated in the advice: the majority of the people – priests, in this case – wanted change, therefore, change should come about. The Roman Catholic Church, despite its efforts to "bring itself up to date" was in no way a democratic institution, nor did it have any ambition to become so. According to the Vatican, the developments in the Dutch Church province all went too far. Interference was needed before the "virus" would spread to the rest of Western Europe. This, however, did not immediately become clear for the enthusiastic – and, one might add, rather naïve – progressives in the Netherlands, who felt "shocked" and "bewildered" about the course of "restorative" measures the Vatican took between 1970 and 1985.

It started with the contemptuous treatment of Cardinal Alfrink, who had to wait for more than six months before he was allowed to hand over the 'advice' from the Pastoral Council to the Pope. The Pope reacted as Cardinal Alfrink had already expected and told him that abandoning celibacy was out of the question. A few months later, Paul VI wrote a concerned letter to the cardinal, wondering what He could do to re-instate the authority of the bishops.⁷⁸ This letter must have brought up some confusion among the Dutch bishops, as an opinion poll in the same year had shown that 88% of the Dutch Catholics had faith in the guidance of the Dutch bishops.⁷⁹ It remains unclear how Cardinal Alfrink replied to this letter, but we do know how Pope Paul VI responded to the – perceived – crisis of authority.

In the appointment of a new bishop for Rotterdam, Paul VI choose to ignore the three recommendations of the college of bishops and instead sent Adrian Simonis, a conservative priest from The Hague. In 1972, appointed the very conservative Joannes Gijssen as bishop of Limburg (Roermond). These two bishops, most notably Gijssen, were not only conservative, but ruled their bishoprics in a particularly authoritative way,

⁷⁷ After the 1981 the progressive Catholics would proudly name themselves as 'suffering' from *Katholieke Hollanditis*, after the characterisation for the Dutch disarmament movement.

⁷⁸ *Katholiek Archief* 25 (70) 77; as referred to in Laeyendekker, 'Van Kardinaal Alfrink naar Kardinaal Simonis' 199.

⁷⁹ Laeyendekker Van Kardinaal Alfrink naar Kardinaal Simonis, . 199. Laeyendekker, who is very critical about the authoritative rules from Rome, does not mention any source for this number. It might, thus, be an overstatement. However, from other sources we do not have a reason not to believe that the support of the bishops was not strong: Van der Plas, *Dagboek van het Concilie*; Oosterhuis *Twee of drie*.

not minding the rest of the bishops. In the course of the 1970s, the disagreements between the Dutch bishops became clearer. In 1979, Cardinal Alfrink was summoned to Rome, to report on the situation for the new Pope John-Paul II. While Alfrink was in Rome, bishop Gijssen revealed what his opinion was in an interview in *Elseviers Magazine*. He stated that he would deny the sacraments to Catholic politicians campaigning in favour of a law legalizing abortions. Furthermore, he spilled the beans on the Dutch bishops' conference, stating that it was such a mess "the Pope will have to interfere."⁸⁰ The Vatican reprimanded Gijssen, telling him that the bishops should act in unity to outsiders. That the Pope nevertheless agreed with Gijssen became clear when a "pastoral synod", a series of meetings with the seven Dutch bishops and the top of the Vatican was held in 1980-1981.⁸¹ The aim of the synod was to restore unity among the Dutch bishops and, by doing so, to get the Dutch Catholics back on track. The synod documents claimed that, in a Church province, "it is the bishops' task to lead the Catholic flock, in accordance with the Vatican's policy and under the guidance of the Pope." Laics should refrain from polarising practices: fanaticism, (public) pressure and the denying of a dialogue can only have negative outcomes. In his book on the relationship between the Dutch and John Pope II, Tom Van Schaik sarcastically remarks: "apparently, these were practices only laics could be guilty of."⁸² According to Henk Manders, (emeritus) professor at the university for theology and pastorate in Heerlen, the synod's document made a division between, on the one hand the "true Faith" held only by the Catholic hierarchy, assisted by the priests; and a subjective "religious experience" held by laics. Because of their subjective experience, laics could not perform in the liturgy in the Church.⁸³ The Jesuit Father van Kilsdonk, student pastor in Amsterdam said "the bishops are made the lackeys of the Pope"; the Dominican theologian André Lascaris wrote: "[the Dutch Catholic Church] will become a do-it-yourself church".⁸⁴

The start of the Do-it-yourself Church

Lascaris' call was not meant to cause a schism in the Dutch Catholic church. He merely called upon the Dutch Catholics to ignore the outcome of the synod, and the (new) policies of the bishop. This attitude became illustrative for many Dutch Catholic

⁸⁰ Elseviers Magazine 1979, republished as: Brico, *Dossier Gijssen*. For more on the controversy surrounding this article, see the other articles published in the *Dossier*, or Ruigrok and Gulmans 'Bisschop Gijssen'.

⁸¹ See van Schaik *Bedankt voor de bloemen* 63-86.

⁸² *Ibid.* 70.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 93.

⁸⁴ Van Kilsdonk is cited in *Ibid.* 93.; André Lascaris OP, 'Bisschoppen Spelen Monopolie', *De Bazuin*, 64 (1981), 1.

parishes, where the priests (educated and ordained under the progressive bishops in the years of the Council) and the parishioners (who went to the Catholic high schools and student' parishes in the Sixties) discovered the space they had to do things they could not and *would* not tell their bishop about. Working groups and discussion groups flourished in the parishes. These groups were set up by politically engaged people from the 'grass roots' of the Church and were, as opposed to the traditional Catholic societies, not chaired by a bishop, nor a priest. These groups regularly demanded (and were granted) attention in the media – not in the least because they were active in fields and discussions which were considered important outside the churches as well: women's emancipation, homosexuality, environmental pollution, the position of the poor and the Catholic priests in the dictatorships of Latin America, etc. Partly to learn from each other, partly to stand stronger against the distrust they felt from the bishops, the groups organized themselves in the *Basisbeweging*, the "grass roots movement". Ab Kerssies defines this as a loosely organised collective of groups in which "either concrete pastoral work was carried out, or room for theology debates existed."⁸⁵ When reading the archives of the various groups active in the ecumenical student church of the University of Nijmegen it becomes clear that there were, indeed, very few things that could not be discussed.⁸⁶ The British historian Diarmaid MacCulloch places these discussion groups in a wider movement of theologians arguing for social engagement, and of Christians – and Catholics – looking to other sources than the Vatican theologians to base their 'christian' lifestyle upon. Gustavo Gutiérrez' *Theology of Liberation* was widely read, as was Karl Barth and Karl Rahner.⁸⁷ Within the Netherlands, the progressive theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, who did not shun conflict with the bishops, and the feminist theologian Catharina Halkes provided an intellectual background and directions for the *Basisbeweging*. The Dominican-lead magazines *De Bazuin* and *Wending* would become the mouthpiece for the intellectual progressive Catholics. Many groups, most notably the *Christenen voor het Socialisme* did not only read theologian literature, but works by Marx,

⁸⁵ Ab Kerssies and Laurens Tuinema, 'De Basisbeweging Nederland', in *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II tot Acht Mei beweging*, ed. by Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Saleminck (De Horstink, 1988), pp. 168–181.

⁸⁶ More often than not the stadium of a debate about the aims and ideas of the group was more or less ever-lasting. In an evaluation of the local *Christenen voor het Socialisme* group one member states "wij zullen door strijden!!!" when asked about his ambitions for next academic year, while another group member complains that the meetings mostly consisted of endless discussions, which too often ended up being too intellectual for the 'common man' to understand, and that nothing concrete had come out of the group's work. He hopes that in the next five (!) years, the group will gain the knowledge and skills to put their ideas into practice, but first they will need a deeper understanding of the theologians and political philosophy they have been reading. Archives Student Parish Nijmegen, +/- 1981 Inv. No 65

⁸⁷ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Allen Lane, 2009)

Engels and Mao as well. In March 1983, *De Bazuin* devoted an entire issue to Marx.⁸⁸ In the next chapters, we will return to these movements and see what the consequences of their theoretical interests were in their choices in contact with the communist countries.

For some years, these groups were only loosely organised; private initiatives, unrestricted by central authorities was exactly the point of the movement. Ironically, they found each other when in 1985 Pope John Paul II visited the Netherlands, and the bishops organised a programme which would *celebrate* the Catholic Faith, instead of *discuss* it. Months before the start of the visit, it became clear that there would be no room for any slightly critical groups in the official programme. The grass roots groups decided to organise their own event to show “a different face of the Church”. The meeting on the Malieveld in The Hague on the 8th of May attracted around 10.000 visitors.⁸⁹ A couple of days later, the Pope would drive through the almost empty streets of Den Bosch, and be cheered on by far-right *Totus Tuus*-groups in Maastricht.⁹⁰ Although the visit of the Pope showed that the Pope *did* have some supporters among the ‘common’ Dutch Catholics, the image that remained was the distance between conservatives and progressive Catholics. The organisation of the day on the Malieveld returned the next years as the “8 May movement”, and the bishops would continue their quest for the re-instatement of conservative Catholicism.⁹¹

The Christian Peace movements and the 8 May movement

In the last chapter we saw how public concern about the “new” Cold War resulted in the mass-support for the Peace movements. The growth of the Dutch branch of the Catholic Peace movement *Pax Christi*, and the way it shaped its organisation and policies between 1975 and 1985⁹², should moreover be seen in the context of the increase of support and opportunities for political and social engagement among Catholics. *Pax Christi* international was founded in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, in the context of the foundation of the United Nations, the Declaration of Human Rights, and the first talks on European Cooperation. It aimed to be a *spiritual* movement, hoping to support the world in the new course, away from nationalism and tyranny. After the papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, *Pax Christi* slowly, but steadily gained the confidence to

⁸⁸ ‘Honderd jaar na Marx’ *de Bazuin* 66 (1983) 10

⁸⁹ Borgman, van Dijk and Salemink, *De Vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland* 7. van der Plas, *Uit de grond van ons hart*

⁹⁰ See van Schaik, *Bedankt voor de bloemen*; Ruigrok and Van Hasselt ‘De Paus in Nederland’

⁹¹ The 8 May movement was formally disbanded in 2003. At that moment, there were only about 800 contributors left. *Trouw* reports regularly on present-day conflicts: Monic Slingerland, ‘Woede om “Kadaverdiscipline” in RK Kerk’, *Trouw*, 15 November 2012 <<http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/5091/Religie/article/detail/3348388/2012/11/15/Woede-om-kadaverdiscipline-in-rk-kerk.dhtml>>.

⁹² See, for instance: Reiding, *Bewegen Binnen Smalle Marges* in particular the chapter on the recruitment and emancipation of new members/contributors in the 1970s.

operate not just as a spiritual movement, but as a political movement as well. Meanwhile, more and more Christians realised that the optimism of the years after the War had been naïve and that the world, divided by yet another political conflict, was not heading in the right directions.⁹³ Soon, dilemmas were raised about which, it was felt, Pax Christi should take a clear stand – which was not necessarily the same stand as the Catholic political party took. In the Netherlands, the “225 million”-discussion” of 1969 would be the first example.⁹⁴ The outcome (Pax Christi spoke out against the extra budget for military defense, and thus against the KVP) was one of the signs of an increased self-confidence in the undertaking of their own initiatives, without waiting for directions of the Bishops and/or the Catholic political party. From the late 1970s, Pax Christi became one of the main initiators of the mass demonstrations against the deployment of the NATO arsenal in the Netherlands. In these years, membership grew exponentially, and Pax Christi was able to obtain a strong position among the other Peace movements, and in the Dutch Catholic Church. The *Kommunikatieblad*, Pax Christi did not shun critical analysis of the CDA policies. The bishops’ silence on the arms race was to many a thorn in their side as well. In 1985, Pax Christi was one of the critical organisations present at the manifestation in The Hague, and in 1988, Pax Christi contributed to *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland*, a book that can be seen as an anthology of the “8 May movement”. The author of the Pax Christi chapter is, however, cautious. Pax Christi was, after all, still headed by a bishop, and part of Pax Christi International. “It is not the task of Pax Christi to engage in Church-internal discussions on hierarchy and organisational structure, but to inform and educate Catholics – from bishop to parishioner – about Peace.” – the author claims.⁹⁵

⁹³ Schennink, *In beweging voor de vrede*; Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen binnen smalle marges*

⁹⁴ After the Prague Spring, the Dutch government wished to expand the budget for defence by 225 million guilders. A majority of the members expected Pax Christi to speak out against the budget, but the KVP, member of the coalition, was in favour, and so was the KVP politician Wim Schuijt, who happened to be part of the national board of Pax Christi as well. In the yearly general meeting, the KVP politician stepped away from the board, and the road to the first ‘real’ political statement of Pax Christi was cleared. At that moment, the bishops had, thus far, refrained from any pronouncements on the defence budget. Pax Christi was chaired by a bishop, but had no stronger voice in the meetings than the other members of the board. Jacques van der Meer, Interview by the author, digital recording, The Hague, 1 November 2012; Jeurissen, *De kerkelijke vredesbeweging* 136–150; Schennink, *In beweging voor de vrede*; Megens and H Reiding, *Bewegen binnen smalle marges*

⁹⁵ Jeurissen, *De kerkelijke vredesbeweging* 136–150.

The interviewees in this thesis, however, show that their engagement in the *Berliner Konferenz*, Pax Christi or the trips organised for them *were* part of their wider engagement in the *Basisbeweging* and/or the “8 May movement”. Karl Derksen was a very prominent figure in both circles, and, as we will see, used the *Bazuin*, *Wending* and other magazines to promote further collaboration between the two movements, which he saw as working towards similar ideals.⁹⁶ For others, the *Berliner Konferenz* and/or Pax Christi offered an outlet for their political engagement. Especially for those who were active in the local Pax Christi groups in their parish, it was the last straw that kept them inside the Church.⁹⁷ Some of the GDR-goers in the last chapter of this thesis stated that, if another non-Catholic organisation had offered them to make a similar trip to the GDR, they would have done that.⁹⁸ Others considered their political engagement as essential to their Christian identity. “You are a Christian, and *thus* socially and politically engaged.” Whether this social engagement was practised in a plea to invite homosexuals to the student parish or in a trip to East Berlin to meet other Christians was not of a great difference. “Where people from different social groups meet, *that’s* where Christ becomes man”; said Jan Huysmans, who worked as a (married) priest and student pastor in Nijmegen between 1982 and 1995.⁹⁹



⁹⁶ Ernst, *Geleefde theologie* 6.

⁹⁷ In 1987 and 1988 Pax Christi Netherlands and *De Bazuin* both organise polls among their members/readers. The outcomes show that the members have enjoyed higher education, vote for the (smaller) ‘red’ political parties, and consider themselves religious. In both polls, about 10% (and in case of *De Bazuin* readers older than 45 years more than 25%) of the respondents crossed out the word “Roman” before “Roman Catholic” when asked to which religious community they belonged. The reports on the polls show that there must have been an overlap in the ranks of Pax Christi and the readers of *De Bazuin*. Serge Roufs and Elly Kok, Interview by the author, digital recording, Arnhem, 16 October 2012; Wim Muijers, Interviews by the author, digital recordings, Ede, 18 September and 26 October 2012.

⁹⁸ ‘Voor ‘t Eerst D'rüben - Een Reisverslag Van Acht Jonge Mensen Naar De DDR Met Het Oost-West Buro Van Pax Christi’ (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 2655).

⁹⁹ Jan Huysmans, Interview by the author

A minority in seclusion

The Catholic Church in the GDR, 1950 -1989

“Dieses Haus bleibt uns ein fremdes Haus”

Bishop Spülbeck at the *Katholikentreffen*, 1956¹⁰⁰

In the last chapter we surveyed the differences between Catholics in the Netherlands. In the discussions, the national government played no part at all; although the Christian political parties were (part) of the government, Catholic politicians were very careful not to speak out about Church politics. In their turn, the bishops were very cautious to speak out about political issues such as the positioning of NATO weapons on Dutch soil. In the GDR, however, the question as to what the Catholic Church’s attitude towards the State should be, determined virtually every other discussion within the Church as well. This was not only due to the Catholics’ aversion of the Communist regime, but also because of the regime’s *Kirchenpolitik* which was never friendly, at times outright hostile but overall calculative:

Die SED [Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands] fand nur sehr langsam zu einem sachlicheren Umgang mit den Kirchen, wobei die konkrete Kirchenpolitik immer einem taktische Kalkül unterworfen blieb. Die Kirche galt als potentieller Feind, der stets mißtrauisch zu überwachen war.¹⁰¹

The Christian faith practiced in the churches was, in the eyes of the regime, no more than “institutionalized superstition”, and was expected to die out soon. The regime did not modify this ideas until the 1960s. By then, the authorities understood that, even though the number of church-goers had decreased considerably, they had also formed a hard core which would remain stable. The SED regime started to use the Vatican in its struggle for international recognition. It understood the Vatican as an institute with tremendous diplomatic power, and was cautious to grant Catholics in the GDR enough freedom not to enrage other Catholic (European) nations. Privileges, however, were

¹⁰⁰ Schäfer, *Staat und Katholische Kirche in der DDR* 110.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 453.

almost always granted to the Catholic hierarchy, not to the common parishioners.¹⁰² The result was that, on the one hand, East German Catholics found in their churches an 'alternative public sphere', next to life in the socialist society, a place where, up to a very limited point, they could discuss politics freer than outside, and become active in small pressure groups. On the other hand, the dictatorial regime provided the circumstances in which the domination of the hierarchy over the common parishioners and priests could be established stronger than in the Western European countries, even after the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰³ Many Catholics in the GDR thus felt oppressed from two sides; by the State in public life, and by the bishops within the churches.¹⁰⁴

Kirchlich und Staatlich in Diaspora

Since the Reformation, the Churches in the German states had been linked closely to the worldly authorities. The *cuius regio, cuius religio* principle had made Catholics a very small minority in the center of the Reformation, the region that would later become Eastern Germany. Under Bismarck and the Weimar Republic, the Catholic Church was suppressed, and although the *Concordat* between Hitler and Pius XI in 1933 had granted Catholics freedom of Religion, it had also driven back the Church from public life, closing schools, hospitals and other societies. Through the *Concordat* the German Church had become a private society, which dealt only with the celebration of Faith inside the churches.

After the Second World war, the Catholics in the Soviet Occupied Zone of Germany saw themselves under another regime hostile to religion. Soon, the differences in opinion as to what was the best stand towards this new regime became apparent. The creation of the GRD and the BRD as two independent states had divided the German bishoprics, but for more than a decade, the Catholic Church refused to make changes in the hierarchical structure of the German Ecclesiastical province. In 1962 Apostolic Administrators were installed in the Eastern regions of the now divided bishoprics. In the 1970s more steps towards administrative independence of the GDR bishoprics would be made, but the Vatican would never acknowledge the GDR, and did not change the

¹⁰² Cor Arends, *Katholiken in Ost-Europa: Opleving, Getuigenis En Engagement* (J.H. Kok, 1989); Kösters and Tischner *Katholische Kirche in SBZ und DDR*. See also: Cerny-Werner *Vatikanische Ostpolitik und die DDR*.

¹⁰³ Schäfer *Staat und Katholische Kirche*, p. 459; Kösters and Tischner *Katholische Kirche in SBZ und DDR*; Grütz *Katholizismus in der DDR-Gesellschaft*.

¹⁰⁴ Cor Arends, '- VERTROUWELIJK - Verslag van de reis naar Leipzig, DDR 2-8 April' (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 2119, 1985).

old borders. Consequently, the bishop of Berlin was, up until the fall of the Wall, bishop of East *and* West Berlin.¹⁰⁵

The incongruence between state- and ecclesiastical borders was an important factor in the discussion on how to react to the new Communist regime in the SBZ/GDR. Bishops residing in the West now made statements on how Catholics and the Catholic Church should stand towards the new regime. Cardinal Preysing stated that the only solution the Catholic Church could live with, were reforms in Western direction. In 1947 he released the "*Preysing-Erlass*", stating that all direct negotiations between Catholic dignitaries and representatives of the Communist state were prohibited. In 1957, Julius Döpfner, bishop of Berlin and former bishop of the divided bishopric Würzburg, restated this document, and expanded it. Only absolutely necessary talks could be held, and only in Berlin, with at least two representatives of the Church present. Negotiations with mass-organisations and political parties were banned, as were talks about ideology, politics or current events. Reports of the talks should be sent (in duplicate!) to the episcopal ordinariate of Berlin.¹⁰⁶ Döpfner, in line with his predecessor Preysing, took an offensive stance, hoping to expose the suppression of the church by the Communist regime. The result was that he was denied access to the East zone of Berlin from 1958. Historian Bernd Schäfer:

Der offensive politische Kurs des in seinem Westberliner Horizont agierenden Bischofs Döpfner beruhte auf einer Überschätzung des Potentials der katholische Kirche vor Ort in der DDR. Angesichts der realen Machtverhältnisse führe dieser Kurs in eine kirchenpolitische Sackgasse und schließlich im Juli 1961 zur Versetzung Döpfners nach München durch den Vatikan.¹⁰⁷

That Preysing's and Döpfner's demands were unrealistic was already understood by bishops residing in the East. They preached an approach that would stand closer to what was called the 'Zone Reality' (*Zonenwirklichkeit*).¹⁰⁸ As the "*Kirche unter dem Kreuz*" the Catholic Church would have to survive under a hostile regime which, the bishops were convinced, was temporary, yet would not end within one or two generations. The Church, thus, had to convince the parishioners that living as a Catholic in the GDR was something to which resistance was useless. To make living as a Catholic in the GDR possible, it was necessary that the Church was in contact with the state. At the *Katholikentreffen* in Cologne, in 1956 (one of the last pan-German gatherings) bishop

¹⁰⁵ Schäfer *Staat und Katholische Kirche*; Grütz *Katholizismus in der DDR-Gesellschaft*.

¹⁰⁶ Cerny-Werner, *Vatikanische Ostpolitik und die DDR* 93.

¹⁰⁷ Schäfer, *Staat und Katholische Kirche* 456.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid* 455.

Spülbeck used the metaphor of the socialist state as a house. He recounts a ‘typical’ conversation between a cleric and a representative of the State:

Dies Gespräch beginnt geradezu stereotyp: Herr Minister, Sie sind Marxist. Ich bin katholischer Christ. Wir haben daher in den weltanschaulichen Beziehungen nichts miteinander gemein. Es gibt keine Brücke von Ihnen zu uns. Wir sind völlig getrennte Leute. Aber wir leben in einem Haus, dessen Grundfesten wir nicht gebaut haben, dessen tragende Fundamente wir sogar für falsch halten. Und wenn wir jetzt in diesem Haus miteinander leben, so kann unser Gespräch nur bedeuten (...) *wer macht in diesem Haus die Treppe sauber?* Damit soll keine Abwertung der ernstesten Gespräche zwischen Staat und Kirche gemeint sein, sondern es soll nur handgreiflich ausgedrückt werden, daß grundsätzliche Gespräche zwischen den beiden Partnern nicht möglich sind. Wir tragen gerne dazu bei, daß wir selbst in diesem Haus noch menschenwürdig und als Christen leben können, aber wir können kein neues Stockwerk draufsetzen, da wir das Fundament für fehlerhaft halten. Das Menschenbild des Marxismus und seine Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsauffassung stimmt mit dem Bild, das wir haben, nicht überein. *Dieses Haus bleibt uns ein fremdes Haus.* Wir leben also nicht nur kirchlich in der Diaspora, sondern auch staatlich.¹⁰⁹

Although Spülbeck still kept the Socialist state at bay, and made very clear that he would rather not live under this regime, his approach was rather different than Döpfner who, even after the communist regime had been firmly in office for over a decade and had successfully and brutally suppressed uprisings in both the GDR (1953) and Hungary (1956), was under the impression that it was the Church who could lay down the terms of negotiations. Throughout the 1950s, the Church(es) openly criticized the State on various occasions, most notably when in 1956 the *Jugendweihe* was introduced.¹¹⁰ Overall, however, the bishops kept quiet and the church-goers formed small, rather isolated communities. Like in the Hitler years, most priests refrained from political engagement, and kept to their altars as their only work place.

In the 1960s, the new bishop of Berlin, Bengsch, hoped to continue this strategy. At the start of the Second Vatican Council, he pleaded to “remain silent about the Church that remains silent”; a too strong condemnation of communist tyranny (another judgement could hardly be expected from the Vatican) would only make things worse for Catholics in the GDR and the rest of the Eastern Bloc. Apart from this plea, Bengsch also voted against most of the Council’s constitutions, including *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen*

¹⁰⁹ Bishop Spülbeck at the Catholic days in Cologne, where 25.000 Catholics from the DDR could attend. As cited in: Schäfer *Staat und Katholische Kirche* 110. My Italics

¹¹⁰ In the *Jugendweihe* twelve year old students would affirm their loyalty to the State. Participation was not mandatory, but it soon occurred that *not* participating would result in discrimination later in life. The Church, however, saw the *Jugendweihe* as a propaganda tool against the confirmation sacrament.

gentium. Bengsch considered lay participation potentially harmful for a Church living under a dictatorial regime. He particularly feared the opening up of the discussion of political engagement by the Church, suspecting that the State would exploit divisions between Catholics.¹¹¹ In the words of a liberal priest from Leipzig, the rejection of these documents meant, “[in the Catholic Church in the GDR] no reflection on the position and the task of the Church in the modern world had been practised.”¹¹² The result was a ‘scared’ Church which retreated from society and hid behind the altar. In 1970-1973, the metaphor of the Catholics as a “small flock” in a diaspora; the weak in an hostile society, was made official - even “cultivated”-, during the Episcopal synod in Dresden. This would remain the ‘official’ stand of the Eastern German bishops until the second half of the 1980s.¹¹³

The Alternative: *Kirche im Sozialismus*

The Lutheran (or *Evangelische*) churches are widely credited for their realistic attitude towards the regime, and their later part in the peaceful course of the events preceding the *Wende*. During the 1950s, confrontations between the Evangelical Church of Germany (like the Catholic Church still organised in a Pan-Germanic structure), and the State were no less fierce than between the state and the Catholic Church. After the building of the Wall, Lutheran bishops from the FRG were denied access to the East. Painful as this was, the realisation that the division was definitive did clear the road to a more realistic approach to state-church authorities. Under great pressure from the state authorities, the German federation of Lutheran churches split into two in 1969, and the *Bund der Evangelische Kirchen in der DDR* (BEK) was born. In the same year, the tenet *Kirche im Sozialismus* was coined. The Evangelical churches aimed to be a church not *against* or *next* to, but *in* the “real existing socialism” of the GDR.¹¹⁴ The churches declared to remain loyal to the State, and to actively help building the socialist state. In exchange for loyalty to the state, the evangelical churches were granted a certain level of independence, and freedom of speech within the churches. The “marriage”, however, would remain a marriage of convenience. Open imputations of Christians, even if they were members of the CDU, were not uncommon, and the Church voiced open critique

¹¹¹ See, for instance: Grütz *Katholizismus in der DDR-Gesellschaft*, 122.

¹¹² As cited in: Arends, *Katholiken in Oost-Europa* 75–76.

¹¹³ Schäfer *Staat und Katholische Kirche*; Arends, *Katholiken in Oost-Europa*

¹¹⁴ Paul Peters, ‘Rudolf Bahro : The Alternative in Eastern Europe’, 115–126. The term ‘Real existing socialism’, coined by Rudolf Bahro in 1968 was meant to indicate the socialism as it was practised in the GDR. This was, according to Bahro, not the perfect form of socialism, but did have the potential to become so. In the Christian *milieu* of the GDR and the rest of the Warsaw pact it was furthermore used to stress the reality of power relations under communist regimes. See also the chapter ‘*Loyale Opposition or Instrumentalisierung?*’

towards the government on various occasions. At the same time, the Church leaders pleaded for cautiousness among their flock, and would remain very cautious itself in backing illegal “disloyal” opposition voiced by (Christian) popular movements, such as *Schwerter zu Pflugscharen*.¹¹⁵ In the late 1980s, this would lead to the churches becoming the place where political engagement, loyal opposition and *peaceful* protests could start and lead up to the mass demonstrations in Leipzig and the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹¹⁶ Like the Catholic Churches, the services and activities of the Lutheran Churches offered an alternative public sphere to the uniform, monotonous daily life of the communist society. However, because the Lutheran churches, more than the Catholic churches, aimed to stand in society, many Christians felt that the Lutheran churches were more ‘on their side’ than the Catholic parishes. A young (Dutch) visitor of the *Katholikentagen* in Dresden, 1987, remarked that being part of society is so much easier for a Lutheran pastor, who did his or her studies at a University, is often married and has kids who are confronted with the dilemmas of living a Christian life in a society forced to be secular, than for a Catholic priest, let alone a bishop, who had lived a sheltered and secluded life since they entered the seminaries at age 18 or younger. Priests were never confronted with compulsory military service, discriminatory measures after not participating (or letting your children participate) in the *Jugendweihe*, or having to fear to be ‘allocated’ to work in the chemical industries after voicing discontent. Instead, they enjoyed the security of a salary paid – in large – by the Western German Catholic Church, plus the privileges of easier traveling and access to luxury (western) goods offered by the State. In all, it was felt that they could not always satisfactorily offer advice to (young) GDR-Christians.¹¹⁷

Some Catholics who felt neglected by their bishops went to the Lutheran churches instead. Others stayed, but tried to find ways to employ their own activities and initiatives, similar to the 8 May Movement in the Netherlands. In his book on the Catholic Church in the GDR/society, Reinhard Grütz describes these groups as very small (*quantitativ marginal*), yet offering an interesting “other way” (*Nebenstrang*) of the conception of the Second Vatican Council.¹¹⁸ The best-known group would become the *Aktions Kreis Halle*, founded in 1970 after the controversial appointment of the conservative bishop Braun, and the unexpected death of bishop Spülbeck, which caused

¹¹⁵ See the chapter ‘On the road to the right track’

¹¹⁶ de Graaf, *Eine Protestantische Revolution?*; Conway, ‘The “Stasi” and the Churches’; Ozawa-De Silva, ‘Peace, Pastors, and Politics’; Ramet, ‘Religion and Politics in Germany Since 1945.’

¹¹⁷ Pieter Jongsma and Jan ter Laak, ‘Bezoek aan het Katholiken Treffen, Dresden’ 1987 (Personal Archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. no 40).

¹¹⁸ Grütz, *Katholizismus in DDR-Gesellschaft* chap. VIII – ‘Innerkirchliche Kreise und randständige Dissidenz’.

the pre-mature end of the “synod” he had initiated in his bishopric. The start was inspired by the group of “Solidary critical priests” which was founded in the FRG in 1969, and can (thus) also be seen in the post-conciliar rise of basis initiatives by the lower clergy and laics.¹¹⁹ The movement would never be officially recognized as a *Church* group, yet was tolerated more or less until the second half of the 1980s by the Catholic Hierarchy.¹²⁰ In the *AKH*, priests and catholic laics would come together and discuss ecclesiastical and social questions, and publish statements about these questions. Initially, the group mainly criticized the isolationist attitude of the “Small flock Church”, but soon the vocabulary changed, and socialism as practised by the SED-state was criticised as well. The *AKH* now looked to Latin America and the Liberation theologians in their criticism towards the materialism of communism *and* capitalism, and their plea for a *Fundamentaldemokratisierung*. Socialism, as it existed in the GDR, should change, but, they argued, this could only be achieved if the Catholics were willing „*Von einer bloßen Anerkennung des Sozialismus zu einem überzeugten Sozialismus zu kommen*“¹²¹ In their plea for democratization in and outside the Church, the members of *AKH* were feared by both State and hierarchy. They were also considered the ‘natural allies’ of the progressive Catholic peace movement Pax Christi.¹²² The chapter on the International affairs committee of the Dutch branch of Pax Christi will, therefore, return to the *AKH*.

The members of *AKH* accepted the *principles* of Socialism, - or at least most of them considered it the better alternative to Capitalism. They, however, refused to collaborate with the SED-party, which, in their eyes, practised a corrupted form of socialism. Other Catholics went further in their alliance with socialism. In 1964 the *Berliner Konferenz europäischer Katholiken (BK)* was founded, as a Catholic “sister” to the *Christliche Friedenskonferenz (CFK)* which was founded in Prague in 1958. The *BK* aimed to be a forum for all Catholics, East and West, to discuss the Peace problem - most notably the nuclear arms race. The *BK* members, for most part, wished to build on and expand the socialist state, along with the socialist government. They acknowledged that the socialism now practised by the GDR authorities was not the perfect form of socialism, but instead of choosing the illegal, “disloyal” opposition like the *AKH*, the *BK* hoped to

¹¹⁹ Peter Willm, ‘Der Aktionskreis Halle (AKH) Als Teil Der Suchbewegungen Des Nachkonziliaren Katholizismus’, *Rundbrief Aktions Kreis Halle*, 1–7 <http://www.akh-info.de/archiv/Willms_Aktionskreis_Halle.pdf>; Claus Herold, *Der Aktionskreis Halle, Geschichte, Strukturen Und Aktionen Einer Katholischen Basisgruppe* (Magdeburg: Der Aktions Kreis Halle, 1999).

¹²⁰ Arends, *Katholiken in Oost-Europa*.

¹²¹ Grütz *Katholizismus in der DDR-Gesellschaft*, 245.

¹²² ter Laak, *Op zoek naar bondgenoten*

improve socialism from within.¹²³ Officially independent (*eigenständig*) from the Communist government and party, the plenary conferences held in Berlin were nevertheless fully subsidized by the State. For most of the other Catholics, both the hierarchy and the laics, the *Berliner Konferenz* was associated too closely with the regime. The *BK*, like the *CFK*, did not condemn the Soviet invasion in Prague in '68, nor did they speak out against the martial law in Poland in '81.¹²⁴ Closer to home, Catholics reproached the *BK* for not speaking out against the compulsory military service. Although the *BK* always claimed to be an 'all-including' forum where everyone who wished so could speak, the Catholic hierarchy mistrusted the *BK* because of the close ties with the Christian political party *CDU-Ost*, which was seen as a puppet party to the *SED*. Consequently, the bishops forbade priests and Catholic laypeople to join the sessions. The *AKH*, not usually impressed by a condemnation of the bishops, avoided the *BK* as well. It was, at the time, clear to all that the plenary meetings of the *BK* in Berlin were *visited* by the *Stasi*, yet it remains unclear as to how much the sessions were *guided* by the *Stasi* as well. In their bulky standard works on Catholics in the GDR, both Bern Schäfer – who focusses on the bishops – and Reinhard Grütz devote very little attention to the *BK*, because of the isolation from the rest of the Catholic milieu.

From the start of the *BK* the Dutch Dominican Karl Derksen, later joined by the sister of Divine Providence Yosé Höhne-Sparborth were regular participants of the *Berliner Konferenz'* plenary sessions, and the meetings for theologians. In the chapter *Loyale opposition or Instrumentalisierung* we will survey their motivations to join the *BK*, and their ideas on the 'instrumentalisation' of the movement by the government further.

The pastoral letter *Katholische Kirche im Sozialistischen Staat* – a new direction?

In the second half of the 1980s, after Gorbachev announced his reforms, the people of the GDR, the illegal opposition and the Lutheran churches slowly but steadily began to claim more space for freedom of speech and thought. In 1986, the bishops in the GDR released a pastoral letter titled *Katholische Kirche im Sozialistischen Staat*. The document is the result of four years of campaigning by the new Apostolic Administrator of Erfurt, Joachim Wanke, who rejected the notion of the "small flock" and searched for openings

¹²³ Yosé Höhne Sparborth, Interview by the author, digital recording, Utrecht, 26 November 2012; Publications in *Bazuin*; Guske *Chronik*.

¹²⁴ Karl Derksen, Interview by Jacco Pekelder, tape recording, s.l., 11 September 1995 "Er werd geen officiële veroordeling gepubliceerd, maar er was zeker discussie over, met name vanuit de Westerse deelnemers." *We did not issue an official condemnation, but we certainly discussed it, most notably the Western participants.*

in the “*Umfelt DDR*” to live a Christian, yet socially engaged life.¹²⁵ In the letter, the bishops observed the reality of the socialist state, with which they cannot agree completely, because it is based on beliefs and ideologies different to theirs: Marxist-Leninist materialism and a determinist idea of the course of history. Furthermore, this state and the ruling party SED consider religion as “wrongful thinking”, as a form of a “wrong reflection of nature and society in the human consciousness.”¹²⁶ The image of the Christian as *Klassenfeind*, propagated in the state schools and the SED’s *Kirchenpolitik* is established firmly in society. The State does, however, expect its citizens, including the Christians to participate in the “*Aufbau und die Stärkung der sozialistischen Gesellschaft.*” Christians are, thus, confronted with a society which demands a lifestyle they cannot agree with. *Verbitterung* and *Resignation*, and a high number of *Ausreiseantrags* (an official request for permission to emigrate from the GDR) among Christians in the GDR are the consequences. The bishops bemoan this attitude, since it is the Christian’s task to, by his Christly *Lebenszeugnis*, spread the Spirit of Christ’s gospel, and be “the salt of the Earth”.¹²⁷ The Catholic Church will lose its identity and credibility if it would position itself as in service of the State; its allegiance can lie only with the World Church (headed by the Pope) and in service of the one God: *Wir sind nicht eine Landeskirche, sondern katholische Weltkirche in einem Land.* In political questions, the Church can only act “in name of the Lord”. This does not mean that there can be no dialogue between State and Church, yet it should be clear that in this dialogue, the Church – in the form of the Berliner Bisschoffen Konferenz – will not let itself be used by other parties (political or other) for propagandist or other ‘alien’ interests. For the individual Catholic, this means:

Er darf sich dort zur Zusammenarbeit mit andersdenkenden Menschen aufgerufen wissen, wo es um das Wohl des einzelnen Menschen, einer Gemeinschaft oder um das allgemeine Wohl der Gesellschaft geht und wo er gleichzeitig (!) ungeschmälert und offen sein Leben und Wirken unter Gottes Anspruch stellen darf. Unser Ja zur Welt und ihren Ansprüchen muß vom Ja zu Gott umfassen bleiben. (...) Es darf auch nicht für den Christen ein gesellschaftliches „Mitmachen“ aus dem Bestreben geben, seinen christlichen Glauben zu verbergen oder sich dem klaren Einstehen für eigene Überzeugungen zu entziehen.

Es ist Aufgabe aller katholischen Christen, die Bedeutung ihres Glaubens und des Evangeliums im Einsatz für eine gerechte, menschenwürdige und friedliche Welt zu erkennen und in die Tat

¹²⁵ Cor Arends, ‘Katholiken in DDR Worden Wakker Uit Winterslaap’, *Hervormd Nederland*, 1987; Arends, *Katholiken in Oost-Europat*.

¹²⁶ “verkehrten Widerspiegelung der Natur und der Gesellschaft in menschlichen Bewußtsein.” Die Bischöfe der Berliner Bischofskonferenz, ‘Katholische Kirche im sozialistischen Staat - Pastoral Schreiben der Katholischen Bischöfe in Der DDR an Die Priester Und Diakone’ (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv no 712, 1986).

¹²⁷ Matthew 5, 13

umzusetzen. Dort, wo ein Christ lebt und arbeitet, muß etwas von seinem Glauben in die Umwelt einfließen. (...) Der christliche Glaube läßt sich nicht so schnell verbittern oder in Resignation treiben.

After this letter, expectations among GDR and Dutch Catholics were high.¹²⁸ They saw it as an opening to an attitude which resembled the critically engaged position of the Evangelical churches. From the early 1980s, the *BEK* had framed its social engagement in the worldwide “Conciliar Process for Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation.”¹²⁹ Started in Vancouver in 1982, this ‘concord’ of Christians all over the world really began to take shape in Eastern Europe, where engaged Christians used it to discuss injustices and malpractices in their own countries.¹³⁰ GDR Catholics, most notably the members of the *AKH* used the Pastoral letter to push the GDR bishops to voice their support for the Process.¹³¹ Pope John Paul II, who recognized the process as an important aspect of the opposition against the Communist regimes, urged the bishops to voice their support as well, but, like we saw in the previous chapter, remained wary of all activities not supervised by the Hierarchy. The GDR bishops were hesitant at first, but did voice their support in 1987.¹³² There were some parishes which did start discussion groups and activities, particularly in the bishopric of Erfurt, where bishop Wanke supported ecumenical initiatives.¹³³ In practice, however the ‘support’ from the bishops proved to be mainly in words, very little in deeds. After the *Katholiken Treffen* in 1987 Jan ter Laak remarks, pessimistically, that “the Church has strengthened its grip on the peace initiatives in the Church.”¹³⁴ A year after the Pastoral letter and the hopeful news features in Western media, new articles with rather different titles appear: “*DDR Katholiken wollen Identität bewahren*”; “*Rigoros und zurückhaltend zugleich, Katholiken zeichnen sich (...) als kleine geschlossene Gesellschaft*”.¹³⁵

¹²⁸ Cor Arends, ‘Van getto naar engagement - Katholieken in de DDR’ (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 712, 1986); Arends, ‘Katholieken in DDR worden wakker uit winterslaap’. Jan ter Laak ‘Het Conciliair Proces in Oost-Europa’ s.d. (1995) (Personal Archive Jan ter Laak, Inv. 40)

¹²⁹ Stephen Brown, “Global Denken, Lokal Handeln: Der Konziliare Prozess Für Gerechtigkeit, Frieden Und Bewahrung Der Schöpfung Als Wegbereiter Der Friedlichen Revolution in Der DDR”, in „*Kirche für andere*“, des Rates der Kirchen in den Niederlanden und IKV/Pax Christi zu Ehren Heino Falckes, Utrecht, 2 Oktober 2009, 2009, p. 14 <<http://de.scribd.com/doc/20817555/Der-konziliare-Prozess-als-Wegbereiter-der-friedlichen-Revolution>>. See also: Stephen Brown, *Von der Unzufriedenheit zum Widerspruch. Der Konziliare Prozess für Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und d Bewahrung der Schöpfung als Wegbereiter der friedlichen Revolution in der DDR*, (Lembeck, Frankfurt am Main 2010)

¹³⁰ See the chapter “Love thy neighbour as thyself” for more about the Conciliar Process

¹³¹ Letter by the *Aktions Kreis Halle* to *Bischöfe der Berliner Bischofskonferenz*, June 1987, copy (Personal Archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. no 40)

¹³² Arends, *Katholieken in Oost-Europa*

¹³³ For example the group in Halberstadt, which invited a group from Arnhem to discuss how Catholics in East and West joined the Conciliar Process. Geert van Dartel, ‘Enkele Dagen Ruiken Aan De DDR’, 1988; Lidwien Meijer, ‘Een Ontmoeting in Halberstadt, DDR’ (Personal Archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. no 40, 1988).

¹³⁴ Jongsmas and Jan ter Laak, ‘Bezoek aan het Katholikentreffen’

¹³⁵ Albrecht Hinze ‘DDR-Katholiken wollen Identität Bewahren’ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13 July 1987, Albrecht Hinze ‘Rigoros und zurückhaltend zugleich’ 15 July 1987; copies of articles in: (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no. 710)

At the *Katholikentreffen* in Dresden in 1987, an event many had looked forward to since at least 1985, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) gave the most important speech and left no question to what was the most important message: obedience. Obedience was expected of the parishioners to their priests, who, in turn, were to turn to the bishops, who would turn to the Cardinal and the Vatican.¹³⁶ Twenty years later, Arends expresses the feeling that came upon him when listening to this speech:

the Westerner came to tell the Eastern priests how to fulfil their work, and how to live their life. I expect many of them must have listened to it with some *Hintergedanken*: 'hear it, ignore it, go on with your life', in the exact same way as they listened to the Party's propaganda.¹³⁷

All in all, the Pastoral letter and the 'support' of the Conciliar Process was too little, too late to ignite a widely supported social engagement among Catholics. For forty years, they had been fighting for the right to their own lifestyle and identity. In the rest of this thesis we will see that this made them hesitant to engage in any activities which would change the identity. The Process did, however, create some opportunities for those who had already been seeking a way out of the *Resignation*. It made sure that at least some GDR Catholics, albeit not walking up front next to their Lutheran brothers and sisters, could join in as Catholics *and* active citizens.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Arends, *Katholiken in Oost-Europa*; Arends, 'Katholiken in DDR worden wakker uit winterslaap'. Ratzinger was Cardinal of all German bishoprics, West and East.

¹³⁷ Cor Arends, Interview by the author, digital recording, Amersfoort, 31 October 2012

¹³⁸ Grütz *Katholizismus in der DDR-Gesellschaft*, chap. 'Veränderungen in der Selbstbeschreibung von Katholischer Kirche in der DDR'.

On the road to the right track

The ambivalent course of the Committee for International Relations East-West of Pax Christi Netherlands, 1981 – 1990

“Ik hoop een afgewogen en persoonlijk oordeel te kunnen geven en te kunnen aantonen dat Pax Christi (later gevolgd door het IKV) in de afgelopen 30 jaar bij de keuze van bondgenoten in Oost-Europa voor haar vredeswerk een principiële en heldere koers heeft gevaren”

Jan ter Laak, ‘Op zoek naar bondgenoten’, 1989¹³⁹

Als voorzitter van de CIZOW heb ik ontzettend geprobeerd de twee stromingen in ieder geval met elkaar te laten praten. In de hoop, enige tijd nog, dat er meer gezamenlijk beleid zou komen. Terwijl je achteraf toch moet concluderen dat de twee insteken onverenigbaar waren.

Jacques van der Meer, nov. 2012¹⁴⁰

In July 1989, as political reforms in the Eastern European countries followed in rapid succession, Jan ter Laak looked back on the Eastern Europe policies of the peace movements Pax Christi Netherlands and the *Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad*, groups for which he was respectively general secretary and a member of the executive committee. In the above quote, which is representative of how these movements are now remembered, he claims that the course of Pax Christi in Eastern Europe was “fundamental” and “clear”, and that it set an example for the IKV. In contemporary news magazines, and in later publications on the IKV and Pax Christi, the movements are characterised as making a clear stand *for* the oppositional movements, and *against* the dictatorial communist

¹³⁹ I hope to offer a measured and personal ordeal and to show that Pax Christi (followed by the IKV), in the past thirty years, has made a fundamental and clear choice in her choice of allies for its peace work in Eastern Europe: ter Laak, ‘Op zoek naar bondgenoten’

¹⁴⁰ As chair of the CIZOW, I tried really hard to let the two ‘movements’ engage in a dialogue. For some time, I kept hoping that a collective policy would form. In hindsight, however, one has to conclude that the two perspectives were incompatible. van der Meer, Interview by the author

regimes that oppressed Christians and (other) political opposition.¹⁴¹ However, in this chapter we will see that, although the two movements cooperated closely (mostly because of overlap at the upper echelons of the organisations) and both had a clear idea of who were their “friends” in Eastern Europe, their policy was carried out in very different ways. Pax Christi (and the IKV) developed these policies only in the later years of the Cold War, and this stance was never uncontroversial among members. The partiality for oppositional movements was only formulated officially in late 1983, and events in early 1985 would already ignite calls for a re-assessment and increase willingness to talk to ‘official’ groups as well. The Pax Christi ‘Committee for International Affairs, East-West’ (CIZOW) had only been established in 1978, and had, until 1984, functioned more as a discussion forum than as a committee.¹⁴² The claim that Pax Christi had carried out a “clear” course “over the past thirty years” seems, therefore, an overstatement.

This chapter, aims to give an overview of the discussions that took place on the road to a clearly formulated policy on Eastern Europe, and see what implications this had for the activities of Pax Christi in the GDR. We will see that reaching a consensus on “who Pax Christi’s friends were in Eastern Europe” was very hard, precisely because (prominent) members of the committee had clear, yet very different, ideas on this issue – and did not always take the time to listen carefully to what was said by others.

From a spiritual peace movement to active engagement

In 1963 the Papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris* argued that a Dialogue between the two power blocks was as important for world peace as disarmament and prayers.¹⁴³ In Warsaw pact countries, this led to the foundation of various Catholic groups of priests and/or laics willing to engage in dialogue with the socialist state. In the GDR, no national group was started, but the magazine *Begegnung* and the *Berliner Konferenz europäische Katholiken* should be seen in this context.¹⁴⁴ In Western Europe, the national Pax Christi sections started think tanks which were tasked with deciding what shape the dialogue with communists and Catholics on “the other side” should take. In the Netherlands, the “Workgroup Dialogue” was started in 1966. Members of this committee

¹⁴¹ de Graaf, *Over De Muur*; ter Laak, *Reiziger in Vrede*. Mient Jan Faber, *Vooruitgeschoven spionnen: bevrijd uit de boeien van de Koude Oorlog*, ed. by Henk van Bakel (Utrecht: Spectrum, 2007); van den Berg *IKV 1966-2006*. See also: de Graaf, Hellema and L J van Damme, *Civic Diplomacy*

¹⁴² Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen binnen smalle marges*, chap. 2.3 ‘Het Oost–West beleid krijgt vorm’.

¹⁴³ Pope John XXIII, ‘Pacem in Terris - Papal Encyclical on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty’ (Holy See) <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html>.

¹⁴⁴ See for more information the chapter “Loyale Opposition or Instrumentalisierung?”

were prominent progressive intellectuals. Among these were the priest Wim Rood; Herman de Lange, polemologist at Groningen, and Ad Manning, professor in the history of Dutch Catholicism at the University of Nijmegen. Since the *Berliner Konferenz* was the only politically engaged Catholic group in the GDR, these men considered this to be their 'natural' partner. Nevertheless, the committee hesitated to engage in formal contacts. When it appeared that bishop Bengsch of Berlin had dismissed the *Berliner Konferenz*, followed by FRG bishops and Pax Christi FRG, the Workgroup Dialogue decided that its members would visit BK meetings in a private capacity. This way, Pax Christi Netherlands could keep abreast of current events, without forming a formal alliance with the BK.¹⁴⁵

A committee trying to find its way

In its first years, the "Workgroup Dialogue" was not a very active group, especially as concerned the GDR. In 1977 the group was continued as a sub-committee of the Committee for International Affairs, and became the 'CIZOW'. Apart from keeping up to date with events in Eastern Europe, the committee was supposed to formulate an Eastern Europe policy for Pax Christi, and to organise events to inform grassroots members of Pax Christi about the Warsaw Pact and the Cold War. In comparison with the Dialogue workgroup, the CIZOW was better organised and had a clearer task in mind, but new members made the carrying out of this task anything but easy. Among such newcomers were the Dominican priest Karl Derksen and the Benedictine Michel van Winkel. After 1977 the CIZOW was filled with (younger) men and women who were invited because of their "expertise" in certain countries or areas. This 'expertise' should not, however, be overestimated: one visit to the country involved, combined with a lot of enthusiasm for Pax Christi, could be enough to join, as was shown by Wim Muijers in 1982.¹⁴⁶ Jacques van der Meer had been an active organiser of Pax Christi pilgrimages (*voettochten*), both in the Netherlands, and, from 1978, in Poland. He lived in the Dominican community in Nijmegen and had been in frequent contact with prominent Dominicans, among whom were Edward Schillebeeckx and Karl Derksen. As a student and chairman of the local Pax Christi section in Amsterdam in the late Sixties, he had cooperated with members of the Communist Party of the Netherlands when organising demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. Although he, thus, was not against cooperation with communists *on principle*, his first visits to Poland, and his experiences

¹⁴⁵ Megens and Reiding *Bewegen binnen smalle marges*.

¹⁴⁶ Wim Muijers, Interview by the author: minutes of first CIZOW meetings he attended, personal archives of Wim Muijers.

seeing the impositions placed on the Polish people, led him to stop believing in the benefits of communism.¹⁴⁷ Karl Derksen, on the other hand, joined the CIZOW as a member of the international committee of the *BK*, and strongly advocated *loyal* opposition to the communist regimes, in order to help them develop and improve the socialist experiment of the GDR.¹⁴⁸ Michel van Winkel, also a priest, had great respect for the *BK* where, according to him, “within the boundaries of what is realistic, Christians worked very hard for the demolition of hostile stereotypes between East and West.”¹⁴⁹ Joof van Keulen, by contrast, argued for a stronger focus on human rights and, thus, a critical stand towards the organisations cooperating with the regimes, but doubted whether it was Pax Christi’s job to attempt to oppose the power of the Eastern European governments directly.¹⁵⁰

After the Helsinki agreements, and especially after *Charta '77*, critics of the communist regimes and their violations of human rights were not only found among right-wing politicians and journalists. Many members and voters of the PvdA and PPR were equally critical of the oppression prevalent in communist countries, but did not think this should be a reason to increase the NATO arsenal. Due to its (informal) connections with the *BK*, and its anti-NATO disarmament campaign, Pax Christi was accused of being too lenient towards communism and sometimes called “Marx Christi.”¹⁵¹ Although the CIZOW did take these criticisms into account, an official “yes” in favour of the “dissident” movements (to complete the ‘no’ to official contacts with the *BK*) was not issued during the first years of the committee. Divisions between CIZOW members prevented this, and, more importantly, it was feared that strongly voiced critiques would be harmful to the *détente* between the two blocks. At least until 1981, *détente*, and indeed anything that would help to prevent nuclear war, was considered the first priority of the Peace movements. Until 1981, even those Pax Christi activists who were critical of the *BK* hoped that a *détente* in international relations would lead to a decrease in oppression and censorship in the Warsaw Pact nations, whereas insistence on respect for human rights in the East would cause the authorities to feel threatened, thus harming international safety, as well as (possibly) having a reverse effect on the

¹⁴⁷ Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen binnen smalle marges*, Jacques van der Meer, interview by the author

¹⁴⁸ Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen* chap. ‘Oude en nieuwe problemen, 1977 – 1981’; Paul van Dijk, ‘In gesprek met Jan ter Laak en Karl Derksen’.

¹⁴⁹ van der Meer, Interview by the author; Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen* 160.

¹⁵⁰ Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen* 161. Joof van Keulen, ‘Comments on the Memorandum “De Helsinki Akkoorden Nieuw Leven Inblazen”’, 1986 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 287).

¹⁵¹ Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen* 161.

human rights situation.¹⁵² After the declaration of martial law in Poland, however, it appeared to many that the ‘human rights through détente’ scenario was very unlikely. A few members of the CIZOW, most notably Herman de Lange and José Burger, modified their perspective on the BK, and now argued for contacts with “dissident” movements *as well as* the “loyal opposition”, and for a pragmatic approach in deciding who to talk to and on what subject.¹⁵³

Defining “friends” in Eastern Europe

Slowly, the idea emerged that peace activism should be linked to an engagement with human rights in the Third and Second worlds. It would, however, take another couple of years before this conviction was labelled with the phrase “*vrede is ondeelbaar*” (‘Peace is indivisible’), and even longer before Pax Christi would make this part of its official policy; discussion in the CIZOW would continue until well into 1984.

From early 1982, however, the IKV extended its anti-arms race protests to Eastern Europe. It demanded space for the acknowledgement of the part the Warsaw pact played in the arms race, and announced that it would extend the plea for unilateral disarmament so that it would be heard in the Warsaw Pact as well. This meant that the “independent” peace movements (that is, those movements not financially supported by the state, which in the socialist mind-set often meant: “not *with* the state, therefore *against* the state”) which criticised both the NATO *and* the Warsaw Pact arms industries should be supported, by the Western peace movements, the Western churches, *and* the churches in the Warsaw pact countries. This new policy was criticised by many in and outside the Peace movements. (Semi-) socialist movements in the Netherlands, and the *afh ngige* peace movements in the GDR accused the IKV of involvement in affairs that were not theirs to deal with, and of blindness to the dangers that NATO posed towards the GDR and USSR.¹⁵⁴ Surprisingly, the BEK was also critical, especially of the new plan to establish a European-wide Peace platform, the *Dresdner Friedensforum*, which would campaign for unilateral disarmament both East *and* West of the Iron Curtain and would operate independently from any government. Although in principle in favour of

¹⁵² The idea of détente before human rights also laid ground to the *Ostpolitik* of the Dutch government, which followed Willy Brandt. Hilde Reiding, ‘Ontspanning en mensenrechten. Pax Christi’s omgang met een klassiek dilemma in Koude Oorlogstijd’, in *Civic Diplomacy - Diplomatie tussen macht en mensenrechten, ter nagedachtenis aan Jan ter Laak*, ed. by Beatrice de Graaf and Duco Hellema (Utrecht: Utrecht University, SIM, 2011), pp. 45–63.

¹⁵³ Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen* 162.

¹⁵⁴ de Graaf, *Over De Muur*; Dorry de Beijer (red.), ‘Lustrumnummer 10 Jaar Christenen Voor Het Socialisme’, *Opstand*, 11 (1984). Yos  H hne-Sparborth ‘Vredesacties zijn geen exportartikel’ *De Bazuin* (november 1981) p 6-7

disarmament in the GDR, the GDR churches accused the IKV of opportunism: the *Dresdner Forum* plans, widely published in the Dutch newspapers, made the IKV popular in the Netherlands,¹⁵⁵ but overlooked the consequences for churches, namely prosecution and less space for *unabhängig* peace activities. “*Der IKV erhält dafür die Schlagzeilen, aber wir in Osteuropa bekommen die Schläge*”, said (Lutheran) bishop Werner Krüsche in an interview in the Dutch periodical *De Tijd*.¹⁵⁶ This, and other public statements on events happening in the GDR (including their support for the *Schwerter zu Pflugscharen* movement)¹⁵⁷ soon backfired for the IKV: prominent members would be denied access to the GDR until the summer of 1989.

The immediate consequences of the “reckless” actions of the IKV made the CIZOW of Pax Christi hesitant to make the same choices. They did not want to harm either their contact with the *BEK* and the *BK* or their occasional contact with the Catholic bishops, nor did some of them wish to support an initiative which would probably be harmful to the *BK* (which was still considered an ally by some). Being denied entrance visas to the GDR would have meant the end of dialogue between the parties, which was considered the basis of their Eastern Europe policy.¹⁵⁸ An even stronger argument than the possibility of visa denial was the condemnation of the IKV by Joachim Garstecki, a Catholic priest working for the ecumenical centre of the *BEK*.¹⁵⁹

Yet while the *CIZOW* tried to distance itself from the IKV and looked for its *own* Eastern Europe policy, member overlap at the upper level of the two movements was increasing. In 1983, Jan ter Laak, member of the executive board of IKV, was appointed as general secretary of Pax Christi, and, as such, became a member of the *CIZOW*. Although not initially an expert on Eastern Europe, he quickly formulated his own ideas

¹⁵⁵ J. Alberts and R. Schoof, ‘De Johan Cruijff van de vrede. Scheidend IKV-voorman Mient Jan Faber scoorde als vredesactivist in de Politieke Arena’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 2003.

¹⁵⁶ *De Tijd*, december 1982 – as quoted in de Graaf, *Over De Muur* 158.

¹⁵⁷ The GDR movement *Schwerter zu Pflugscharen*, which originated in the *BEK* churches, but had soon grown out of it, became very popular. The movement chose as its logo an image of the sculpture the USSR had donated to the United Nations, but this was nevertheless banned soon after some of the members had added “*bei uns anfangen*” to the motto. Aware of the fragility of its own position, the *BEK* was hesitant to back the movement, a (non-)reaction that was criticised fiercely by the IKV. See, for instance ter Laak, ‘Op zoek naar bondgenoten’.

¹⁵⁸ Megens and Reiding *Bewegen*.

¹⁵⁹ “Gesproken [met Garstecki] over stand van zaken rond END/Amsterdam. Ook vraag van Wolfgang overgebracht over komst op persoonlijke titel. Onmogelijk, ‘men moet toch begrijpen dat dat niet kan’ Ook rondom Sicherheitspartnerschaft iets doen kan niet. Zelf heeft hij vragen bij het nut van zo’n conventie. Hij was blij te horen dat de brief aan het IKV was aangekomen (...) Deze brief is niet ‘onder druk’ geschreven, maar door hemzelf.” Joof van Keulen, ‘-VERTROUWELIJK- Kort Verslag Gesprekken in West En Oost-Berlijn, 20-21-22 Mrt’ 1985 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 711). “Garstecki was zeer kritisch over I.K.V., met name over Wolfgang Müller. Hij had de indruk dat het IKV ‘profileringsproblemen’ had en Oost Europa gebruikte om in eigen land geloofwaardig te zijn. Hij had meer vertrouwen in J. van Putten [another prominent member of IKV, who was generally less out-spoken than Wolfgang Müller and Mient Jan Faber]” Cor Arends, ‘-VERTROUWELIJK- Betr: Afspraken DDR-bezoek Cor Arends 6-11 Maart aan Leipzig, Erfurt, Hallen en Berlijn’ 1986 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 2119).

on the Warsaw pact and on the course the *CIZOW* should take in its contacts in the East.¹⁶⁰ Jan ter Laak sympathised with *Charta '77* and *KIK*, the society of Catholic intellectuals in Poland, many members of which were also prominent figures in the *Solidarnosc* movement. Undoubtedly influenced by these contacts, he did not believe in the 'socialist experiment', or the benefits of the "real existing socialism" in the Warsaw Pact countries. He considered the dictatorial aspects of the communist system as laid down in the form of government in the Warsaw Pact as "frightening, (...) so oppressive that I feel there is something fundamentally wrong in this system, and it will inevitably lead to this. It is not a by-effect, something co-incidental, but it is immanent to the system."¹⁶¹ This, he claimed, did not mean that he exclusively sought for contacts among those "who only want to break down the system", but rather that a distance from the system and its authorities was necessary.¹⁶² Also active in both the IKV and Pax Christi was Wim Bartels, international secretary of the IKV, and member of the *CIZOW* from 1982. In a *CIZOW* meeting in June 1983 Bartels argued that the disarmament struggle was "part of a broader solidarity movement".¹⁶³

The solidarity Bartels and Ter Laak envisioned was a solidarity with *all* Europeans, including those on the other side of the Iron Curtain; people who, like the Westerners, had nuclear weapons stationed in their countries against their will, but who did not have the rights to protest against these weapons. An important (yet, like *Charta '77*, not exclusively Christian) independent group in the GDR was the *Friedensgruppe Jena* (FGJ). The first signs of contact between the FGJ and the Dutch peace movements were seen in January 1983. Roland Jahn and Dorothea Rost were two *ausgebürgerte* members of the group sent to the FRG to inform the *CIZOW* and other peace activists about their work and about the severe repression of the GDR state; many activists were *ausgebürgert*, others gave up their work after having been arrested and imprisoned by the *Stasi*. This meeting was attended by a varied group of Dutch peace activists, among whom was Rinse Reeling Brouwer, representative of the *Christliche Friedenskonferenz* and Christians for Socialism. After talks with the *Jena* activists, discussion arose as to whether or not a

¹⁶⁰ Muijers, Interview by the author: "Jan ter Laak and I did not always agree on what road to take in Eastern Europe, but I must say that he mastered the 'Eastern Europe' questions quickly."

¹⁶¹ Quote taken from: Paul van Dijk *In gesprek met Jan ter Laak en Karl Derksen*, 19: "dat systeem zoals het is neergeslagen in regeringen en staatsvormen mij grote angst inboezemt. Ik vind het zo onderdrukkend, dat ik het gevoel krijg: er is iets in het systeem zelf dat wezenlijk verkeerd is en dat hiertoe leidt. Het is niet iets bijkomstigs, toevalligs (...), maar het zit erin gebakken, het is systeem-immanent." See also: Megens and Reiding *Bewegen* 169; ter Laak 'Op zoek naar bondgenoten'; Jong, *Wie Zijn Je Vrienden in Oost-Europa?*

¹⁶² Paul van Dijk 12–28 *In gesprek met Jan ter Laak en Karl Derksen* 19.

¹⁶³ Megens and Reiding *Bewegen* 167.; In 1982, Bartels and Karl Derksen clashed publicly when Bartels left the stage of the World Peace Council in Moscow after being denied speaking time which, he claimed, had been promised to him. See: de Graaf, *Over De Muur* 147–8, 154–5.

Western peace group should interfere in national issues such as the repression of oppositional groups like the FGJ. Reeling Brouwer claimed that, since the armament of the NATO was still stronger than that of the USSR, Western peace movements' responsibility lay in the West. Roland Jahn, on the other hand, claimed that, while the first responsibility of any movement should be its own government, groups could nevertheless work together and support each other, for example by keeping in close contact.¹⁶⁴ In the minutes of the discussion we see the first outlines of what would soon after, under the influence of Ter Laak, Bartels, and Joof van Keulen, become the official policy.¹⁶⁵ Peace was "indivisible", which meant that peace activism involved both protesting against nuclear armament *and* against the oppression of the (*eigenständige*) peace movements in the communist countries, the "natural allies" of the Western peace movements.¹⁶⁶ The basic principle was thus not very different from that of the IKV, yet the policy that would enact this principle was to be different. As disarmament, with détente as its most important vehicle, was still the priority of the peace movements, it was important to remain on speaking terms with the official Peace Councils. However, there should be a "two-track policy":¹⁶⁷ the CIZOW would try to keep in contact with as many groups as possible, both *abhängig* and *eigenständig*, but contacts with 'official' groups would always be "carried out to assert the position of the 'natural allies'", the independent movements. Direct oppositional interference in national affairs was the task of the *eigenständigen*, not that of Pax Christi, but the peace movement could, upon their request, try to assist them.¹⁶⁸

Once this official policy of Pax Christi had been formulated, it began to be argued for in the press. In March 1984, a double interview with Jan ter Laak and Karl Dersen was published, in which the two men discussed their different opinions and ideals.¹⁶⁹ In publications following from this interview, both parties were forced to better articulate their arguments. Derksen claimed that Pax Christi was interfering in national affairs; Jan ter Laak stressed that the allies like the FGJ and *Charta 77* had *asked* for Pax Christi's

¹⁶⁴ Nico van Arkel and Aad Jansen, 'Verslag van het gesprek met Ronald Jahn en Dorothea Rost', s.a. 1983 (?) (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 713). This meeting was visited by members of the CIZOW, the Eastern Europe committee of *IKV*, the Dutch branch of the *CFK*, and representatives of the *Werkgroep Gemeentecontacten*. The afternoon with the *FGJ* seems to have been part of a wish to speak to independent movements from as many different countries as possible, and we can assume that it has been important to 'check' whether the 'strategy' should be used in the GDR as well.

¹⁶⁵ Contacts with *Charta '77* in Prague and KIK in Poland played a very important role in this process as well, as appears from CIZOW-minutes and newspaper letters such as published in: Jong *Wie zijn je vrienden in Oost-Europa*.

¹⁶⁶ Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen*, 168–9.; ter Laak, 'Op zoek naar bondgenoten'.

¹⁶⁷ Two-track policy is not to be confused with the NATO two-track decision. In Dutch, different words were used: *Dubbelbesluit* and *Twee sporenbeleid*.

¹⁶⁸ "Maksimaal opkomen voor onze natuurlijke bondgenoten"; Jacques van der Meer during a CIZOW meeting, september 1983, as quoted in Megens and Reiding *Bewegen* 168. See also: Reiding, 'Ontspanning en mensenrechten' 57

¹⁶⁹ van Dijk, 'In gesprek met Jan ter Laak en Karl Derksen'.

support. Furthermore, Pax Christi and the IKV founded their disarmament protests on the need for the people's consent to the deployment of weapons on their soil, so why should they not argue for the same right of their fellow activists on "the other side".¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, many in the CIZOW remained convinced that direct interference with internal affairs would not benefit the cause of the independent movements; this had been proved sufficiently after the IKV had been denied entry visas. Support for the movements, they argued, should be confined to *moral* support, with this being clandestine if necessary. Distinction between direct interference and moral support was, however, very hard to make.

The two-track policy: easier said than done

One of the consequences of the two-track policy was that all of Pax Christi's partners had to agree to the conditions: the (semi-) official institutions had to accept that the movement was in contact with the 'dissidents' and vice versa. In an interview in Wending in January 1984, Jan ter Laak claimed that, "as an international Catholic Peace Movement", Pax Christi had the privilege of posing demands to organisations such as the *Berliner Konferenz*.

Wanneer je als Pax Christi weet dat BK zo graag contact met je heeft – je bent immers een internationale vredesbeweging, vanuit de R.K. Kerk – dien je je uitermate gereserveerd op te stellen en van te voren heel duidelijk te zeggen: we willen geen communiqués, waarin de zaken alleen maar eenzijdig worden weergegeven.(...) Zulke eisen horen van tevoren op tafel te liggen.¹⁷¹

This seems to have caused very little problems in the first months, when both Jan ter Laak and Joof van Keulen succeeded in meeting a great variety of people during their trips to Berlin.¹⁷² Soon, however, Ter Laak's conscience seems to have been troubled. Partiality for "dissidents" on the one hand, and a commitment to a "two-track policy" on the other hand caused a dilemma was highlighted in a meeting with Joachim Garstecki.

¹⁷⁰ Jong *Wie zijn je vrienden in Oost-Europa?*; ter Laak 'Op zoek naar bondgenoten'; various articles in *De Bazuin* 1884-1986; Cor Arends, Interview by the author

¹⁷¹ "As Pax Christi, you know that the BK wants to be in contact with you – after all, you are an international Peace movement in the Roman Catholic Church. This means that you certainly have to keep your distance, and state clearly, in advance: we do not accept communiqués in which (international) affairs are portrayed from not more than one perspective. These demands should be stated in advance." van Dijk, 'In gesprek met Jan ter Laak en Karl Derksen' 21

¹⁷² In January 1984 Joof van Keulen travelled to Berlin for *Hier en Nu*-t.v. He spoke with several *ausgebürgerte* GDR dissidents in West Berlin: Rainer Eppelman; Christine Wienck (GDR Peace council and "according to insiders the one responsible for the blocking of the IKV"); two (ex-) youth pastors in East Berlin; some dissident writers; "a dozen members of an East Berlin peace group" and Fuchs "and his new secretary." The next month, Jan ter Laak accompanied the Council of Churches to Berlin. Over a four day visit, he spoke with an official delegation of the *BEK*; the 'dissident' pastor Rainer Eppelmann; the ecumenical Joachim Garstecki (a Catholic priest working for the *BEK*, critical to the SED regime); the president of the *Berliner Konferenz* Otto Harmut Fuchs (who "warmly welcomed" Ter Laak to his own house), and received messages from bishop Wanke and the Aktions Kreis Halle via Garstecki. Joof van Keulen, '-VERTROUWELIJK- Betr: DDR-bezoek, 14-20 Januari' 1984 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 711).; Jan ter Laak, "Werkoverleg Februari 1984", (Personal Archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. no 40)

After changes at the top of the *Christliche Friedenskonferenz*, and in line with the ‘two track policy’, Pax Christi and Jan ter Laak had become convinced that the organisation should be granted a new opportunity to show its “independence” from the official Warsaw Pact propaganda on nuclear armament at the theologians’ conference in September 1984. Garstecki, however, could not attend, since the Catholic Bishops would not allow participation in the *CFK*-event.¹⁷³ Realising this, Jan ter Laak pondered, once again, on the contacts with the *BK* and *CFK*:

Tijdens mijn verblijf in de DDR bleek nog eens hoe negatief de kerken daar denken over *CFK* en *BK*. Kunnen we ons als *IKV* en Pax Christi wel een gezamenlijke konferentie met *CFK* veroorloven? Een serieuze vraag, die binnen *CIZOW* en werkgroep Internationaal zorgvuldige bespreking verdient.¹⁷⁴

In the first months of 1985, discussion on whether or not a Christian peace movement could cooperate with a communist regime, and whether or not the *Berliner Konferenz* went too far in cooperating with the Czechoslovakian organisation *Pacem in Terris*, became an intense debate in the Dutch Christian media. This discussion was paralleled by a ‘slander campaign’ directed at Karl Derksen in the *Telegraaf*, which claimed that he was a KGB-agent.¹⁷⁵ At a meeting in Berlin, Joof van Keulen seems to have succeeded in convincing Fuchs (the president of the *BK*) that Pax Christi was “not involved” in these slander campaigns.¹⁷⁶ Fuchs promised to lobby for visas for Pax Christi for a trip they were planning for late April, and van Keulen continued his meetings with (among others) Rainer Eppelmann (a critical Lutheran minister), Garstecki and “some peace activists met at the ‘trusted’ address in East Berlin”.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ In the end, the *BEK* would attend this particular theologians conference. The *BEK* and the Berlin Bishops’ Council, however, would remain very critical towards the *Berliner Konferenz*. Ter Laak: “Wie zijn je vrienden in Oost-Europa”, *Trouw*, 1985, as published in: de Jong *Wie zijn je vrienden?* 7-10.

¹⁷⁴ *Duing my stay in the GDR, I once again noticed how disapproving the churches think about the CFK and the BK. As IKV and Pax Christi, can we indulge ourselves a conference with CFK? This is a serious question, which we should debate in the CIZOW and the general international committee.* ter Laak, ‘Werkoverleg Februari 1984’

¹⁷⁵ The discussion was published mainly in the *Podium* pages of *Trouw*, and is reprinted in: Jong (ed), *Wie zijn je vrienden in Oost-Europa?* The controversy surrounded the fact that Edward Schillebeeckx, the highly respected Dominican theologian had given the ‘key-note’ speech at a conference organised by the Czechoslovakian branch of the *Berliner Konferenz*, whose members were also affiliated with *Pacem in Terris*, which was seen as a puppet organisation to the very oppressive regime. Members of *Charta ’77* were disappointed that Schillebeeckx lend himself for the regime which would ‘use’ his prestige for their own prestige. A journalist of *Trouw* accused Schillebeeckx of not choosing carefully where to go. Karl Derksen and Yosé Höhne Sparborth defended Schillebeeckx by stating that it was not *Pacem in Terris* but the *BK* which had organised the conference; Jan ter Laak, on his turn, accused them of overlooking the links between *Pacem in Terris* and the *BK*, but did not directly attack Schillebeeckx.

¹⁷⁶ Joof van Keulen’s report is very brief, and rather vague: “F[uchs] wilde nadere bijzonderheden horen over de lastercampagne in de pers tegen Karl Derksen (KGB-agent) en Schillebeeckx. Er gingen ernstige geruchten dat Pax Christi in het laatste geval betrokken was. Ook het interview in *Wending* is bekend. Heb hem de zaak van onze kant uit verklaard. Al dit soort geluiden maken volgens Fuchs toekomstige activiteiten, zoals de reis alleen maar moeilijker. Hij was zeer blij te horen dat PC een brief had geschreven naar Karl en niet een anti-Schillebe. actie is gestart. (...) Hij zal zijn best doen voor de visas.” van Keulen ‘Kort verslag van gesprekken in West en Oost Berlijn 20-21-22 maart’.

¹⁷⁷ van Keulen, ‘-VERTROUWELIJK- Kort Verslag Gesprekken in West En Oost-Berlijn, 20-21-22 Mrt’.

It appears, however, that Fuchs did not succeed in arranging visas for the planned 'Pax Christi' trip. Although proof of the reasons for which visas were denied in early 1985 will probably never be found, it is very likely that it was due to the events surrounding the END conference in Amsterdam, which had been organised mainly by the IKV and Pax Christi. Jan ter Laak and Mient Jan Faber (general secretary of the IKV) had tried to invite as many "independent" movements as possible. These movements, however, were not granted permission to leave their countries by their respective governments. In reaction to Pax Christi's clear bias in favour of the independent movements (as had also become clear in the discussion in *Trouw*), the official Peace Councils refused to come to a conference organised by those who clearly preferred "subversive" movements. In the end, very few Eastern European groups could visit the conference, and many considered it a failure. A year later, the conference memorandum *De Helsinki-akkoorden nieuw leven inblazen* (reanimating the Helsinki accords) was issued by a hundred peace activists from both East and West, among whom were Jan ter Laak and Mient Jan Faber. However, many visitors to the conference, including prominent Pax Christi figures, did not agree with the Memorandum, which made a stark division between "official" and "independent", and in the words of Joof van Keulen, offered "an unrealistic image of what is really going on in communist Europe."¹⁷⁸

A true two-track policy

The END conference was an important turning point in the Pax Christi activities in Eastern Europe. The CIZOW members realised that one cannot always make demands to those who invite you to their country. In the discussion surrounding Schillebeeckx's talk in Prague and the END conference, the former two track policy had more or less been abandoned.

The new two track policy was substantiated in a visit to the official GDR Peace Council, which was fully complicit with the terms set by the Peace Council, in May 1986. In his opening speech, Jan ter Laak expressed his hope that the visit would improve the dialogue between Pax Christi, the Council and various other organisations, including "our friends in the GDR who are not in the official organisations". Whereupon the Council remarked that, as long as a council could "directly influence the government's international policies [like the GDR Peace Council could], there would be no need for a peace council to be an oppositional group", and that an official delegation of Pax Christi

¹⁷⁸ Joost Eskes, 'De END-Conventionie in Amsterdam: Een Circus Met Een Paar Mooie Nummers', *Kommunikatieblad*, 1985, pp. 10–11; Höhne-Sparborth, 4–5; van Keulen, 'Comments on the Memorandum "De Helsinki Akkoorden Nieuw Leven Inblazen"'.

could only visit the GDR when invited by the Peace Council, and that visits to other groups should be arranged via private visa. Finally, the Council warned Pax Christi to not play the Council out against the *BEK* as “this would only benefit [the Council]”.¹⁷⁹ During the trip the only “unofficial” movements visited were the *Berliner Konferenz* and the *Christliche Friedenskonferenz*: the rest of the programme was filled with official visits to schools, scholarly institutes, theatres and the CDU party. The four Pax Christi men were not at any time left unsupervised.

The Pax Christi delegation seems to have appreciated the opportunity to see “a somewhat more multiform GDR”, and to see more clearly the work of the GDR peace council. This was, at least, what Joof van Keulen said in his farewell words to the council. In the confidential report for the CIZOW meeting, however, Hans Hütter (one of the four Pax Christi delegates) stressed the very little room for manoeuvre and an ‘independent’ sound the Peace Council had (and claimed!), as well as the amazement and frustration felt during talks with CDU politicians. Hütter and the rest do, however, seem somewhat reassured about the way in which the official GDR institutions were approaching the ‘nuclear energy/weapons’ industry. Like Pax Christi, the Peace Council would rather have had the weapons on their soil removed (provided that Washington decided to remove the NATO weapons as well). Training for a “civil defence” to a “confined nuclear war” had been put on hold. Hütter concludes: “less than ever before does the GDR believe in the possibility of a confined nuclear war.”¹⁸⁰

A second official visit was never planned. In February 1987, the Council made a short visit to The Hague, meeting Pax Christi amongst many other groups and institutions. On Dutch soil, Pax Christi was determined to promote their own agenda, as the *Friedensrat* had done the year before. Joof van Keulen promoted “détente is indivisible” as the theme for the Dutch peace week, hoping that the Peace Council would help to realise “détente from below” through lobbying for intercultural exchange, thus creating the possibility for peace movements from *both* sides to visit each other without restrictions.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Hans Hütter, ‘Bezoek Aan De DDR-Friedensrat, 19-23 Mei 1986 - Report’ (Personal Archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. no 40).

¹⁸⁰ Hütter ‘Bezoek aan de DDR Friedensrat’.

¹⁸¹ Joof van Keulen, ‘Welcome / Introduction to Meeting Pax Christi NL and DDR Peace Council’, 1987 (Personal Archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. no 40).

The number of 'unofficial' visits to the GDR and other countries East of the Iron Curtain rises exponentially from 1985, particularly so after 1986.¹⁸² Joof van Keulen and Cor Arends travel to the GDR on a regular basis.¹⁸³ Jan ter Laak travels to the GDR about two times a year between 1982 and 1990, and pays many more visits to other Eastern European countries. Sometimes these visits do not take longer than three days: in 1984 ter Laak proudly remarks: "there and back in less than 48 hours!"¹⁸⁴ When visiting events organised by Catholics in the GDR, such as the *Friedensdekade* in Halle in 1986¹⁸⁵, or the *Katholikentagen* in Dresden in 1987, the trips take longer and the three men invite younger, less 'experienced' Pax Christi members to go with them.¹⁸⁶ The main goal of Van Keulen's and Arends' trips seems to have been to stay informed on current affairs in the Catholic *milieu* of the GDR, and, where possible, to support independent (cross parish) initiatives. Important interlocutors are Joachim Garstecki in Berlin and the Oratorians in Leipzig, particularly Joachim Brandt and Hermann Fischer. These men are important mainstays for movements such as the *Aktions Kreis Halle*, or the *Friedensgruppe Jena*. Garstecki and Brandt inform Pax Christi of their activities, and make sure that, whenever possible, Pax Christi is invited to their events.¹⁸⁷ The *AKH*, founded in the 1970s, tried to restart in 1985, but came under severe pressure when the *Stasi* put them under strict surveillance, and bishop Braun did not defend them. In 1987 Jan ter Laak describes the relation between the *AKH* and the bishop as "an open war"; the bishop had declared that the group did not belong to the Church, which made the group politically outlawed.¹⁸⁸ Pax Christi seems to have followed the *AKH* with great interest, but was not able to help them in any concrete manner. The same is true for the *Friedensgruppe Jena*, and the "several members of independent activists" that Joof van Keulen visits at "the usual trusted address" in Berlin in 1985 and 1986.¹⁸⁹ These contacts seem not to have led to any direct action or public support; at least, not in terms of support carried out by or with the consent of the complete CIZOW. This is probably because Pax Christi did not consider this in line with the two track policy, as well as due to the idea that direct interference could be more harmful than beneficial. *If* direct action was undertaken, this

¹⁸² Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen* chap. Breekt de vrede uit?. "iedere CIZOW-vergadering zijn er verscheidene reisverslagen te bespreken."

¹⁸³ Cor Arends, Interview by the author. Arends recalled that he visited the GDR every two months in 1985 and 1988

¹⁸⁴ ter Laak, 'Werkoverleg Februari 1984'

¹⁸⁵ Leen de Wit, 'Bezoek Aan De Friedensdekade in Halle' 1986 (Personal Archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. no 40).

¹⁸⁶ Their experiences will be discussed in the chapter 'Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself'

¹⁸⁷ Arends 'Leipzig, Erfurt, Hallen, Berlin'

¹⁸⁸ Jongsma and Jan ter Laak, 'Bezoek aan het Katholikentreffen'. An organisation which was not funded by the National Front, nor approved of by the Church was illegal

¹⁸⁹ van Keulen, '-VERTROUWELIJK- Betr: DDR-bezoek, 14-20 Januari'; van Keulen, '-VERTROUWELIJK- Kort Verslag Gesprekken in West En Oost-Berlijn, 20-21-22 Mrt'.

was probably done in a private capacity; Joof van Keulen speaks about “the possibility of support” for the un-named “dissidents” he meets in Berlin,¹⁹⁰ but most of the support from Pax Christi seems to have been moral support. At the *Friedensdekade* in Halle, 1986, Jan ter Laak stresses that Pax Christi will not leave the GDR Christians:

„Bei uns [ist] kein Friede, wenn Sie in der DDR nicht in Frieden leben, und umgekehrt (...) Friede sei mit uns allen.“¹⁹¹

Finding openings in a closed community

Overall, it seems as if the continuous discussion within the CIZOW was not the main obstructing factor against any concrete help being provided by Pax Christi to the socially engaged Catholics. However hard Van Keulen, Arends and Ter Laak may have tried, it would be an exaggeration to speak of any ‘structural’ contact between Pax Christi and any of the Catholic groups. Contacts with Garstecki were structural and enduring, but he worked for the ecumenical branch of the *BEK*. Arends was able to uphold long-lasting contact with the Oratorians in Leipzig, but they operated independent from the bishops, and, furthermore, were only indirectly involved in Peace work and human rights issues; they were merely a lot more open to the problems that (young) Catholics were confronted with when living in a socialist society, compared to the rest of the Catholic clergy. The complete rejection of any social engagement in the socialist state on the part of the bishops made enduring contact hard, as well as the strong oppression of movements such as the *AKH* and the refusal of the bishops to protect them from the *Stasi*. To this, we should add the idea of *Resignation*; a general ‘weariness’ about political matters very common among GDR citizens, and especially among Catholics.¹⁹² The Catholic *milieu* in the GDR was thus not the best environment for seeking allies for the disarmament campaign in West and East. Cor Arends even wonders whether it was a good idea *at all* to lobby for more contacts between the Dutch peace movement and the GDR Catholics:

¹⁹⁰ The fact that both the groups and the address remains secret in the report for the CIZOW reveals that the members were cautious to publish about the ‘real’ illegal groups (as long as the *AKH* and the *Friedensgruppe Jena* operated in public, the CIZOW could speak and, to a lesser extent, publish freely about them), even within the committee. Arends blames the presence of Karl Derksen at the CIZOW meetings, claims that a lot of information and talks were deliberately held outside the meeting room, fearing that Derksen would inform the *Stasi* (or the *BK*, which would then inform the *Stasi*). Jacques van der Meer tries to nuance this, and says that “these meetings were not for minor details anyway.” Arends, Interview by the author; van der Meer, Interview by the author. Jan ter Laak mentions the looming inclination of not trusting his companions (meaning Karl Derksen) in the interview in *Wending*, Karl Derksen agrees that he is sometimes inclined to distrust Jan ter Laak: van Dijk ‘In gesprek met...’ 12–28.

¹⁹¹ Jan ter Laak, ‘Grüßwort and Die Teilnehmer Der Friedensdekade Halle’ (Personal Archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. no 40, 1986).

¹⁹² More about the *Resignation* among ‘common’ East Germans in the Chapter ‘You shall love thy neighbour as yourself’

De positiekeuze van de R.K. Kerk leidt tot een aantal probleemstellingen van de gelovigen die een eind vóór vredesvragen liggen. Het gaat vooral om geloof(svorming) in relatie tot het dagelijkse leven in de DDR, en de dilemma's die dat oproept.

Misschien nog principiëler: de afhankelijkheid van het westen als hét voorbeeld wordt nog groter.¹⁹³

The ecclesiastical letter of 1986 was expected to offer some space for engaged Catholics;¹⁹⁴ as was the commitment to the Conciliar Process made in early 1987. In their meetings, the CIZOW discussed the *Ostpolitik* of the Vatican. The above developments were considered important because they were expected to strongly influence the attitude of the Eastern European churches. The *Ostpolitik* was considered a form of “détente from above”, but the tendency of Pope John Paul II to focus his attention on the Catholic people (rather than the communist authorities and the way they treated Christians) was considered promising for the space offered to independent peace movements and parishes wishing to invite visitors. Arends judged the Pope's call for prayer and evangelization in the communist world as less hopeful, but was optimistic about the call for dialogue made by the European bishops (including those in the GDR).¹⁹⁵

In the introduction we noted that the practices of the bishops did not change much. Jan ter Laak notices that the “Roman Catholic Church still considers itself superior to the Lutheran Churches”, and that all of the ‘official’ activities for the Conciliar Process, as undertaken by the ecumenical desk of the BEK were being coordinated by Christa Lewek, who was at the time already known to be an active informant of the *Stasi*.¹⁹⁶ In the next chapter we will see that those Catholic parishes that do actively pick up the Conciliar Process feel discouraged by the bishops, and that the theme of “Justice”, which was supposed to be only one third of the process, takes over most of the discussions, and focuses on injustices in the GDR and the Catholic Church.¹⁹⁷ The oppression (from both State and Clergy) faced by the AKH led to the (forced) departure to the FRG,

¹⁹³ *The Roman Catholic Church's attitude leads to problems among the believers which should be addressed before peace questions can be addressed. These mainly concern religious education in relation to daily life, and the dilemmas faced through this. – Possibly even more fundamental: the reliance on the West will increase even more.*

Cor Arends, ‘Bezoek Aan De Friedensdekade in Berlijn (Oost) Van 10-13 November’ 1985 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 712). The title of the document is misleading: Cor Arends and the two other Pax Christi travellers visited the *Friedensdekade* only one night, and seemed to have used it mostly as an easy way to obtain a visa.

¹⁹⁴ Lisette Dekker, ‘De Katholieke Kerk in De DDR Kruip Uit Haar Schulp’ 1987 (Personal Archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. no 40).

¹⁹⁵ Geert van Dartel, ‘Betekenis Van De Ostpolitiek Van Het Vaticaan Voor De Onafhankelijke Basisgroepen in De 2e Wereld’, 1987 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 287); Cor Arends, ‘Vaticaanse Ost-politik En De Betekenis Ervan Voor Pax Christi Nederland’ 1987 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 287). Unpublished essays, written for CIZOW meeting of June 1987.

¹⁹⁶ See B de Graaf, *Over De Muur: De DDR, De Nederlandse Kerken En De Vredesbeweging*, pp. 249–50.

¹⁹⁷ As opposed to injustices in the world, for example the misdistribution of wealth, like the Conciliar Process ‘was supposed to do’, according to some. We will see more of this in the next chapter ‘Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself.’

imprisonment and general battle-weariness of its members. In late 1986 Jan ter Laak remarks, with evident disappointment:

Opmerkelijk was het a-politieke karakter van de dienst. Voor enkele jaren waren er in Halle bruisende activiteiten. [Maar] het was duidelijk dat de Kerk de Friedensdekade weer helemaal in handen heeft.¹⁹⁸

Overwhelmed by Peace?

The Protestant Churches, meanwhile, became increasingly active in demanding space to live as a Christian and freedom of speech and publishing for all. The *Stasi*, however, did not give in, and protesters and dissidents were persecuted and banned to the FRG on a larger scale than ever before, to the point that people join the protests in order to be “allowed” to leave the GDR. The Christian press had been granted relative freedom since the late 1960s, but in 1987 and 1988 the censors targeted the main Christian journals to the extent that that issues with blank pages are published. The *Stasi* raided churches, church-goers were subjected to (violent) inspections and surveillance. In October 1988, 80 young men and women who had been protesting against the censorship were jailed for two days. Jan ter Laak and Mient Jan Faber corresponded feverishly with Joachim Garstecki at this point, and decide to let go of the ‘non-interference’ policy by writing a telegram to Honecker.¹⁹⁹ Encouraged by *Glasnost*, those in the GDR and the *BEK* became increasingly confident in voicing their critiques. The Catholic Church, however, remained silent, presumably still fearing the power of the *Stasi* and the consequences that critique would have on their own privileges. The *Stasi* and the GDR Peace Council remained on a collision course, and after the death of Fuchs, the *Berliner Konferenz* came under stricter supervision by the State secretary for Church issues.²⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the other Warsaw Pact Peace Councils *did* modify their policies under the influence of Gorbachev’s *Glasnost*. In 1987, the Moscow Peace Council decided to make “opposition and democracy” an agenda item for the conference for Warsaw pact peace councils. A year later, Western peace activists were offered a rental car to visit their friends of *Charta ‘77* by the Council of Czechoslovakia.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ The a-political character of the service was remarkable. For a few years, brimful activities were organised in Halle, [but] it was clear that the Church has regained its grip on the Friedensdekade. ter Laak, Bezoek aan Friedensdekade.

¹⁹⁹ Archives Pax Christi NL, Inv. no. 713

²⁰⁰ See the chapter ‘Loyale Opposition or Instrumentalisierung’.

²⁰¹ Hilde Reiding, *Bewegen* 60

For Pax Christi, the focus of their activities in Eastern Europe had always lain on Poland, Czechoslovakia and the USSR rather than GDR; passive attitudes in the latter, in contrast with those of Protestant churches, and (more importantly) the size of the Catholic Church had caused it to be a second priority. Increased activity in Moscow and Prague only reinforced this trend. In addition, GDR expert Cor Arends had his first child and was offered a new job away from Pax Christi in 1988. From early 1988, the CIZOW seems to have been too overwhelmed by all developments.

By 1989, the political situation in all Warsaw Pact countries had become extremely unstable. Pax Christi, like many other Peace movements (and all European governments), seemed taken over by these events. The last chapters on the CIZOW in *Bewegen binnen smalle marges* are strikingly headed “outran by the current events” and “overtaken by Détente”. Between 30 October and 4 November 1989, while in Leipzig the weekly marches attracted thousands of people and Poland had experienced its first democratic elections, Pax Christi Netherlands and the Catholic broadcasting company KRO organised the conference “Living in Truth” where Eastern European Catholics met to exchange experiences. Compared to four years earlier, obtaining an exit visa had become much easier to obtain, so the conference was well attended, and considered very successful, even though all participants realised that the proceedings would be out-dated even before the ink could dry.

The CIZOW: clear and principal choices?

To conclude this chapter we could ask whether the CIZOW of Pax Christi ever made a clear, fundamental choice, and if so, whether the activities of Pax Christi, as carried out in the GDR were in line with this choice.

In the divided CIZOW, Jan ter Laak seems to have had a clear idea of who were his Eastern European friends, and on how to help these friends: peace in Europe was for him possible only if all Europeans could strive for peace and could be free to undertake initiatives independent from their governments. Acting like “a bull in a china shop”, however, was not the right way to help the allies.²⁰² This should rather be done cautiously, on “two tracks”: firstly, the track of the “official” movements to which one should speak in order to make space for the second track of the “independent” movements, whose ideas and wishes should form a guide for all discussions.

²⁰² ter Laak, ‘Op zoek naar bondgenoten’

After 1983, he seems furthermore to have been able to introduce new, younger members to the CIZOW on whom he could count, and to have convinced Joof van Keulen of his ideas. When Eastern Europe became a prominent factor in Pax Christi activities, Ter Laak furthermore succeeded in enwrapping the CIZOW in the organisation, so that the executive board would decide on the Eastern Europe policies, and the CIZOW could merely offer advice. After Jacques van der Meer left the CIZOW (to start the *Oost Europa Desk*²⁰³) and Joof van Keulen became the chairman of the CIZOW, the committee seemed to have become more harmonious, and, at the same time, less important in the stipulation of policy. The END conference of May 1985, however, called for reflection, and when the plan for an official visit to a 'broad range of Catholics' failed, Pax Christi seems to have learned the hard way that making demands of the GDR Peace Council was neither wise nor tenable. From 1986, a real two-track policy seems to have been followed.

The "independent" movements with which Pax Christi felt most connected were Catholic groups, and/or Catholic parishioners. The Protestant Council of Churches had friendly contacts with the *BEK*, but the isolationist attitude of the Catholic Bishops, maintained until well into 1989, was obstructive rather than helpful for Pax Christi and made it very hard for them to maintain (regular) contact with the *Aktions Kreis Halle* and the few progressive parishes. As Pax Christi did not think it was wise to directly interfere in these issues, the situation did not change significantly throughout the 1980s. We noted before that, although concrete help was scarce, the repeated (albeit short) visits and speeches by Jan ter Laak (such as the one at the *Friedensdekade*), Cor Arends and Joof van Keulen might have been heartening to socially engaged GDR Catholics. Whether these visits and speeches prompted the GDR Peace Council and the *Stasi* to treat the *Eigenständigen* even a little bit better, we can only hope.

²⁰³ See the chapter 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'

Loyale Opposition or Instrumentalisierung?

Dutch Catholics in the Berliner Konferenz Europäischer Katholiken

Kein gesellschaftliches System entbindet uns vom christlichen Liebesgebot, allen Hilfsbedürftigen beizustehen und das öffentliche Bewusstsein für sie zu wecken oder wachzuhalten. Die Freiheit des religiösen politisch-moralischen und materiellen Solidarität mit allen für soziale Gerechtigkeit und freie Entwicklung der Völker kämpfenden Menschen erblickt die BK eine christliche Pflicht (...).

Die Mitarbeiter der BK kommen aus Ländern mit unterschiedlichen Gesellschaftsordnungen und vertreten verschiedene gesellschaftliche Auffassungen. Alle aber eint die konsequente Parteinahme für den Frieden und die soziale Gerechtigkeit.

'Das Selbstverständnis der BK'²⁰⁴

We staan aan de kant van die theologen, die de realiteit van de klassenstrijd onder ogen durven zien.

José Höhne-Sparborth, De Bazuin, 1981²⁰⁵

Ein Defizit der BK-Arbeit bestand in der unzureichenden und staatlicherseits nicht erwünschten Erörterung von Fragen der Menschenrechte, der Demokratie und Freiheit in den realsozialistischen Ländern.

H. Guske 'Einige Erkenntnisse' 1996²⁰⁶

In the last chapter, we saw how the Pax Christi Committee for International Affairs East-West (CIZOW) formulated their “two-track policy” and their partiality for the

²⁰⁴ International Fortsetzungsausschuß der BK 'Das Selbstverständnis der BK' 1978 (copy in: Archives Pax Christi NL. Inv. No. 288)

²⁰⁵ *We're siding with those theologians who are willing to see the reality of the class struggle.* Yosé Höhne-Sparborth, Karl Derksen 'Schepping en vrede' *De Bazuin* 64 (1981)

²⁰⁶ From a report by H. Guske about his work on the Chronicles of the BK, reported in 1996, published in: Guske, *Chronik* 508–510.

independent oppositional movements in the Eastern European countries. In line with this policy, they dismissed the *Christliche Friedenskonferenz* and the *Berliner Konferenz europäischer Katholiken* as “official” movements which were loyal to the oppressive communist authorities. The debate became particularly fierce in 1984, after the double interview with Jan ter Laak and Karl Derksen in *Wending*, and after Schillebeeckx’ speech at the theology colloquium of the *BK* in Prague. In the eyes of some of the CIZOW-members, the undertaking of legal activities in the Warsaw Pact countries alone was enough to be considered as someone who “collaborated” to the communist regimes, and this image was even stronger portrayed in the media.

The main target of this criticism was Karl Derksen. As a prominent member of the Dominican order in the Netherlands, and a forerunner of the *Basisbeweging* and other initiatives aiming to find new ways of “being Church”, he was well respected among progressive Catholics, including the members of Pax Christi. By the second half of the 1980s was active in multiple organisations which were considered “mouthpieces of communist propaganda.”²⁰⁷ His preference of communism over capitalism and his far-reaching willingness to, as a Christian, uphold a dialogue with the communist authorities was not understood by all. He was accused of being a “fellow-traveller;” an accusation directed earlier at the philosophers and theologians Derksen respected and on whose work he founded his own ideas. In this chapter we will examine how Karl Derksen, and Yosé Höhne-Sparborth, who was a good friend of Derksen and shared most of his ideas, came to their choice for the dialogue with the communist authorities, and why they chose the *Berliner Konferenz* as the forum for this dialogue. After this, we will examine discussions surrounding the *BK*, and the question whether the members should be considered “loyal oppositionists” or “lap dogs” to the GDR regime.

Anti-fascist upbringing and a progressive education

Karl Derksen and Yosé Höhne-Sparborth were both born in Germany. During the war, his father deserted from the German army, and Karl showed the pacifist upbringing his parents gave him when he refused to bring the Hitler salute to Hitler’s portrait in the German school. Höhne-Sparborth was born in the Eastern Section of Berlin in 1946. Her Dutch mother and German father moved to a small town outside Berlin, but had to flee to West Berlin during the tumultuous months of 1953, after her father, a convinced socialist, had voiced his criticism to the *practices* of the SED too fiercely and now risked

²⁰⁷ The *Berliner Konferenz*, the Nederlands Comité voor Europese Veiligheid en Samenwerking, the World Peace Council. Ernst, *Geleefde theologie* 81.

persecution. Later, Höhne-Sparborth's mother moved with her two children to the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, both Karl Derksen and Yosé Höhne-Sparborth were made very aware of the “disaster and misery” the German people (‘their’ people!) had brought to the Netherlands and the world.²⁰⁸ Overwhelmed by the sense of collective guilt, they hoped to find a way to a definitive reckoning with National Socialism. They found that the socialist state of the GDR was on a better track to avoid another war started by Germany, than the capitalist FRG:

Geboren in Duitsland in een tijd, waarin het Hitlerfascisme de toon ging aangeven en waarin de nog slechts prille pogingen tot democratie alweer het onderspit moesten delven, interesseer ik mij sinds het bestaan van twee Duitse staten ook zeer voor de Duitse Democratische Republiek. Ik beschouw de DDR als de voortzetting van die traditie van mijn vaderland, die ook in onze tijd een bijdrage kan leveren aan de vrede en het betere onderlinge begrip van volkeren.²⁰⁹

After Derksen's death his biographer phrased Derksen's reasoning:

Hij zocht naar een rechtvaardige wereldsamenleving als voorwaarde voor de vrede en vond de voorwaarden voor een rechtvaardige samenleving eerder in het socialisme dan in het kapitalisme. Hij vond dat je in de concrete omstandigheden van de jaren zeventig en tachtig partij moest kiezen, dus moest samenwerken met vredeskrachten binnen het *reëel bestaande socialisme*. Hij vond dat je met communisten moest praten.²¹⁰

“Real existing socialism” was the characterisation Karl Derksen (and many others) used for the political systems East of the Iron Curtain.²¹¹ This was not the perfect form of socialism, but had the potential to become so. Moreover, it was, in any case, better than Western capitalism. Derksen considered himself an anti-capitalist, but no convinced communist. Before all, he was a Christian, and a theologian. As such, he felt it was his duty to engage himself for a peaceful, righteous society – and to do so in the context of the concrete socio-political situations of the time.²¹² To him, “real existing socialism”,

²⁰⁸ Yosé Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author; Ernst, *Geleefde theologie* p. 13. “je hoort tot het volk dat onder andere in Nederland zoveel onheil en ellende heeft aangericht”

²⁰⁹ *Born in Germany, in an era of rising Hitler-fascism and the downfall of the budding attempts at democracy, I have been very interested in the German Democratic Republic, right from its start. I consider the GDR as the continuation of that tradition in my homeland which can offer a contribution to peace and understanding between peoples up until today.* Info brochure from *Vereniging Nederland-DDR*, Karl Derksen explains why he is a member. Z.j. Brochure found in Archives Pax Christi Nederland (PXNL), inv. No. 117; Yosé Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author

²¹⁰ *He searched for a righteous world society as a condition for peace, and found the conditions for a righteous society in socialism rather than capitalism. He considered that, in the circumstances of the 1970s and 1980s, one had to pick sides, and (consequently) had to cooperate with peace workers within the real existing socialism. He considered one had to engage in a dialogue with communists.* Ernst, *Geleefde theologie* 81–82. My italics

²¹¹ van Dijk, ‘In gesprek met...’ 12–28. Alexander J Matejko, ‘[untitled Review] Rudolf Bahro - The Alternative in Eastern Europe’, *Slavic Review*, 39 (1980), 700–702.

²¹² van Dijk, ‘In gesprek met...’ 12–28.; Karl Derksen, Interview by Jacco Pekelder, tape recording, s.l. 11 september 1995 “Als je je niet wil engageren voor de vrede, moet je geen theoloog worden.”

also meant the idea that the Church, living in a communist society, could no longer claim the old privileges, and should adjust to living in this society.²¹³

Derksen's words resound the theology of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886 – 1968). In 1962, Derksen wrote his thesis about this Protestant scholar, whose ideas were very influential among left-wing Protestants and a few Catholics.²¹⁴ Barth had, like Derksen would later do, chosen communism over capitalism, but also warned against the dangers of fundamentalism in communism. In his *Brief an einen Pfarrer in der DDR* he provided some pastoral and practical guidelines to those who, like him, considered the principles of the classless society commendable, yet were confronted with the oppressive and anti-religious practises of the communist regime:

Sie würdigen den Sozialismus Ihres Staates als respektablen Versuch, ein Neues zu pflügen, und wünschen ihm, (...) eine gesunde, freiheitliche Entwicklung. Sie führen dann freilich und Reihe von harten Tatsachen an, die Ihnen als Christ und Pfarrer in der deutschen Ostzone schwerste Mühe machen.²¹⁵

According to Barth, however, a Christian could be both loyal to the socialist experiment, while still upholding his Christian principles and life style:

"Loyalität" heißt *nicht*: Gutheißung der dieser Ordnung zugrunde liegenden Ideologie. Und "Loyalität" heißt *nicht*: Gutheißung aller und jeder Maßnahmen der faktischen Träger und Repräsentanten dieser Ordnung. "Loyalität" schließt den Vorbehalt der Gedankenfreiheit gegenüber der Ideologie, aber auch den Vorbehalt des Widerspruchs, eventuell des Widerstandes gegen bestimmte Explikationen und Applikationen einer vorgegebenen Staatsordnung in sich. Es gibt auch so etwas wie eine loyale Opposition."²¹⁶

The Berliner Konferenz

From 1963 up until 1990, "loyal opposition" would remain the key-phrase of Derksen's attitude to the SED authorities and the GDR state. In the years after finishing his thesis, Derksen spent some years in the FRG for a PhD course. In these years, he travelled around the FRG and the GDR and met fellow Christians inspired by the works of Karl Barth. One of them was the Czech philosopher Hromádka, founder of the *Christliche Friedenskonferenz*. In an interview by Karl Derksen for the journal *De Bazuin*, Hromádka stated that a Christian can have no objections to a classless society, but that communists,

²¹³ Most, if not all of the initiatives Derksen undertook or supported could be placed in the wider mission to find new ways of 'being a Church', stressing the realistic approach the Church should take on its own role and position in a secular society, both in the East and in the West; Ernst *Geleefde theologie*, 62–76, 83.

²¹⁴ That Derksen was allowed to write his thesis about Barth is illustrating of the liberal atmosphere at the theology college of the Dutch Dominicans. See also: Ibid. 60.

²¹⁵ Karl Barth, 'Brief an einen Pfarrer in Der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik', in *Karl Barth - Offene Briefe 1945-1968*, ed. by Diether Koch (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1984) 412.

²¹⁶ Barth, 'Brief an eine Pfarrer' 429.

blinded by their fundamentalism, tend to look over the voids and flaws of a communist society. It was important to provide a *Christian* critical reflection, in dialogue with the communist authorities.²¹⁷

Inspired by Barth, Hromádka and the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, a group of left-wing GDR Catholics founded the journal *Begegnung*, which would soon expand into the *Berliner Konferenz*:

ein ständiges politisches Forum demokratischer und gesellschaftlich engagierter Katholiken aus ganz Europa zur Beratung, Koordinierung und Aktivierung katholischen Wirkens für Frieden und soziale Gerechtigkeit.²¹⁸

The platform would use “the continuing exchange of perceptions of Peace and Justice” to pursue its goals. Yosé Höhne-Sparborth clarifies the idea of using ‘just’ the exchange of ideas as peace work:

Very aware of the burdened past of Third Reich Germany, [Otto Fuchs, the founder of the *BK*] considered discussions about the past and the implications of this past for the present as fundamental Peace activities: only if you can agree about what happened, you can start to formulate common ideas on what should change.²¹⁹

Sympathetic to the aims, goals and practises of the *BK*, Derksen was involved from the beginning.²²⁰ He had great respect for Otto Harmut Fuchs and Hubertus Guske, who (co-)founded the *BK*, and would become close friends of Derksen. From 1964, the *Berliner Konferenz* held a plenary session every two or three years. At these conferences plenary lectures were held, and smaller groups gathered for thematic discussions. The *Internationalen Forsetzungsausschuss*, the international committee which decided on the general policy of the forum met once or twice a year. From the 1980s, the work of the *BK* became more diverse: activities for young members (under 35) were organised, Yosé Höhne-Sparborth and a few other women started discussion groups for feminist theology and peace works and both Derksen and Höhne-Sparborth were among the initiators of colloquiums for theologians. These colloquiums were to provide theological grounding to the statements of the *BK*. Moreover, they served to let Eastern European theologians become acquainted with recent, post-Vatican II theology: theologians in the Eastern European countries were (generally) trained in conservative seminaries, or had

²¹⁷ Karl Derksen ‘Interview met J.L. Hromádka’ *De Bazuin* (1963); see also: Ernst, *Geleefde theologie* 21–22. Derksen’s concluding paragraph in the Western magazine revealed his objection with the ‘Cold War paradigm’, as common in the Netherlands: ‘*Heeft de dienst der verzoening, deze in navolging van Christus, nog enige mogelijkheid, wanneer wij ons blijven opsluiten binnen een bepaalde politieke constellatie of sociaal-ekonomische structuur, die we dan nog als de enig juiste blijven aanprijzen?*’

²¹⁸ ‘Das Selbstverständnis der *BK*’

²¹⁹ Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author

²²⁰ Derksen, Interview with Jacco Pekelder; Ernst *Geleefde theologie* 85. Although not always present at the events during the first 15 years, he claims his absence was never because of principle reasons.

been trained before the Vatican Council. The *BK* theologians were, generally, eager to learn about new doctrinal theory which offered more space for social engagement.²²¹

Lap dogs to the communist regimes...

Work groups, colloquiums and other small-scale *BK* activities took place in various European countries. These gatherings were always (largely) funded by local (public) funds. In the communist countries, this meant that they were funded by organisations similar to the *Nationale Front* of the GDR: the communist mass organisations.²²²

The public statements of the sessions of the International committee, and the plenary sessions resound the statements of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union Peace Council. Occasionally, the wording is exactly the same. This was one of the main reasons organisations such as Pax Christi, and the Catholic Clergy considered the *Berliner Konferenz* to be a “lap dog” of the communist regimes, willing to do and say whatever the State’s secretary for Church Affairs would tell them to. Yosé Höhne-Sparborth and Karl Derksen later replied to this:

The *BK* was financed by the National Front. Like the national government in contemporary Western countries, the government wants to know what its money – tax paid by the citizens – is used for. It also wants to show the people that the money is well spent, so if the outcome of the subsidized event is newspaper-worthy, it is likely that the organisation will receive money for future events as well.

This, Höhne-Sparborth claims, is, why the official press-releases of the *BK*, at first sight, echo the ideology-idiom of the State. However, if one would look closer, you can see the differences.

Fuchs said: ‘if you put in four standard lines in your press release, you will have room for three other things as well.’ So, we put in a thing or two about the nuclear weapons of the NATO, about the contributions of the Soviet Union to the Peace process, and then added the rest.²²³

When asked to clarify what ‘the rest’ meant, Höhne-Sparborth was not able to find concrete examples of published proclamations which reveal critical remarks to the GDR. Karl Derksen, however, seems to have considered the similarity not problematic at all:

If you agree with what is written down [in the Warsaw pact press release] in principle, then why would you have to change the wording? Some might say you should try your best to express yourself as neutral as possible, but I disagree: I am not a scholar, I am a peace activist, and am therefore of the opinion that your colour, your position should be clear.²²⁴

²²¹ Derksen, Interview by Jacco Pekelder, Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author.

²²² Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Derksen, Interview by Jacco Pekelder

Derksen, however, has also acknowledged that the reports of the *BK* as published in the GDR were also phrased in this way, because the SED party, and the Secretary for Church affairs *did* try to make the *Berliner Konferenz* the mouthpiece for their propaganda.²²⁵ One of the ‘tactics’ to add to the authority and credibility of the *BK* statements used by the GDR state media was to overstress the presence of Western activists; the number of western visitors was exaggerated, or their authority overstated (Karl Derksen was named a “professor” numerous times). The best-known example was the speech of Edward Schillebeeckx in Prague; the coming of this very well-known theologian was announced on the front pages of the State newspaper, yet his (critical) speech was never published.²²⁶

The official reports were not the only to remain close to the “Warsaw pact paradigm”. After visiting the plenary session and some of the thematic discussion groups, Wim Muijers²²⁷ concluded that “there was very little room for an *unabhängig* voice” at the *BK*, and that, even in the discussion rooms there was virtually no opportunity for a discussion of the role of the Warsaw pact in the arms race, or of the effects of anti-American propaganda or the *Wehrkundeunterricht* on peace-engagement among the GDR public. After three “discussion” meetings, the “draft” was virtually unchanged, even though the Westerners had tried to bring in a more nuanced sound.²²⁸ What Muijers expected but did not know for sure, was well-known among the top of the *Berliner Konferenz*: the plenary sessions were managed by a *Koordinationsgruppe* with members of the CDU-Ost and SED party, and were supervised by the *Stasi*. According to Yosé Höhne-Sparborth, this did influence the tone of what was published and what was said at the plenary meetings.²²⁹ It seems, however, that the visitors of the *BK* were less cautious in the corridors, where, according to Muijers, “discussions were not shunned.”²³⁰

At the meetings of the youth-, women- and theologian groups, the participants considered themselves to be unsupervised by the *Stasi* as well. No official reports of these meetings were made, but if we look closely we can find some traces of a more or

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid; Muijers, Interview by the author, Ernst *Geleefde theologi; de Jong Wie zijn je vrienden?*

²²⁷ Wim Muijers was a student of Herman de Lange, who had been active in the *BK* during the 1960s and 1970s. Muijers had recently become a member of the CIZOW

²²⁸ Wim Muijers ‘Verslag van de Berliner Konferenz 17-19/11/1982’, annotated by Jan ter Laak, Personal archives Jan ter Laak, Inv. 40; Interview Wim Muijers, 25 september 2012

²²⁹ Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author

²³⁰ Muijers ‘Verslag van de Berliner Konferenz 17-19/11/1982’

less open discussion in the *Chronik*: after the *Jugendtreffen* in 1985 in Sachsenhausen, a young Austrian visitor reports in the Austrian magazine of the peace movement that she was “surprised by the breadth of the discussion and the great variation in opinions, which led to lively debates.”²³¹ When these meetings were held in the West, the organisers seem to have been even more ready to voice their critique towards the oppressive aspects of the communist regimes. Shortly before the *Frauenseminar*, Höhne-Sparborth announced that she would write a letter to the GDR State Secretary for Church Affairs because of his ‘boycott’ of the seminar by denying Exit visa for the GDR women. Among the 27 participants were only five women from the Warsaw Pact countries. The only visitor from the GDR called for “*besonnenheit*”, which led to the withdrawal of the letter, but the International Committee of the *BK* was nevertheless urged to think about “ways to improve the possibility for women to participate in seminars.”²³² In 2012, Yosé Höhne Sparborth remembers that she felt “free to speak her mind openly” at the seminars, which, to her, were the ‘real’ *Berliner Konferenz*. She does acknowledge that there were some rules: criticism towards the Vatican or John Paul II was not appreciated, nor was a discussion about the *Wiedervereinigung* or characterisation of the GDR socialism as a dictatorial regime. She, however, feels that she could express her opinion more freely in the East than in the West;

“anyone who wished to believe in the socialist regime, was put aside as a naïve communist, as someone who could not be trusted, nor cooperated with, even if the goal – peace – was the same.”²³³

The rules of the *BK* were, according to Höhne-Sparborth, understandable, since it was very important that the *BK* was, at least by the State, considered as a Catholic institution; this provided a safety-net, as the State was very cautious not to prosecute Christians too fiercely, fearing the reaction of the West and the Vatican. The *Wiedervereinigung* was out of the question in the GDR, and raising the issue was closely related to the ‘dictatorship question’. Too much attention to this would definitely mean the end of the financial support for the *BK*, the ceasing of all the activities and the persecution of the GDR citizens in the *BK* (after all: private initiatives not funded by the State were considered to

²³¹ Guske, *Chronik* 204. “Über die Spannbreite der Diskussion und die sehr unterschiedlichen Meinungen war ich überrascht, die zu einer regen Gesprächsbeteiligung führten.”

²³² Guske, *Chronik* 219–221.

²³³ Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author. In the first report of the *Oost Europa Desk* by Jacques van der Meer (1986), we read that Van der Meer, on the other hand, noticed that the relations between the Dutch *BK*-‘group’ (which had occasional meetings in informal settings) had cooled down, since he felt that it was not clear whether one had to share the ideas of the *BK* members in order to attend the meetings, or whether it was enough to wish to stay in contact with the *BK*. Jacques van der Meer ‘Notitie voor het missiesekretarissenberaad d.d. 27-11-86 over het eerste jaar van de ‘Oost-Europa Desk’ van Pax Christi Nederland’ 1986 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no. 635)

be against the State). Sending a letter to the State Secretary about the visa applications was over the edge of accusing the authorities of dictatorial rule. Though not reluctantly, Höhne-Sparborth seems to have held on to this rule as well, at least during the meetings in the Eastern European countries: “it was not our position to bring our hosts in danger. We were their guests, they invited us. It was very clear that *they* would be in danger if we did something which was unacceptable.”²³⁴ Karl Derksen expressed similar concerns about the dangers for the Eastern European hosts, and, furthermore, noted that he considered it more important to listen to the other side, than to express his own opinion – especially if his own opinion could be considered to be interfering with the national sovereignty as laid down in the Helsinki agreements.²³⁵

If I was invited to speak somewhere in the East on a personal note, or asked about *my* opinions, I would use a Western idiom and a Western sound – in the West, however, it was often more important to let the Eastern sound be heard.²³⁶

In the concluding remarks of the *Chronik*, Hubertus Guske names the “political aims” of the *BK* which, at that time, were considered “communist”, but by now, have been accepted by the West as well: the recognition of the GDR and the Oder-Neisse border; nuclear disarmament and the Helsinki Agreements. That these last two were wished for in the West as well is, conveniently, left out. In the same conclusion paragraphs, Guske ‘acknowledges’ that the *BK* members from the socialist countries were expected to openly support communism as the only righteous ideology:

Die wirklichen oder vermeintlichen Erfolge realsozialistischer Politik stets öffentlich als beispielhaft auch für den Westen würdigten.²³⁷

In the *Selbstverständnis* of the *BK* we read that the members were united by the “konsequente Parteinahme für den Frieden und die soziale Gerechtigkeit”.²³⁸ We have already noted that Karl Derksen was convinced that ‘social justice’ had more potential under socialism than under capitalism. He could, thus, interpret a ‘consequent partiality for social justice’ as a partiality for communism. This interpretation was shared by many in the *BK*.²³⁹

Nevertheless; in no official report did the *BK* make a definitive choice for communism. According to Guske, this could never have happened:

²³⁴ Derksen, Interview by Jacco Pekelder

²³⁵ Ibid.; Ernst *Geleefde theologie*; van Dijk, ‘In gesprek met’.

²³⁶ Derksen, Interview by Jacco Pekelder

²³⁷ Guske, *Chronik*, 507

²³⁸ International Fortsetzungsausschuß der *BK* ‘Das Selbstverständnis der *BK*’

²³⁹ Ruud Bunnik and Jan van Hooydonk, ‘Na De Omwenteling in Oost-Europa - Een Twistgesprek’, *De Bazuin*, 73, 3–6; van Dijk, ‘In gesprek met...’

Das wäre angesichts der Mitarbeit von Katholiken aus westlichen Ländern, die dem Realsozialismus kritisch gegenüberstanden oder ihn total ablehnten, auch nicht möglich gewesen.²⁴⁰

This statement, coming from a prominent member of the *BK* is a strong “proof” of the discussions which *did* go on in the International Committee, and the “real” power relations between East and West. The Western visitors would not only block a declaration explicitly supporting communism; they would also refrain from coming to the *BK* the next time, which would mean the end of the *BK* as a pan-European platform. This did, however, by no means imply that the Westerners were in full control, as might be shown best from one of the last conclusions of Guske (to which we will come return at the end of this chapter.):

Ein Defizit der *BK*-Arbei bestand in der unzureichenden und staatlicherseits nicht erwünschten Erörterung von Fragen der Menschenrechte, der Demokratie und Freiheit in den realsozialistischen Ländern. Wenn solche Themen auf internationalen Veranstaltungen der *BK* von westlichen Teilnehmern in die Diskussion gebracht wurden, mußten sie von östlichen Teilnehmern abgeblockt und in andere Richtungen gedrängt werden. In *BK*-Veröffentlichungen durfte über solche Diskussionen nicht berichtet werden.²⁴¹

... or loyal oppositionists?

‘Ik heb tot nu toe niet de drang of de behoefte gevoeld om te zeggen, dat ik me in mijn engagement zou hebben vergist, en al helemaal niet dat ik me schuldig gemaakt zou hebben. Ik was niet fout en ik ging ook geen verkeerde weg.’

Karl Derksen, as quoted by his biographer²⁴²

In the process of compounding his *Chronik*, Hubertus Guske was the first to check the *BK* files in the archives of the *Stasi* and the SED. By doing so, he hoped to get a better view on the level of control the SED, the State Secretary for Church Affairs, the *Stasi* and the *Koordinationsgruppe* had over the *BK*. The archival material is ordered by year, yet incomplete (some years are missing). The documents cover the official reports and other articles and lists which were already accessible, as well as memos about the *BK* by the

²⁴⁰ Guske, *Chronik* 508, 509.

²⁴¹ Guske, *Chronik* 509.

²⁴² *I have, so far, never felt the urge or the wish to say that I made mistakes in my involvement, let alone that I am guilty. I was not on the wrong side, nor did I follow the wrong path.* Karl Derksen in *Ophef*, journal of the Society for Theology and Society, as cited in: Ernst, *Geleefde theologie* 98.

Stasi employees. Furthermore, the archives contain confidential reports and notes by the *Stasi*, speaking of “*Maßnahmeplänen*” for the shadowing of international visitors of the sessions and seminars, and the orders for the *IMs*. After plenary sessions, the secret services of the socialist “*Bruderländer*” were informed, and visiting colleagues were assisted in arranging an invite for the *BK* and hotel reservations. The most important part of the archives are the reports by *Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*. Guske does not give any specific numbers, other than that he has found a list of 20 pseudonyms from men in Berlin, nor does he name any of the *IMs*. Most of the *IMs* worked at the central office in Berlin, were GDR participants of the sessions and seminars, or guides of the Western German participants; one of the *IMs* seems to have worked for the *BK* between 1964 and 1989; the rest over a shorter period. About the meaning of the word *IM* in the *Stasi* papers Guske states:

Ihre Motive sind aus den Akten nicht erkennbar. Manche sind vermutlich nur „abgeschöpft“ und ohne ihr Wissen als „IM“ geführt worden. Die meisten der „IM“ arbeiten aber wohl bewußt für das MfS und waren davon überzeugt, etwas Richtiges zu tun. (...) Manche „IM“ gaben nur protokollartige Informationen an das MfS weiter, die man auch in den offiziellen oder offiziösen *BK*-Materialien nachlesen konnte, andere wiederum berichteten sehr ausführlich, z.B. über Gespräche mit zu „beobachtenden Personen.“ (...) Ziemlich genau wurde manchmal notiert, wann und wo sich ein Tagungsteilnehmer „illegal“ mit einer nicht zur *BK* gehörenden Privatperson traf.²⁴³

For this paper, the remarks about the *Störversuchen* found by Guske are perhaps most interesting. The *Stasi* agents noted *Störenfriede*; most often Westerners (FRG, the Netherlands or Belgium) who made remarks which were considered too critical, or tried to start discussions which were unwished for. A priest from the FRG had dared to speak of the “*Schießbefehl and der Mauer*”, and was ridiculed for this in the *Stasi* papers. Even more revealing was the fact that the *Stasi* were not just present at the main sessions, but also in the International committee meetings and the theology seminars.²⁴⁴ Yosé Höhne-Sparborth admits to having been flabbergasted when she heard about the presence of a *Stasi* man among the theologians.

“We had no clue. Yes, looking back, it is obvious; when in the West, he always seemed to be more interested in the shops than in the sessions. But at that time... no, we didn’t know. Which is also why I can be so sure that it did not have an impact on our works and discussions: we felt free to say whatever we wanted to say.”²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Guske, *Chronik* 513–514

²⁴⁴ Guske, *Chronik* 512

²⁴⁵ Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author

This idea rings through in Guske's conclusion as well:

Die Staatssicherheit der DDR hat sich sehr viel Mühe gegeben, die BK zu beobachten und unter ihre Kontrolle zu bringen. Aber selbst das nur noch unvollständig vorhandene Material des MfS verdeutlicht, daß die eigenständige Arbeit der BK nicht verhindert werden konnte.²⁴⁶

Giving an overall verdict on the 'independency' of the *Berliner Konferenz* is very hard. Even in 1999, Guske holds the idea that the main work of the *BK* was independent and uncontrolled by the State secretary for Church affairs. He does, however, acknowledge that the backing of socialism was expected, and that there was very little – or no – space for criticism of the communist authorities. The meticulous notes and minutes of the *Stasi* reveal on the one hand that Western visitors tried to ignite discussions and bring in Western views; on the other hand that virtually every aspect of the *BK* was checked. If a certain platform became too critical, it was banned immediately, as shown by the ban of the theologians colloquium in 1988.²⁴⁷ Apart from this, too many questions remain about the identity, activities and the extent of control of the *Mitarbeiter* of the *Stasi*. Guske and Fuchs themselves have been named as active *IMs* – yet most of their files are said to have been destroyed in 1989.²⁴⁸

Surveying the sources now available, it would do no justice to Karl Derksen and Yosé Höhne-Sparborth to portray them as “naïve” or as “lap dog of the regime.” They were definitely confronted with aspects of the “real existing socialism” they could not agree with, and tried to voice their criticism through the channels they believed would work best. However, their willingness, and maybe stubbornness, to believe, and keep believing in a system which “was the better alternative” but at the same time caused so much oppression and lack of freedom, went very far.

Similar to the peace movements which supported the opposition groups, it is very hard to tell whether the *BK* made significant contributions to peace and the end of the Cold War. But even if we resign to not trying to answer this question, another question arises: did the 'loyal opposition' as (supposedly) practiced by the members of the *BK* make any difference to the style of governance chosen by the communist

²⁴⁶ Guske, *Chronik* 515.

²⁴⁷ Ernst Geleefde *theologie*. Both Yosé Höhne Sparborth and Karl Derksen did not mention the ban in the interviews in 2012/1995.

²⁴⁸ Martin Gehlen, Matthias Schlegel “Die Papst-Akte” *Zeitung Heute* 10 October 2005 <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/zeitung/die-papst-akte/647774.html>, “Hinter „IMV Georg“ verbirgt sich der langjährige Generalsekretär der so genannten Berliner Konferenz, Hubertus Guske. (...) Guske selbst arbeitete zwischen 1959 und 1989 mit dem MfS zusammen, seine voluminöse Berichtsakte wurde im Dezember 1989 ebenfalls größtenteils vernichtet.; Bernd Schäfer, Fuchs, Otto Harmut’ *Biographische Datenbanken – Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung* <http://bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/wer-war-wer-in-der-ddr-%2363%3B-1424.html?ID=912> „1963 – 70 vom MfS als IM »Hartmut«“

regimes? To this, the concluding answer is that the regime might have been cautious not to treat the *BK* and the Catholics of the GDR too hostile but that there can be very little proof that this was due to a willingness to take account of the *Konferenz*, or other motives (such as international sanctions following from the oppression of Christians). Furthermore, the practices of the *Stasi*, revealed after 1990 show very little sign any “Christian reflection” the *BK* tried to offer.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself

Dutch Catholic parishes visiting catholic communities in the GDR 1981-1990

De weg tot kontakt is niet gemakkelijk, maar te belangrijk om op te geven.

Cor Arends in a letter to A. ter Meulen, secretary of a parish trying to get into contact with a GDR-parish, October 1986²⁴⁹

Haar van nature vrolijke ogen kregen iets van een doffe ontzetting toen ze zei: "als de grote klap komt, dan – als we er tenminste nog zijn – dan staan jij en ik tegenover elkaar als vijanden." En ze schudde heftig haar hoofd, als om de last van dit ondenkbare af te werpen, maar dat lukte maar half.

"What was the most impressive moment of your trip to the GDR?" answered by a student at the university of Wageningen, October 1981²⁵⁰

Veel: geleerd, gelachen, gedronken

Weinig: geslapen, gezonde lucht, (gezonde) vitaminen

Avelien summarizes her trip to the GDR, July 1989²⁵¹

After 1973, when the Netherlands recognised the GDR as a sovereign country, it became easier for Dutch tourists to travel to the East. In the course of the 1980s hundreds of them traveled across the Iron Curtain, and many more visited East Berlin on

²⁴⁹ *The road to contact is not easy, yet too important to give up.* Letter Cor Arends to A. ter Meulen, Vaassen, 21 October 1986 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no. 711)

²⁵⁰ *Her naturally bright eyes suddenly tuned into a dull gaze, when she, filled with dismay, said: "if the big bang comes, - if we're still there, that is – we will be facing each other as enemies." And she shook her head fiercely, as if trying to shake of this unthinkable horror, but succeeded just partly.* 'Special Issue: Reisverslag Oost-Duitsland', *Triangel - periodiek van het studentenpastoraat Wageningen* (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv no 2119, 1981).

²⁵¹ **A lot of:** *learning, laughing, drinking – Little:* *sleep, fresh air, (healthy) vitamins* 1989 'Voor 't eerst d'rüben - een reisverslag van acht jonge mensen naar de DDR met het Oost-West Buro van Pax Christi' (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 2655).

a one-day visa. In this chapter we will look at these contacts between common people; citizens of the Netherlands and the GDR, not active in the higher ranks of the “(semi-)official” or “independent” Peace movements. Because (most of) these meetings were arranged by the executives of the Peace movements, we will see that an overlapping area between Peace activism and the work on the arrangements of these ‘exchanges’ existed. On their visits to, for instance, the *Katholikentagen*, Jan ter Laak, and Cor Arends would invite younger, politically engaged students with them, who would eagerly use the opportunity to speak to as many people as possible, and who would look back on their GDR-trips in a similar way as the younger group travelers.

In this chapter, we will provide a brief overview of the Protestant and non-confessional initiatives to arrange contacts between Dutch and Eastern German ‘commoners’, before moving on to the Catholic activities. Although these visits were virtually never undertaken with a direct political aim, the trips were nevertheless considered by many as an essential aspect of Peace activism, because it resulted in the breaking down of the hostile image of the people on “the other side”, and increased mutual understanding.

Protestant *gemeentekontakten*

In 1980, the *Werkgroep Oost-Europa Projecten (WOEP)* published a travel guide aimed at Dutch tourists, providing information of the history of the GDR, the structure of the socialist state, the position of the Churches, and practical information with regards to Visa, the *Mindesumtausch*, etc. The most common way for Dutch people to travel to the GDR (and other Warsaw Pact countries) was an organized group tour. Visa-restrictions and the strict planning that was required were often considered too complicated for those who were not experienced in dealing with the German communist bureaucracy.²⁵² More importantly, travelling in a group made it easier to arrange meetings with local groups. The first to organize these group travels was the *Werkgroep Oost-Europa Projecten*,²⁵³ With a magazine, public lectures, expositions, and group tours, they hoped to inform the West about the East. Although the people working for *WOEP* all felt, to some extent, sympathetic towards the socialist ideal, and/or the communist regimes of

²⁵² Pieter Boot, Lisette Dekker and Hans Groenewegen, *Het Andere Duitsland - Introductie Tot De DDR* (s.l.: Sjaloom, 1980).

²⁵³ The *Werkgroep* was a continuation of much of the work done by the Dutch Christian Students Association, *NCSV*. Before 1973, the *NCSV* had published the journal *DDR kenningen*, with information about current events in the GDR hoping to provide an alternative for the ‘biased’ coverage in the standard media. Pekelder, *Nederland En De DDR*, 382.

the Warsaw Pact countries, it was decided that the journal should remain as un-biased as possible. Likewise, the trips they organized had no direct political aim.²⁵⁴

Before 1973, some Protestant churches had been in contact with the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* in the GDR. In the early 1960s, these contacts were often based on the idea that the new communist authorities suppressed the fellow Christians, and that the Dutch should, thus, help them. A typical way of sending “help” was to smuggle Bibles into the GDR, since many Westerners believed that the Bible was banned.²⁵⁵ After 1973, however, and more notably after 1980, the contacts were based more on equality, and the mutual exchange of ideas and ideals.

We have seen that, from 1982, the IKV extended its focus from nuclear arms to human rights conditions in the Warsaw pact. In the early years of this Eastern Europe engagement, some in the IKV higher ranks hoped to use the congregational contacts to pursue their “pro-opposition” policies in the GDR. Mient Jan Faber and other IKV prominents argued for “open discussions” and open talks with the dissident movements. We noted this new course was criticized by many as “beneficent only for the reputation of the IKV in the Netherlands,” and harmful to the opportunities of both the independent movements, and the *BEK* churches. This policy was criticized by those who had been working hard to establish these contacts. They feared that this would result in the same repercussions for the ‘congregation visits’ as for the top of the IKV (a prohibition to travel into the GDR).²⁵⁶

In 1985, the *Werkgroep Gemeentekontakten* was founded to provide a structural basis for the trips. The *Werkgroep* aimed to assist congregations looking for a partner congregation in the GDR, or other Warsaw Pact countries, and serve as an advisory organ for those contacts which were already established.²⁵⁷

Pax Christi’s ‘Eastern Europe Desk’ and the ‘East West Desk’

In contrast to the Protestant contacts, the various Catholic (or Catholic “leaning” ecumenicals) initiatives were never organised, coordinated or even assisted by one central institution. The *Landelijk Overleg Studentenkerken* could provide some help, but Eastern Europe projects were never considered their main priority, and throughout the

²⁵⁴ Pekelder, *Nederland en de DDR*

²⁵⁵ It was, in fact, not banned, yet the shortage of paper and the central distributing system did seriously hamper the printing of new Bibles. Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author; Jan Jonas van de Capelleveen, ‘De Bijbel in Oost-Europa: Een kort historisch overzicht van het bijbelwerk in Oost-Europa en een samenvatting van de huidige stand van zaken’ (Harlem: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1983).

²⁵⁶ ter Laak, ‘Op zoek naar bondgenoten’; de Graaf, *Over De Muur* 159–162, 204–208.

²⁵⁷ de Graaf, *Over De Muur*, chap. ‘De kerkelijke uitwisseling’. The *werkgroep gemeentekontakten* is still active: <http://www.gemeentekontakten.nl/Duitsland/index.html> (visited 21-12-2012)

1970s and 1980s, the organisation seems to have been unstable itself.²⁵⁸ The *Katholieke Raad voor Kerk en Samenleving* had had a committee trying to stimulate social engagement for Eastern Europe among Catholics, but could not reach a wide public until it requested the help of Pax Christi in 1984. The request, combined with the looming realisation that a new strategy was needed in order to uphold the public mobilization secured by the disarmament protests led to the shift in priorities: Eastern Europe would become the main focus, not just for the national board, but *also* for the ranks and files of the movement. Pax Christi now considered the providing of information on the Warsaw Pact regimes and, especially the position of Roman Catholics in these countries as one of its priorities.²⁵⁹ After having travelled across the country for lectures on the nuclear arms race, Cor Arends, Jacques van der Meer and others would now do the same, except with a slightly different topic.²⁶⁰

In 1985 the *Oost Europa Desk (OED)* was set up at the secretary of Pax Christi in The Hague. Jacques van der Meer, was just the man to man this desk. He had been in various Eastern European countries and had been the chairman of the CIZOW for more than six years. From around 1986 Cor Arends assisted him in contacts with the GDR. The *OED* was closer to a national coordination point than any other institute, but nevertheless cannot provide an overview of *all* Catholic visits to Eastern Europe after 1985. This is because of the way the *OED* operated: only a small proportion of the contacts in the Warsaw pact countries were actively arranged by the men from Pax Christi.²⁶¹ Most contacts were established via other contacts. In the archives of the *OED* and the *CIZOW* we find letters of Jacques van der Meer and Cor Arends, offering advice to churches and groups. Most often the advice is to get into contact with another church which is already in contact with a GDR or Polish church.²⁶² In his work for the *OED*, Jacques van der Meer furthermore was in close contact with the pastoral centres of the Dutch dioceses. Some of these centres had their own coordinators for groups wishing to travel East, who took over a lot of the work from the *OED*. The *OED*, thus, delegated a lot of the work for the arrangements of the exchanges. Meanwhile, Jacques van der Meer

²⁵⁸ As appears from the Archives of the Student Church of the University of Nijmegen. Archives and newsletters of the Student Churches of Rotterdam, Wageningen and Nijmegen show that all had contacts with at least one community in the GDR. Jan Huysmans, who was the student pastor in Nijmegen, 1982-1995, remembers the meetings with other student pastors as the place where he first got the idea to try to organise trips for the students visiting his church. Huysmans, Interview by the author. Fragments of the archive of the *Landelijk Overleg Studentenkerken* are part of the archive of the Students' parish in Nijmegen. Minutes of meetings of 'coordination groups' etc. reveal uncertainty about the course of the organisation.

²⁵⁹ Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen*; van der Meer, Interview by the author

²⁶⁰ Megens and Reiding, *Bewegen*; Arends, Interview by the author; van der Meer, Interview by the author

²⁶¹ Jacques van der Meer 'Notitie voor het missiesekretarissenberaad'

²⁶² Letter Cor Arends to A. ter Meulen

and Cor Arends tried to make sure that up-to-date information on Eastern Europe was available for those seeking it. Pax Christi (in cooperation with the *WOEP* and *IKV*) made at least two exhibitions; *de Vredesbeweging in Oost-Europa* (1984) and *Oost-Europa, dat zoeken we op!* (1987) which were exhibited in various cities around the country. Seminars on the GDR and/or parish contacts were held about once a year between 1985 and 1989. At these meetings, the “GDR-experts” of the CIZOW were invited, as well as parishes who had been to the GDR recently, and representatives of the *Werkgroep gemeentekontakten*.²⁶³ From +/- 1985 the Pax Christi magazine *Kommunikatieblad* devoted at least one article per issue to the peace movements in Eastern Europe, and made a series on ‘normal’ parishes visiting parishes in Eastern Europe in 1985-1986.²⁶⁴ The limited direct involvement of the *OED*, particularly Jacques van der Meer himself was, thus by choice. It was, however, also caused by his other work for Pax Christi:

“Jan ter Laak saw himself more as a politician than as somebody working to let others travel East, and he expected me to be involved in the political work as well. Moreover, and this should not be forgotten, I also organised travels to Poland for the religious congregations – people who devoted a lot of their time *and* financial means to Pax Christi, and who thoroughly enjoyed seeing the land of the Pope with their own eyes. If you *really* want to do the work for the parish-contacts thoroughly, you should devote a lot of time to it – and a week has a limited number of hours. Yet, nevertheless, the *Oost Europa Desk* was the central point for Catholic contacts with Eastern Europe. I think I had about 35 addresses for these sort of contacts, and the work we did was valued.”²⁶⁵

For Cor Arends, more or less the same arguments applied. Apart from, gradually, becoming a ‘GDR-expert’, and seeking contacts with parishes in the GDR, he was also in contact with the ‘independent’ opposition in the GDR (as seen in the previous chapter), was involved in the new campaign against the nuclear arms race, and was editor of the *Kommunikatieblad*. In 2012, when asked what he would have done differently, he said:

“The new campaign *Stop armament, start with conversion* was terribly naïve. (...) It would have been good if we had taken the chance to take more groups of people to the GDR – to invest more in a ‘true’ understanding of their lives. Not only the political aspects, but also to understand their different views upon what a ‘Christian lifestyle’ was for them.”²⁶⁶

²⁶³ See, for example: Jacques van der Meer ‘Kandidaten voor het tweede Halberstadt-seminar’, 1988 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no. 2119)

²⁶⁴ Cor Arends ‘Idioot dat een groepje Hollanders zo’n reis maakt om mensen op te zoeken.’; Jelva van der Werf, ‘Zuid-Limburg stuurt Oost-Europa een groet’; Jan Maasen, ‘In Polen wonen mensen als hier met eenzelfde verlangen naar meer gerechtigheid en vrede.’; Magda van der Ende ‘Contact hebben met mensen in Oost-Europa is ontspanning’, all in *Kommunikatieblad* 1985-1986

²⁶⁵ Jacques van der Meer ‘Notitie voor het missiesekretarissenberaad’; van der Meer, Interview by the author

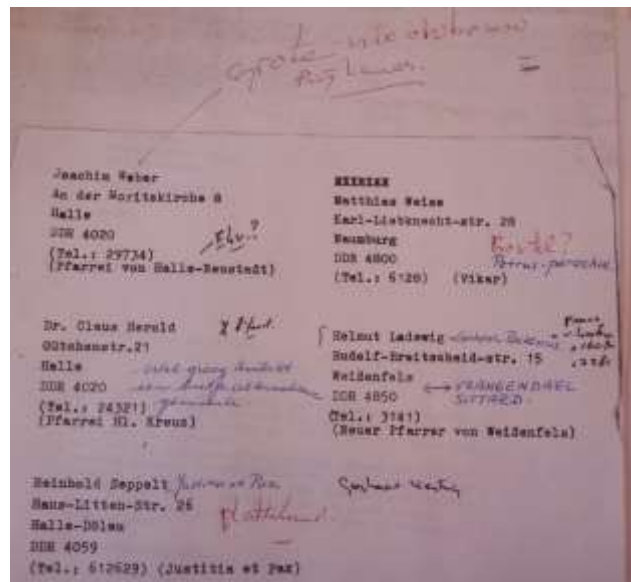
²⁶⁶ Arends, Interview by the author



In 1987, the *OED* was followed by the *Oost-West Buro* (East-West Desk). The *OWB* seems to have been based on the same ideas as the *OED*, but focused specifically on youngsters. In contrast to the *OED*, the *OWB* had an active role in organising trips to the GDR and other Eastern European countries. In cooperation with the new Pax Christi Youth Council, the *OWB* organised “Eastern Europe festivals” with music, food and art from the Warsaw Pact countries. The activities aimed to engage students for Peace, and stressed the common identity of European youngsters.²⁶⁷

The first step: getting into contact with another parish

In the previous chapters we have seen that the focus of the CIZOW and the executives of Pax Christi never lay on the GDR. However, for logistical and linguistic reasons, the GDR was, of all the Warsaw Pact countries the most suitable for the organisation of these basis contacts. The CIZOW and the OED did not have that many contacts in the GDR, and throughout the 1980s, Jacques van der Meer, Cor Arends, and others kept collecting names of priests



and parishes possibly interested in inviting over a Dutch group. In line with the doctrine of the ‘small herd’ in diaspora, the GDR-Catholics generally lived their life rather isolated from the rest of society (we will come back to this later in this chapter), and the

²⁶⁷ Oost West Buro/Jongerenprojekt: Archives Pax Christi NL Inv. no. 2152; Illustrations: Archive Pax Christi NL, Inv. no. 2646

bishops were, generally, not very supportive of contacts with the outside world – as was the state. Nevertheless, some young parish priests tried to do whatever the boundaries of the bishops and the state allowed them to engage their church-goers. To find these people, Jacques van der Meer cooperated with the *Werkgroep Gemeentecontacten* of the protestant churches, and with some people from Pax Christi FRG. Most important were two contacts *in* the GDR: Joachim Garstecki in Berlin (Ost) and Joachim Brandt in Leipzig. These two progressive priests were, as we have seen in the previous chapter, important sources of information on current events in the Catholic Church in the GDR and the state.²⁶⁸ They furthermore acted as intermediaries between Pax Christi and GDR parish priests.²⁶⁹ Joachim Brandts' help went even further, when in 1986 the Oratorian community hosted a group of young people on a trip organised and joined by Cor Arends himself.²⁷⁰

Despite these very well connected informants, it appears that the number of Dutch parishes wishing to go was far higher than the number of GDR parishes hoping – or allowed – to invite a Dutch group. The cause of this incongruence is probably three-folded. Firstly, the GDR state in general was hesitant to allow Westerners into the country. GDR citizens who appeared too eager to come into contact with the West were regarded with suspect by the *Stasi*, which might have made the parishes hesitant to try to invite a Dutch group in the first place. Secondly, the Catholic hierarchy, as we saw, was very careful not to lose the privileges it enjoyed within the Party state, and, thus, did not encourage the parishes to undertake any activities which could arouse suspicion. Finally, after the Pastoral Council and the synod of the Pope and the Dutch bishops, the Dutch Catholics did not have a very pious reputation in the rest of the world. The German bishops were afraid that the obeisant GDR Catholics (who were, as we saw, submissive to both the State and Hierarchy) would be stirred up to rebellious thoughts or acts by those “astray” Dutch Catholics. On top of this, the questionable reputation of the Dutch peace movements and Jan ter Laak did not always make it an advantage to be linked to Pax Christi.²⁷¹

Apart from *getting* into contact, it was also very hard to *stay* in contact: only in 1988 do we see a visit to a parish which, apparently, had been visited the year before as

²⁶⁸ Garstecki was a Catholic priest who worked at the ecumenical centre of the *BEK*. Brandt was an Oratorian priest, who, due to the vows of their Order, could operate more or less independently from the bishops. Joachim Brandt and his younger colleague Werner Fischer were in regular contact with Cor Arends – who says he visited the Oratorians many times before and after November 1989, most of the times on a personal tourist visa. See the chapter ‘On the road to the right track’

²⁶⁹ List of names with notes by Cor Arends, s.a. (1985) (Archives Pax Christi NL Inv. no. 2119)

²⁷⁰ Arends, ‘- VERTROUWELIJK - Verslag van de reis naar Leipzig, DDR 2-8 April’.

²⁷¹ Arends, Interview by the author

well. The Oratorian community in Leipzig was revisited a couple of times, but mostly in the form of private visits by Cor Arends.²⁷² The Catholic student parish in Berlin (Ost) was visited by students from Nijmegen in 1985 and 1986, and probably after that as well. The Dutch students, however, never stayed in East Berlin, but attended seminars in West-Berlin, from where they would make a short visit to the students in the East.²⁷³ Because these visits were mostly focused on the exchange of ideas and experiences, the incidental character of the visits did not harm the quality or meaning of it. As we will see, a couple of days, sometimes even a couple of hours, spent with those ‘on the other side’ could provide enough new experiences.

Politically engaged or just curious? A profile of the visitors and their hosts

Because of the fragmented archives, the variety in organisations working to establish these contacts, and (most of all) because of the time frame in which this research project was carried out, it is impossible to provide a *complete* overview of all contacts between Catholic or ecumenical parishes in the Netherlands and the GDR in the 1980s. The sources that were available, however, do provide a glimpse of how the contacts were established, what the main motivations to go to or invite another parish were, what activities the groups undertook during their trips, and what themes were discussed.²⁷⁴

The trips can (generally) be divided into two categories: firstly, small groups of four to seven people who are active in their local Pax Christi or *IKV* committee, hoping to meet GDR-people who are engaged with peace in a way similar to themselves, and to find ways to cooperate in this. These are people who, in the Netherlands, are involved with the 8 May movement and other socio-political issues in and outside of the Church: they are informed on the arms race, human rights conditions, gender debates, etc. They (generally) vote for the political parties on the left, but are convinced of the values of a multiform democracy and freedom of speech. Two examples are the trip to Halberstadt in 1988, of which we have reports by Geert van Dartel, Liduine Meijer and Cor Arends,²⁷⁵ and the trip to Berlin in June 1986, of which we have a report by Henk de

²⁷² Arends, Interview by the author

²⁷³ *Ingeschreven, blad van de Nijmeegse Studentenkerk*, 1985-8, 1986-2; 1989, 1990

²⁷⁴ Van der Meer, Interview by the author; Arends, Interview by the author; Wim Muijers, Serge Roufs and Elly Kok, who all three were students in the 1980s and visited the Catholic Student parish of Berlin (Ost) in 1985 and 1986; and Jan Huysmans, student pastor in Nijmegen in the 1980s. Even more important than the interviews are the reports written by students and other GDR-goers, as preserved in the archives of Pax Christi and as published in the newsletters of the student parishes (see below)

²⁷⁵ Dartel, ‘Enkele dagen ruiken aan de DDR’; Meijer, ‘Een ontmoeting in Halberstadt’. At that time, Geert van Dartel was already a member of the CIZOW, and for that purpose had travelled to many Eastern European countries. He had, however, not been in the GDR before, and, at the start of his report, explicitly states that the main goal of this trip did not have anything to do with the “East-West policy” of Pax Christi. I therefore decided to categorize this under the parish contacts.

Wijer.²⁷⁶ In 1985 and 1986, shortly after the founding of the Eastern Europe Desk, five articles written by participants of these sorts of trips to various Warsaw Pact countries were published in the *Kommunikatieblad*. In these articles, “meeting the other side” is made equal to “peace engagement” and “détente from below”:

Dit soort contacten zijn niet te plannen als ‘campagne voor ontspanning’ – ze zijn ontspanning. (...) Mensen in Hongarije zitten niet te springen om vrede te krijgen. Wel om een echte dialoog die draait om het volgende: Hoe geef jij, in jouw samenleving, vorm aan verzet tegen onrecht, hoe draag ik bij aan vrede en hoe kunnen wij samen een stuk van dat ijzeren gordijn laten zakken?²⁷⁷

The second category consists of trips which aimed to show to “common people” that “Eastern Europe is not as far as they think it is”²⁷⁸ These were trips organised by or with assistance from the CIZOW, the Eastern Europe Desk and the East-West Desk. We have a few reports from the student parishes in Nijmegen and in Wageningen²⁷⁹ and longer reports from the trip to Leipzig in 1985²⁸⁰ and to the area around Halle and Erfurt in 1989 and 1990.²⁸¹ From the introduction of the latter two it becomes clear that, between 1985 and 1989, more trips for students were organised, but we have not been able to find reports of these trips.²⁸² Among these (younger) travellers, political engagement (if present at all) was not directly linked to their *Christian* identity: some of the students didn’t even go to Church regularly.²⁸³ For them, the opportunity to see the GDR (or any Warsaw pact country) was more important than the meeting with other Catholics. Most of them had been to the FRG, but realised that they know virtually nothing about the GDR. At least some of the GDR-goers were curious about the benefits of the socialist experiment, and were critical of the capitalist system. Some of the Wageningen students in 1981 read *De Waarheid*, newspaper of the Dutch Communist Party, and some of them

²⁷⁶ Henk de Wijer, ‘Een indruk van een reis naar Oost-Berlijn’ (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 711, 1986).

²⁷⁷ *Contacts like these cannot be planned in ‘a campaign for détente’ – they are détente. (...) The people in Hungary are not too excited about peace-tourists. They are, however, looking for a real dialogue about this: how do you give shape to your resistance against injustices in your society, how do I contribute to peace, how can we, together, let down a piece of the Iron Curtain?*

Magda van der Ende ‘Contact hebben met mensen in Oost-Europa is ontspanning’ *Kommunikatieblad* (1986)

²⁷⁸ Jacques van der Meer ‘Oost-Europa Desk’op poten’ *Kommunikatieblad* (1985)

²⁷⁹ *Ingeschreven*, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990; ‘Special Issue: Reisverslag Oost-Duitsland’.

²⁸⁰ Ronald Baseler, ‘Mijn reis naar de DDR’, 1985 (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 2119, 1985); Piet Venhuizen, ‘Verslag van de DDR-reis’ (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 2119, 1985); Jan Wagenaar, ‘De DDR-reis van 2-8 April’ (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 2119, 1985).

²⁸¹ ‘Voor ‘t eerst d’rùben’; ‘Voor Het Laatste in De DDR - Verslag Van De Pax Christi-reis’ (Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no 2655).

²⁸² The *OWB* (probably) started in 1987, and organized the first youth vacations in the same year, or in 1988. The *OED*, furthermore, provided information about youth vacations and voluntary work in the GDR and Polen, which were organised by a Christian organisation in East Berlin (ASF), yet I have not been able to find any longer personal reports by participants. Therefore, these trips are left out.

²⁸³ See the pre-face to ‘Voor ‘t eerst d’rùben’. Cor Arends, a theologian even, did not go to Church regularly. Arends, interview by the author.

are disappointed after their first meeting with the German students, “because they heard only negative things about the GDR.”²⁸⁴ Over the course of their trip all young travellers become less enthusiastic about “real existing socialism”. These trips let the students think about the arms race and a divided Europe, but we have little evidence that the visits convinced them to become members of their local Pax Christi/MOV groups. Wim Muijers, who became a member of the CIZOW after his first trip in 1981 (of which we have very little reports) seems to have been an exception.

The conversation topics of the younger groups seem to have been very similar to the first category. Even during the ‘neutral’ activities such as a hike through the forest near Leipzig, the talks and discussions among the Dutch and German students touch upon political issues. This is due to the character of the communities they visited: the hosts of both ‘categories’ were critically engaged communities or parishes. The programs they prepared for their visitors were filled with politically tinged activities: a visit to a former concentration camp, a gay community centre, the building site of a new Church. The parish in Halberstadt explicitly invites a parish in Arnhem to discuss “how both parishes have taken up the Conciliar Process”²⁸⁵ The discussed themes hardly change over the course of ten years, but after 1986 the discussions are placed in the context of Conciliar Process: Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of creation.

Themes to discuss: Justice and Peace

In the world-wide Conciliar Process, the terms “justice” and “peace” were mostly considered to mean world-wide justice in terms of a fairer distribution of wealth between the First, Second, and Third world, and peace between the peoples of the world. In the GDR, however, the discussions in the “justice-field” were applied to the GDR society itself, and the injustices done by the regime to its citizens, Christians in particular. ‘Peace’ was usually interpreted as the struggle for disarmament and openness about the defense budgets and policies of both the Warsaw Pact and the NATO. In the socialist countries, the right to pursue this struggle for peace through independent initiatives was inextricably linked to the discussion surrounding “justice”. The debate about the role of the laity and women in the churches were also placed under the heading of Justice.

²⁸⁴ Special Issue: Reisverslag Oost-Duitsland’.

²⁸⁵ Dartel, ‘Enkele dagen ruiken aan de DDR’; Meijer, ‘Ontmoeting in Halberstadt’.

Injustice (and Peace) in the GDR

In contrast to the *Berliner Konferenz*, where the characterisation of the GDR as a dictatorship or undemocratic society was *faux pas*, the travellers on these trips seem to have encountered very little taboos. In Leipzig, they met a man who is active in the CDU party, who explained the constitutional decree on the structures of the government and parties. His wife was sceptical about his work; since the CDU did not have any real influence. Later, they spoke to members of a student parish, who were equally sceptical about the election process in the GDR. This aspect of the GDR as a dictatorship impressed the Dutch visitors, but was seen as only one part of the general lack of freedom. The checks at the FRG-GDR border, the registration at the police office, and, after a week in Leipzig, the confrontation with the Berlin Wall gave them a very strong feeling of being in a prison. When Ronald Baseler waited at the police station for his registration, he was approached by an old lady. She told him that she liked to sit around the phones for international calls because she could meet people from all over the world there. Baseler realised that he was her “eye” to the rest of the world.²⁸⁶ Baseler’s companion Piet Venhuizen wrote:

Hetgene wat me het meest van mijn stuk gebracht had was toch wel de onvrijheid geweest waarin de DDR-mensen leven. Geleidelijk (...) was het besef van datgene wat ik natuurlijk al jaren wist maar waar ik nooit zo bij stil gestaan had, diep in mijn hersens doorgedrongen: namelijk dat het de DDR-burger werkelijk niet toegestaan is te gaan en staan waar hij wil. Iemand die dit leest zal zeggen: “maar dat is toch niks nieuws, dat weet toch iedereen (...)? Ik antwoord dan: Natuurlijk weet iedereen dat, maar je moet er naar toe gaan, en de douanecontrole, de prikkeldraad, en de bejaardentreinen zien, om te begrijpen maar ook te VOELEN wat het werkelijk inhoudt.²⁸⁷

The ban on independent initiatives was a second aspect of the lack of freedom the GDR people discussed with the Western visitors. The young groups in Leipzig and in Halle/Erfurt were amazed at how many young people visit the events organised by the Oratorium priests and the church in Erfurt: at the time, the population in the Dutch churches had been greying for at least a decade. They later learned that the church was the only organisation allowed to organise her own events, next to the *Freie Deutsche*

²⁸⁶ Baseler, ‘Mijn reis naar de DDR’.

²⁸⁷ *The thing that shocked me the most was the lack of freedom of the GDR people. I slowly thoroughly realized (...) that which I had, obviously, known for years but never really considered: that the GDR citizens is truly banned from going wherever he wants to go. Anyone who reads this might say: “well, that’s nothing new, everybody knew that, right?” I will answer: “Yes, of course everyone knows about this, but you will have to go there, go past the border checks, the barbed wire, see the trains with the elderly, in order to understand and FEEL what this really means.* Venhuizen, ‘Verslag van de DDR-reis’.

Jugend, which the GDR youngsters thought was “*furchtbar langweilich*”, because of all the “ideological waffling” at their events.²⁸⁸ The Dutch visitors were surprised that enjoying a meal on Maundy Thursday and singing songs together can be so enjoyable. Later that same week they experienced that it was (virtually) impossible to go to the only disco or night club in Leipzig for non-members of the *FDJ*. The group of local *IKV* and Pax Christi activists traveling to Berlin with Henk de Wijer were equally amazed about the number and variety of people they met in the churches. They even met convinced atheists and Marxists who could not find any other place to voice their criticism to the state and the “real existing socialism”.²⁸⁹ The group from Arnhem, invited to the ecumenical parishes in Halberstadt, experienced the hardest confrontation with this problem. Geert van Dartel states:

Het beeld van de DDR dat me is bijgebleven is toch vooral van een zeer gesloten samenleving. (...) Pogingen van groepen of individuen om brandende maatschappelijke vraagstukken op een onafhankelijke manier aan de orde te stellen worden door de maatschappelijke instituties veelal gefrustreerd.²⁹⁰

The parishioners in Halberstadt linked their wish for the right to independent political engagement to the fight for social justice in the GDR. The parishioners said that could not understand that the Dutch had so much more opportunity to protest for Peace and Justice issues, but that they seemed to do so little with it. The only reply the Dutch visitors could think of that, in the Netherlands, you could protests however much you wanted, the “gentlemen in the Hague” did not listen, anyway.²⁹¹

Injustice in the Catholic Church of the GDR

We have noted that one of the main obstructions to parish-to-parish contacts in the GDR were the bishops, who feared that the “rebellious” Dutch would ignite their pious parishioners. Earlier, we saw that the isolation of the GDR Catholics of the rest of the Church, and the rest of society resulted in an ecclesiastical province where the renewals of the Second Vatican Council had scarcely reached the parishes. For some of the Dutch visitors the conservative outlook on what a “Catholic identity” entailed, or how the hierarchical organisation of the Church (both a such, and the persons currently occupying the positions) might have caused an even greater culture shock than the different views on world politics.

²⁸⁸ Venhuizen, ‘Verslag van de DDR-reis’.

²⁸⁹ Wijer, ‘Indruk van deen reis naar Oost-Berlijn’.

²⁹⁰ *The image of the GDR that remained was an image of a closed society. Attempts by groups or individuals to bring burning social issues up for debate are frustrated by the social institutions.* Dartel, ‘Enkele dagen ruiken aan de DDR’.

²⁹¹ Meijer, ‘Een ontmoeting in Halberstadt’.

As discussed in the introduction chapter on Catholics in the GDR, the question which occupied them most, was to what extent a Catholic could participate in a society with which' fundamentals he could not agree. The answer of the GDR Bishops was: "participation is only allowed if it is completely necessary". After the pastoral letter of 1986 the official answer became: "participation is allowed, as long as a Christian remains loyal to his Christian lifestyle, and is not forced 'to follow any other star than that of Bethlehem.'"²⁹² In practice, these two answers were not very different. Catholics in the GDR were still confronted with the same obligations and expectations from the State and the Catholic Church. *Jugendweihe*, *Wehrkundeunterricht*, and the military service were judged as "un-Christian" by the bishops, but virtually unavoidable by common Catholics. The only *realistic* answer to the "participation-question" was, therefore: a Catholic who wished to avoid discrimination, persecution, or, at worst, imprisonment *had* to participate; there are very few other options.

All GDR parish priests were educated at the only seminary where they had been trained by priests who were mostly very old and very conservative. They, on their turn, had had their trainings in fascist Germany, or in the FRG in the 1950s, and had not left the monasteries since then. Not surprisingly, many of the young priests were not very well prepared to offer advice about the "real life" of socialist society to their parishioners. This was felt particularly by the younger generations. At the *Katholikentreffen* in Halle, a conscripted boy raised his dilemma: he was the last one of his regiment who has not devoted his loyalty to the Soviet Union, and now his and the rest of his regiments' payment is shortened. Serge Roufs and Elly Kok remember talking to a girl who felt she was prohibited from studying medicine because she was not active in the *FDJ* or the *CDU*; the few places available at the university were allocated by the *SED*. The 'ban' on membership of the political parties resulted in restrictions to academic education for Catholics. In both cases, the only "right" answer the priest could give was the answer of the bishops: a Catholic should stay firmly for his own convictions, and not give in to any pressure from non-believers.²⁹³

The incongruence between the reality of everyday-life, the propaganda and demands from the State led many people in the GDR to live their life in *Resignation*. They lived as stowaways in their own house, had learned that only a few could be trusted, and kept quiet in the outside world. Their participation in society was as little as

²⁹² Die Bischöfe der Berliner Bischofskonferenz, 'Katholische Kirche Im Socialistischen Staat'

²⁹³ De Wit 'Bezoek aan de Friedensdekade Halle'

possible: they did whatever was expected, but nothing more, waiting for better times to arrive – if ever. For the Catholics in the GDR, the incongruences between the expectations of the State and the demands of the Church were added to this. This resulted in a “double Resignation” amongst parishioners. Cor Arends explains this to the *CIZOW* after the Leipzig trip:

Vele 30 – 50 jarigen hebben een gezagskomplex doordat zij aan de eisen van het maatschappelijk leven moeten voldoen, (bijv. deelname aan verkiezingen waarin ze niet geloven) en een innerlijk (kerkelijk) leven naast elkaar moeten laten bestaan. (...) Toch is de kerk, vooral de katholieke kerk, geen echt alternatief. (...) De clerus is tamelijk konservatief, ook door hun opleiding in afzondering op het seminarie in Erfurt. Daar wordt hun een anti-kommunisme en zelfs onverschilligheid t.o.v. maatschappelijke vragen bijgebracht.²⁹⁴

The active Catholics in those parishes interested in welcoming Western believers, however, tried their best not to follow the easy path of *Resignation*, and tried to do whatever they could to improve their situation and fight for their own rights. The *Studentengemeinde* of Erfurt had painted the motto “*Ein Heiliger der nur traurig ist, ist ein trauriger Heiliger*” on its walls. The pastor saw it as one of his most important tasks to campaign against the *Resignation*, and activate the students to improve their own positions.²⁹⁵ In the reports about the trip to Halberstadt, where the parishes were so actively engaged in the Conciliar Process, we see how hard it was for the parishioners to ignite political activism, struggle for the improvement of the own position, and criticize the “passive whining” of the fellow GDR-citizens without stepping in the same pitfall of negativity themselves.

Geert van Dartel’s evaluation of the trip as a whole reveals that they have heard a lot of East German problems, and very little solutions:

Het is moeilijk te spreken van een echte uitwisseling. De DDR-mensen waren het meest aan het woord over hún situatie (...). De gesprekken vond ik te weinig praktisch. De vraag hoe ieder in zijn/haar situatie de komende jaren heel concreet bezig wil gaan met de thema’s van het Conc. Proces, werd onvoldoende beantwoord. Het beschrijven van de huidige situatie kreeg de meeste aandacht.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ *Many 30-50 year-olds have authority issues because of the demands of the society (such as voting in elections they do not trust) which they have to combine with their ‘inner’ (Church) life. (...) The Church, especially the Catholic Church, however, does not offer an alternative. (...) the clergy is rather conservative, because of their isolated education at the seminary of Erfurt. They are ‘raised’ anti-communist, and are taught an indifferent attitude towards social questions. Arends ‘Verslag van de reis naar Leipzig’.*

²⁹⁵ ‘Special Issue: reisverslag Oost-Duitsland’.

²⁹⁶ *We cannot speak of a real exchange. The GDR-people were mostly talking about their situation. (...) I think the talks were not practical enough. The question on how everyone can take up the themes of the Conciliar Process in their situation in the next years, was not answered sufficiently. More attention was paid to describing the situation as it is right now. Dartel, ‘Enkele dagen ruiken aan de DDR’.*

Despite the active approach of the hosts, the impression the Dutch were left with was often not much different than the picture painted by the hosts.

Participation of laics and women in the parishes

In most parishes Mass, liturgy and all other activities were still very traditional; Mass was the highlight of the week, and communion was the most important part. The priest could “reign” over the parishioners, who had very little to say. After half a century (since the Hitler-years) of bans on political involvement by the churches, most Catholics did not know how to integrate engagement with liturgy, and what the role of the laics in this could be. This was very different from Dutch parishes where workgroups had been engaged in IKV and MOV groups for years, and where politics and liturgy were merged in the Political services (*Politiek avondgebed*). When Cor Arends shows the Halbertstadt parishes a video of a baptism in Arnhem. The baby is baptised by a woman,²⁹⁷ and the GDR parish is amazed: “is that even allowed?” A discussion on “what is allowed, and what do we just do” followed.

Many of the Dutch visitors seem undecided on what to think about the *Resignation* dilemma, especially in the context of the Catholic Church. They do feel bad that the bishops seem so unwilling to think about the problems of the common Catholics. Yet, on the other hand, they have a hard time understanding why the Germans attach so much importance to the judgement of the priests and the bishops: *not* listening to the bishops’ judgements has proved to be liberating for the Dutch; why should it not for the Germans?²⁹⁸ Cor Arends went so far as naming this as the main obstacle to independent peace activism by Catholic parishes:

De aard van de problemen in de katholieke kerk: het ontbreken van ieder kritische bewustzijn over de eigen rol als gelovige en als kerk in het socialisme. Het bevorderen van deze mondigheid door de tegenspreken en breuken in de kerk en in de maatschappij te leren zien zou wel eens van grote belang kunnen zijn dan expliciet vredeswerk op te pakken.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Please note that this was not even the main ‘point’ to show the video; Arends just wanted to show the variety of activities happening in the church in Arnhem; among shots of all sort of work and discussion groups the baptising woman just confuses the onlookers the most.

²⁹⁸ Not only the bishops could enjoy respect, Pope John II could as well: he was the one who appointed the ‘liberal’ bishop Wanke, and opened the way to a dialogue with the communist regimes, especially in Poland. Jan Huysmans remembers that both the GDR and the Polish students (whom the Dutch met coincidentally in the Catholic Parish in East-Berlin) asked them “What did you do with our Pope?”.

²⁹⁹ *The character of the problems in the Catholic Church: the absens of any critical reflection on the own part of believer and as church in a socialist environment. The promotion of independence, by learning to see incongruences and schisms in the Church and society could be of more importance than explicit peace work.* Arends, ‘- VERTROUWELIJK - Verslag Van De Reis Naar Leipzig, DDR 2-8 April’

Catholic women in the GDR and Church

Closely related to the organisation of the Church and the position of the laity was the discussion on the position of the woman in the Church.

Many of the Dutch women and girls traveling to the GDR expected an emancipated society, because they had heard that the GDR authorities did so much more against sexism and the dominant position of men in society.³⁰⁰ The GDR did have a lot of 'progressive' laws; both men and women were expected to work, and birth control and abortions were financed by the state. Nevertheless, inside the house the traditional roles of men and women remained unchanged. Consequently, many women had full-time jobs and the full care of a family. Many of the progressive regulations, for example the long maternity leaves, in fact fixed the traditional roles of men and women in society.

Meanwhile, the struggle for a Catholic lifestyle was made into a political struggle. A Catholic lifestyle (according to the bishops, and, thus, many of the parishioners) was a lifestyle focused on the family; the woman stayed at home to take care of her (many) children; birth control was not allowed, abortion was out of the question.

In the Netherlands, the feminist movement was active outside and inside the churches and campaigned for an equal position in the churches (including the campaign for the opening of priesthood for women).³⁰¹ It seems as if this discussion had not reached the majority of the GDR Catholic Churches for all of the 1980s. Lidwien Meijer, one of the women visiting Halberstadt, met two female theologians; exceptional in the Catholic church, since the only Catholic theology college was part of the seminary, and thus not open to women. These women had studied at the protestant theology faculty in Leipzig. One of them, Eva (her last name is not mentioned) voiced her displeasure when gender relations in the Church is not selected as one of the official themes for the Conciliar Process discussions. The priest claimed that the committee that decided on the themes "was compiled of men as well as women"; whereupon Meijer remarks: "I always cringe in a little when someone speaks of women in 'as well as-terms'".³⁰²

Meijer was lucky to meet two academically trained female theologians, but the overall number of politically engaged Catholic laics with an academic education, let

³⁰⁰ Illustrative for the image painted by the Dutch left-wing media is the chapter 'De tweede sexe in het andere Duitsland' in Boot, Dekker and Groenewegen, pp. 99–106.

³⁰¹ See for example Eginhard Meijering, *Het Nederlands Christendom in De Twintigste Eeuw* (Balans, Uitgeverij, 2007); van der Plas, *Uit De Grond Van Ons Hart*; Borgman, van Dijk and Saleminck, *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland. De Bazuin* regularly devoted articles to feminist theology; in the student parish in Nijmegen discussion nights etc. are organised on a regular basis. Virtually all of these articles, including the chapters in the mentioned books, were written by the very few women in the organisation; possibly the best proof that 'even' in the Netherlands, the (Catholic) peace movement was indeed a virtually all male's affair.

³⁰² Meijer; Dartel, 'Enkele dagen ruiken aan de DDR'.

alone women, was very little. This was probably why feminist theology, or even any discussion on female emancipation was not discussed in many parishes. Most of the Dutch visitors seem to have noted this, yet accepted it, not wanting to offend their hosts. Elly Kok, participant of the trip organised by the student parish in Nijmegen, remembers her rather 'direct' friend who expressed her aversion to the Pope and his stance on condoms, birth control and abortion during the first introduction talks in East Berlin: "surely, every self-respecting young woman would agree with her?" This introduction did not go well with the GDR Catholics.³⁰³ In the conservative environment the students from Nijmegen and their pastor felt uncomfortable. Years later, pastor Jan Huysmans understands the conservative attitude: "If you are pushed to the barricades to fight for your right to stick to your own identity, you cannot torn this identity".³⁰⁴ Birth control and abortion were considered to be imposed by the State; a Catholic woman could not afford to choose for these things which were considered as directly undermining the Catholic identity.

Themes to discuss: The integrity of Creation

Without exception, the first thing the visitors note is the polluted air of the GDR. From the descriptions we get the impression that the intense smell started the minute the border with the FRG was crossed; almost as if not just the people who could not cross the border, but the wind as well. Brown coal was the common fuel in the GDR (and FRG), and the area between Halle/Leipzig and Erfurt was full of mines.

The Dutch were shocked by the pollution, but even more shocked to notice that it did not seem to bother the GDR citizens at all. This laxity was not uncommon in the Netherlands either. However, as we saw, most of the visitors voted for the left-wing 'green' parties, and thus had at least some awareness of environmental problems. In 1982, Wim Muijers gave a short report to his trip to Erfurt for the CIOZOW. The group of Dutch students had asked about the stench, the use of ignite and the waste of energy (they noticed that many people would heat their apartments so that they could wear summer clothes inside, even during winter). The Germans had answered that there was nothing they would be able to do anyway, and that this was the way it was. Furthermore, they had argued that the brown coal mines were the main mainstay of the (already fragile) economy of the FRG, and that it was a cheap fuel, affordable for all.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Roufs and Kok, Interview by the author

³⁰⁴ Huysmans, Interview by the author

³⁰⁵ Minutes of the CIOZOW meeting, copy preserved in the private archives of Wim Muijers

Three years later the groups in Leipzig encountered a similar attitude among the students they met.³⁰⁶

The Conciliar Process basket 'Integrity of creation' put care for the environment on the agenda of the politically engaged churches around the world. In the GDR, however, the *Erziehung zur organisierten verantwortungslosigkeit*; the retreat into an organised sense of not being responsible for the pollution, or for a solution to the pollution was grounded deep in the minds of the GDR citizens, the scientists and the state. As late as 1988, Geert van Dartel wrote:

Niemand [heeft] me ooit duidelijk (kunnen) maken hoe abominabel het leefklimaat in de DDR is. Het is werkelijk verstikkend. (...) Het is onbegrijpelijk en triest, dat de kwestie van de vervuiling in [de] samenleving geen onderwerp van gesprek mag zijn. Milieuactivisten krijgen alleen in de Evangelische kerk wat ruimte; in katholieke kerk helemaal niet.³⁰⁷

To make things worse, a law prohibited the publishing of sensitive data on air and ground pollution, and any criticism was considered undermining opposition. This, of course, meant that the State did acknowledge the problem, but also that speaking out on the issue was even more dangerous. The reports remain pessimistic up until the Pax Christi trip of July 1989.

All in all, the explosiveness of the issue appears most clearly from the programme of the Pax Christi trip of July 1990, when the students devote three full days to visits to ignite mines, meetings with environmental activists from various churches and a lecture in the *Unabhängiges Institut für Umweltfragen*.³⁰⁸

After the *Wende*

After the revolution of November 1989 Protestant and Catholic churches in the Netherlands hastily make plans to finally invite their German friends over to the Netherlands. In September 1990, 14 students from the *Katholische Studentengemeinde Berlin(Ost)* visited Nijmegen. Although the program prepared for the five days in the Netherlands is not very different from the earlier trips in the GDR, Jan Huysmans remembers the visit overall as slightly disappointing.³⁰⁹ The visiting Germans appeared to be "Roman Catholics", with the emphasis on the word *Roman*." The discussions – or even clashes – between the Dutch and German students were fierce, particularly during

³⁰⁶ Arends, ' - VERTROUWELIJK - Verslag van de reis naar Leipzig, DDR 2-8 April'; Venhuizen, 'Verslag van de DDR-reis'.

³⁰⁷ *Nobody ever really succeeded in letting me understand how abominable the climate of life is in the GDR. It is really suffocating. It is incomprehensible and very sad that environmental pollution issues are banned from public discussion. Environmental activists are only offered some space in the Evangelical churches, and not at all in the Catholic churches.* Dartel, 'Enkele dagen ruiken aan de DDR'.

³⁰⁸ 'Voor het laatst in de DDR - Verslag van de Pax Christi-reis'.

³⁰⁹ Huysmans, Interview by the author

the info-sessions on feminist theology, “Church life in modern times”, and when it appeared that the service the Dutch students had prepared appeared to be very different from the Roman Catholic Mass they had expected at the *Catholic* university of Nijmegen.³¹⁰

The partnership between the student church of Berlin(Ost) and Nijmegen was not the only parish-contact to disintegrate rapidly after the *Wende*. The differences between the Dutch and the German Catholics in terms of their ideas about what “being Catholic” entailed were very different. These differences had, of course, been apparent before the *Wende*, but seemed unimportant, overshadowed by so many other differences and that one common goal: getting to know the other side, breaking borders in the divided world.

Before 1989 the Dutch had provided a window to the rest of the world for their German hosts. Now that the borders of the (former) GDR had opened, the Netherlands (and Nijmegen in particular) was not one of the most exotic places the Germans could visit. Furthermore, among the Dutch students the animus to host students from the GDR seems to have dropped dramatically. Before November 1989, trips to (East-)Berlin were announced just once, and the increase in the number of trips between 1986 and 1989 reveals the interest among the students. The committee organizing the visit to Nijmegen had to make at least five calls in the months before to find enough hosts for fourteen Berliners.

The “Other” had fascinated them, but as soon as the “other” was one of them, the fascination was over. In this, the German and the Dutch students’ attitude were remarkably similar.

Looking back

In his *Kommunikatieblad* article about visiting a parish in the GDR Cor Arends concludes:

Wie wil gaan moet wel kritisch staan tegenover zijn eigen leven, waarden en normen, en ook tegenover onze samenleving. Want als je vol bent van je eigen gelijk, zie je ook alleen maar de bevestiging van je (voor)oordelen. Zie je wel, ze hebben ‘t daar slecht, geen tomaten in december of sla in januari. Wij zijn gewend steeds meer te willen hebben en door contact met hen leer je dan dat alles te relativeren. Je leert te zien wat genoeg is om te leven.³¹¹

³¹⁰ The students had hoped to be able to ‘insert’ the experiences of the visitors on Sunday. Stan Morre ‘Vergelt’s Gott: het bezoek van de KSG uit de (nog) DDR aan het SPN’ *Ingeschreven* 2, 1990-1991

³¹¹ *Whoever wishes to go, has to have a critical attitude towards his own life, values and norms, and towards our own society. Because, if you are convinced of being in the right, you will see nothing but confirmations of your own prejudices. See, the people live in poor conditions, no tomatoes in December, or lettuce in January. We are used to wanting more and more, and by getting into contact with them, you will learn that all is relative. You will learn to see what is enough to live.* Cor Arends ‘Idioot dat een groepje Hollanders zo’n reis maakt om mensen op te zoeken.’ *Kommunikatieblad* 1986

Although most of the travelers realize that the GDR-people have enough food, and that having to wait years for a *Trabant* is not life-threatening, they readily confess that they are glad to be living on “the other side”. The participants are relieved to be back in the West after spending a couple of days – or even only a few hours³¹² in the GDR. Properly painted houses, (relatively) fresh air, variation of meat and vegetable supplies, and “real” coffee and coke were missed most. The impression of a grey country in which most people live a resigned and drab life stays during the full length of their trip. In 1989 the Pax Christi trip even schedules a day in the FRG to “acclimatize” in the West.³¹³ Spending a week ‘on the other side’ seems to have felt, to some at least, as having spent a week in another world – a world where *everything* is different, even the taste of a glass of coke or a cup of coffee. “Seeing what is enough to live on”, was probably not the first thing the Dutch visitors remember of their trip. It is, in any case, not what the interviewees remember in 2012, or what we read in the conclusions at the end of the reports.

Knowing this, and having seen the rapid disintegration of the contact after the *Wende*, should we conclude that the contacts were worthless, and did not mean anything special to those hosting or travelling to the GDR? No. The visits might have meant virtually nothing in the course of the Cold War in general; but they did change the minds of at least some people East *and* West of the Iron Curtain. Looking back, 25 to 30 years later, Cor Arends wishes he had spent more time on arranging these trips than on the “terribly naïve” disarmament campaign Pax Christi set up after 1984, “because with this work a ‘real difference’ could be made.”³¹⁴ The articles in the *Kommunikatieblad* speak of *Détente* from below, facilitating a dialogue between East and West, a contribution to mutual understanding, and a stimulation to peace engagement among those visiting Eastern Europe. It seems like the trips did to Erfurt and Leipzig did exactly what Pax Christi hoped they would. In the introduction of their report, Ronald Baseler and Piet Venhuizen reveal that they knew very little about the GDR before going there:

Voor mijn gevoel lag het ergens ver weg achter het ijzeren gordijn, en had het meer iets
“Russisch” dan iets ‘Duits”

At the end of his report he concludes:

³¹² Jan Huysmans ‘Oost-Westgroep Berlijnreis 10-15 februari 1986’ *Ingeschreven*, 1985-1986; Wanda Sluiter ‘Een weekje Berlijn’, *Ingeschreven* 1989-1990 “We ergeren ons kapot dat we er niks kunnen kopen, en realiseren ons dat dat de dagelijkse realiteit is voor de Oost-Duitsers.”

³¹³ ‘Voor ‘t eerst d’rüber’.

³¹⁴ Arends, Interview by the author

We moeten er eens vanaf in systemen te denken, en we moeten ons richten op de mensen. Ik kan me niet voorstellen dat ik op wie dan ook van de personen die ik in de DDR heb ontmoet een bom zou moeten gooien. Dat lijkt me onmogelijk. Na deze reis kan ik me bij het oostblok individuen voorstellen, en dit maakt vrede voor mij iets van persoonlijke verantwoording. (...) Als veel mensen die zouden doen, zou vrede zeker dichterbij komen.³¹⁵

The travelers experienced every-day life in the GDR. They had come to understand that the Eastern Germans were not so different from them, and the GDR people had experienced the same about the Westerners. Both groups now came to question the hostile propaganda imposed on them by their governments and the NATO and Warsaw Pact.

From the written reports we get the impression that the talks and discussions in the GDR were open and covered a wide range of topics. In contrast to the *Berliner Konferenz* there seem to have been very little to no taboos.³¹⁶ The reports reveal a lightness of the discussions and a degree of mutual understanding which we cannot find in the reports of the CIZOW members, who encounter so many problems and obstruction by the state. These differences might be explained by the fact that this no illegal opposition, nor extremely cautious attempts at legal opposition. No direct effects on society or politics were aimed at, which made the discussion less consequential. This does, however, not mean that the visits were merely happy exchanges: discussion themes were heavy, and the more the Germans and the Dutch got to know each other, the more they became aware of the sadness of their current political situation. So far, the reports written a couple of weeks after the visits and the accounts of the interviewees in 2012 correspond. There is, however, one thing which seems to have penetrated the minds of the Western visitors only after their stay: the fact that the GDR was a police state, and the consequences this had for the GDR people. Piet Venhuizen claimed that he had 'FELT' the lack of freedom when crossing the border in East Berlin, but nowhere in his report of the rest of the week do we read anything about a constant fear among the Germans to be overheard or considered suspicious by the *Stasi*. Yet, both the Oratorians in Leipzig and the *Katholische Studentengemeinde* of East Berlin write a letter to the visitors after their stay: they would be welcome to come again, provided that a smaller group

³¹⁵ *I felt like it was somewhere far away behind the Iron Curtain, and more Russian than German --- We need to stop thinking according to economic systems, and we should focus on the people. I cannot imagine that I would throw a bomb on any of the persons I met in the GDR. That seems impossible. After this trip, I can picture individuals in my mind when I think of 'the Eastern Bloc', which makes peace a personal responsibility for me. If more people would do this, peace would come closer.* Venhuizen, 'Verslag van de DDR-reis'.

³¹⁶ The lingering anti-semitism and nostalgia for the Second World war is very briefly discussed in 1985. Baseler 'Mijn reis naar de DDR'. In 1989 the *Oost-West Buro* planned to devote more attention to it, but were disappointed when they had to sit through a very long lecture by an old Jewish man. At the end of that lecture, all students felt 'accused' of being anti-semites. 'Voor 't eerst d'rüben'

would come.³¹⁷ The larger groups were much too loud and too noticeable on the streets of the GDR. With their fashionable clothes and exuberant behaviour, the groups were immediately recognized as Westerners. In 2012, Elly Kok, Serge Roufs and Wim Muijers *do* remember this:

“We would run on the street, or sing while waiting at the train platform. That made the Students in Berlin extremely nervous.”³¹⁸

Cor Arends reflects on things he now thinks he should have noticed before:

“I must have had chats with Stasi informers without realizing it... After the *Wende*, when all that came out... I only really came to think about it. Sometimes we did not know where one of the priests had been during a couple of hours. And some priests had nicer shoes or Western cars... makes you wonder where those came from. I am very willing to believe that these men were blackmailed by the *Stasi* into doing this, but it nevertheless shines a new light on your visits...”³¹⁹

The scope and timeframe of this research project made it impossible to find reports or interviews with former GDR citizens who hosted Dutch, or any Western visitors. If we can trust the accounts of the Dutch, the Germans appreciated the contacts and benefitted from them – not just because the Dutch brought them bananas, cheese or coffee, but because the visits made them realize that there was an alternative to the resigned society of the GDR, and that there were others in the West who not only thought about them, but seemed to struggle with similar problems.³²⁰

³¹⁷ Personal archive Wim Muijers; Letter Cor Arends to ‘Leipzig people’ Archives Pax Christi NL, inv. no. 2119

³¹⁸ Roufs and Kok, Interview by the author

³¹⁹ Arends, Interview by the author

³²⁰ “‘t zijn kleine dingen, maar er wordt over gepraat, ze zijn een bemoediging en ze betekenen “we worden niet vergeten”. Want daar zijn ze wel een beetje bang voor.” – Arends ‘Idioot dat zo’n groepje Hollanders zo’n reis maakt om mensen op te zoeken.’; Dartel, ‘Enkele dagen ruiken aan de DDR’.

Conclusion

Recapturing Dutch peace activities in the GDR

Pax Christi, the *Berliner Konferenz* and the parish contacts: friends or foes?

Brian: Excuse me. Are you the Judean People's Front?

Reg: Bugger off! We're the People's Front of Judea!

Monty Python's *Life of Brian*³²¹

De dissidenten, het subversief verzet, mensen die – terecht – vrij willen zijn, in felle soms bittere discussie met mensen die het systeem van binnen uit willen veranderen tot menselijk socialisme. (...) Het is een tragiek. Beiden hebben elkaar zo hard nodig! Laten we op zijn minst beiden dan ook erkennen.

Vicar L. Ringalda compares the Christian peace movements to the Dutch resistance groups of World War II.³²²

Met dit paspoort wil ik de Nederlandse en Europarlementariërs vragen ales te doen wat in de mogelijkheden ligt de kontakten tussen jongeren in Oost en West te vereenvoudigen. Kontakten die nodig zijn om de deling van Europa te doorbreken onze eigen mogelijkheden voor een ander Europa te onderzoeken

European Passport, distributed by the Oost-West Buro of Pax Christi, 1988³²³

The last three chapters of this thesis surveyed the GDR activities of the Dutch participants of the *Berliner Konferenz*, the members of the Pax Christi committee *CIZOW* and the visits of the groups of common Dutch Catholics. The chapters discussed what

³²¹ Graham Chapman and Terence Graham Perry Jones, *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (Handmade Films, 1979).

³²² L. Ringalda, 'Weer een indeling in goede en verkeerde nederlanders', *Trouw*, 1985. Republished in: de Jong *Wie zijn je vrienden*.

³²³ Archives Pax Christi NL Inv. no. 6246

the three groups did, and how they motivated the choices and policy underlying these activities. We have seen what their main goals were, and how they thought to achieve these goals. This concluding chapter will overview the three groups in a comparative perspective, hoping to show and explain the differences and communalities. The last question to be answered is the character of the differences: were these really as fundamental as the members of the peace movements thought, or can they be compared to the “differences” between Monty Python’s *People’s Front of Judea* and the *Judean People’s Front*?

Both the *BK* and *Pax Christi* claimed the title of “peace movement”, and the parish roots contacts were considered to be contributing to peace as well. The three groups, however, disagreed on how to operate. The disagreements are revealed best when one surveys the definitions and meaning allocated to key-concepts and institutions. The most important concept was, of course, “peace”, but the definition of “peace work”, “human rights”, or “social justice” are contested as well. Furthermore, the groups valued socialism (or communism, or “real existing socialism”) and capitalism rather differently. The definitions of dictatorship and censorship varied as well. Consequentially, institutions such as NATO, the Warsaw Pact and the GDR-state (and the division of Germany), and the Catholic hierarchy in the GDR and in the Vatican were judged very differently.

1 Definitions and judgements

| <i>CIZOW, Pax Christi NL</i> | <i>Berliner Konferenz</i> | Contacts between common Cath. |
|--|---|---|
| Peace - is where every citizen can live in peace, without fear of being persecuted, internationally and nationally. | A just society, a fair socio-economic system, tolerance and understanding among sovereign countries | No restrictions on contacts between people from different countries. Inter-cultural understanding and sympathy are developed through international contacts |
| Peace work - Support those who aim for the same peace under different, more difficult circumstances; | Discussing the situation in the world and Europe in a pan-European forum - Trying to steer the political | Organising meetings, opportunities for contact between different peoples, thereby creating an alternative |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>- create awareness of the work of these groups at home</p> | <p>powers towards peaceful and safer policies, without losing track of political realities</p> <p>- Support peace initiatives from the State</p> | <p>to hostile images created by propaganda.</p> |
| <p>Human Rights - Freedom of expression and the right for peaceful opposition are essential, because these secure the right to claim all other rights</p> | <p>A certain amount of control over the population is understandable since the Warsaw Pact countries are threatened by the NATO arsenal, and the socialist experiment cannot be undermined.</p> <p>Under capitalism, economic human rights are violated.</p> | <p>[Before visit:] hesitant to place political rights above economic rights.</p> <p>[After visit]: the social security does not live up to the lack of freedom. Political rights are a condition for other rights.</p> |
| <p>Socialism - A system to which oppression and dictatorship are intrinsic. The government claims to represent the people, but will inevitably end up oppressing the people, making them the victims of the system.</p> | <p>In essence a fairer system than Capitalism, and a better road away from fascism, and from the tyranny of the wealthy over the poor. It can lead to fundamentalism - it's the Christian's duty to provide reflection.</p> | <p>[Before visit]: not very coherent: from 'neutral' to 'better than capitalism'; generally unfamiliar.</p> <p>[After visit]: still not coherent, but mostly: 'oppressive' 'unfree'</p> |
| <p>Real existing socialism (GDR) - Oppressive. State lacks legitimacy and credibility.</p> <p>Doubt the possibility of change without completely overthrowing the system.</p> | <p>Historically justified</p> <p>Just in essence, needs (and can) be changed for the better, no <i>fundamental</i> change needed.</p> | <p>Lack of opportunities for private initiatives, state intervention in all parts of private life, endless propaganda, result in grey, uniform and closed society.</p> |
| <p>Capitalism - A system with many downsides, yet it does offer space for private initiative and individual thought. Should, and can be combined with a stable democracy.</p> | <p>Results in materialism and maldistribution of wealth and goods, which results, as shown in the past, in maldistribution of power. Oppresses peoples in the West <i>and</i> in the East.</p> | <p>Not much better than socialism, yet at least if offers opportunities to acquire personal wealth and private initiative. The image GDR citizens have of capitalism is too optimistic.</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>NATO, Warsaw Pact, arms race – Both blocks are equally guilty of the arms race – the deployment of (nuclear) weapons on national soil should be a national, democratic, decision</p> | <p>The NATO arsenal is larger, and more modern than the Warsaw Pact's. The NATO arsenal surrounds the Warsaw Pact; the Pact is within its right to defend itself. This notwithstanding, the arms race should be halted – the Warsaw Pact has done more to end the race than the NATO.</p> | <p>The NATO weapons are not deployed on our soil in our name; we understand that the Warsaw Pact arsenal is not deployed on GDR territory in the name of the GDR citizens.</p> |
| <p>Division of Germany, GDR – unnatural. Understandable in the eyes of the WW-II past, yet the implementation, especially the travel restrictions are unjustified. Hope for re-unification, within the context of the 'European house' process.</p> | <p>GDR is 'morally superior' Germany; division was initiated by the USA, UK, and France. Unified, militarised Germany threat to world-peace</p> | <p>[Before visit] "GDR is more like Russia than like Western Europe" [After visit] GDR is primarily German, division is imposed on the German people, who suffer under it.</p> |
| <p>Living conditions in the GDR – The state interference and lack of freedom result in a uniform, <i>resigned</i> society. The social security for all is impressive, yet overshadowed by the violation of political rights.</p> | <p>The GDR is on the way to a fair distribution of wealth. Social services, health care, education are available for all. Social engagement, peace activism are encouraged through the <i>Volksfront</i>.</p> | <p>It is clear that the people have enough money to buy basic goods, but most products are old-fashioned and the choice is limited. The lack of freedom, however, is worse than not having access to 'real' coffee.</p> |
| <p>Church - State relations – The SED party state limits the freedom of expression of religion of Christians</p> | <p>"There is no struggle against the Church in the GDR.³²⁴"; the State is right to expect social engagement from Christians.</p> | <p>Christians feel excluded from every-day life. Are discriminated for not participating in the <i>Jugenweihe</i> or the <i>FDJ</i>, and for (applying as) <i>Bausoldat</i>.</p> |
| <p>Catholic hierarchy in the GDR – limit freedom of</p> | <p>The bishops prevent Christians from living an</p> | <p>The parish flock and pastors feel unseen and/or oppressed</p> |

³²⁴ "Een strijd tegen de kerk vind je in de DDR eenvoudigweg niet" H. Guske, '20 Jaar Begegnung Een Ontmoeting Van Christendom En Socialisme', *De Bazuin*, 1981, 6–7. (translation: Karl Derksen)

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| expression, involvement of laics in the parish, and room for (political) opposition in the Churches. Do not meet the Christian flock's need for concrete advice on dilemmas faced in the socialist society. | actively engaged life within the socialist society. | by the bishops. |
| Catholics in the GDR – have so many problems of their own that active Peace engagement seem far away. | Many Catholics would wish to become socially engaged, yet are prevented from doing so by their priests and parish. | The <i>Resignation</i> is strong; common Catholics have lost hope for an improvement of their situation. This is caused by the State and the bishops. Most parishioners are obedient to the Hierarchy, which ensures the conservative ideas on morals and social norms. |

Before we continue to the contrasts between the *Berliner Konferenz* and Pax Christi, let us survey the third column, that of the contacts between common Catholics. As said before, the groups traveling to the GDR varied widely in age, size, length of their stay and considerably in political affiliations and the researched reports do not offer a complete overview of the Catholic parish contacts. The characterizations in the table are, thus, generalizations. Because more than half of the trips researched was organised by Pax Christi, it is not surprising that the travellers' ideas lie closer to Pax Christi's than the BK's.

Like Pax Christi, they would consider themselves critical of the capitalist system. Their complaints during the first days of their trip reveal, however, that they are more attached to free market and free trade than they would like to admit. It takes them a few days to get over the fact that the supermarkets offer such little variation in goods, that coffee houses do not serve coffee, that they have to wait 45 minutes to be served in a restaurant, and that there is only one menu available. After a few days in the GDR, however, they find that having to wait for a meal is not too bad if it's cheap and affordable to all.

The control of the market is, therefore, not the most important factor contributing to their *unheimisch* feeling in the GDR: it's the lack of freedom to travel, and to undertake

private initiatives, without having to fear of persecution by the State. The students in the Pax Christi trips seem most impressed by how “plain” and “monotonous” life in the GDR is; the people from the parish in Arnhem are impressed by how put-down their GDR friends feel by the lack of opportunities and their fight against *Resignation*. As ‘liberal’ Christians in the West, both groups are appalled by the obeisant attitude towards the Catholic hierarchy in the GDR. The importance attached to the right to undertake *private, individual* initiatives, and the strong aversion against regulations from the State and the Church Hierarchy reveal their Western ideas on Human Rights and individualism. Another interesting factor is the gradual change we see in the ideas of the travellers. The personal reports reveal that most travellers were aware that their initial images of the GDR were preconceptions, and that many of their ideas have changed significantly during the trip. This reveals an open mind, and a willingness to see a situation from both sides. The overall ideas about the GDR, peace work and peace with which the travellers return could well have been more nuanced than those of the activists of the *Berliner Konferenz* and Pax Christi.

After 1984, when Jan ter Laak and Karl Derksen were interviewed in *Wending*, and the *Podium* pages in *Trouw* were filled with letters from both sides, harsh judgements were not shunned. Both sides accused the other group of naïveté towards the Warsaw Pact or NATO governments, and claimed that the work of the others was not ‘real’ peace work, but in fact damaged the course to a peaceful world. The judgements voiced by both groups in publications, archival sources and interviews are shown in the following tables:

2 Characteristics of Pax Christi and the BK, according to Pax Christi³²⁵

| Pax Christi Netherlands | <i>Berliner Konferenz</i> |
|--|--|
| Peace movement | Not a peace movement. Conference, consultative body. |
| Independent from any state authorities | Linked to and used by the SED authorities of the GDR; lap dogs of an oppressive dictatorial regime |
| Can make a real difference by offering support to allies in East, and by opposing policies | May have good intentions, but cannot pursue these because of oppression/control by the |

³²⁵ Statements printed in black are directly taken from publications, interviews, archives, etc. Statements printed in grey are ‘fill-ins’; no direct mentions of these statements have been found, yet they can reasonably be filled in in the context of the other statements in the same column, and in contrast to the statement in the other column.

| | |
|---|--|
| which are a threat to peace in the West. | communist authorities: bound hand and foot, no <i>real</i> independent Peace activities can be expected. |
| Allies of the democratic opposition movements in the Warsaw Pact countries | Excludes political opposition movements; Distrusted by the real 'friends' of Pax Christi |
| Open attitude, willing to engage in a dialogue with all who are willing to include all groups who wish to join the dialogue | Excludes and brands 'illegal' opposition |
| Not naïve; base statements and claims on well-documented independent research | Naïve, blind to oppressive aspects of communist regime |
| Not tied to any of the economic systems; critical of capitalism and communism. | Semi-communists |
| 'Official' Catholic Peace movement | Unofficial Catholic movement, but no less entitled to carry name 'Catholic' |

3 Characteristics, positions of the *Berliner Konferenz* and Pax Christi, according to the BK.

| <i>Berliner Konferenz</i> | Pax Christi |
|--|---|
| Peace movement: facilitating a peaceful dialogue between East and West, through this releasing tensions between East and West | Voices criticism towards communist authorities too strongly: unrealistic approach, which damages the dialogue between East and West, and thus the road to Peace. |
| Open to all who wish to engage in a serious, realistic dialogue about Peace. | Dismisses, without serious assessment, all legal activities in the GDR and Warsaw Pact as 'legal, therefore collaborative'. (Thus) not willing to engage in a <i>real</i> inclusive dialogue. |
| Not in contact with official <i>Friedensrat</i> , because of too close ties with the government | In contact with official GDR <i>Friedensrat</i> |
| Critical of the <i>real existing socialism</i> . However: taking side for the oppressed and the poor, therefore aiming for the improvement of the socialist experiment. Honest about whose side they are on. | Say they're critical towards capitalism, but do not act upon this: 'neutral' position is in fact sided against communism. |
| Realistic about the role of the NATO and capitalism in for example the arms race, the wars in Southern America and the excrescences of Western companies in the post-colonial | Either blind or too scared to criticize the NATO and capitalism; naïve. |

| | |
|---|---|
| world. | |
| Practices loyal opposition to the communist authorities: the only opposition which can realistically expect to influence the government. | Supports illegal opposition which, in the eyes of the communist authorities, will undermine the socialist experiment. This is an unrealistic approach which brings harm to the other Christian initiatives in the East. |
| Represents the many European Catholics who wish to work towards understanding and <i>détente</i> between the communist and capitalist world | An international Catholic movement, which should not exclude other Catholic movements |
| Organisation aims to be as independent as possible from the CDU-Ost, SED and State; linked only to the <i>Volksfront</i> for financing of plenary sessions. Aware of, and open about the fact that <i>Stasi</i> is present at plenary sessions. | Is influenced by Eastern and Western secret services, yet does not acknowledge this: terribly naïve. |

After the end of the Cold War, *De Bazuin* published a double interview with Wim Bartels and Karl Derksen (who, by then, had left the editorial board of *De Bazuin*). The article can be seen as a follow-up of the 1984 article in *Wending*. The air was not yet cleared, as becomes clear in the first alinea:

Karl Derksen: ‘Waar ik aan lijd is de karikaturale voorstelling die hier in Nederland steevast van een organisatie als de Berlijnse Conferentie van Europese Katholieken wordt gegeven. Dat geschiedt door mensen die werkzaam zijn binnen de secretariaten van het IKV en Pax Christi; dat gebeurt binnen de media. Dat gebeurt ook door jou in dit gesprek. Ik vind het belangrijk dat we als vredesorganisatie gauw eens rond de tafel gaan zitten.’ (...) Bartels: (...) ‘Een simpel gesprek tussen ons volstaat niet, vrees ik. Ik denk dat een meerdaagse retraite meer op zijn plaat is. Ik word momenteel namelijk al te gauw tot solidariteit en gezamenlijke actie opgeroepen door mensen met wie ik het de afgelopen jaren grondig oneens was.’³²⁶

In the interview, Bartels blamed Derksen for collaborating with the authorities who banned him from their country (Bartels was one of the activists who were refused entry visa in the GDR and Czechoslovakia) and worse, who imprisoned and oppressed democratic movements. Derksen replied with the same arguments used before the Wall: the members of the *BK* did criticize the visa refusals and the oppression, yet could not

³²⁶ Derksen: *I suffer from the caricature image invariably assigned to the Berliner Conference of European Catholics in the Netherlands. This is done by people who work at the secretaries of IKV and Pax Christi, and in the media. And you do the same in this conversation. I think it is very important to sit down with the peace movements for a conversation. (...) Bartels: a simple conversation will not suffice, I fear. I think a retreat of a couple of days would be more in order. I feel that the calls for solidarity and joint actions I receive are voiced too soon, and by those people with whom I heartily disagreed in the past years.* Bunnik and Hooydonk, ‘Na de omwenteling’ 3

and did not wish to publish this, because of the strategy the *BK* had chosen consciously. Like Jan ter Laak did five years, earlier, Bartels did not settle for this answer, and remained that the *Berliner Konferenz* has lost all its credibility; not only in Western Europe, but even in Eastern Europe.³²⁷

Twenty-two years later, those peace activists who were considered the hardliners during the 1980s, still stand by the approach they took in the 1980s. Yosé Höhne-Sparborth stated in November 2012 that

“peace work was, in the 1980s, making sure that the two treaty organisations would not press the button to launch the nuclear weapons. The *Berliner Konferenz* aimed to understand the divided world, an understanding which would lead to tolerance and mutual respect.”³²⁸

Cor Arends, on the other hand, claimed that

“it was very clear that the *Berliner Konferenz* would never be able to achieve any concrete steps towards a safer, more just society.”³²⁹

In his letter to *Trouw*, one of the last letters devoted to the “independent” vs. “official” opposition to the communist authorities in 1985, the pastor Ringnalda compared Pax Christi/IKV and the *Berliner Konferenz* with the Dutch resistance movements of the Second World War. Caught up in the discussion over what ‘real’ resistance was, what was ethical and what was not, the resistance movements seemed to have forgotten that they were, in the end, fighting for the same cause: the defeat of the Nazi regime. The two peace movements, Ringnalda ‘reminded’ the Dutch public (and the Peace activists) were also fighting for the same cause: peace in Europe. To accomplish this, he claimed, both “sides” of the oppositional movements needed each other, just like the Dutch resistance fighters in the underground movements needed the “collaborating” police officers who stayed to their office, and sabotaged various plans of the regime from there. It was time, Ringnalda claimed, to bury the hatchet and start to appreciate the work of the other group.³³⁰

The historian Odd Arne Westad characterizes the conflict as “a clash of ideas and cultures”. These ideas, he claims, had “hardened into ideologies” by 1945: “individual liberty, anticollectivism, and market values on the US side; social justice, collectivism, and state planning among the Soviets”³³¹ In three tables we see the two ideologies

³²⁷ Bunnik and Hooydonk ‘Na de omwenteling’ 6

³²⁸ Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author

³²⁹ Arends, Interview by the author

³³⁰ Ringnalda ‘Weer een indeling in goede en verkeerde nederlanders’

³³¹ Westad, ‘The Cold War and the International History’ 17

reflected in the oppositions between Pax Christi and the *Berliner Konferenz*. Pax Christi's ideas of peace, peace activism and human rights showed signs of the "US", or Western ideology, valuing political rights over economic rights, and taking a side for independent groups who claim these rights. The *Berliner Konferenz'* ideas mirrored the Soviet conception of a fair share of wealth and collectivism. They considered fair economic distribution conditional to political rights, and had no objections of principle to peace initiatives from the State. Is Jacques van der Meer's reflection that "it is now obvious" that his persistence in trying to ignite a dialogue between the two groups was "in vain" correct?³³² Were the ideas of the *Berliner Konferenz* and Pax Christi – with the common visitors in their wake, so strongly rooted in the ideologies that a clash was inevitable? Was Ringnalda wrong in claiming that the two movements were, essentially, fighting for the same goal?

I will claim that both Jacques van der Meer's reflection and Ringnalda's claim were correct. Yes, the opinions on how best to act in order to bring peace about were very different; so different that real cooperation would have been very hard, and that the fierceness of the debate was understandable. However, one cannot deny that Pax Christi, the *Berliner Konferenz* – and the parish contacts – were aiming for the same goal: peace in Europe. While tension rose within the Warsaw Pact countries – tensions caused by stronger opposition movements and increasingly insecure authorities, that which the *BK* and Pax Christi were aiming for became an increasingly realistic goal. The two movements realised this. Yosé Höhne-Sparborth:

"In the months before and in the two months after the fall of the Berlin Wall you could feel that the opportunities were rising, you felt the space for opposition, individual thought and real change growing. It was an exciting time, in which we felt we would really get the chance to build up a new socialism."³³³

The archives of the CIZOW of Pax Christi show no less enthusiasm and eagerness to use the space for change now created. In March 1990, Jan ter Laak remembers a congress of the Conciliar Process in Dresden:

Er is geen land geweest waar het conciliair proces zo serieus is aangepakt. De toespitsing op 'gerechtigheid in de DDR' is uitermate relevant gebleken. Democratisering van de samenleving en vrij reizen voor alle burgers waren openlijk geuite verlangens. (...) Ik heb de indrukwekkende afsluiting van het conciliair proces in Dresden (voorjaar 1989) meegemaakt. Ik had het gevoel:

³³² Van der Meer, Interview by the author

³³³ Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author

hier toont zich het andere DDR. Een eigen kracht tussen de corrupte en autoritaire regeringspartij SED en de stromingen die verlangd uitkeken naar de welvaar in de Bondsrepubliek.³³⁴

Karl Derksen and Yosé Höhne-Sparborth held on to their preference of socialism over capitalism. Jan ter Laak, Cor Arends and others were more than happy to see the socialist system as practised in the GDR go. This seems to be an ideological difference which we cannot go around. That is, if the interpretation of “socialism” had been the same. It was, however, very different. Jan ter Laak, Cor Arends, and to a lesser extent Jacques van der Meer considered “socialism” to be a system which led to oppression and tyranny. Yosé Höhne and Karl Derksen, on the other hand, considered socialism as synonymous with “solidarity with the victims and the weak.”³³⁵ All members of Pax Christi voted for the left-wing social-democratic parties in the West – they valued the “socialist utopia”, yet had become hesitant of using the word, associating it with an oppressive dictatorial regime. The disagreement on the interpretation hides the agreement on the mission.

After the *Wiedervereinigung*

“Het doet pijn, dat in de verkiezingsuitslag niet de idealen zijn terug te vinden, waarvoor je op de straat ging, dat het zo anders is verlopen als je had gehoopt.” De tranen stonden haar in de ogen.

Ronald van Dokkum quotes Gisela Kallenbach, participant of the *Montagsfriedensgebeten* in Leipzig³³⁶

Perhaps the best “proof” of the common ideal of Pax Christi, the *Berliner Konferenz* and the parish contact organisers is that they shared their happiness of the fall of the Berlin Wall (as a symbol of the oppression of the people by a regime that distrusts its citizens) and their concerns over the rapid disintegration of the GDR and unification of Germany on the terms of the capitalist West. Yosé Höhne-Sparborth reflects in 2012:

“It was an annexation. I understand that it had to go the way it did, but it saddens me. All the good parts of the GDR state were thrown away with the bad parts. So many people were working

³³⁴ *There has been no other country where the Conciliar Process was taken up as enthusiastically as in the GDR. The accentuation on ‘justice in the GDR’ has proven very relevant. The demand for democratization of society and freedom of travel for all citizens were openly voiced. (...) I was at the impressive closing ceremony of the Conciliar Process in Dresden (spring 1989). I felt: this is the other GDR. A force between corruption and the authoritative SED party AND the movements longing for the wealth of the FRG. Ter Laak, Reiziger in vrede 83.*

³³⁵ Bunnik and Hooydonk, ‘Na de omwenteling’; Guske, *Chronik* 6–7.

³³⁶ *“It hurts that the election results do now show the ideals which we protested for, that everything took a different course than what we had hoped for” I saw the tears in her eyes. Ronald van Dokkum ‘Spiegelfunktie’ in: ‘Voor Het Laatst in De DDR’*

so hard for a fair society, and after the unification it was all gone. I personally felt that I had lost my fatherland.”³³⁷

These words resemble the diary of Jan ter Laak, in March 1990:

Maar het eenwordingsproces had een eigen, niet meer te stuiten tempo gekregen. De onlangs opgerichte *SPD* partij (...) probeert, nog iets van het DDR-zelfrespect te redden. Geen overname en uitverkoop van de DDR. En een herenigd Duitsland zou ook niet zomaar in de huidige NAVO moeten worden opgenomen. (...) Mijn sympathie ging uit naar *Demokratie Jetzt*, naar *Neues Forum* en naar de *SPD*. (...) Samen met onze DDR-vrienden hebben we onderschat hoe sterk de behoefte van de burgers in de DDR is om democratie *en* welvaart te verwerven.³³⁸

During the last *Oost West Buro* trip to Erfurt, Leipzig and Halle in 1990, twelve students meet various politically engaged groups, most of which were illegal before the fall of the Wall, but could now voice their opinion publicly. The Dutch students are very impressed by the frustrations and disappointment of the activists, who notice that the GDR citizens could not care less about their call for gradual reforms or the importance of holding on to the good things of the GDR.

In de DDR werd er voor iedereen, ook voor gehandicapten, voor een werkplaats gezorgd. Een bedrijf was verplicht om de werkplek aan te passen als een gekwalificeerd personeelslid werd aangenomen met een handicap. Ook werden mensen die geen baan konden vinden in de reguliere bedrijfstakken aan ene baan geholpen, als bijvoorbeeld plantsoenenreiniger. Men ziet nu in de DDR dat verschillende van deze mensen het eerst op straat zijn komen te staan. De Coca-Cola blikjes, die wel eens het symbool zouden kunnen worden van de toenemende verwesterlijking van de Oostduitse samenleving, liggen nu al sporadisch op de staat en worden niet opgeruimd. Waarschijnlijk zal het niet lang meer duren, of de nu nog zo mooi glanzend rode blikjes zullen gaan roesten. Met deze blikjes zullen ook de mooie idealen die DDR rijk was vergaan en zullen de staten in de DDR niet schöner zijn als [*sic*] die in het Westen.³³⁹

Jan Huysmans reflects on the feelings of the left-wing ‘8 May’ Catholics in the Netherlands:

“we were euphoric when the Wall came down. This was the start of the new world, the ‘end of history’ had indeed come. However, we were soon disappointed by the materialism and

³³⁷ Höhne-Sparborth, Interview by the author

³³⁸ The unification process had taken its own, unstoppable pace. The recently founded SPD (...) tries to, somehow, hold on to the dignity of the GDR. No take-over and sell-out of the GDR. A unified Germany should not become a member of NATO without any consideration. (...) *Demokratie Jetzt*, *Neues Forum* and the *SPD* had my sympathies. (...) Together with our friends in the GDR, we have underestimated how strong the desire for democracy *and* wealth was among the GDR citizens. Ter Laak, *Reiziger in vrede* 83–85.

³³⁹ *In the GDR, everyone, including disabled people, was offered a job. A company was required to adjust the working place if a qualified disabled person was hired. Those who could not get a job in the regular working fields were helped as well, and would work (for example) in the parks. Today, we see that those people are the first to end up on the street. The Coca Cola cans, possibly the ultimate symbol of the Westernization of the GDR society, lay on the street without being cleaned. It will not take long before the shiny red cans will start to get rusty. With the cans, the ideals of the GDR will fade, and the streets of the East will not be cleaner than in the West.* Tony de Wit ‘Okolöwe – Ecologisch(bewust)e Leipziger’ in: ‘Voor Het Laatst in De DDR’

unbridled capitalism, which was now unrestrained by any other economic system. Today's economic crisis is the prize that we pay.”³⁴⁰

The fall of the Berlin Wall was the end of the division of Europe. It was, however, not the beginning of the peaceful and righteous world they had imagined.

³⁴⁰ Huysmans, Interview by the author

The Christian Peace initiatives in the context of the Cold War

“Few foresaw the peaceful end of the Cold War, yet many worked for decades to achieve it.”

Matthew Evangelista “Transnational Organizations and the Cold War”³⁴¹

“Het is te hopen dat wat de vredesbewegingen nu moeizaam aan Oost-West kontakten opbouwen, ooit later door historici nog eens zal worden beschreven als een van de bijdragen die geleid hebben tot betere verhoudingen in ons werelddeel.”

Jan ter Laak, *Pax Christi Kommunikatieblad*, March 1985³⁴²

In the last chapter we reviewed the motivation and ideals of the Catholic Peace activists, and concluded that, although disagreeing on the right road to choose, the movements agreed on what their ultimate goal was: peace on the European continent.

A final question could be whether the Catholic peace initiatives did indeed contribute to “better relations on our continent” – as Jan ter Laak expressed his hopes in 1985. The end of the Cold War and the people, events and factors that contributed most, if not *the* most, are a highly debated subject, to which all historians seem to have a different answer. Few historians seem to be able to go around Gorbachev’s reforms and the economic situation of the Eastern European countries, yet the importance attached to these varies from “the only real decisive factor” to “providing the background for the *real* decisive factors”. In the latter case, the “really decisive factors” can be virtually everything, and can be found mostly in Western European culture.³⁴³

In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, John W. Young, Rosemary Foot and Matthew Evangelista try to assess the Western influence on the revolutions in the East. Young focuses on diplomatic international relations; Evangelista on transnational NGOs,

³⁴¹ Evangelista, ‘Transnational organizations and the Cold War’ 421.

³⁴² *We hope that the East-West contacts, so laboriously established by the peace movements will later be discussed by historians as one of the contributions to better relations on our continent.* Jan ter Laak “END-bijeenkomst Amsterdam – Welke Oost-Europese groepen komen? Een gigantisch getouwtrek!” *Pax Christi Kommunikatieblad* March 1985, 7

³⁴³ Pekelder, ‘Na het strijken van de Sovjet-vlag’ 227–249; Westad, ‘The Cold War and international history’ 1–19.

or semi-NGO's; Foot on human rights, as debated by governments and non-governmental organisations.³⁴⁴ According to Young it was the combination of economic strength and the welfare state system, *and* the diplomatic contacts between the Western European leaders and the Warsaw Pact which made the Western European model both attractive and known to the Eastern European countries and, thus, set the course for the outcome of the revolutions on 1989. According to Foot, it were the Helsinki accords that helped the expression of a common Western policy on human rights, and led to the dominance of the (Western) discourse of civil and political rights over economic and social rights. This was adopted by movements like *Charta '77*, *KIK*, and *Solidarnosc*, and after 1985 by Gorbachev. Over all, Foot claims, "human rights contributed to the Cold War's end in ways that were largely unanticipated in the West and in the East."³⁴⁵ Evangelista credits the transnational organisations for successfully convincing policy makers (Gorbachev in particular) and the public in West and East of the objections to the nuclear arms race, "peace through strength", and the violation of human rights.³⁴⁶

The *Berliner Konferenz*, *Pax Christi* Netherlands, and the parish contacts discussed in this paper can be seen as examples of these transnational organisations.³⁴⁷ *Pax Christi* and the parish contacts, furthermore, did help to spread the Western discourse on human rights to the Warsaw Pact. The space for political human rights within the *BK* is contested, but the *Chronik* by Guske (and their own accounts) do suggest that people like Karl Derksen and Yosé Höhne-Sparborth have tried to *create* space for this. We have seen that the Dutch visitors provided a window to the rest of the world for their "imprisoned" hosts. Wim Muijers remembers how a woman in Erfurt wrote him that she could "live for weeks" on his letter, because it told her that somewhere, outside, there was a place where people could protest against the government without being persecuted or oppressed.³⁴⁸ Cor Arends wondered whether it was a good idea to continue the Dutch

³⁴⁴ Young, 'Western Europe and the end of the Cold War'; Foot, 'The Cold War and Human Rights'; Evangelista, 'Transnational organizations'.

³⁴⁵ Foot, 'The Cold War and Human Rights' 465

³⁴⁶ Evangelista, 'Transnational organizations'

³⁴⁷ Evangelista acknowledges that the distinction between NGOs and governmental organisations in the Warsaw Pact is problematic, due to the strong impact of the State on the policies of the organisation. He, however, does consider these organisations as having "provided opportunities for informal exchange of ideas that deviated from and in some cases ultimately influenced official policy." Furthermore, many non-state agencies in the West had close ties to the governments and/or were looking for governmental support. *Ibid.* 401.

³⁴⁸ Muijers, Interview with the author

visits to the GDR, “since it would make the reliance on the West [to change the situation in the East] even worse.”³⁴⁹

Transnational peace movements and human rights activists showed the people in the East that there was an alternative. They showed that isolation, oppression and lack of personal opportunities did not have to be a “fact of life”, and inspired the people in the East, both the public and the political leaders, to fight for change. The Dutch Catholic movements should certainly be seen in this context. The sources used for this research project - accounts written and told from a Western perspective, do not provide enough information to assess any direct influence. For this, research using German sources could provide a more solid base. I do think, however, that it is fair to say that Jan ter Laak’s hope that his (and others’) work did contribute *something* to a more peaceful continent, did come true.

³⁴⁹ Arends, ‘Bezoek aan de Friedensdekade in Berlijn (Oost)’

Bibliography

Archives

Catholic Documentation Center, Nijmegen

Pax Christi Netherlands

287-293 (Minutes of meetings of the CIZOW, with attachments)

710 - 715, 2119, 2136 ('documents regarding the GDR')

2152, 2655, 2646 (Oost-West Buro, travel reports GDR)

635 (Oost-Europa Desk)

1756-1757 (Photo exhibition *Vredesbewegingen in Oost-Europa*)

International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam

Persoonlijk Archief Jan ter Laak

40 (Reports of DDR-travels by Ter Laak and other Pax Christi- and IKV-employees. 1982-1987)

Interviews

Cor Arends, Interview by the author, digital recording, Amersfoort, 31 October 2012

Karl Derksen, Interview by Jacco Pekelder, tape recording, s.l., 11 September 1995

Yosé Höhne Sparborth, Interview by the author, digital recording, Utrecht, 26 November 2012

Jan Huysmans, Interview by author, digital recording, Nijmegen, 18 September 2012

Jacques van der Meer, Interview by the author, digital recording, The Hague, 1 November 2012

Wim Muijrsers, Interviews by the author, digital recordings, Ede, 25 September and 26 October 2012

Serge Roufs and Elly Kok, Interview by the author, digital recording, Arnhem, 16 October 2012

Periodicals

De Bazuin - weekblad voor katholieken en zoekenden naar de waarheid, 1981 - 1990

Pax Christi Kommunikatieblad, 1981 - 1990

Ingeschreven - blad voor het adressenbestand van de Nijmeegse Studentenkerk 1982 - 1990

References to particular articles can be found in the footnotes. These magazines were, furthermore used for a general impression of the Dutch Catholic *milieu* of the 1980s.

The open letters on the *Trouw* podium pages on the debate surrounding the END Conference and Schillebeeckx' speech in Prague were read in the compilation:

Jong, G H, *Wie Zijn Je Vrienden in Oost-Europa?* (Amsterdam: Trouw/Kwartet; Stichting informatie over Charta '77, 1985)

Articles published in other magazines, journals and newspapers can be found in the literature list.

Literature

Abrams, Lynn, *Oral History: Theory into Practice* (Taylor & Francis, 2008)

Arends, Cor, 'Katholieken in DDR worden wakker uit winterslaap', *Hervormd Nederland*, 1987

---, *Katholieken in Oost-Europa: Opleving, Getuigenis en Engagement* (J.H. Kok, 1989)

Barth, Karl, 'Brief an einen Pfarrer in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik', in *Karl Barth - Offene Briefe 1945-1968*, ed. by Diether Koch (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1984)

Bauer, Babett, *Kontrolle und Repression: individuelle Erfahrungen in Der DDR, 1971-1989* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006)

Beijer, Dorry de (red.), 'Lustrumnummer 10 Jaar Christenen voor het Socialisme', *Opstand*, 11 (1984)

Van den Berg, Dion, *IKV 1966-2006: Veertig jaar mobiliseren voor Vrede* (The Hague: IKV, 2006)

Besier, Gerhard, *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche 1983 - 1991*: (Berlin: Propylaën, 1995)

Betts, Paul, 'The Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture', *The Journal of Modern History*, 72 (2000), 731-765 CR <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/316046>>

Boot, Pieter, Lisette Dekker, and Hans Groenewegen, *Het Andere Duitsland - Introductie tot de DDR* (s.l.: Sjaloom, 1980)

Borgman, Erik, Bert van Dijk, and Theo Salemink, *De Vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II tot Acht Mei beweging* (Amersfoort/Leuven: De Horstink, 1988)

---, 'Van Pastoraal Concilie tot Acht Mei Beweging', in *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II tot Acht Mei beweging*, ed. by Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Salemink (Amersfoort/Leuven: De Horstink, 1988), pp. 13-30

Brico, Rex, *Dossier Gijsen* (Amsterdam: Elseviers Magazine, 1979)

Brown, Stephen, 'Global Denken, Lokal Handeln: Der Konziliare Prozess Für Gerechtigkeit, Frieden Und Bewahrung Der Schöpfung Als Wegbereiter Der Friedlichen Revolution in Der DDR', in „Kirche für andere“, *des Rates der Kirchen in den Niederlanden und IKV/Pax Christi zu Ehren Heino Falckes, Utrecht, 2 Oktober 2009*, 2009, p. 14

<<http://de.scribd.com/doc/20817555/Der-konziliare-Prozess-als-Wegbereiter-der-friedlichen-Revolution>>

Bruce, Gary, *The Firm: The Inside Story of the Stasi* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2012)

Burgess, John P., 'Church-state Relations in East Germany: The Church as a Religious and Political Force.', *Journal of church and state*, 32 (1990), p17, 18p </cgi-bin/journal/ebscoft?issn=0021969X&an=9604243413>

Capelleveen, Jan Jonas van de, 'De Bijbel in Oost-Europa: een kort historisch overzicht van het Bijbelwerk in Oost-Europa en een samenvatting van de huidige stand van zaken' (Harlem: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1983)

Cerny-Werner, Roland, *Vatikanische Ostpolitik und die DDR* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2011)

Chapman, Graham, and Terence Graham Perry Jones, *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (Handmade Films, 1979)

Cohen, I Warren, ed., 'The Rise and Fall of Détente', in *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations - Vol IV: America in the Age of Soviet Power, 1945-1991*, Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Conway, John S., 'The "Stasi" and the Churches: Between Coercion and Compromise in East German Protestantism, 1949 - 1989', *Journal of church and state*, 36 (1994), p725, 22p </cgi-bin/journal/ebscoft?issn=0021969X&an=9412303783>

Diepen, Remco van, *Hollanditis: Nederland en het kernwapendebat, 1977-1987* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2004)

Dijk, Paul van, 'In gesprek met Jan ter Laak en Karl Derksen: De kerkelijke vredesbeweging op de grens van twee ideologiën, tussen Oost en West', *Wending, maandblad voor evangelie, cultuur en samenleving*, 39 (1984), 12-28

Dunar, Andrew J, 'History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology - Thinking About Oral History: Theories and Applications', *Oral History Review*, 36 (2009), 103-107 <doi:10.1093/ohr/ohp015>

Ernst, Jan, *Geleefde theologie: het verhaal van Karl Derksen, Dominicaan* (Gorinchem: NARRATIO, 2005)

Ester, Johannes, *Dies Ist Nicht Unser Haus: die Rolle der katholischen Kirche in den politischen Entwicklungen der DDR* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992)

Evangelista, Matthew, 'Transnational Organizations and the Cold War', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by P Melvyn Leffler and Arne Odd Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Faber, Mient Jan, *Vooruitgeschoven spionnen: bevrijd uit de boeien van de Koude Oorlog*, ed. by Henk van Bakel (Utrecht: Spectrum, 2007)

Fischer, Beth A., 'US Foreign Policy Under Reagan and Bush', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by P Melvyn Leffler and Arne Odd Westad, Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

- Foot, Rosemary, 'The Cold War and Human Rights', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by P Melvyn Leffler and Arne Odd Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 445–456
<http://histories.cambridge.org/extract?id=chol9780521837217_CHOL9780521837217A022>
- Funder, Anna, *Stasiland - True Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall* (London: Granta Books, 2003)
- Gorbachev, Mikhail, 'Address to the 43rd U.N. General Assembly Session' (New York), p. 7
<http://isc.temple.edu/hist249/course/Documents/gorbachev_speech_to_UN.htm>
- Graaf, Beatrice de, *Eine protestantische Revolution?: die Rolle der Ostdeutschen evangelischen Kirche in der Wende 1989/1990* (Unpublished Thesis, Utrecht University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of German Language and Culture, 1998)
- , *Over de Muur: De DDR, de Nederlandse kerken en de vredesbeweging* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2004)
- Graaf, Beatrice de, Duco A. Hellema, and Leon van Damme, *Civic Diplomacy: diplomatie tussen macht en mensenrechten* (Utrecht: SIM, 2011)
- Grele, Ronald J., 'Oral History Theory', *Oral History Review*, 38 (2011), 354–359
<doi:10.1093/ohr/ohr059>
- Grütz, Reinhard, *Katholizismus in der DDR-Gesellschaft 1960-1990: kirchliche Leitbilder, theologische Deutungen und lebensweltliche Praxis im Wandel* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004)
- Guske, Hubertus, *Chronik Der Berliner Konferenz Europäischer Katholiken 1964-1993* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 1999)
- Haese, Ute, *Katholische Kirche in der DDR: geschichte einer politischen Abstinenz* (Patmos, 1998)
- Herold, Claus, *Der Aktionskreis Halle, Geschichte, Strukturen Und Aktionen Einer Katholischen Basisgruppe* (Magdeburg: Der Aktions Kreis Halle, 1999)
- Huisman, Judith, 'Jong En Jezuïet in De Jaren Zestig' (Unpublished Thesis, Utrecht University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of History, 1998, 2009)
- Jacobs, Jan Y.H.A., *Met het oog op een andere kerk, Katholiek Nederland en de voorbereiding van het Tweede Vaticaans Oecumenisch Concilie, 1959-1962* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1986)
- Jeurissen, Ronald, 'De Kerkelijke Vredesbeweging', in *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II tot Acht Mei beweging*, ed. by Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Salemink (Amersfoort/Leuven: De Horstink, 1988), pp. 136–150
- John XXIII, Pope, 'Pacem in Terris - Papal Encyclical on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty' (Holy See)
<http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html>
- Jong, Bert de, *Wie Zijn Je Vrienden in Oost-Europa?* (Amsterdam: Trouw/Kwartet; Stichting informatie over Charta '77, 1985)

- Jong, Johannes de, and De Nederlandse Bisschoppen, 'De katholiek in het openbare leven van deze tijd: Bisschoppelijk Mandement 1954', in *Mandementen van de Nederlandse bisschoppen; 10*, 1954
- Judt, Tony, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005)
- Kellogg, Michael, 'Putting old wine into new bottles: The East German Protestant Church's desire to reform state Socialism, 1989-90.', *Journal of church and state*, 43 (2001), p747, 26p
- Kennedy, James, *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw: Nederland in de Jaren Zestig* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1995)
- Kerssies, Ab, and Laurens Tuinema, 'De Basisbeweging Nederland', in *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II tot Acht Mei beweging*, ed. by Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Salemink (De Horstink, 1988), pp. 168-181
- Kunter, Katharina, *Erfüllte Hoffnungen und zerbrochene Träume: Evangelische Kirchen in Deutschland im Spannungsfeld von Demokratie und Sozialismus(1980-1993)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006)
- Kösters, Christoph, and Wolfgang Tischner, *Katholische Kirche in SBZ und DDR* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005)
- Laak, Jan ter, *Reiziger in vrede: Dagboeknotities* (Kampen: Kok, 1994)
- , 'Op zoek naar bondgenoten - Pax Christi en IKV in Oost-Europa', in *Katholiek in Oost-Europa - Opleving, getuigenis en engagement*, ed. by Cor Arends and Geert van Dartel (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, i.s.m. Koinonoyntes/Communicantes & Pax Christi Nederland, 1989), pp. 200-220
- Laeyendekker, L., 'Van Kardinaal Alfrink Naar Kardinaal Simonis', in *De vernieuwingen in Katholiek Nederland - Van Vaticanum II tot Acht Mei beweging*, ed. by Erik Borgman, Bert van Dijk and Theo Salemink (Baarn: De Horstink, 1988), pp. 195-211
- Leffler, Melvyn P., and Arne Odd Westad, eds., 'Bibliographical Essay', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
<http://histories.cambridge.org/extract?id=chol9780521837217_CHOL9780521837217A027>
- Macculloch, Diarmaid, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Allen Lane, 2009)
- Matejko, Alexander J, '[untitled Review] Rudolf Bahro - The Alternative in Eastern Europe', *Slavic Review*, 39 (1980), 700-702
- Megens, Niek, and Hilde Reiding, *Bewegen binnen smalle marges: Pax Christi Nederland, 1965-1990* (Nijmegen: Studiecentrum voor Vredesvraagstukken, KU Nijmegen, 1999)
- Meijering, Eginhard, *Het Nederlands Christendom in De Twintigste Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Balans, Uitgeverij, 2007)
- Müller, Jan-Werner, 'The Cold War and the Intellectual History of the Late Twentieth Century', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by P Melvyn Leffler and Arne Odd Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

<http://histories.cambridge.org/extract?id=chol9780521837217_CHOL9780521837217A002>

Niethammer, Lutz, 'Oral History as a Channel of Communication Between Workers and Historians', in *Our common history - the transformation of Europe*, ed. by Paul Thompson and Natasha Burchardt (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982), pp. 23-37

Njølstad, Olav, 'The Collapse of Superpower Dé,tente, 1975-1980', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by P Melvyn Leffler and Arne Odd Westad, Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Oosterhuis, Huub, *Twee of Drie - voor en over kritische gemeenten: Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis sinds Bisschop Bekkers* (Baarn: Amboboeken, 1980)

Ozawa-De Silva, Brendan R., 'Peace, Pastors, and Politics: Tactics of Resistance in East Germany.', *Journal of church and state*, 47 (2005), p506, 27p </cgi-bin/journal/ebscoft?issn=0021969X&an=18101890>

O'Farrell, Patrick, 'Oral History: Facts and Fiction', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, 5, 3-9

Paul VI, Pope, 'Humanae Vitae - Encyclical Letter on the Regulation of Birth' (Holy See, 1968)
<http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html>

Pekelder, Jacco, *Nederland en de DDR: Beeldvorming en betrekkingen 1949-1989* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1998)

---, 'Na Het Strijken Van De De Sovjet-vlag - Geschiedschrijving over De Koude Oorlog Sinds 1989/1990', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 114 (2011), 227-249

Peter Willm, 'Der Aktionskreis Halle (AKH) als teil der Suchbewegungen des nachkonziliaren Katholizismus', *Rundbrief Aktions Kreis Halle*, 1-7 <http://www.akh-info.de/archiv/Willms_Aktionskreis_Halle.pdf>

Peters, Paul, 'Rudolf Bahro : The Alternative in Eastern Europe', 115-126

Plas, Michel van der, *Dagboek Van Het Concilie* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1963)

---, *Uit de grond van ons hart: open brieven aan Paus Johannes Paulus II* (Weesp: Agathon, 1985)

Portelli, Alessandro, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, Second Edi (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 32-42

Raleigh, Donald J., *Soviet Baby Boomers : An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Ramet, Sabrina P., 'Religion and Politics in Germany Since 1945: The Evangelical and Catholic Churches.', *Journal of church and state*, 42 (2000), p115, 31p </cgi-bin/journal/ebscoft?issn=0021969X&an=2964630>

- Reiding, Hilde, 'Ontspanning en mensenrechten. Pax Christi's omgang met een klassiek dilemma in Koude Oorlogstijd', in *Civic Diplomacy - Diplomatie tussen macht en mensenrechten, ter nagedachtenis aan Jan ter Laak*, ed. by Beatrice de Graaf and Duco Hellema (Utrecht: Utrecht University, SIM, 2011), pp. 45-63
- Rey, Marie-Pierre, 'Gorbachev's New Thinking and Europe, 1985-1989', in *Europe and the end of the Cold War: a reappraisal*, ed. by Frederic Bozo (New York: Routledge, 2008)
- Righart, Hans, *De Eindeloze Jaren Zestig: Geschiedenis Van Een Generatieconflict* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1995)
- Ruigrok, Paul, and Mirjam Gulmans, 'Bisschop Gijsen' (VPRO - Geschiedenis 24, 2007) <<http://www.geschiedenis24.nl/andere-tijden/afleveringen/2007-2008/Bisschop-Gijsen.html>>
- Ruigrok, Paul, and Laura Van Hasselt, 'Andere Tijden - De Paus in Nederland' (VPRO - Geschiedenis 24) <<http://www.geschiedenis24.nl/speler.program.6937969.html>>
- Van Schaik, Ton H. M., *Bedankt voor de bloemen - Johannes Paulus II en Nederland* (Tiel: Terra - Lannoo, 2005)
- Schennink, Ben, *In beweging voor de vrede: Veertig jaar Pax Christi: Geschiedenis, werkwijze, achterban en invloed* (Nijmegen: Pax Christi, 1988)
- Schäfer, Bernd, *Staat und Katholische Kirche in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999)
- Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2000)
- Thomson, Alistair, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', *Oral History Review*, 34 (2007), 49-70 <[doi:10.1525/ohr.2007.34.1.49](https://doi.org/10.1525/ohr.2007.34.1.49)>
- Valk, Hans de, 'Hollandia Docet? Cardinal van Rossum and the Catholic missions in the Dutch East Indies', *Trajecta - religie, cultuur en samenleving in de Nederlanden*, 19/20, 143-157
- Walters, Philip, 'The Revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Beginnings of the Post-communist Era', in *Cambridge History of Christianity - IX World Christianities c.1914-c.2000*, ed. by Hugh McLeod, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 348-365 <[doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521815000.020](https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521815000.020)>
- Westad, Odd Arne, 'The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol I: Origins*, ed. by Melvyn P. Leffner and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1-19
- Wielenga, F., *Nederland in De Twintigste Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Boom Onderwijs, 2009)
- Wittner, Lawrence S., *Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971-Present* (Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 2003)
- Young, John W., 'Western Europe and the End of the Cold War, 1979-1989', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War - Vol III: Endings*, ed. by P Melvyn Leffler and Arne Odd Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)