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## THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BONN

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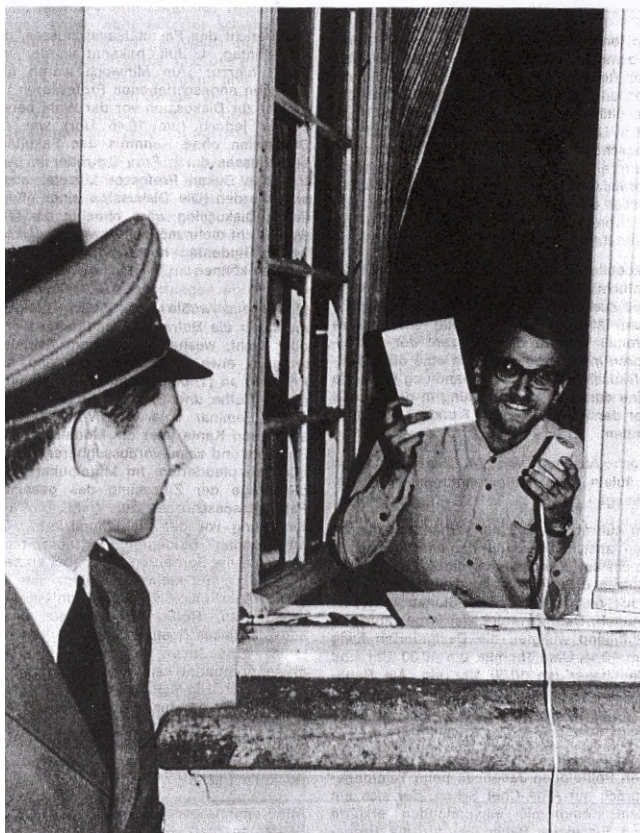
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# THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BONN

by

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### *Introduction*

The 1960s were a decade of political and cultural upheaval. Regime changes across the developing world, an unpopular war in Vietnam, and grassroots domestic campaigns all contributed to growing civil unrest, while the counter-culture favored by the dissidents created more division between political groups. At the same time, the decade's youth, the product of the postwar baby boom, were entering universities in unprecedented numbers. The mixture of these students and the political and cultural atmosphere proved combustible, and scenes of various student movements around the globe became as emblematic of the decade as the Beatles or the peace sign.

The West German student movement of the 1960s reached almost every post-secondary educational institution in the country, spreading quickly from its epicenter in West Berlin. West German universities from the North Sea to Bavaria all experienced waves of student protests, with dramatic incidents ranging from the occupation of university offices to the burning of department stores. Each West German university city therefore has its own story to tell of student activities during the turbulent decade. While Frankfurt may have been the center of the movement's academic influences on the young activists and West Berlin certainly took a central role for ideological and organizational purposes, not to mention newsworthy protests, the University of Bonn provides an equally valuable lens through which to view the student movement, largely because of its typicality. In spite of Bonn's special circumstances, the course of the movement there ultimately bore a closer resemblance to most other West German universities than exceptions to the rule like Frankfurt and West Berlin.

As the capital of West Germany, the city of Bonn would fall at the center of many protests. Though the university now neighbored the ministries and legislature of West Germany, not to mention dozens of foreign embassies, the conservative-to-moderate attitudes and general political apathy of the student body were the hallmarks of the university up to the mid-1960s. As a measure of the prevailing apolitical nature of the Bonn students, the most popular student group, the local chapter of the *Ring Christlich-Demokratischer Studenten* (RCDS), while maintaining official partisan political ties with the CDU, emerged as one of the biggest opponents of changing the status quo. These attitudes reflected the entrenched provincialism of the region, which had already earned the new capital the nickname *Bundesdorf* (federal village). The collision of the university's conservative nature and largely conservative student body with a radical minority, within the context of debates amplified by Bonn's status as federal capital, created a turbulent atmosphere within the university that alternately spurred and stalled the process of reform.

The subject of this thesis is the interaction of these two groups and the issues they dealt with which brought them together or set them at odds with each other. It will examine how, why, and to what extent the Bonn students became galvanized, as well as the reasons for the swift rise and decline of the radicals' influence and the limits of their cooperative relationship with the rest of the student body. Local scandals will be scrutinized alongside national debates, as they were handled in Bonn, and both will contribute to an understanding of trends in the West German student movement as a whole.

*Chapter One: Background of the German University System and the Hochschulreform Movement*

Before focusing on Bonn, it is necessary to devote a few pages to the history and structure of the German university and the rise of the reform movement which lay at the heart of the student unrest. The unique character of the German university system and its development from Prussian reforms of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to denazification efforts of the late 1940s serve as crucial context for an examination of almost any aspect of the West German student movement of the 1960s. The basics of the German university are familiar to many, due to the popularity of the Humboldt model and its influence on American higher education. However, the social and historical background of the German university is far more alien to students of any other system. The character of the German university, shaped as it was by innovators like Humboldt and the instability of German society, emerged as both a major influence and obstacle to reform efforts following World War II.

The Humboldt ideals first introduced in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Prussia provided a revolutionary approach to education in the western world and elevated the German university system to a leadership role. As Minister of Education in post-Napoleonic Prussia, Wilhelm von Humboldt incorporated his ideals into the restructuring of Prussia's institutes of higher education, which were in dire straits following decades of war. Humboldt advocated several principles which became intrinsic to the German university over the next century, as contact between the universities of the German-speaking lands increased steadily from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and as Prussia spearheaded German unification and many aspects of Prussian society

provided the model to which the rest of the new nation conformed even before unification in 1871.<sup>1</sup>

Of the many Humboldtian ideals which shaped the German university system, the limitation of the state's influence on the university and the elevation of the individual professor and his research played an especially important role in the unique social context of German universities. Humboldt's commitment to the limitation of state on education emerged as a reaction to the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution and in conjunction with an ideal at the center of the German Enlightenment, specifically and heartily endorsed by Humboldt, that the role of the university should be the development of a well-rounded individual. So that the state's adherence to a particular doctrine would not constrict the individual's exposure to other ways of thinking, the university should enjoy a high degree of autonomy. Additionally, the academic community of the university should have its own organs of self-government, which would be recognized by the state.<sup>2</sup>

The social elevation of the professor also came in part as an extension of Humboldt's commitment to the autonomy of the university system and protection of scholarship. Humboldt advocated the union of research and instruction in academics, in which the professor would conduct his own research and instruct the students in accordance with his personal scholarship. This idea was a departure from the standard of university education, in which the lecture served as the key method of instruction and the professor simply related the works of classical authorities to his students. The promotion of research in academia not only contributed to the wealth of scientific progress coming from German universities through the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gerd Hohendorf, "Wilhelm von Humboldt," Prospects Sep 1993: 665-76, 667-8.

Marianna Wertz, "Education and Character: The Classical Curriculum of Wilhelm von Humboldt," Fidelio Jul 1996, The Schiller Institute 3 Feb 2009 < [http://www.schillerinstitute.org/fid\\_91-96/962\\_humboldt\\_education.html](http://www.schillerinstitute.org/fid_91-96/962_humboldt_education.html)>.

Margareta Bertilsson, "From University to Comprehensive Higher Education: On the Widening Gap between 'Lehre' and 'Leben,'" Higher Education Oct 1992: 333-49, 333-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

centuries, but also ceded great authority and social status to the individual professor. Even in the heavily bureaucratic, hierarchical society of Wilhelmine Germany, professors continued to enjoy a very highly regarded position. Within the university, due to the importance placed on his own research and the limitations of state influence, and reinforced by the respect accorded to him by both society at large and his own students, the German professor became almost a demigod.<sup>3</sup>

Though German universities had for the most part been viewed in a very positive light throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, serving as a golden standard for much of the rest of the world, the system came under scrutiny in the wake of the Second World War. In examining the Nazi ideological hegemony, the Allies found much to criticize in the role of the German university. Marked by its complicity in the rise of the Third Reich on the post-secondary level and by its role in brainwashing the German youth on a primary and secondary level, the German education system was singled out for reform early on by the planners of the Allied occupation. As early as June 1942, when the Anglo-American involvement in the European Theater of Operations was centered in North Africa, US State Department officials met for their first discussion on education reform in occupied territories. Just as the schools of the Third Reich had facilitated the brainwashing of the German youth, the post-war institutions were charged in part with the reversal of this process. After the end of the war, the education reformers of the American, French, and British zones had not only to rid the German schools of the many fervent Nazis in their faculty, but also to craft curricula and school governments which would promote democratization on all levels of government involved and democratic ideals in the German youth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hohendorf 673.

Walter Hallstein, "The Universities," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science Nov 1948: 155-67, 155-6.

<sup>4</sup> James F. Tent, Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) xv, 2.



The denazification of post-secondary institutions, especially the universities, was largely outsourced to University Planning Committees (UPCs) composed of German academics who could prove opposition to or noncompliance with the Nazis. The denazification effort in the universities was hindered not only by disagreements between the UPCs and Allied authorities and the policy shifts among the Allies in regards to denazification, but also by the urgency in reopening West German universities. The overall poor health of millions of German civilians, resulting from damaged facilities as well as undernourishment, necessitated the reopening of the university medical centers, which in turn necessitated the reopening of these centers' support departments. The domino effect that followed resulted in the reopening of the majority of West German universities, including the University of Bonn, by December 1945.<sup>5</sup>

Even under these circumstances, some reforms initiated in the denazification did take root at the universities, with modest success. The Free University of Berlin, founded in the American zone of the divided city in 1948, was intended as an exemplar of a democratized university. Though the Free University's provisions for student representatives in each of the colleges and in the university senate, a major advance in student power, did not catch on at other West German universities for another two decades, the establishment of two organs of student government proved more easily replicable. The constitution of the Free University created both a student parliament and an executive student board (AStA – *Allgemeiner Studentenausschuss*) appointed by the parliament for the administration of student activities.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the moderate successes in university democratization and other areas, many victories were only symbolic and the existing West German institutions proved highly

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<sup>5</sup> Tent 57-8, 61, 64.

<sup>6</sup> In German universities, the word "Fakultät" is used to describe a division within the university composed of multiple departments. Though the word is often translated into English as "faculty," I have used "college" so as to avoid confusion when referring to the faculty and staff of the university as a whole.

Richard L. Merritt, Ellen P. Flerlage, and Anna J. Merritt, "Democratizing West German Education," Comparative Education Dec 1971: 121-36, 127-8.

intractable. In education, field agents visiting post-secondary institutions in the late 1940s repeatedly reported that the rectors were “employing staff contrary to denazification laws.” The prewar flight of many academics from Nazi Germany and the low level of return contributed to both the lack of ideological diversity and the dearth of politically suitable options for filling the many posts held at the German universities by ardent Nazis. The postwar universities frequently remedied their teaching shortages by hiring professors with backgrounds of compliance with the Nazis under the title of laborer, but utilizing them as instructors. The ramifications of this practice would be especially severe in the 1960s, when the Nazi pasts of several high-ranking university officials were exposed. However, the failures of the universities in regard to denazification of the faculty, as well as plans to democratize the university governments and adapt the curricula to suit the changing demographics in West German society, caused little stir in the intervening years. Efforts in the primary and secondary schools carried on into the 1960s in some regions, with an emphasis on social studies curricula for the promotion of democratic ideals. But in higher education, the continuation of reforms to a murky, highly disputed notion of the post-war, denazified, democratized university was a task of the individual West German states, who still had not achieved a working consensus on the government’s authority over the post-secondary institutions.<sup>7</sup>

Over the next two decades, as many of the failures of university restructuring became apparent, a diversified movement gradually coalesced under the very broad banner of *Hochschulreform* (reform of higher education). The circumstances under which the

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas M. Bower, The Pledge Betrayed: America and Britain and the Denazification of Postwar Germany (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981) 165.

Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, “Intellectual Exile,” Germany and the Americas Eds. Thomas Adam and Will Kaufman (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 562-4.

Theodore Huebener, “Proposed Reforms in the German Schools,” Comparative Education Jun 1962: 44-7.

Ursula Kirkpatrick, “The Rahmenplan for West German School Reform,” Comparative Education Jun 1960: 18-25.  
“Democratizing West German Education,” 122.

*Hochschulreform* movement gained considerable momentum are key to understanding the most basic motivations of its participants in the years preceding the movement's radicalization and splintering. Though the failures of denazification in the staff were readily apparent, the promise of a more democratic university structure and greater voice to the students was very slow in coming. The impetus to calls for reform arose chiefly from bureaucratic strain. The first major proponents of *Hochschulreform* were the university faculty and staff, in response to the mounting problems associated with a growing student enrollment, resulting from the post-war baby boom, and a paucity of instructors.

The *Hochschulreform* debate gained some momentum through the 1950s, amid many other debates on the restructuring of postwar institutions and the establishment of the Federal Republic. The demographic changes at the universities in the early nineteen-sixties, however, brought *Hochschulreform* to the forefront by amplifying unresolved issues in higher education and increasing the students' desire for involvement. The student-instructor ratio had been rising since the reopening of the universities, with war veterans returning to school and faculties reduced by denazification. The postwar baby boom amplified this ratio drastically, especially as the post-war generation first began matriculating in the mid-1960s. From 1952 to 1964, enrollment at West German universities doubled, due not only to an increase in population, but also increasing affluence. Reports based on West Germany's economic growth forecasted that enrollment would double once more between 1960 and 1980. Reports on university enrollment in the nineteen-fifties highlighted the difficulties universities would face in expanding to meet the growing student population, as certain fields – sometimes even within the same college – showed highly disparate rates of growth.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford: Berg, 2003) 55.

Friedrich Edding, "The University Enrollment in West Germany," *Comparative Education Review* Feb 1965: 7-8.

Until the mid-1960s, student involvement in the *Hochschulreform* debate remained very limited. The academics continued to represent the post-secondary institutions in the debates, with little consensus and even less actual reform. A small number of students had attempted to participate in the debate in the immediate postwar period, offering suggestions in the rewriting of university constitutions. However, the members of this small group were far left of the university administrations and student bodies, and their suggestions were summarily rejected. The vast majority of students, who had no memory of life before the Third Reich, were simply unequipped to challenge authority or participate in such debates, in addition to being preoccupied with other matters relating to personal survival and rebuilding.<sup>9</sup>

With the demographic changes continuing to present challenges to the universities and amplifying the need for immediate bureaucratic reforms came a generation and culture of students more prepared to question authority. Though the political makeup of most West German student bodies and their student government representation remained conservative, the loudest student voices in calls for democratization remained decidedly to the left. Even the conservative and moderate elements of the student body soon came to recognize the limitations of their organs of student government and the many unresolved issues of *Hochschulreform* as the debates started by the radicals made their way to the main arena of university and student government. It is at this point in history and the course of university politics that the focus of this thesis on the student body of the University of Bonn begins.

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<sup>9</sup> Willibald Karl, "Students and the Youth Movement in Germany: Attempt at a Structural Comparison," Journal of Contemporary History 1970: 113-27, 114.

## *Chapter Two: University Politics from the Mid-1960s to the Schahbesuch*

The situation at the University of Bonn remained relatively tranquil up to 1967. The students were generally reform-minded, but limited their approach to university-related issues and eschewed the budding radical groups advocating not only drastic changes to the German university system as a whole, but also greater political engagement by students in national and international issues. The moderate attitudes of the Bonn student body became most apparent in their expressions of disdain for the radical minority and the antagonistic relationship between the Bonn student parliament and the same university's branch of the most radical German student

group, the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (SDS) up to the spring/summer of 1967. However, several incidents leading up to June 1967 brought more students to the floor of the debate, diversified the opinions of the student body, and ripened the ground for three highly eventful semesters to come.<sup>10</sup>

The politicization of the student body remained a gradual process during the year 1966, and the best overview can be found in an analysis of the changes of the student government's political makeup between the 1966 and 1967 elections. The students of the university elected their parliamentary representatives each January for the remainder of the calendar year. The candidates were divided by field of study, with each college allotted a certain number of seats and each student receiving one vote in his or her college. The first order of business for the newly-elected parliament was to select the AStA officers, who also served for one year. Up to 1966, the only serious rival to the RCDS control of student government was apathy. At the time, only 15 of the parliamentarians even claimed membership in a political student group. Of these, eight were RCDS members, with the SDS holding two seats and the SHB holding three. Of the remaining 46 candidates, only a handful characterized themselves as left-leaning. The radical students had a greater voice in the editorial board of the bi-monthly university magazine *akut* and the student parliament responded to the perceived "extreme leftist bias" of the publication by shutting down the publication for much of the autumn/winter semester.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The SDS, founded as the student group affiliate of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD), separated from its parent party in 1961 over ideological differences. By the mid-1960s, the SDS was synonymous with radicalism.

<sup>11</sup> The SHB (*Sozialdemokratischer Hochschulbund*) succeeded the SDS as the SPD's student affiliate. The RCDS (*Ring Christlich-Demokratischer Studenten*) also had a national partisan affiliation in the form of the CDU/CSU (*Christlich Demokratische Union* and its Bavarian equivalent, *Christlich-Soziale Union*), a conservative party which had been the most prominent in West Germany since the end of the war and was the senior partner of the ruling coalition in the federal government at the time.

Horst-Pierre Bothien, *Protest und Provokation: Bonner Studenten 1967/1968* (Essen: Klartext, 2007) 127.

"Studentenzeitschrift 'akut' erscheint wieder," *Bonner Rundschau* 16 Dec 1966.

"Wilde Demonstranten schmierten Botschaft mit roter Farbe an," *General-Anzeiger* 11 Feb 1967.

"Studentenkrach um Lübke, Libyen und Lappalien," *Express* 2 Mar 1967.

The biggest gain in political representation for the left in 1966 came with the appointment of the new AStA, shortly after the new parliament had been sworn in. In its primary function as executive student committee, the AStAs of years past had posed little threat in awakening student political interest, and the 1966 AStA seemed no different. The newly-elected chairwoman, Madeleine Hackspiel, was not associated with any political student groups, and the political affiliation of the other members did not reflect a favoring of the left. However, Hackspiel soon revealed a commitment to increasing student political engagement through AStA-sponsored forums and debates. In the summer, she officially joined the SHB and successfully fended off accusations of bias from the outraged RCDS for the rest of her term. Though the AStA-sponsored political events of 1966 never drew as much notice as RCDS polemics against them or the decidedly more colorful, raucous protests of the SDS, the program of the Hackspiel-AStA provided a forum for the measured participation of formerly apathetic or moderate students in university, national, and international political events.<sup>12</sup>

Still, the RCDS killed the majority of the proposed events of the Hackspiel-AStA in their infancy by alleging political bias. On occasions when the bias argument was not successful, they turned to the debate over the parameters of the student government's political mandate. In spite of the RCDS' overt partisan connections, the organization dug in its heels as chief proponent of strict limits on any sort of political engagement or promotion by the organs of student government. Though all calls for expansion of the political mandate were coming from the left, the RCDS maintained that its opposition to political engagement did not stem from a desire to limit leftist influence in particular. In the midst of scrutinizing AStA publications and events for bias and defending their own group against accusations of passivity, RCDS representatives

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<sup>12</sup>Bothien 67.

"Der neue AStA – Aktivitäten, Programme, Arbeitsbereiche," *akut* May 1966: 9.

argued that the danger of bias was too great and that the student parliament and AStA should exclude themselves from any matters not firmly grounded in university administration or academic affairs.<sup>13</sup>

In its argument against the expansion of the political mandate, the RCDS frequently cited a line from the university student bylaws, which stated, “The organs of the student body [...] may not function in a politically partisan manner.” The quote set up an easy retort for the proponents of the political mandate’s expansion, who fired back with the very next sentence: “[The organs of the student body] may take a position on political issues within the area of student interest.” For proponents of a greater political mandate, the issue became an essential component of university democratization. In their view, the engagement of students on political issues was as vital to the formation of good, democratic citizens as their ability to elect a representative government. In an *akut* editorial published shortly before the 1966 student parliament elections, one of the staff writers declared that the political indifference that seemed to be fostered by the limited engagement within the student body would lead to a complacent, apathetic voting bloc, a frightening image in light of recent German history.<sup>14</sup>

The students arguing in favor of increased political participation also pointed to the activism of many Bonn professors. The more vocal members of the academic community in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany were staunch monarchists before World War I and generally right-wing in their attitudes after the war, with a number coming out in favor of a restoration of the deposed Hohenzollerns. The dominant policies of the Weimar Republic placed great emphasis on academic freedom and generally encouraged professors to publicize their political

<sup>13</sup> Hartwig F. H. Suhrbier, “SP-Report,” *akut* Jul 1966: 10.

Wolfgang Henrich, “Status quo in der pädagogischen Provinz: Das unpolitische Selbstverständnis der Universität,” *akut* Jan 1966: 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> Josef Petry, “Weder rot noch schwarz: Hat die Studentenvertretung ein politisches Mandat?” *akut* Dec/Jan 1966/7: 30.

“Status quo in der pädagogischen Provinz: Das unpolitische Selbstverständnis der Universität.”



critiques. However, the conservative academic community's complicity in the rise of the Third Reich made it necessary for many professors to either deny or recant political statements and writings after the end of the war in order to keep their positions. Still, a number of West German professors sought a sizable role in both commentary and policymaking in the debates that were shaping the political orientation of the new country. The academic community served as a major force in the "Kampf dem Atomtod" anti-rearmament campaign of the late 1950s, a movement that reawakened the political consciousness, or at least the political discontent, of several groups of West German society. Since the rearmament campaign, Bonn professors had also routinely taken part in national political debates, and many of the same professors lent their support to the expansion of the political mandate in 1966 by participating in AStA-sponsored forums and writing commentary on political issues for *akut*.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout 1966, the debate over the political mandate remained in the spotlight through several bitter spats between the RCDS and the temporarily-allied AStA and *akut*. The so-called *Flugblatt Affäre* (Flier Affair) in the summer of 1966 became one of the key events of the standoff. Towards the end of the spring/summer semester of 1966, the RCDS distributed fliers accusing AStA of sponsoring partisan events, in response to Madeleine Hackspiel's proposal of new seminars and lectures, and showing partiality to leftist political groups by allowing the SDS use of AStA printing machines. The *akut* report on the affair and the corresponding cartoon characterized Jürgen Rosorius, then the second-in-command of the Bonn RCDS, as a "lone warrior," depicted wearing a paper hat and brandishing a wooden sword in the cartoon. The *akut* report also gleefully noted how Rosorius, who would become a regular contributor of letters to

<sup>15</sup>Fritz Veit, "Academic Freedom in Germany before and after 1933," *Peabody Journal of Education* Jul 1937: 36-44, 36-40.

Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford: Berg, 2003) 31.

"9 Professoren gegen Notstandsgesetze," *General-Anzeiger* 27 Jun 1966.

"Protest scheitert an Satzungsfrage," *General-Anzeiger* 2 Dec 1966.

the editor and a regular subject of scorn in the columns of *akut* during his remaining years in Bonn, was shouted down by unnamed student parliament officials. For his part, Rosorius, who became the RCDS chairman shortly after the *Flugblatt Affäre*, responded with a letter to the editor calling *akut*'s coverage of the affair and corresponding parliament sessions in the past few months "the last attempt of the paper to inhibit the growth of the RCDS into the most active and attractive student association at the university."<sup>16</sup>

Joining the debate over the political mandate in dominance of student politics in 1966 was the matter of *Vorlesungskritik*. Both issues were closely linked to aspects of university democratization. Both issues also proved equally important in 1967, where they framed several momentous events in the politicization of the student body as a whole and the radicalization of a segment of the students. However, while the debate over the political mandate drew attention to national political issues and the need for greater awareness of the world outside the academic bubble, the *Vorlesungskritik* debate drew student attention back to the inner workings of the university system, the lack of student voice within the university, and the pressing need for reform in the face of thoroughly undemocratic attitudes within the university faculty and administration.

Like many other elements of student-driven *Hochschulreform*, the idea of *Vorlesungskritik* ("Lecture critique") spread westward from the FU Berlin. After introducing the notion that the students had the right to criticize their professors' scholarship and classroom performance, the reform leaders at the FU offered space in their student newspaper for students to submit anonymous critiques. Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1966, the editorial board of

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<sup>16</sup> "SP-Report" 10.

*akut* announced its intention to follow suit with a regular *Vorlesungskritik* column for the fall/winter semester.<sup>17</sup>

The idea proved radical in several respects. First, the invitation to the students to challenge the objectivity and accuracy of the contents of a course put the professors in the position of defending their scholarship, which the university and German society as a whole had gone to such great lengths to elevate. The format of the critique presented an additional affront to the highly formal relationship that existed between professor and student, by making the criticism public and removing the painstaking civility that would have marked the encounter if the student were required to visit the professor in his office and present the critique in person. Finally, the extension of the criticism, by virtue of its name, to the most basic course level, the lecture, opened the opportunity to criticize the professor to those with only a passing familiarity with the subject matter. With the guarantee of anonymity offered in the newspaper format of *Vorlesungskritik*, the professor in question had no way of gauging the academic seriousness or expertise of his critic.

Still, members of the leftist student groups overwhelmingly hailed the introduction of *Vorlesungskritik* as an important step in the process of university democratization. They promoted the anonymous critiques as a more direct method for students to voice their concerns about university issues in need of immediate reform, from overcrowded classes to unsatisfactory course offerings and professors who seemed more in touch with their research than with the instructional component of their career. Furthermore, the editorial staff of *akut* defended the

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<sup>17</sup>“Professoren gegen anonyme Kritiker,” *General-Anzeiger* 22 Jul 1966.

“Darf ein Student den Professor zensieren?” *Bonner Rundschau* 30 Jul 1966.

anonymity of their format of *Vorlesungskritik* as necessary for the protection of students against what they viewed as an authoritarian university system.<sup>18</sup>

A few professors offered support of the idea of *Vorlesungskritik*, though not the format proposed by *akut*. Benno von Wiese, professor of modern Germanic languages and literature, voiced this opinion in a column he contributed to *akut*, saying:

In a democratic political system, criticism is permitted to everyone; it is indeed an integral part of the cultural and scientific life itself. Another question, however, is who criticizes and how. [...] Criticism on the scholarly performance of a professor can only be administered meaningfully by one who is sufficiently familiar with the matters of this scholarship.

Von Wiese went on to acknowledge that a second category of criticism existed in the instructional capacity of the professor. He allowed that, "...a good scientist can be a mediocre or even terrible teacher" and vice versa, and that "the unity of these two gifts is desirable to the university, but rare." However, von Wiese maintained that student evaluations in this matter were highly subjective and not deserving of a forum for anonymous critique. He warned, with a great deal of foresight in view of the events that would occur in the fall of 1967, that the introduction of anonymous critiques would force professors into a popularity contest and create a press sensation that would ultimately distract from real questions of scholarly competence.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of *akut* and the leftist student groups' championing of *Vorlesungskritik* and a measure of support for the general idea by a handful of academics, *akut's Vorlesungskritik* column fizzled out by the end of 1966. In the column's "obituary," an *akut* writer accused the professors of every department except the Department of German Languages and Literature of

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<sup>18</sup> "Professoren gegen anonyme Kritiker."

Volker Rohde, "Angst vor dem Anonym? Vorlesungsrezension in Bonn fast ein Nekrolog," *akut* Dec/Jan 1966/7: 9.

<sup>19</sup> Benno von Wiese, "Bonner Professoren über Vorlesungskritik," *akut* Jul 1966: 4-6.

not engaging the students on the various areas of criticism out of cowardice. The column, however, made no mention of the role of the students, though a chief reason for its failure was the lack of student submissions. When asked about a revival of the forum for anonymous criticism in February 1967, a vast majority of students expressed satisfaction with course options and a desire not to let their hopes of *Hochschulreform* interfere with their personal regard for their professors.<sup>20</sup>

Though the death of the *Vorlesungskritik* column was a setback for the involvement of the leftist groups and the student body as a whole in *Hochschulreform*, the first few months of 1967 provided ample opportunity for the leftist groups to regain some ground. However, an increasingly active group of radicals also engaged in a number of activities that proved distasteful to the majority of the student body and limited the amount of cooperation possible even as the moderates found more reasons to participate in protests.

The 1967 student parliament elections provided the first advance for the leftists, including the radicals, of the new year. The newly-elected parliament was much more partisan than the previous one, with two highly partisan voting blocs forming. Though the RCDS remained the largest political student group in Bonn, with nearly 200 members, its conservative coalition faced stark opposition. The SDS, with only about 20 members, increased its parliamentary representation from two to 10 seats. Meanwhile, RCDS representation remained at 15 seats, though the organization achieved a tactical victory in seating its chairman, Rosorius, as speaker. Just days later, the new parliament appointed the first leftist-dominated and leftist-supported AStA. Though Hackspiel's joining of the SHB in the first quarter of her term had provided a symbolic victory to the leftist student groups, she had striven for the appearance of

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<sup>20</sup> "Angst vor dem Anonymus? Vorlesungsrezension in Bonn fast ein Nekrolog."  
 "Bonner Studenten nicht für Vorlesungskritik," Bonner Rundschau 10 Feb 1967.

impartiality, but had also been critically impeded in her progressive agenda by more conservative members of AStA and by the targeting of the RCDS. The new AStA, under the leadership of “leftist-independent” Bernhelm Booß, contained a much higher number of members who were either independents or members of leftist student groups. Furthermore, the larger leftist representation in the student parliament for the corresponding term promised an easier path than the one Hackspiel’s AStA had faced in fulfilling its agenda.<sup>21</sup>

The highly partisan nature of the new student parliament masked the strength of the student body’s continued political apathy. Only 300 of Bonn’s 15,000 students belonged to a political student group, and the majority of the independents leaned to the right. The courting of independents would be especially important for the leftist groups to maintain their recently-won popular support, but SDS activities in the month of February betrayed no sensitivity to this need.<sup>22</sup>

The controversy began with protests at the Libyan embassy in early February. At first, the demonstration was limited to a handful of Libyan students from the University of Bonn, who gathered to protest the treatment of their counterparts back in Libya. Though several student organizations expressed solidarity with the Libyans, the SDS was the only one to join their protests. After SDS members smeared the embassy with paint and police banned demonstrators from the grounds, the SDS organized daily protests around the city. On February 15, police arrested 14 students, mostly SDS members, for demonstrating without a permit. Local newspapers reported further vandalism and the destruction of automobiles, while the other

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<sup>21</sup> “SDS erhielt zehn Abgeordnetensitze,” General-Anzeiger 24 Jan 1967. Bothien 134.

“AStA dankt seinen Freunden,” Bonner Rundschau 23 Feb 1967.

<sup>22</sup> “Studentenkrach um Lübke, Libyen und Lapalien,” Express 2 Mar 1967.

student organizations who had previously expressed solidarity with the Libyans hastened to distance themselves from the SDS brand of protest.<sup>23</sup>

The height of this distancing came a week later, on the morning of February 23, with the circulation of a petition outside the main building of the university. The anonymous author of the document invited students to declare themselves “against the reckless demeanor of the SDS and against the radicalization of the student body,” so that “a radical minority [might] no longer give the appearance of speaking for the Bonn students.” Within three and a half hours, the circulators of the petition had collected 1100 signatures, and would receive another 300 by the end of the day.<sup>24</sup>

The SDS took the repudiation in stride, and seemed even to revel in being called out in such a manner. In the past few weeks, through its strong showing in the parliamentary elections and participation in the Libyan protests, the twenty-member group had proven itself as a force to be reckoned with among the 15,000-member student body. In response to the petition, one SDS member proudly proclaimed the organization a “political pike in the collegiate carp pond.”<sup>25</sup>

Although the SDS’ role in the Libyan protests did little to foster unity, a few key events to follow in the spring of 1967 briefly muted the alienating effect of the radicals and galvanized more of the student body to reform. However, SDS members and a growing number of radicals in other leftist groups frequently carried their response to these issues well past what was palatable to more moderate reform seekers. This pattern would play out several times, in several issues, at the University of Bonn over the next year. The quick succession of events in the spring

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

“Wilde Demonstranten schmierten Botschaft mit roter Farbe an,” Bonner Rundschau 11 Feb 1967.

“Illegale Demonstrationen: 14 Festnahmen,” General-Anzeiger 17 Feb 1967.

<sup>24</sup> “SDS wird Angegriffen,” General-Anzeiger 23 Feb 1967.

<sup>25</sup> “Studentenkrach um Lübke, Libyen und Lappalien.”

allowed the left to build significant momentum, even if cooperative efforts with the moderates remained superficial.

The Booß-AStA had endorsed protests and attempted to host discussions on multiple national and international issues during its short reign. The board took a special interest in the plight of students in Libya, Indonesia, and Iran, with numerous AStA officers joining in peaceful protests at the respective embassies after the unpopular SDS participation in February. Their participation gained more press attention in late April 1967, with the death of former chancellor Konrad Adenauer. As waves of foreign dignitaries, including US President Lyndon Johnson, descended on nearby Cologne for the state funeral, SDS members in Bonn and Cologne began coordinating demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. Though the involvement of the AStA officers did not extend beyond the distribution of fliers, their support for the more raucous SDS protesters in the name of freedom of speech incited outrage from the RCDS, who issued the first of several calls for Booß' resignation.<sup>26</sup>

The Booß-AStA took a bolder stance days later, in protests against the recent military putsch in Greece. In spite of a warning from the rector and his refusal to allow a corresponding information session in one of the lecture halls, AStA announced its intention to stage a protest in the city center. The Bonn police chief rejected their permit application, saying that it had not been filed in time for the proposed date of the event. While AStA denounced the police chief and the reasons for his refusal, the RCDS issued its second call in less than a week for the resignation of the officers of the Booß-AStA.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Bothien 34.

"Protestluftballons wurden abgeschossen," Express 26 Apr 1967.

"SDS Flugblattaktion schlägt weiter Wellen," Bonner Rundschau 27 Apr 1967.

<sup>27</sup> "Studenten riefen zur Kundgebung Athener Militärregime," Bonner Rundschau 28 Apr 1967.

"AStA Demonstration verboten," General-Anzeiger 29/30 Apr 1967.



In addition to advocating the expansion of the political mandate through protest participation and information sessions, the Booß-AStA also managed to bring attention to other aspects of *Hochschulreform*. One of its first orders of business had been the publication of a *Negativ-Dokumentation* in March and April. The 23-page document enumerated student grievances, culled from a survey drawn up by Hackspiel-AStA members and distributed in early 1967. The grievances stemmed mostly from overcrowding and the inflation of student fees. A second *Negativ-Dokumentation*, organized by the Booß-AStA and published in May, drew more focus to grievances with the limits of student government and the authoritarian structure of the university.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, a larger scandal was about to present the Booß-AStA with another opportunity to rouse the student body and prove the organizational capabilities of the leftist students. The latest controversy would make national headlines and serve as an indictment of authoritarianism and censorship within the federal government. The academic connection began with the subject of the scandal, Klara Marie Faßbinder, a septuagenarian retiree of the *Pädagogische Hochschule* (Teaching Academy) in Bonn. Faßbinder had become a person of suspicion to federal authorities in the 1950s, due to her activism in women's liberation and the peace movement. She had been forced into retirement in the mid-1950s, but returned to prominence in 1967 when the conservative *Bundespräsident* Heinrich Lübke prohibited her from receiving a prestigious award from the French government for her work in translation and efforts in improving Franco-German relations.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "Negativ-Dokumentation des AStA Bonn über Mißstände an der Universität," *Hochschulreport* Apr/May 1967. "Bonns Studenten sollen jetzt nach System meckern," *Bonner Rundschau* 19 May 1967.

<sup>29</sup> Gisela Notz, "Klara Marie Faßbinder and Women's Peace Activities in the 1950s and 1960s," trans. Rebecca van Dyck, *Journal of Women's History* Autumn 2001: 98-123.

Lübke did not act outside of his authority in what the West German press labeled the *Ordensverweigerung* scandal. As *Bundespräsident*, he had already forbidden the receipt of foreign awards to over a thousand German citizens, without much notice from the public. But the political nature of the Faßbinder case, Faßbinder's academic reputation, and Lübke's refusal to offer an explanation for his actions all awakened outrage in the academic community. The case soon made its way to the international press, with Bonn remaining at the center of the scandal.<sup>30</sup>

The relevance of the University of Bonn to the case lay not only in Faßbinder's academic connections there, but also in Lübke himself. The university had appointed Lübke, an alumnus, as an honorary member of its senate in October 1966. Though largely ceremonial, the position gave the students a certain amount of accessibility to Lübke. On March 1, the student parliament submitted a formal request for the *Bundespräsident* to explain his actions in the Faßbinder case. While awaiting a response, the parliament also debated whether to boycott any university affairs at which Lübke was present.<sup>31</sup>

The SDS, which had sponsored the latter proposition, seemed poised to take a leadership role in the case. They had called for student involvement in the Faßbinder case for weeks before the parliament took up the matter, and student sympathies were rapidly turning against Lübke. However, extremist demands and poor organization once again sabotaged the SDS' ability to be a major player in the case. The first sign of trouble came on the same day as the vote to petition Lübke for an explanation. Walter Fischer, leader of the Bonn SDS and sponsor of the proposed Lübke boycott, was not in attendance at the session, but at home ostensibly searching for his student identification. The rector of the university, Edmund Gassner, had recently sent word to the student parliament that he had no record of Fischer's enrollment. Over the next week, it was

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Stähle, "Was darf Lübke?" *Die Zeit* 11 Aug 1967.

<sup>31</sup> "Studenten fordern Auskunft," *Bonner Rundschau* 2 Mar 1967.

discovered that neither Fischer nor fellow SDS member and parliamentarian Peter Pade were currently students at the university. The votes of their respective colleges in the student parliament were declared invalid, and the student parliament's position in the Faßbinder case severely weakened.<sup>32</sup>

Though the pressure on Lübke and the focus on the *Ordensverweigerung* at the university dissipated, Faßbinder once again became the cause of strife between students and the university administration in May. Shortly after taking office in March, the leftist Booß-AStA began making plans to host a session on post-war German politics with the retired professor and representatives from communist East Germany. The rector communicated his disapproval of such a session to Booß early on, saying that it might be seen as an affront to Lübke. Undeterred, the Booß-AStA continued with its plans and publicized the affair as a landmark case in the expansion of the students' political mandate. The rector and university senate held their ground, refusing to allow AStA use of a lecture hall in an official declaration issued on May 3.<sup>33</sup>

On May 8, 1967, the 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Germany's unconditional surrender in World War II, the Faßbinder symposium took place. 800 students crowded into the cafeteria to hear the retired professor speak and offer their support with numerous spontaneous rounds of applause. The successful staging of the event, however, was a bittersweet victory for the Booß-AStA, which had resigned in protest after they were refused use of a lecture hall. 20 members of the student parliament resigned in solidarity soon thereafter. Gassner's obstruction of the staging of the Faßbinder symposium had been the final straw for the young AStA regime, which had done

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<sup>32</sup> "Fischer nicht in der Studentenkartei," General-Anzeiger 2 Mar 1967.

"Studentenparlament steckt in akuter Krise," Bonner Rundschau 9 Mar 1967.

<sup>33</sup> Bothien 69-70.

"Wieder Streit um einen Hörsaal," General-Anzeiger 3 May 1967.

"Der Rektor verschließt den Hörsaal," Süddeutsche Zeitung 8 May 1967.

much in support of the expansion of the political mandate in its two months and found itself at odds with both the university administration and the RCDS several times.<sup>34</sup>

The resignation of the Booß-AStA and the replacement thereof with a much more moderate board might have proven a crushing blow for the leftist students, if the members of the Booß-AStA had faded quietly into the background. Instead, the leftist student leaders refocused their efforts into the organization of a new outlet for representation. Within three weeks, in a cooperative effort between the SDS, SHB, *Humanistische Studentunion* (HSU), *Liberaler Studentenbund Deutschlands* (LSD), and a number of leftist independents, the *Studentengewerkschaft* (student labor union, hereafter “SG”) emerged. The organization was the first of its kind in West Germany, and its 200 founding members pledged themselves to university democratization and the politicization of the student body under the leadership of their first chairman, Bernhelm Booß. The SG acted autonomously and influentially for the rest of the year, coordinating leftist activities and galvanizing the rest of the student body after a baptism by fire through a national tragedy that occurred just days later and marked the beginning of a new phase for student activism in Bonn.<sup>35</sup>

### *Chapter Three: June to December 1967*

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<sup>34</sup>“Professor Faßbinder vor 800 Studenten,” Bonner Rundschau 9 May 1967. Bothien 69-70.

“Bonner AStA tritt aus Protest zurück,” General-Anzeiger 5 May 1967.

<sup>35</sup>The LSD (*Liberaler Studentenbund Deutschlands*) was a student group affiliated at the time with the more conservative *Freie Demokratische Partei*. However, the student organization had been trending towards the left for the past few years and would separate from the national party by the end of 1968.

The HSU (*Humanistische Studentunion*) had no partisan affiliations, but usually lent moral support to the leftist student organizations when a conflict developed with the RCDS.

“Bonner Studenten organisieren sich,” Express 26 May 1967. Bothien 137.

The planned visit of the Iranian shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and his wife to West Germany in the late spring of 1967 did not seem to be an inherently controversial event. The West German tabloid press had already anointed the handsome, relatively young shah as a “fairytale prince,” and the *Schahbesuch* was anticipated as a routine state visit in which the royal couple would have the opportunity to tour West Germany’s most picturesque landmarks, and German crowds would have the opportunity to see the glamorous pair up close. The SDS’ leadership and other leftist student groups recognized another opportunity in the visit. The SDS had already added the shah’s regime to one of its many, many points of protest in the category of international politics, along with the Vietnam War, Suharto’s New Order Regime in Indonesia, the newly-installed military regime in Greece, and the Libyan monarchy. With scheduled stops at a handful of prominent universities and the promise of high press coverage, the *Schahbesuch* provided the SDS with a unique chance to promote both themselves and awareness of the increasingly oppressive conditions in Iran.<sup>36</sup>

The itinerary for the shah’s tour at the end of May 1967 stretched across West Germany. In spite of the setbacks for the SDS in the recent AStA elections and the *Fall Faßbinder*, the leaders of different leftist student organizations in Bonn seemed confident that they could make a strong showing for the beginning of the anti-shah protests. The recent developments at the Bonn campus, particularly the creation of West Germany’s first SG and the student unrest in *Fall Faßbinder*, had heightened student interest in other international political issues. They signaled to the organizers that the political consciousness of the Bonn student body was not a lost cause. As a measure of insurance in motivating the students further, the national leaders of the SDS

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<sup>36</sup> Arno Widmann, “Schahbesuch 1967 und Chatami 2000,” *Berliner Zeitung* 11 Jul 2000: 86. SDS issues identified by protests of the Bonn SDS from 1966 to May 1967.

sponsored a week of political discussions on Arab-Israeli relations, which were particularly strained and about to develop into the Six-Day War.<sup>37</sup>

The SHB took the reins in planning the anti-shah protests in Bonn, as the reputation of the local SDS chapter, under whose leadership all of the month's setbacks had occurred, was again low. The protests began with the shah's arrival in Bonn on May 27. The organizers managed a modest turnout, but the police response insured that the demonstration would not be ignored by the media. The Bonn police, present from the outset in a force of 200, arrested 61 of the protesters. Newspaper reports gave no mention of provocation, and the resultant outcry was powerful and immediate. Less than 48 hours after the police assault, some 1200 students and 16 professors gathered under the Beethoven memorial, where leaders of each political student group, as well as representatives of AStA and the SG, issued condemnations of the police action.<sup>38</sup>

The strength of the students' response to the arrests alone might have proven a major step in the unification of the Bonn student body and the legitimization of the left wing student groups' leadership, but there was little time for the event's impact to be absorbed. On June 2, in the midst of an increasingly raucous anti-shah protest in front of the opera house in West Berlin, the student movement received its first casualty. Police attempts to break up the mob, which had begun throwing food and smoke bombs, quickly turned violent. At one point, a plainclothes officer fired into the crowd and hit Benno Ohnesorg, a 26-year-old member of an evangelical, nonviolent student group. Ohnesorg died of his wounds before the end of the day. The mayor of West Berlin responded by enacting an indefinite ban on demonstrations (finally lifted on June

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<sup>37</sup> "Skirmishes," *Minerva* Dec 1967: 281-3, 283.

<sup>38</sup> "Studenten Demonstrieren," *Bonner Rundschau* 25 May 1967.

"Polizei kassierte 61 Studenten," *Express* 30 May 1967.

"Die Polizei probt den Notstand," *General-Anzeiger* 2 Jun 1967.

13), condemning the student protesters, and defending the police. In Bonn, over 3000 students marched in silence on June 5, an event planned by the SG. In the next few days, the student body continued to mark Ohnesorg's death with discussions. On June 10, over 10,000 students from across West Germany joined in a peaceful memorial in Hanover, Ohnesorg's hometown.<sup>39</sup>

The semester closed in July with high tensions between the student body and the administration. The university administration did seem prepared to negotiate with the students, or at least recognize their grievances. In a meeting of the university advisory board, Gassner cited three causes of the growing displeasure among the students. In addition to general political factors, including "a general dissatisfaction with the society and the handling of liberal values," Gassner placed the majority of the blame for the unrest on the limited voice of the students in university government and administration and on the demographic challenges faced by the university. The session closed with the council declaring itself ready for more cooperation with the student body. However, the semester still ended on a sour note, with Gassner yet again refusing to recognize the two-month-old SG.<sup>40</sup>

The efforts of Gassner and the advisory council, in light of recent protests, to refocus on *Hochschulreform* appeared successful at the opening of the next semester in October 1967. The inaugural session of the *Verfassungskommission*, a new commission of both faculty and student representatives who would discuss changes to the university constitution, was greeted optimistically by new AStA chairman, the politically independent Rudolf Pörtner. However, the credibility of Pörtner's AStA, the *Rektorat*, and the student parliament would all be called into

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<sup>39</sup> "Deepening Radicalism: The Aftermath of the Shah's Visit and the Death of Benno Ohnesorg," *Minerva* Dec 1967: 283-7, 283-4.

"Schweigen," *Express* 6 Jun 1967.

"Deepening Radicalism," 284.

<sup>40</sup> "Student eher ein Zustand als ein Stand," *General-Anzeiger* 13 Jul 1967.

"Unharmonischer Semesterabschluß," *General-Anzeiger* 31 Jul 1967.

question in the next week, and by the end of the year, the ability of any of these groups to work together was a matter of considerable doubt.<sup>41</sup>

The efficacy of AStA was increasingly reduced after the introduction of the SG in May. As the student parliament aligned increasingly with the university, hoping to assist in progress on the *Verfassungskommission*, the leftist students aligned with the SG so that AStA was left in the middle. The division was apparent from the summer of 1967 onwards, with the student parliament and its executive board acting independently of each other. By the end of October AStA was distancing itself from the student parliament, refusing to comply with orders for the production of even the most routine documents. The fissure between AStA and the student parliament occurred much to the delight of the parliament-opposed editors of *akut*, whose longstanding nemesis Jürgen Rosorius was now the speaker of the student parliament.<sup>42</sup>

At the end of October, the term of office of Edmund Gassner, who had recently played a significant role in assembling the *Verfassungskommission*, came to an end. No apparent scandal accompanied the resignation of Gassner, who returned to his teaching position at the university in the department of urban development and settlement. Yet the transition of power in the rector's office proved far from auspicious for the students. Gassner had not yet recognized the validity of the SG as of the end of the previous semester, and there appeared to be some hope that his successor, theology professor Wilhelm Schneemelcher, would at least recognize the growing organization, even if he were not prepared to welcome them to a special seat in the *Verfassungskommission*. However, Schneemelcher used the occasion of his inaugural address to

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<sup>41</sup> "Die Studenten sollen in der Zukunft mehr mitreden können," *Bonner Rundschau* 11 Oct 1967.

<sup>42</sup> Bothien 72-3.

Heinz-Günter Riwozki, "Traurige Bilanz," *akut* Oct 1967: 19.



denounce “certain extremists” within the student body. The remark did not go over well, and 30 members of the SG promptly walked out of the small gathering.<sup>43</sup>

The second crumbling of relations between the various student organs and the university administration at the beginning of the fall/winter semester of 1967 was only the start of the university’s troubles. Attempts by the rector’s office to squelch the credibility of the SG hit a snag when the union attached itself to the issue of *Vorlesungskritik*, on the rise again after being declared all but dead by *akut* at the end of 1966. The issue had been revived shortly before the death of Ohnesorg, when the College of German Languages and Literature provided an outlet for critique. The relatively progressive college, identified earlier by *akut* as the only one whose members had not “thrown their hands in front of their faces” when confronted with an anonymous critique, approached the “heretical business” of *Vorlesungskritik* on its own terms, limiting the critiques to academic content and sidestepping the anonymity issue while still ceding a significant amount of authority to the students by giving them a voice. The professors circulated forms among their students, with questions limited to the scholarly content of the respective courses. The attempt to meet the students halfway encountered limited success. Only 31 of 150 students in an introductory course returned the forms. Whether the large abstention percentage was due to fear of attaching one’s name to a critique of a professor or simply a lack of interest in substantive criticism is unknown. Still, the progress was enough to show the advocates of *Vorlesungskritik* that some colleges were open to debate on the issue, and that the more recalcitrant ones might hopefully be dragged into the fray. The *Vorlesungskritik* advocates in Bonn also took a cue from the March 1967 meeting of the *Verband Deutscher Studentenschaften* (VDS) in Göttingen, at which a unanimous declaration was issued in favor of *Vorlesungskritik*. The declaration read that a lecture critique should “de-privatize the course and

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<sup>43</sup> “Verhältnis zwischen Uni und Studenten stand im Vordergrund,” *Bonner Rundschau* 30 Oct 1967.

provoke the members of the faculty into a permanent discussion with the students.” In the October 1967 edition of *akut*, the editorial staff not only provided space once again for anonymous *Vorlesungskritik*, but also revived the debate over format and anonymity and reported on the progress of *Vorlesungskritik* at other West German universities.<sup>44</sup>

The SG, with many prominent SHB and SDS members at the helm, seized upon *Vorlesungskritik* as their flagship issue for the fall/winter semester. As a target for their campaign, they singled out a lecture offered by the history department: “History of the Soviet Union, 1917 to 1939.” The lecture, delivered by the politically moderate, scholastically traditional Professor Horst Jablonowski, coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Soviet Union, and members of the SDS were especially keen to ferret out any bias in the course readings or in the lecture itself. The members of the SG prepared diligently during the semester holiday for single-pronged attack, poring over the assigned reading and arranging for the printing of critiques after every meeting of the twice-weekly lecture. The stated goal of the SG “work group,” composed specifically for this *Vorlesungskritik*, was to drastically alter the lecture format at the university, opening up the floor for questions to be posed by the students during the lecture period. To this end, the planners focused on inciting the engagement of the students and bringing them out of their “consumer attitude” rather than debating the merits and various forms of criticism with Jablonowski himself.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>The VDS (*Verband Deutscher Studentenschaften*) was an association of representatives from the student bodies of West German universities.

Volker Rohde, “Angst vor dem Anonymus? Vorlesungsrezension in Bonn fast ein Nekrolog,” *akut* Dec/Jan 1966-7: 9.

Hans-Günter Jurgensmeier, “Angriff auf heilige Kühe?” *akut* Jun 1967: 16-17.

Heinz-Günter Riwozki, “Ein Fall,” *akut* Nov/Dec 1967: 4-7, 5.

Wilfried von Bredow, “Studentische Anmaßung,” *akut* Oct 1967:4-5.

<sup>45</sup> “Ein Fall,” 4-6.

“Studenten kritisieren: Gespräch mit SDS-Mitglied Glen Pate,” *Bonner Rundschau* 15 Nov 1967.

Jablonowski learned of the work group during the semester holiday and immediately began planning a counterattack. He first submitted a query to the dean of the history department, on the matter of “how one should acquit oneself in the event of disturbances.” The dean’s reply was not published, but the query established, as Jablonowski’s assistant later confirmed in an interview, that Jablonowski interpreted the action from the beginning as a disruptive maneuver on the part of the SG rather than a legitimate critique of his scholarship or an earnest pursuit of historical debate.<sup>46</sup>

From the first lecture, the SG operatives did little to dispel this notion, just as Jablonowski showed little willingness to negotiate with the students as equals or to take the inciters’ demands seriously. The members of the work group distributed their first lecture bulletin to the other students in the lecture hall prior to the professor’s entrance. Along with a summary of historiography relative to Soviet history, the bulletin contained an impassioned defense of the merits of a *Vorlesungskritik* conducted over the course of the semester, which “should and could achieve influence on the content and form of the lecture itself.” Jablonowski, who was offered his own copy of the bulletin upon arrival, ordered the student to sit down immediately. As the professor attempted to go over the most basic aspects of the course, other members of the work group raised their hands to speak and then stood to catch the professor’s attention when he did not call on them. After five minutes, Jablonowski saw that “order was no longer guaranteed” and left the room.<sup>47</sup>

At some point between the first lecture, on a Tuesday, and the next one, the following Friday, Jablonowski met with his assistant and four unidentified students. He initially declared the students’ behavior as “unseemly” and “insisted that he alone decided in what form his lecture

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<sup>46</sup> “Ein Fall,” 4-6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

Bonner Studentengewerkschaft, “Vorlesungsnachrichten I,” Akten-Jablonowski (AStA 81 220) 17 Oct 1967.

would be conducted.” Yet after hearing the students’ apologies and their claims that the complexity of the lecture’s theme deserved some degree of discussion, Jablonowski seemed to soften. He assured the small group that he would “reflect on the form of his future lectures.” However, the only fruit of Jablonowski’s promised reflection was his decision not to face the students alone again. He appeared at the next lecture in the company of a pair of custodians, a handful of assistants, and two fellow professors, one of whom read a letter on behalf of the history department denouncing the radicals.<sup>48</sup>

The next two classes progressed without incident. Even the members of the work group remained quiet, limiting their activities to the distribution of more bulletins and occasionally raising their hands to ask a question, both of which were ignored by the professor, in an effort to bring Jablonowski back into a discussion of some sort. Attempts to compromise on a post-lecture colloquium fell through when the representatives of the SG rejected the offer in favor of advocating for discussion within the lecture period. By Tuesday, October 31, it became apparent that the professor would not be swayed by good behavior, and the disruptions resumed. On that day, according to a report in a city newspaper, an unidentified number of students filled the crowded lecture hall with laughter and whistling. Jablonowski attempted to lecture over the students for the better part of an hour, but ultimately left the room before the period was even halfway over. With the second interrupted lecture began the second phase of the Jablonowski Affair, which, according to a later *akut* account, was a phase “characterized by inept action on the part of the SG.” As the academic critique disappeared and the disruptive behavior during the lecture period continued, the aims of the SG became even more muddled. The highly political

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<sup>48</sup>I have translated the German word *Pedell* as “custodian,” though the correlation is not exact. The *Pedell* was more the equivalent of the British beadle. At the university, he was the groundskeeper and enforcer of rules of student conduct. The working-class *Pedellen* often had an antagonistic relationship with the students, especially the radicals.

Bothien 73-5.

content of the critique itself made support from the moderate elements of the student body unlikely, and the conduct of SG representatives during the lecture combined with the disappearance of content-specific criticism seemed to erode outside student backing of the SG almost completely.<sup>49</sup>

At the same time, the various units in support of Jablonowski – the dean, university administration, and the RCDS – launched a counterattack, which they grounded solidly in the West German law. *Freiheit der Lehre* (freedom of teaching/instruction) became the catchphrase of the pro-Jablonowski faction, who lifted the idea from Article 5 of the West German constitution. The term usually indicated the protection of a professor and/or university from censorship by the government on the subjects of instruction. In the early defense of Jablonowski, *Freiheit der Lehre* was extended to protect the professor's scholarship from the almost purely political critiques offered by the SG in their efforts at *Vorlesungskritik*. The application of this term and the retort of *Freiheit des Lernens* (freedom of study) briefly brought the discussion back to some of the real issues at the heart of *Vorlesungskritik* – the democratization of the university and the demand that student voices be heard in administrative as well as academic matters – but escalating conflict within Professor Jablonowski's lecture room insured that the rational debate was swiftly pushed out of the spotlight.<sup>50</sup>

After breaking up the lecture early on Friday, Jablonowski appeared on Tuesday, November 7, with a letter in hand, ostensibly from the rector. In the letter, which Jablonowski read before the class, the rector delegated to Jablonowski *Hausrecht* (the right of the owner to act against disturbances on his property) over the auditorium and the authority to forbid the

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 75-7.

"Ein Fall," 5-6.

"Wieder Vorlesung gestört," *Bonner Rundschau* 1 Nov 1967.

<sup>50</sup> "Ein Fall," 5.

Bothien 76-7.

distribution of fliers before and during the lecture period. Violation of these instructions on behalf of the students would be regarded as *Hausfriedensbruch* (breach of domestic peace), and the offenders duly charged. The letter, with its very clear language coming from the highest university authority, might have settled the matter for good – had such a letter from the rector actually existed. As the student body soon learned, the letter Jablonowski read was written by the dean of the history department. A few days later, a letter from the rector to all professors, rather than Jablonowski specifically, was publicized, with mention of *Hausrecht* over the lecture rooms but no reference to *Hausfriedensbruch* or the punishment of students.<sup>51</sup>

By mid-November, both Jablonowski and the members of the SG seemed well past the point of negotiation. Attempts by the dean of the history department, Lützeler, and Pörtner, the head of AStA, to bring the respective parties back into a discussion fell through. Jablonowski's use of the custodians to remove disruptive students on November 10 only served to augment the boldness of the students attending the lecture. Even as methods of interruption by the students escalated to catcalls and the slamming of doors, a representative of the SG wrote an open letter to Jablonowski, stating, "Therefore, we would like to once more emphatically request that you not take our actions as an attack on your person" and assuring the professor that their only intent was to improve the lecture.<sup>52</sup>

Lützeler addressed the students before the beginning of the November 14 lecture, promising to act as mediator in the situation. He reiterated the ban on the distribution of fliers before and during the lecture, but offered the students the opportunity to submit questions to Jablonowski in writing so long as they included their names and put no restriction on the distribution of fliers after the lecture. After a peaceful lecture on November 17, the November 21

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<sup>51</sup>"Ein Fall," 5-6.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

Christoph Strawe, Letter to Horst Jablonowski, Akten-Jablonowski (AStA 81 220) 10 Nov 1967.

lecture proved that the terms set forth by the dean were not satisfactory to the work group. Jablonowski announced that he would not answer anonymous questions, and that he did not have the time in that period to answer the 24 questions he had received from the last class. He also noted that he had rejected a number of questions because they were not applicable to the previous lecture, were anonymous and therefore “for the wastebasket,” would be answered in today’s lecture, or were simply “insolent in tone.” When a student responded with heckling, Jablonowski beckoned for the custodian to collect the student’s personal information and then evict him from the room. Ironically, the bulletin printed for distribution after that day’s class contained a great deal of self-congratulation for perceived improvements in Jablonowski’s lectures.<sup>53</sup>

The rest of the battle between Jablonowski and the students played out largely in isolation from the ongoing *Vorlesungskritik* discussion at the university. At a meeting held on December 1, the SG rescinded its order against personal attacks on Jablonowski in order to, in the words of SDS vice president Glen Pate, “provoke fascist encroachments from Professor Jablonowski, give the actors [of the SG/work group] new courage, and make the lecture interesting again.” Pate also suggested at the meeting that the university consider forcing the 54-year-old professor into retirement, or at least probing the professor’s record during the Third Reich (a later probe revealed nothing scandalous).<sup>54</sup>

The months of conflict and the escalation of personal attacks seemed to take a great physical and emotional toll on the professor. Even the *akut* writers noted with a certain degree of pity Jablonowski’s poor condition as he appeared at the podium in the last weeks of the conflict.

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<sup>53</sup> “Ruhe bei Professor Jablonowski,” *Bonner Rundschau* 18 Nov 1967.

“Jablonowski wies Studenten die Tür,” *Bonner Rundschau* 22 Nov 1967.

“Studentengewerkschaft Extra No. 3,” Akten-Jablonowski (AStA 81 220) 23 Nov 1967.

Studentengewerkschaft Bonn, “Vorlesungsnachrichten 9,” Akten-Jablonowski (AStA 81 220) 21 Nov 1967.

<sup>54</sup> Egmont Elschner, “Angriffe,” *akut* Nov/Dec 1967: 3.

The student magazine's coverage of the affair in the November/December 1967 issue began with a description of the professor at the beginning of a lecture period:

The professor is small and haggard. His face shows rigidity. His hands travel nervously over the lecture manuscript. Theses and sentences are punctuated emphatically with jerky bows. The eyelids twitch behind almost rimless spectacles. Abruptly he turns to the blackboard. The writing drops down to the right. The chalk breaks frequently.

The description showed an appreciation even on the part of the pro-*Vorlesungskritik akut* writers for the hardship of the ordeal on the professor, who remained saddled with the unenviable task of contending with a rowdy group of students challenging the merits of his life's work. In spite of Jablonowski's hard line against the students in previous weeks and his consistent unwillingness to cooperate or negotiate, it was clear that he did not have the strength to continue fighting, much less under sustained personal attacks from his students.<sup>55</sup>

The Jablonowski Affair lurched to a sour end in the week after Pate called for personal attacks. Within the week, the SG went so far as to demand the rector's resignation and to broadcast the details of their case on an East German radio station. On Tuesday, December 5, students arriving at the lecture hall for Jablonowski's class were greeted with a curt written notice from the professor: "Due to the repeated impediment of my lectures by the SG, my further lectures in this semester are cancelled. Signed, Jablonowski." Upon reading the notice, a majority of the students offered a "solidarity address" for the defeated professor. On Friday, the 20 other professors of the history department once again proclaimed their support of Jablonowski, emphasizing that "the majority of the students avow themselves to the imperative of fairness, and therefore do not wish that a lecture be detonated under the pretense of a

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<sup>55</sup> "Ein Fall," 4.



discussion.” In spite of the show of support, Jablonowski seemed never to recover from the turbulent six weeks of targeted, disruptive *Vorlesungskritik*. When he passed away two years later of cancer, the obituary mentioned that the events of those six weeks “hit the researcher, who was devoted to historical truth, to the core. Until his death, he suffered greatly under these attacks.”<sup>56</sup>

The week following the end of the Jablonowski Affair was still an active one for the SG, with some redemptive value for their organizational reputation. The organization had been planning a protest event to the *Dies Academicus*, an academic holiday abbreviated as “Dies” and staged by the university every semester. The *Dies Academicus* allowed the various colleges to showcase their research for the enjoyment of current students, prospective students, and alumni, as well as the general public. The protest event was titled *Anti-Dies* and featured professors and students from other West German universities as well as Bonn on the program. The keynote speaker was Rudi Dutschke, leader of the SDS and prominent student radical from the Free University. After losing a struggle with the university senate for the use of lecture halls, the organizers of the *Anti-Dies* relocated the event to the inner courtyard, coatroom, and stairways of the university’s main building. While the concurrent regular *Dies* drew about 4000 guests, the *Anti-Dies* pulled in a respectable 2000, including a few local professors.<sup>57</sup>

As the growing antagonism between the SG and Jablonowski turned the twice-weekly lectures into a three-ring circus and the *Anti-Dies* made it clear that future agitation was planned, the student parliament, university senate, and various members of the faculty continued the debate on *Vorlesungskritik* in a more organized, productive manner. In mid-November, the

<sup>56</sup> “Prof. Jablonowski liest nicht mehr,” *Bonner Rundschau* 6 Dec 1967. Bothien 79.

“Trauerfeier für Professor Jablonowski,” *Bonner Rundschau* 29 Jan 1970.

<sup>57</sup> Bothien 80-83.

“Heute Anti-Dies im Uni-Arkadenhof,” *General-Anzeiger* 6 Dec 1967.

“Der Dies um eine Komponente reicher,” *General-Anzeiger* 7 Dec 1967.

student parliament, in which leftist groups were well-represented at the time, issued two motions supported by a great majority which challenged the university administration's ban on the distribution of bulletins in the Jablonowski Affair but pointedly distanced itself from the tactics of the SG. Within the month, the university responded with considerable advances in democratization, while condemning the radicalism and disruptive tactics of the SG. On December 11, a local paper reported on important decisions from the university senate. In addition to promising to review disciplinary action taken against student groups and individual students in the previous week for disturbing the peace in Jablonowski's classroom as well as at the *Anti-Dies*, the senate declared that it would make one large and two small lecture rooms available to AStA for student groups' registered events. The senate also vowed to issue weekly information sheets on their proceedings and to sponsor at least two sessions per semester for students and professors to voice their concerns. On December 12, Schneemelcher issued a statement admitting that the response of the university had been "too sparse and too late coming." This admission was followed just a few days later by a landmark decision to add two student representatives to each college and to the university senate.<sup>58</sup>

Events within the University of Bonn in the second half of 1967 reflected several changes in both the conservative-to-moderate majority and the radical minority of the student body, with mixed results. Through the improved organization of the leftist students, student participation in political protests and other activities at the university increased drastically from the levels shown at the beginning of the year. In the area of *Hochschulreform*, a sizable number of students, if not an actual majority, became more aware of and engaged in debates relating to democratization of

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<sup>58</sup> "Studenten pochen auf Freiheit des Lernens," Bonner Rundschau 17 Nov 1967.

"Senat der Universität faßte wichtige Beschlüsse," Bonner Rundschau 11 Dec 1967.

"Die Uni will ihr Schweigen brechen," Bonner Rundschau 13 Dec 1967.

"Rektor: Mitbestimmungen der Student ist den Professoren ein Anliegen," General-Anzeiger 19 Dec 1967.

the university, after the leftist groups pushed the issues into the spotlight by openly challenging the university administration. Still, the tactics of the SG, SDS, and SHB were seen by most of the student body as distasteful at best, with the disruptive methods of the leftist groups receiving just as much blame as recalcitrant elements of the faculty for the lack of success in negotiations. As the Jablonowski affair further exemplified, with its focus on potential political bias in a course on Soviet history, the radicals were not willing to separate external political issues from the *Hochschulreform* debate. Though the leftist student groups brought attention to pressing issues of *Hochschulreform* and forced the university to deal with them in one way or another, their tactics alienated many students and professors and often missed the mark on working towards a solution. The following year would see even more controversy over the methods of the leftist student groups and their disruption of both the progress of reform and the day-to-day administration of the university.

The year 1968 saw an escalation in many protest movements across the globe, and West Germany was no exception. Today, the student movement in 1960s West Germany is commonly referred to as the *68er-Bewegung*, and the year was marked not only by incidents on individual campuses but also coordinated protests with thousands of students representing several universities. Bonn was no exception, serving as the setting for several chaotic local protests through the beginning of 1968 and as the center of the largest single protest of the German student movement. However, 1968 in Bonn also marked the beginning of the end of the tenuous relationship between conservative and moderate reformists and the radicals, with the schism defining the extent and nature of the politicization of the Bonn student body over the past two years.

The events of late 1967 – the Jablonowski Affair, the *Anti-Dies*, and the moderate steps towards reform taken by the university – elevated expectations and interest for the student parliament/ASTA elections in January and February of 1968. The parliamentary elections were first on the docket after the return from the holidays, and the local papers scrutinized the ballots beforehand in an attempt to gauge the political mood among the student body after the affairs of late 1967. In its initial report, the *General-Anzeiger* noted that of the 150 students campaigning for the 61 seats in the student parliament, only 53 had registered themselves as independent. Within two weeks, the number of registrants had decreased to 141, still a dramatic increase over the 113 candidates in the previous year's election.<sup>59</sup>

The partisan nature of the ballot was not so much due to the desire of the candidates to align themselves with a particular national political party as to align themselves with the *Hochschulreform* goals and tactics of various student groups. Of the nine affiliations on the

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<sup>59</sup> "Heißer Wahlkampf," *General-Anzeiger* 27 Dec 1967.

"141 wollen ins Studentenparlament," *General-Anzeiger* 10 Jan 1967.

ballot, only three (RCDS, SHB, and LSD) had ties to a national political party. The best-represented political student group on the ballot, with 24 candidates to the runner-up RCDS's 14, was a new invention, *Aktion 68*. The new group presented itself as politically moderate, but was for all intents and purposes as conservative as the RCDS. Its membership, according to *akut*'s election review, "would have neither interested themselves [in student politics] nor campaigned, had they not been alarmed by actions such as *Vorlesungskritik* and *Anti-Dies*." The *Aktion 68* candidates campaigned most emphatically against radicalism and the expansion of the political mandate, with the catchphrase "No 'High Politics.'" By *akut*'s estimation, the group's success in seating eleven of its 24 candidates, the highest number achieved by any of the groups, was derived almost entirely from this oppositional platform, and not from the candidates' stances on *Hochschulreform*, which the magazine characterized as "long-winded [and] differing from each other only in methods."

Another new, moderate student group achieved comparable success in the election, with the distinction of seating every single candidate (though they sponsored only eight). The *Bonner Hochschulforum* (BHF), founded by AStA chairman Rudolf Pörtner, was also formed in part as a reaction to the turbulence at the end of 1967. As the name implies, the group's focus was on hosting a discussion of *Hochschulreform*, rather than a condemnation of radicalism or the augmentation of the political mandate. In this way, the group distanced itself carefully from the radicals and their tactics, outlining instead a middle path to reform. Similarly, prominent RCDS member Jürgen Rosorius summarized his position as pro-reform, anti-radical with the voting catalog entry, "For college-specific study reform commissions, interdisciplinary courses [...] for *Vorlesungskritik*, and against indoctrination and leftist *Hochschulrevolte*." Rosorius' new stance

on reform represented a significant shift in the RCDS' attitude towards reform, or at least a desire to give the appearance of being able to lead to the reform-oriented voting bloc.<sup>60</sup>

The success of the two new groups in the parliamentary elections firmly indicated the negative reaction of the students to recent unrest and their desire to return to a carefully moderated debate on *Hochschulreform*. Likewise, the showing of the leftist student groups (messily divided primarily between the SHB, SDS, and SG, with a number of left-leaning students campaigning under the traditionally moderate HSU and LSD, both of which had offered limited support of the activities of the SG in 1967) betrayed their unwillingness and inability to work within the framework of student government. The SDS sponsored and seated just one candidate, Stephan Kappstein, who obtained one of the 19 seats in the College of Philosophy. The organization, according to *akut*, was certainly in the position to sponsor more candidates and win more seats, but abstained from doing so in a clear renunciation of the institution. Kappstein's purpose, *akut* surmised, was to serve as the SDS' lookout. While he kept an eye on the proceedings of the student parliament, ostensibly to alert the SDS at the first sign of rupture or bias, the group concentrated on its work in extraparlimentary opposition.<sup>61</sup>

The SDS' almost total abstention from student parliament and the focus of their activities in the next few months would mirror a growing trend in national politics towards extraparlimentary opposition. Electrified by international issues such as Vietnam as well as various domestic controversies and frustrated by the lack of openness resulting from a coalition

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<sup>60</sup> Egmont Elschner, "SP-Wahlanalyse," *akut* Jan 1968: 6-10.

Bothien 125.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

"Leftist groups" should be understood here primarily as the SDS/SG/SHB triumvirate, and secondarily as the HSU and LSD. The HSU, which never held more than three seats in the Bonn student parliament between 1966 and 1968, quietly supported the leftist activities of the SG and acted almost entirely in an auxiliary function in this period. The LSD, officially connected with the more conservative FDP, also endorsed the activities of the SG and officially broke with the FDP in 1969.

Bothien 84.

between the two most powerful political parties, a growing number of activists had given up on gaining a seat at the table and were now focusing on external agitation. By tackling the same issues as the leaders of the extraparliamentary resistance, with whom they shared a great esteem for the Frankfurt School of critical theory, the radical leftist students were already an unofficial arm of the extraparliamentary movement. The decision of the Bonn SDS not to campaign for substantial representation in student parliament marked an attack by the radicals on the legitimacy of the organs of student government as well as another step in the Left's separation from university issues and integration with radical national political groups.<sup>62</sup>

While the SHB and SG did not issue such a cold shoulder to student government, disagreements within the groups over strategy and platform put them at a disadvantage when combined with the tarnished reputation they had gained through the Jablonowski Affair. The campaigns of the SHB and SG revealed their inability to participate in *Hochschulreform* debates while negotiating between damage control from the events of late 1967 and the ongoing radicalism of their members. Both groups first had to overcome the objections of members who wished to eschew student parliament almost entirely, as the SDS had done. The SHB made a great show of agreeing to conform to the system for the sake of earning representation, and in doing so awoke enough internal dissent so as to impact their organizational abilities and the resources they could offer their candidates. *Akut* characterized the SHB's campaign as "headless and poorly planned," and declared that they had lost the election organizationally long before the voting period began. The SG, facing similar challenges in convincing its membership to conform to the student government systems, failed to offer the bare minimum in support of their candidates, neglecting even to print candidate lists. Many SHB and SG members, wishing to

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<sup>62</sup> Kurt L. Shell, "Extraparliamentary Opposition in Postwar Germany," *Comparative Politics* Jul 1970: 653-80, 658-9.

campaign on *Hochschulreform* issues and work within the framework of the student parliament, split from the organizations to campaign either as independents or with the BHF. The SHB, sponsoring 12 candidates, managed to seat a respectable five, while the SG seated five of seven candidates. While these results were far from complete defeats, they were an embarrassment in contrast with the successes of the BHF and *Aktion 68* (not to mention another decent showing by the RCDS) and the victories claimed by the leftist organizations during the previous year. The leftist groups had evidently contributed to the political activism and interest of the student body, but failed to capitalize on the success by expanding their own parliamentary representation.<sup>63</sup>

The newly-elected parliament set right to work in the area of *Hochschulreform*. Their first order of business was to issue an outline to the university senate on the most pressing reforms. For its part, the senate also showed its readiness to resume the business of reform by publishing the proposals on reform of the student disciplinary code promised the previous December.<sup>64</sup>

The main leftist student groups, in particular the SHB, experienced a small triumph when the student parliament elected SHB member and former editor-in-chief of *akut* Peter Schon as the next chairman of AStA. The decision came just one week after Ernst Benda, a moderate CDU politician who would become Minister of the Interior in April 1968, called upon the students of West Germany not to further isolate the radical student groups, but instead attempt to work with them within the established framework. The position of the AStA chairman was especially important – more so than any of the student parliament – if the student government wished to heal any of the divisions within the student body. However, the new AStA chairman would only have from March to July to establish himself in the role, as a recent amendment to

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<sup>63</sup> "SP-Wahlanalyse," 6-8.

<sup>64</sup> "Gemeinsamer Entwurf zur Hochschulreform," Bonner Rundschau 1 Feb 1968.



the university constitution had changed the AStA chairman's term of office from a March to March yearly appointment to July to July, and the man or woman taking office in March 1968 would have his or her term reduced by two-thirds to accommodate this new rule. The student parliament spent three sessions debating the matter before finally selecting Schon, but when the decision finally came Schon had received 32 votes to the RCDS runner-up's 19.<sup>65</sup>

A self-described "leftist Catholic with a militant imprint" who expressed solidarity with Ho Chi Minh, Schon seemed a somewhat controversial choice to preside over the executive board of a largely moderate to conservative student body. Egmont Elschner, SG member and another *akut* writer and self-described leftist, joined Schon's AStA as consultant for information, culture, foreign affairs, and finance. Elschner's appointment reflected the intentions of the Schon-AStA to continue the work of expanding the political mandate and interest of the students. Though the conservative student groups were surely loath to comply with such leadership, the new AStA seemed poised to bring the leftist student groups back into the fold of university-sanctioned activities and conduct debates on *Hochschulreform* without disruptive, polarizing incidents such as the Jablonowski Affair and the Anti-Dies. However, before the ability of this new AStA to prevent further estrangement could be tested (Schon and company would not take office until March), another series of protests began at the university, marking the continued shift in the SDS towards extraparlimentary opposition.<sup>66</sup>

After the student parliament elections and the confirmation of the new AStA, protests resumed at the beginning of February. These demonstrations paled in comparison to the events of the end of 1967 and to events to come in the spring of 1968. The significance of the February

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<sup>65</sup> "Provokationen schaffen Entfremdung," General-Anzeiger 29 Jan 1968. Bothien 136.

<sup>66</sup> "Tumulte im Studentenparlament," General-Anzeiger 7 Feb 1968. Ulrich Rosenbaum, "Peter der Große," akut Apr 1968: 7.

1968 protests lay in establishing the viewpoint of a number of leftist students that the cooperative approach to *Hochschulreform* and student government was at an end. Furthermore, they indicated that the goals of many leftist students were still neither confined to nor able to be satisfied by a discussion on *Hochschulreform* or any other singular issue. Even with notable steps towards university democratization, such as the seating of student representatives in the colleges and university senate and a promised reexamination of the disciplinary system, the radicals found plenty to protest. The reaction of the university to such protests only fanned the flames of their discontent and, in the minds of the radicals, showed that the enduring authoritarian structure of the institution belied olive branches offered in the name of *Hochschulreform*.<sup>67</sup>

The latest wave of protests began on February 1, 1968, with a small, nonviolent demonstration against the Vietnam War. About ten students marched from the cafeteria towards *Kaiserplatz*, just half a kilometer away. The protesters carried four red flags and a picture of Ho Chi Minh, chanting the name of the North Vietnamese leader. Before they had reached their destination, they were stopped by police. When the students were unable to show a permit for the demonstration and refused to dissolve immediately, they were taken into custody. Though the preliminary proceedings against the students were stopped just a short time later, the arrests stirred up a good deal of resentment within the leftist student groups.<sup>68</sup>

The resentment over the dissolved protest action coupled with lingering bad feelings between most of the leftist students and the West German president/honorary senator of the University of Bonn Heinrich Lübke led to the next episode of early February and the involvement of the rector. Lübke's political affiliation (CDU) and role in the *Fall Faßbinder* had

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<sup>67</sup> "Rektor: Terrorwelle hat Bonn erreicht," *Bonner Rundschau* 13 Feb 1968.

<sup>68</sup> Bothien 40.

marked him as a target for the leftist student groups. Over the past two years he had faced accusations, stemming chiefly from East German sources, of benefiting from the use of slave labor during the Third Reich and even supervising the construction of barracks for concentration camps. Though the charges had been summarily dismissed as propaganda in West Germany, they were revived in early 1968, when the pictorial magazine *Stern* featured a handwriting analysis that supported the authenticity of the documents produced as evidence by East Germany.<sup>69</sup>

The Bonn SDS, planning an anti-fascism week to mark the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nazis' seizure of power, seized upon the opportunity and wrote to the rector, requesting both the removal of Lübke's honorary senate seat and an appointment to discuss the matter with the rector in person. After the passage of a week with no reply from the rector, the SDS attempted to contact him by telephone on February 1, 1968. Schneemelcher's secretary informed the SDS representatives that the rector was ill, but consented to scheduling an appointment with the rector for February 6, which the rector himself would have to confirm. The following day, the rector cancelled the appointment and announced that he would only discuss political matters with AStA. The SDS continued to press for an appointment by telephone and letter exchange, until the morning of February 6, at the time originally scheduled for their appointment with the rector. The rector was not in his office, and the secretary called in the university chancellor to deal with the 20 or so SDS members now attempting to enter the rector's office. The chancellor berated the students for their conduct and informed them that a written invitation had already been extended by the rector for a conversation the next afternoon with representatives of the political student groups and the incoming and outgoing AStA leadership. The students accepted the invitation and

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<sup>69</sup> Bothien 20-22.

Lars-Broder Keil, "Heinrich Lübke und die Staatssicherheit," *Die Welt Online* 12 May 2007, 2 Feb 2009  
 <[http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article862432/Heinrich\\_Luebke\\_und\\_die\\_Staatssicherheit.html](http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article862432/Heinrich_Luebke_und_die_Staatssicherheit.html)>.

left the office peacefully, though it was discovered shortly thereafter that one of them had used the time to deface the university's book of honor.<sup>70</sup>

The next morning, as the defacement became public knowledge and the SDS began circulating a flier urging students to assemble outside the rector's office during the meeting, the rector formally rescinded the invitation to the SDS representative. When the representatives of the LSD and SHB appeared at the rector's wing a few minutes late, they too were shut out from the meeting. The crowd outside the rector's office grew swiftly, with SDS representatives heckling through megaphones and police standing guard by the locked doors to the rector's wing. Even after Schon and Pörtner appeared to announce the results of the meeting – that the rector would not comment on the Lübke matter until an official investigation was concluded – the students remained, moving into sit-in mode. Attempts by police to clear the floor resulted in the confiscation of 36 students' identification for further disciplinary action by the university, as well as 40 arrests. After the appearance of graffiti on the main building of the university overnight, 100 policemen were called in to stand guard.<sup>71</sup>

The conflict between rector and students, with the added insult of police action against ostensibly peaceful protesters, quickly eclipsed the Lübke matter. The following week, after a series of frenzied senate meetings in which the closure of the university for the remaining weeks of the fall/winter semester was briefly considered, the rector issued his official commentary on the conflict in the form of a flier titled, "The wave of terror has reached Bonn." After the eye-catching title, the flier continued with, "For 14 days we have all experienced, that small groups terrorize the university senate and rector with the threat of violence." On the same day, RCDS

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<sup>70</sup> Bothien 21-22.

"Radikale wollten Rektorat stürmen," General-Anzeiger 8 Feb 1968.

<sup>71</sup> Bothien 22-24.

"Radikale wollten Rektorat stürmen."

"Wird die Bonner Uni geschlossen?" Express 9 Feb 1968.

leader Jürgen Rosorius resigned his post of speaker of the student parliament, explaining that the “worsening situation” at the university due to the “provocative behavior of the Bonn SDS and its radical leftist like-minded organizations” made it impossible for him to retain the political neutrality required of his position.<sup>72</sup>

Though many students expressed a degree of solidarity with the protesters, chiefly due to the continued unpopularity of police intervention after the Ohnesorg shooting, the sit-in at the rector’s office ultimately proved detrimental to the radicals. The most recent incident raised several issues for debate among non-radical reformists, including the importance of freedom of assembly to university democratization. However, the chaos of the incident and the manner in which it displaced attention that ought to have been focused on the very real questions concerning Lübke’s wartime past once again emphasized the inability of the radicals to participate in a productive discussion on *Hochschulreform*. The next few months, up to the beginning of the fall/winter semester of 1968, saw a number of sit-ins. Meanwhile, the actual progress made in reform during that period made it clear that the path of the radical leftists had completely diverged from that of the moderate reformists.

On April 11, 1968, Holy Thursday in the Pascal Week, Rudi Dutschke, the prominent student radical and SDS leader from the FU Berlin, was shot several times by a young rightwing radical. Doctors managed to save Dutschke’s life and remove two bullets from his skull, but the repercussions of the attack on the student leader quickly spread across West Germany. In several German cities, the resulting student protests led to violent encounters with the police. However, the situation in Bonn did not escalate in such a manner and even offered a glimmer of hope for future cooperation. With the Dutschke assassination attempt following on the heels of the Martin

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<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

“Rektor: Terrorwelle hat Bonn erreicht.”

“Rosorius trat zurück,” General-Anzeiger 13 Feb 1968.

Luther King, Jr. assassination, the protest leaders in Bonn stressed a nonviolent approach. On April 16, the first day of the spring/summer semester, nearly a thousand students marched peacefully. The only scuffle noted in the course of the day occurred over whose turn it was to use the podium.<sup>73</sup>

Still, the commitment to nonviolence voiced by the SDS and other leftist groups in the Dutschke protests did not eliminate further disorderly political demonstrations. On April 20, 1968, the eve of the first anniversary of the military putsch in Greece, SG representative and other leftist students began distributing fliers to Orthodox Greeks exiting Easter services. The situation escalated into a brawl, requiring massive police intervention. Though opposition to the Greek military regime was not a controversial position in West Germany, and had even been supported by 40 Bonn professors and hundreds of students in a February 1968 petition, the raucous nature of the encounter between students and Greek churchgoers did not reflect well on those students involved.<sup>74</sup>

Though the Dutschke assassination attempt had briefly restored the SDS to prominence on the Bonn campus and in the world of student politics, the members of the Bonn SDS quickly returned to their extraparliamentary activities with a focus on national politics. The organization remained busy through the month of May with its involvement in the protests against the *Notstandsgesetze* (Emergency Laws), a controversial set of bills which provided additional powers to the federal government in times of crisis. The *Notstandsgesetze* had numerous opponents and stood as the main issue of the extraparliamentary opposition at the time. The SDS took a leadership role in organizing the opposition for a massive protest on the day the bills were

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<sup>73</sup> David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) 486-7. Bothien 53-4.

"Erhitzter Aufstand blieb aus," *Bonner Rundschau* 17 Apr 1968.

<sup>74</sup> Bothien 41.

"Studentenkrawalle vor der Kirche," *Bonner Rundschau* 22 Apr 1968.

to be voted on by the *Bundestag* in Bonn. The Bonn branch proudly advertised the capital city's university as "Agitation Center Number One," and invested a great deal of time and resources into organizing convergence of various groups marching in protest on the day of the vote. Many student organizations participated in the march, which totaled over 50,000 participants, but the leadership role of the leftist student groups was evident. After the daytime demonstrations, the Bonn SDS leader Hannes Heer also succeeded in leading 2000 of the protesting students to the French embassy, for a midnight declaration of solidarity with the protesting students in Paris.<sup>75</sup>

Though the demonstrations represented a triumph for the leftist student groups in their extraparlimentary opposition accomplishments, they came at the expense of the groups' participation in ongoing conflicts within the university. In the world of *Hochschulreform* and university politics, the student parliament, AStA, and leadership of the other student groups were more involved with issues much more relevant to university democratization. The annual election of the rector and deans at the university, for example, was a matter of contention in ongoing debates over student participation in university government. Though student representatives had been added to every college at the end of the previous year, the extent of their involvement had yet to be clarified, especially in regards to the college elections. The language of the current agreement allowed for the student representatives to be present at college meetings concerning student matters, with plenty of room for interpretation of student concern in a variety of matters.

The election of Rudolf Schützeichel to dean of the College of Philosophy in mid-May caused an immediate uproar in the student body, because Schützeichel enjoyed a reputation as a

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<sup>75</sup> Norbert Kozicki, *Aufbruch in NRW: 1968 und die Folgen* (Essen: Klartext, 2008) 45-6, 62-3. Bothien 55-7.  
Ulrich Rosenbaum, "Wir sind stärker geworden," *akut* May/Jun 1968: 9-10.

strong opponent of *Hochschulreform*. The student reformists used the unpopularity of the choice as leverage for demanding a vote in the election of university officials, and began drafting resolutions to that effect. While the student parliament was in session on the afternoon of May 22, the sitting dean of the College of Philosophy convened a meeting of the “upper faculty” (that is, with the exclusion of student representatives and assistants) to confirm the election of Schützeichel. Immediately upon hearing of the session, the student parliament sent its speaker to the college meeting room with a resolution. After he was turned away, on the pretense that the meeting had nothing to do with student affairs, the student parliament disbanded its session and staged an impromptu sit-in before the entrance to the meeting room. By the time the meeting ended, a crowd of students had assembled, and some professors chose to escape through the window rather than cross the peaceful protesters. The conservative-to-moderate parties played a definitive role in the sit-in, reflecting their leadership in *Hochschulreform* and their willingness to move beyond formal petitions in the face of continued authoritarian action by the university. RCDS leaders encountered the window-climbing professors, declaring their frustrations and demanding immediate action towards reform, while *Aktion 68* leaders suggested breaking down the doors to allow the student representatives to take their rightful place at the meeting. The escalation of events in the election controversy, including activism by the unlikeliest parties, reflected not only the increased political engagement of the student body, but also the reverberations of political activism even after the SDS’ retreat.<sup>76</sup>

Various student organizations, under the leadership of AStA and working within the framework of the student parliament, came together to provide a more democratic method of electing the new deans. After the students of the College of Philosophy formally declared the

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<sup>76</sup> Bothien 88.

“Professoren mußten in Bonn durch die Fenster steigen,” *Bonner Rundschau* 26 May 1968.

“Wahlspektakel,” *akut* May/Jun 1968: 5-6.



election of Schützeichel invalid, through a plebiscite conducted on May 27 and 28, AStA supervised the conversion of several university halls into forums for new, open elections. AStA promoted the new elections as legitimate because they allowed for the open nomination of candidates, the public questioning of the candidates on *Hochschulreform* issues, and the inclusion of each college's student representatives in the voting sessions.<sup>77</sup>

The conflict over dean and rector elections continued to the end of the spring/summer semester of 1968, with many sit-ins, go-ins, and teach-ins, conducted with the support of the main student organizations. The unified front on behalf of the students, with many assistants in alliance, proved victorious when the university senate allowed the students and junior faculty a voice in the elections and required the candidates to answer student inquiries. A smaller, symbolic victory followed at the inauguration ceremony for the new rector in October 1968. The faculty appeared in black business suits rather than the traditional robes, and the new rector, Karl-Josef Partsch, used his inaugural address to speak of ongoing debates and initiatives in *Hochschulreform*. He also granted an interview to *akut*, outlining his plans for a phase-by-phase reform program for his term in office. Partsch's proposals addressed the issues of student representation in the colleges as well as the mandates of the organs of student government, and his moderate proposals were realized over the next year. These reforms were far from revolutionary, but provided enough faculty support for *Hochschulreform* to prevent the recurrence of the incidents which had marked the end of Schneemelcher's tenure as rector.<sup>78</sup>

The spring of 1968 was marked by two massive protests in Bonn, which represented significant organizational accomplishments for the Left. However, the subjects of these protests

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<sup>77</sup> "Professoren mußten in Bonn durch die Fenster steigen."

"Studenten fechten Dekanwahl an," General-Anzeiger 28 May 1968.

<sup>78</sup> Bothien 93.

"Interview mit Partsch: AKUT-Gespräch mit dem neuen Rektor," akut 1 Nov 1968: 2.

were removed from the debates which were the most relevant to the students. The beginning of the fall/winter semester signaled the twilight of the radicals' influence at the university. The conservatives and moderates, stirred to greater political engagement by the brief prominence of the radicals and the politically relevant location of their university, reemerged as the representative voices of the student body. However, their interpretation of the political mandate refocused attention on matters pertaining directly to the university, and the conservative instincts of the student body also resurfaced in the conduct of the student government and organizational leaders. Without the engine of radicalism to drive the student side of *Hochschulreform*, the debates settled into an unhurried pattern marked by a return of painstaking deference on the student side and largely unsubstantial concessions on the faculty side. As the leaders of the radical movement at Bonn either backed down from their aggressive stances or graduated into other arenas of activism, they left behind a university system only moderately changed.

## Conclusion

The resurgence of the moderate and conservative elements of the student body seems a rather disappointing end to the chronicle of the student movement in Bonn. To the radicals, efforts at the university ended on a sour note at the end of the decade, with various leftist student groups either shrinking in size and influence or disbanding altogether. The seats vacated by the Left at the negotiating table were quickly filled by moderates and conservatives, who espoused the importance of democratization and reform but also committed themselves to carrying out these debates in an orderly manner. Similar shifts at other West German universities, along with the competition for national focus from a host of issues like the oil crisis, changes in relations with East Germany, and a number of scandals much more appealing to the boulevard press than university debates, spelled the fizzling-out of *Hochschulreform* in the next decade.

Following the trend set by the SDS in the student parliament elections of 1968 and the coordination of the anti-*Notstandsgesetze* protests in May of the same year, many of the remaining leftists in Bonn focused their energies on extraparlimentary opposition. These migrating would-be leaders of the student movement joined a national trend. At the same time, the main arena of protest shifted away from the universities. A handful of frustrated student activists from various West German universities founded the *Rote Armee Fraktion*, which conducted a campaign of domestic terror through much of the 1970s. Still, the criminal participants of the RAF only represented a tiny fraction of the former leftwing members of the student movement. Most of the radicals soon gave up their agitation in favor of thoroughly ordinary careers.<sup>79</sup>

While the university's political exposure due to Bonn's status as West German capital was certainly unique, the history of the student movement in Bonn was highly typical. Exposure

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<sup>79</sup> See Bothien 95-126 for biographies of many of the student leaders and activists of the late 1960s.

to national and international politics aided the galvanization of the students in Bonn and the transition of the radicals to extraparliamentary protest. However, the entrenched provincialism of the region and the conservative attitudes of many of the students prevailed in limiting both the depth and duration of the radicals' influence, just as they had done in Marburg, Tübingen, and several other West German university towns.

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