Chapter 2

Principles of a New Politics

Green politics grew out of deeply felt principles long before there was any thought of forming a party. Among the broad spectrum of citizens who rallied to stop the spread of nuclear reactors, the pollution of rivers, and the death of the forests during the mid-1970s arose an understanding that we are part of nature, not above it, and that all our massive structures of commerce—and life itself—ultimately depend on wise, respectful interaction with our biosphere. Any government or economic system that ignores that principle is ultimately leading humankind into suicide. The more that people perceived the interconnections among principles of ecological wisdom, a truly secure peace, an economy with a future, and a participatory democracy with power channeled directly from the grassroots level, the more they noticed the absence of such ideals among the existing political parties.

The Greens begin their Federal Program by explaining why a new politics is necessary:
The Establishment parties in Bonn behave as if an infinite increase in industrial production were possible on the finite planet Earth. According to their own statements, they are leading us to a hopeless choice between the nuclear state or nuclear war, between Harrisburg or Hiroshima. The worldwide ecological crisis worsens from day to day: natural resources become more scarce; chemical waste dumps are subjects of scandal after scandal; whole species of animals are exterminated; entire varieties of plants become extinct; rivers and oceans change slowly into sewers; and humans verge on spiritual and intellectual decay in the midst of a mature, industrial, consumer society. It is a dismal inheritance we are imposing on future generations.

We represent a total concept, as opposed to the one-dimensional, still-more-production brand of politics. Our policies are guided by long-term visions for the future and are founded on four basic principles: ecology, social responsibility, grassroots democracy, and nonviolence.

The first of the “four pillars,” ecology, has several meanings in Green politics. All of them can be understood within the context of “deep ecology,” a concept that has also informed American ecophilosophy and activism in recent years. Far more than protecting or repairing the status quo, which is generally the goal of environmentalism, deep ecology encompasses the study of nature’s subtle web of interrelated processes and the application of that study to our interactions with nature and among ourselves. The teachings of deep ecology include implications for our politics, our economy, our social structures, our educational system, our healthcare, our cultural expressions, and our spirituality.

Green politics, then, is inherently holistic in theory and practice. It is based on ecological, or “network,” thinking, a term used frequently by the Greens. Ecological thinking also includes the realization that the seemingly rigid structures we perceive in our environment are actually manifestations of underlying processes, of nature’s continual dynamic flux. Interrelatedness and ongoing process are the lessons the Greens take from and apply to the ecosystems surrounding us. They support “soft” energy production (such as solar power) that works with the cycles of the sun, the water, and the wind, and the flow of the rivers. They call for the development of appropriate technology that reflects our interdependence with the Earth. They advocate regenerative agriculture that replenishes the soil and incorporates natural means of pest control. Above all, the Greens demand a halt to our ravaging of natural “resources” and our poisoning of the biosphere through the dumping of toxic wastes, the accumulation of so-called acceptable levels of radiation exposure, and the pollution of the air.

The broader applications of ecological thinking lead to “social ecology,” the perception of societal structures and human interactions as an intricate web of dynamic systems that are simultaneously interrelated parts and complete in themselves. Although Western culture has been dominated for several hundred years by a conceptualization of our bodies, the body politic, and the natural world as hierarchically arranged aggregates of discrete components, that world view is giving way to the systems view, which is supported by the most advanced discoveries of modern science and which is deeply ecological. In its early stages, during the 1940s, systems theory was closely linked with the study of control and regulatory mechanisms of complex machines and electronic systems. During the past decade, however, the focus has shifted to the study of living systems: living organisms, social systems, and ecosystems. The emergent systems view of life was developed by a number of scientists from various disciplines: Ilya Prigogine, Erich Jantsch, Gregory Bateson, Humberto Maturana, and Manfred Eigen, to name but a few.

The systems view involves looking at the world in terms of relationships and integration. Systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units. Whereas for two thousand years most of Western science has concentrated on reducing the world to its basic building blocks, the systems approach emphasizes principles of organization. Examples of living systems abound in nature. Every organism—from the smallest bacterium through the wide range of plants and animals to humans—is an integrated whole and thus a living system. Cells are living systems, and so are the various tissues and organs of the body. The same characteristics of wholeness are exhibited by social systems—such as a family or a community—and by ecosystems that consist of a variety of organisms and inanimate matter in mutual interaction. The specific struc-
tures of all these systems arise from the interactions and interdependencies of their parts. Systemic properties are destroyed when a system is dissected, either physically or theoretically, into isolated elements. Although we can discern individual parts in any system, the nature of the whole is always different from the mere sum of its parts.

The principles of systems theory were expressed in numerous conversations we had with the Greens and in much of their printed material, yet they use terms other than "systems thinking" to express these concepts. We asked Manon Maren-Grisebach, a philosophy professor and one of the three speakers of the Green party from 1981 through 1983, about this paradox. Maren-Grisebach, a very self-assured blonde woman with a quick intellect and warm humor, has written a book on Green political theory, *Philosophie der Grünen* (Philosophy of the Greens, Olzog Verlag, 1982). In it she asserts that ecology is the secure and scientifically sound foundation for the entire Green philosophy. She explained their preference for the terms "network science" and "network thinking" rather than "systems thinking":

We who have grown up with the history of philosophy [which is more influential in European thought than American] have a certain aversion to the connotations of "system thinking" because often in the course of the history of ideas "system" stood for something that was closed, that was a self-contained doctrine and thus was quite different from a living object. The great philosophers up to and including Hegel were expected to produce a philosophical system, which meant something finished, something closed. Only since the nineteenth century have we begun to connect "system" with living phenomena. Of course, it must be added that living systems are technically open and are capable of evolutionary process.

We asked her about the political implications of multileveled order in nature, an order of systems within systems, integrating nonorganic materials as well into living systems:

Integrated doesn't mean primary or secondary. Green politics must expose the tendencies to set up hierarchies. Some of us see social or ecological or economic issues as primary. Then arguments follow. I always try to intercede immediately and say, "Why don't you let yourselves be guided by the meaning of ecology, that every-

thing is interwoven, that there is no such thing as a first or a second?"

The emphasis on relations and interconnections—in Gregory Bateson's words, "the pattern which connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose and all four of them to me"—is the foundation of Green thought and being, whether it is called grassroots democracy or something else. This consciousness is simply there in the Greens.

That emphasis on relationships and interconnections is the basis of the Greens' ecological work that focuses specifically on environmental protection. Their programs in this area call for humans to find our place in the ecosystems, as their Federal Program states:

We define ecological politics as those measures that understand human beings and our environment as being part of nature. Human life, too, is embedded in the life cycles of the ecosystems; we interfere with our actions and this, in turn, acts back on us. We must not destroy the stability of the ecosystems. In particular, ecological politics presents an all-encompassing rejection of an economy of exploitation and plundering of natural resources and raw materials, as well as the destructive intervention into the cycles of nature's household.

The Greens' proposals for addressing many of West Germany's ecological crises are believed to have brought them most of their votes in the federal election of March 1983. Their major focus during that campaign was immediate action to lessen and then halt the formation of acid rain, which has caused the rapidly escalating "death of the forests" in nearly all parts of West Germany but especially in the Black Forest and near the Czech and East German borders. Since the problem of acid rain transcends borders (both German republics, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, and Poland are major exporters, mainly to Scandinavia and Austria), the Greens call for international cooperative actions. In May 1983, the Green parliamentarian Wolfgang Ehmke presented a four-stage proposal in the Bundestag for the reduction of sulphur dioxide emissions. The gradual plan, which would reduce all levels by the year 2000 to 1.9 percent of what they were in 1983, was not approved. However, a partial improvement in the situation is that lead-free gasoline
is now widely available in West Germany. Many Green groups at the local level monitor the emission levels of factories to see whether they are complying with federal law, and some Greens have successfully initiated local ordinances in this area. For example, a Green proposal in the city council of Nuremberg resulted in that city’s becoming the first in West Germany to restrict the emission levels for its municipal power plant. Not only were nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide emissions almost eliminated, but a procedure was installed whereby sulfur dioxide is processed into nontoxic gypsum and sold to the housing industry.

The Green parliamentarians, particularly the attorney Otto Schily, also formally questioned the legality of military deposits of chemical weapons at sites throughout the country. Around the time the Greens were raising this issue in the Bundestag, a scandal broke concerning the disappearance of dozens of Italian barrels of dioxin, which is extremely toxic. It was the Greens who quickly demanded a federal investigation and measures to control the transport of such dangerous substances.

The Greens also called for protection of farmers. Antje Vollmer, a Green parliamentarian who holds a doctorate in theology as well as agriculture, reminded the Bundestag that “Farmers are the primary environmentalists.” She proposed a revision of federal policy that would support small farmers and organic agriculture, reversing the trend toward automated, industrialized farms that produce food of low nutritional value, destroy the ecosystems, and pollute the air and water with noxious chemicals.

At all levels of the party, the Greens address a multitude of ecological issues, such as the effects of the considerable traffic problems in West Germany. They also encourage ecological planning for towns and individual residences. At the federal level, the party awarded partial funding to a model ecological village (Ökodorf) now in the planning stage. (Several existing “eco-houses and -villages” in West Germany were modeled after the Integral Urban House in Berkeley.) In its ecological work, the Green party works with alternative institutes such as the Öko-Institut in Freiburg and others that comprise the Association of Ecological Research Institutes (AGÖF).

Although the Greens agree that the Federal Environmental Agency, in Berlin, should be strengthened, they are split over the idea of creating a Ministry for the Environment. Some Greens maintain that such a top-level government agency is necessary to develop effective positive programs as well as halting the damage. Other Greens are horrified at the thought of swelling the federal bureaucracy in the name of Green solutions.

The second of the four pillars, “social responsibility,” is understood by most Greens to mean social justice and an assurance that the poor and the working class will not get hurt by programs to restructure the economy and our consumer society ecologically. Social responsibility began in Germany with the Bismarck government, although the concepts were paternalistic. After World War I there was a great deal of fear that the Russian revolution might spread, so the Social Democrats pushed through social legislation to avoid a more radical solution to the postwar problems. The concept of a social contract between the communities, the unions, and industry was developed. Of course, that alliance was insufficient to stop the rise of Hitler’s National Socialist Party, which co-opted many of the social themes. In contemporary West Germany the concept of “social” (sozial) is behind the practice of companies offering workers benefits or arrangements that do not exist in the United States. It also accounts for a law that all stores and businesses, except restaurants, must close at six o’clock every weekday evening, at two o’clock on Saturday, and all day Sunday so that workers can be at home with their families.

The radical-left Greens, however, read sozial as a codeword for socialism, that is, democratic Marxism. Since that political model is specifically not what the visionary, liberal, and conservative Greens have in mind, a battle developed at the preliminary convention in Offenbach in November 1979 over establishing the basic principles. The majority of the assembly wanted the new party to stand for possibilities other than either socialism or the capitalist status quo. The radical-left contingent, on the other hand, insisted on not only including socialism but also on excluding nonviolence as a guiding principle, for reasons we
discuss later in this chapter. Various groups shouted their proposals on issues and principles, and it seemed increasingly certain as the frustrating convention dragged on that a party would not be formed.

The breakthrough was achieved by August Haussleiter, who was then seventy-four years old. He recalled for us that someone from Berlin, whose name he never knew, appeared behind him and gave him the final push necessary to shape the chaos into the four pillars of the Green Party:

I myself had been almost desperate with the situation because there were 3,000 people screaming their own positions in the convention hall. This person kept saying, "Don't give up. Don't give up. They're getting tired." Although agreement seemed impossible, I took a piece of paper and wrote four [in German] words on it: ecology, social responsibility, grassroots democracy, and nonviolence. Then I called together Gruhl [a leader of the conservatives] and Reents [a leader of the radical left] in the room where the journalists were and said, "Sign." We then went back into the convention hall and announced, "We have a program!"

So one of the four pillars, like so much else in the Green Party, has a paradoxical character: it means something different in different parts of the party. Yet the Greens have worked together to propose more legislation to protect the social and civil rights of women and minorities, such as the four million foreign "guest workers" in West Germany, than either of the major parties has ever done. All factions of the party concur that social (which in Germany always includes economic) and ecological issues are inherently linked, as they state in their Federal Program: "The ecological and social spheres belong inseparably together: the economy of nature is linked to the economy of humans for better or worse."

The third pillar, grassroots democracy, was inspired by the West German citizens' movements throughout the 1970s, which in turn were influenced by the civil rights, ecology, consumer, and other movements in the United States. The West German system of government, like our own, is a representative democracy, which means that the people elect representatives to run the party and the government. Direct, or participatory, democracy locates a greater amount of power and control with the local groups, the grassroots (die Basis). This orientation informs the structure of the Green party and is expressed in their Federal Program:

Grassroots-democratic politics means an increased realization of decentralized, direct democracy. We start from the belief that the decisions at the grassroots level must, in principle, be given priority. We grant far-reaching powers of autonomy and self-administration to decentralized, manageable grassroots units.

We have decided to create a new type of party structure, one founded on the inseparable concepts of grassroots democracy and decentralization. We believe that a party lacking this type of structure would be ill-suited to support convincingly an ecological policy in the framework of parliamentary democracy.

An organization structured with participatory democracy sets its basic policy according to the voting at large assemblies. It allows individuals access to all party officials, and it eschews hierarchical structure. Instead of allowing power to be concentrated in a few people who remain at the top of a hierarchy for years, such groups generally elect steering committees, usually with staggered terms of about two years. As we discuss in Appendix A, Green party programs may be compiled and edited by small working groups, but the content is determined directly by proposals and revisions from the grassroots.

One of the central functions of the Green party is to be the voice of the citizens' movements in the town councils, county assemblies, state legislatures, and national parliaments and to relay privileged information from those bodies to the grassroots movements. Although the Greens do not allow dual membership with other parties, most Green party members are also actively involved with one or more of the citizens' movements, that is, the peace, ecology, feminist, or anti-nuclear-power movements.

We were told that if we wanted to see a dynamic Green at work on all those issues and more, we should not miss meeting Emilie Meyer, a Green member of the city council in Freiburg. Freiburg is a charming medieval town near the Black Forest, with mosaic sidewalks, a Gothic church, and an inner city without cars. Meyer is a short, earthy farmer's daughter—and a
grandmother—whose intelligence and warm, energetic style reminded us of Grace Paley in the American peace movement. The day we arrived in Freiburg Meyer had just taken part in a peace action that was filmed for a television documentary. The protesters brought attention to the government’s preparation for a catastrophe of massive proportions, such as a nuclear war would cause: in a mountainside nearby, the government had constructed a repository of microfilm records of “cultural treasures,” for example, the plans of the Cologne cathedral. In the demonstration, ninety women and ten men wore pins with the official symbol for such treasures. They marched with funeral songs and drumming, carrying plaster-cast “death masks” of themselves on black cloth, which they requested be put into the repository saying, “We, too, should be saved. We are cultural treasures.” (When the documentary film was televised, West German citizens were outraged not only that the government was planning for a nuclear holocaust but also that it had stupidly selected mountains of government records to save and very little culture. “Not a single line from Goethe, Schiller, or Hölderlin!” a woman in Munich told us indignantly.)

The Greens are clearly lucky to have Meyer, who was the highest vote-winner among their four members of the city council, because she attracts voters among both the conservative farmers and the radical Green university students and faculty in Freiburg. She candidly explained to us that grassroots democracy puts a burden on conscientious elected officials because the citizens’ movements expect a great deal of service from the council members but do not always do sufficient work themselves. “Often they have opinions,” she told us, “but are not well informed. The Basis does not work as hard as is necessary for me to be effective for them on the city council.” Still, Meyer makes all her “free” time available to the citizens’ groups. Her husband, Gert, is retired and misses her in the evenings but is very proud of her political leadership.

Thomas Schaller, a city planner who is a Green member of the city council in Stuttgart, also spoke of the practical difficulties one encounters as a conduit between the citizens’ movements and the legislative bodies: “Each week council members receive a large packet of papers about issues to be decided at the coming meeting, but the citizens’ movements usually cannot decide on issues that quickly, sometimes because of poor organization.” He feels that working within institutions but wanting to change them is “like walking on a knife.” Schaller spends a good deal of his time offering practical assistance to local citizens’ groups. He helps them frame arguments, organize the community, set achievable goals in small steps, find an attorney, connect with the local press, and realize they are as important as the other people in the news. He stresses that the Greens are fighting to secure policy-making power rather than just consulting roles for the citizens’ groups.

The Greens, in serving as the political voice of the citizens’ movements, know that many activists will never join the Green party, or any other, because a particularly strong antipathy toward political parties exists in West Germany. Older people feel the Nazi party tricked them in their youth with a hidden agenda, while young people point to the failure of the “march through the institutions” in the early 1970s. In addition, the West German electoral system, which we discuss in Chapter 6, allows the parties to appoint half the legislators in the Bundestag and the state legislatures to the long electoral lists rather than through popular vote. Hence, obedience to a party can keep one in a high-paying parliamentary job for years with little direct responsibility to the electorate. The voter turnout is very high in West German elections—typically 89 percent of eligible voters, compared to the 52 percent typical of recent national elections in the United States—but pollsters have discovered that most West German citizens vote only because it is a duty in a democracy, not because they feel their vote has any effect on the politicians or the government.

The Green definition of their Basis, or grassroots constituency, includes nonmembers who work with and support the party. Some local chapters allow nonmembers to vote at party meetings, and in Hesse even the Green state legislators have included nonmembers. The Green party is said to operate with one leg inside the legislative bodies and one inside the citizens’ movements, which Roland Vogt calls the “emergency brakes” of a runaway industrial society. The party’s close ties to the citizens’ movements are demonstrated in many ways, of which the most
impressive may be that the Green party channels a good deal of its money directly to activists’ projects through its foundation, *Öko-Fond*.

*Öko-Fond* is administered entirely at the state level, although funds are derived from national membership dues and from a portion (usually about half) of the monthly salary of the parliamentarians in the Bundestag as well as from those of state legislators. The first *Öko-Fond* was established in Lower Saxony in 1980. In 1983 it received about 200,000 DM ($80,000) from the “extra” half of the Bundestag salaries and 20,000 DM ($8,000) from the “surplus” in the salaries of their Green state legislators. Typical of the 140 projects *Öko-Fond* has supported so far are publicity costs for several protest actions; chemical tests of emission levels; wheelchair access to the office of a peace group; apprenticeships in carpentry, masonry, and roofing for unemployed young people; the deficit from a conference on the problems faced by Gypsies; a film about peace; court costs and legal fees for many groups’ lawsuits; an energy-generating windmill; a prison newspaper; a monthly alternative newspaper; a book on the destruction of a moor through the practices of agribusiness; and collectively owned businesses such as an alternative bookshop, a theater group, and a natural foods store. *Öko-Fond* in other states has also funded peace camps and shelters for battered women.

Most state branches of *Öko-Fond* are administered by a board of five people, at least two of whom—and more often three—are activists from the citizens’ movements who are not members of the Green party. In Lower Saxony they meet for a full day once a month to decide on new funding and discuss ongoing projects, each of which is monitored in between the meetings by a contact person on the board. To any projects that will earn income *Öko-Fond* will usually give an interest-free loan to be paid back in one to three years. This is called a “subsidy” or “allowance” to avoid violating laws concerning political parties. Nearly all grants and loans are under 10,000 DM ($4,000), and most are from 1,000 ($400) to 3,000 DM ($1,200). Sylvia Müller of the *Öko-Fond* board in Lower Saxony told us of a recurring problem: many projects, especially the larger ones, default on the loans.

One of the most problematic aspects of grassroots democracy for the Greens has been their introduction of the rotation principle. In order to diffuse the concentration of power, the Greens adopted from the citizens’ movements the practice of rotating officials after a certain period, usually two years. Rotation has become the expected practice both at the state and the federal level of the party. It is not practiced in city councils, where the Greens feel the chances for accumulating and abusing power are minimal.

What the early enthusiasts of rotation did not foresee was that applying it to electoral politics would be quite a bit more complicated than to steering committees within the citizens’ movements. In West Germany’s electoral system, as we discuss in Chapter 6, each party runs a list of candidates for the number of seats they anticipate winning in a legislative body. Seats are awarded according to the overall percentage of the vote for the party. The Greens run at least twice as many names as the number of seats they expect to receive so that they have a crew of successors ready to rotate in. For example, there are currently twenty-eight members of the Green *Fraktion* in the Bundestag—actually twenty-seven Greens plus one man from the Alternative List in Berlin. Their twenty-eight successors are called *Nachrücker*. Because there is no provision for such positions in German law, the Green party hires the successors as legislative assistants. Some people feared that there might be a legal challenge to rotation since the top vote-winners on the electoral list are supposed to hold office for four years, but the legislators from the Alternative List in Berlin rotated in May 1983 without incident.

The rotation principle was the subject of spirited debate nearly everywhere we went in West Germany. The arguments in favor of it run as follows. Because a person’s thinking is affected by the way she or he lives, eight, or even four, years in the Bundestag—or a state legislature—machine would be very destructive. The Greens do not want their legislators to become insular like the Establishment politicians, who are said to forget what they said three days earlier. Long terms would concentrate information and power, hence are in opposition to grassroots ideals. The Hitler era demonstrated the danger of empowering
charismatic leaders. The Greens should pursue the ideal of a network of people without functionaries who are all involved in governing their society.

Against rotation, we heard the following arguments. The Greens present new and often radical ideas, which the public is more likely to accept from legislators who have become familiar and have established some personal credibility over time. For the Greens to accomplish their political purposes, they must know just how far the opposition politicians can be pushed before they shut down, and this comes only with experience. It takes almost a full year for a new legislator to learn the ropes, and the party’s efficiency suffers if this beginner phase must be repeated every other year. Rotation causes the Greens to lose expertise, seniority, and influence—as well as some of their most accomplished public speakers. The Nachrücker have become a new layer of bureaucracy; many have difficulty finding a useful function in their semiofficial role and so become depressed or unnecessarily competitive with the parliamentarians they are meant to assist.

A compromise was suggested by August Hausseleiter and passed by the national assembly of the party at Sindelfingen in January 1983: each state party may decide whether any of its parliamentarians in the Bundestag is exceptional in some way and should have his or her rotation voted on, being permitted to remain if at least 70 percent of a state assembly approves. Roland Vogt, a sage observer of the dynamics within the Bundestag Fraktion, predicted what will transpire in March 1985, halfway through this first term: “Some people will be glad to leave the pressure and go home, some people will rotate on principle, some people will be dragged out kicking and screaming, and some people will simply not rotate.”

Most of the Greens we spoke with in various states said they would be happy with a rule limiting legislators to one four-year term, rather than one-half of a term, and predicted that such a compromise will come to pass. The problem of electing and gainfully employing the Nachrücker would be eliminated, but the problem of continuity would still go unaddressed, we pointed out. Every four years an entirely new slate of legislators would start from scratch because the terms are not staggered, as they are in the American system. No one we spoke with had a remedy for that difficulty.

The fourth pillar, nonviolence, means to the Greens the cessation of both personal violence and “structural violence,” that is, violence and oppression imposed by the state and by institutions. For these reasons the Greens support the concept of self-determination for individuals and groups. They also advocate peace education in the schools, which would teach nonviolent means of conflict resolution and show children that the cult of the soldier is a cultural, not natural, condition. As we discuss in Chapter 5, the Greens also call for an end to the violence and oppression toward women, children, and minority groups so common in patriarchal societies. They want to develop a nonexploitative economic system in which employee-owned-and-controlled businesses replace huge operations dictated by the state or corporate interests. They want to transform our violent relationship with nature into one of balance and respect. Petra Kelly expresses the centrality of this principle when she says, “Nonviolence is the essential ingredient in an ecological society.”

Although most of the Greens emphatically embrace the principle of nonviolence, they also realize that its application is often problematic. Roland Vogt pointed out one of the areas of conflicting values:

What we have not yet accomplished is to say how we show ourselves to be nonviolent at the moment when we participate in governmental functions, because the state is itself an institution of violence. For example, how will a Green city council act against people who don’t pay their rent, although they really could because they receive welfare or because they earn enough. The normal course is warning, warning, eviction notice, and then eviction by force and by police. We haven’t solved this. That is, there are still no thought-out concepts of how one can reconcile the demands of social responsibility with the demands of nonviolence.

The Greens extend their principle of nonviolence to their active resistance against the most massive and potentially deadly manifestation of structural violence: the nuclear arms race promoted by the military-industrial complex and the government. In their national headquarters in Bonn the Greens have a poster
of Gandhi’s adage “There is no way to peace; peace is the way” and one of Thoreau from The Thoreau Quarterly, published by the University of Minnesota. In their Peace Manifesto the Greens explain their tactics by citing Thoreau:

Those who embrace nonviolent civil disobedience, committing breaches of law on the grounds of conscience, are prepared to suffer violence or punishment themselves rather than inflict violence or injustice on others or share responsibility for such acts by remaining passive. “If, however, the law is so promulgated that it of necessity makes you an agent of injustice against another, then I say to you: Break the law.”

Perhaps the Greens’ most impressive spokesperson for nonviolent resistance to militarism in the nuclear age is Gert Bastian, a former general in the West German army. Bastian is a handsome and charming, silver-haired man of sixty who resigned his commission one month after the “double-track decision” of December 1979 to negotiate in Geneva but deploy the Pershing II and cruise missiles if those negotiations failed. He concluded:

The ethical justification for a military force—that those people are protecting and defending what they love—is lost in the nuclear age because nothing can be protected in a nuclear war. In fact, military service in such circumstances becomes undignified and is a threat to everyone. Abandoning the military, then, becomes a decision of reason and is the only morally justifiable course.

Since leaving the army and joining the Green party—and later being elected to the Bundestag as a Green parliamentarian—Bastian has received a large number of angry, sometimes life-threatening letters from German men. We suggested that his action threatened the connection between manhood and actual or potential violence on which many men’s identity rests (or totters). He agreed that this is often the case, but told us of the network of like-minded military men, mostly retired NATO generals, that has developed since his entering the Greens. In September 1983, when he spoke at the National War College in Washington, D.C., he held up a poster that showed the signatures of fifteen generals opposing deployment of the new missiles in Europe, and the audience of 280 generals and colonels applauded. The college witnessed a reversal of traditional roles that day, as a woman, Petra Kelly, presented the military and political positions and a man, Bastian, related his personal story. Bastian told of having been used in his youth by the Nazi government, who convinced young men to join the army because Germany had been attacked by aggressive nations. Later, when he learned that Germany in every case had been the aggressor, he was shaken by the betrayal. Because young people can be so easily misled and used, Bastian maintains, it is the duty of older people with their wiser perspective to expose the systems of violence, oppression, and mass murder. His message and Kelly’s were received with genuine appreciation and questions about the moral force of Green politics that far exceeded the depth of previous questions from State Department personnel.

Bastian is one of the chief architects of the Greens’ program for a secure alternative to militarism, and he has taken part in the front lines of numerous peace demonstrations. He and the majority of Greens strongly endorse — and live — the concept of active, nonviolent resistance. However, the Group-Z members of the party have never been fully supportive of that principle. They view it as merely a “moralistic” tactic that should be abandoned in favor of escalating resistance if it does not prove sufficiently effective. Petra Kelly’s account of the leftists’ attitude on this issue was similar to what we had heard from many other Greens:

They do not understand that nonviolent action is an extremely subversive force. They think it’s harmless, is a form of obedience, and changes nothing, that it’s like begging from the state. “It’s just a tactic, a tool,” they say. To them everything is to be used. But there are some things you should never misuse— or even use. They are simply integral. Nonviolence cannot be compromised.

We asked Jurgen Reents, a member of the Bundestag from Hamburg, where he is an associate of Group Z within the Greens, whether the radical left might not have a romantic attachment to the vision of armed struggle in the streets since they are steeped in the Marxist prediction that that is how change will occur. He smiled and replied, “I don’t believe this problem can be approached with such a psychological explanation, that we are romantic enthusiasts of street fighting. On the same level, I could talk about the romanticism of nonviolent transformation of society.”
Reents is a tall, attractive man with an intensity and air of personal power that has served him well in politics. His responses on the subject of nonviolence, as well as many other topics, are representative of the radical-left Greens with whom we spoke. For instance, we asked him about the strategy the peace movement should use if it wishes to remain a broad-based, popular force. Other Greens had pointed out the irony involved when the radical left, who pride themselves on being "objective," fail to perceive objectively that there is a narrow path the peace movement must walk between active nonviolent resistance and violent action, which would alienate a large portion of the movement plus its nonactive supporters in the general public. Reents responded:

I do not believe that we can win the struggle against deployment by militant resistance. I agree that it can be prevented only politically, as you say, by mobilizing broader and broader parts of the population, which will increase the political costs of deployment to such an extent that it finally becomes impossible. My critique of those who have turned nonviolence into an absolute, inviolable ideology is that it leads to martyrdom, which makes me fear that one will remain morally clean in the end but politically without success.

I, too, participate in sit-ins. We sit down and we are carried away by the police. But someday the situation will arise where we will have to demonstrate that we refuse to be carried away. The question is: when will we have that political force? At present we don't, but this cannot be turned into an argument for absolute nonviolence.

Any movement that had gained enough "political force" to win widespread public support for violent resistance against the police would also by then have won seats in the legislative bodies to be achieving its goals nonviolently. Moreover, we objected, violent resistance at any time in the foreseeable future would cause hundreds of thousands of citizens to drop out of the peace movement. "For me," Reents replied, "this is a matter of changing consciousness. The majority of the population and the majority of the peace movement are currently adherents of absolute nonviolence. But to say 'I won't resist the police; I am just a martyr' is not the expression of supreme political consciousness."

He further argued that many successful, violent revolutions followed a period of nonviolent actions, which had failed. However, the historical survey by the American defense analyst Gene Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action (Porter Sargent, 1973), demonstrates that numerous nonviolent struggles were completely successful without escalating to violence. Moreover, we were reminded of the recently coined slogan in certain new-politics groups in the United States: "What you get is how you do it." Process, that is, is directly related to the end result. "Out of violent action almost never comes a nonviolent society. We can practically guarantee that violence will breed more of itself," we observed to Reents. "I cannot deny that critique," Reents conceded. "What you say is right, and it is an argument of great moral integrity. But I do not believe that it can be used to support social resistance when it reaches its limits and the question arises: shall we give up? When they won't let us blockade the gates any longer, what shall we do then?" This is precisely the dilemma that plagued the West German peace movement throughout 1983, although many of the advocates of nonviolent resistance argued that such a course cannot be dismissed as "merely moralistic" since it is also absolutely rational (that is, history shows that violence breeds violence—structural as well as personal—so we must find another way to effect change, especially in the nuclear age). For most members of the Greens the choice was clear, as Petra Kelly often expresses with a citation from Martin Luther King: "We no longer have a choice between violence and nonviolence. The choice is either nonviolence or nonexistence."

Some Greens feel that the principle of decentralization should have been a fifth pillar, as it is essential to Green politics. All Green proposals are built on the conviction that people must have more direct control over the complex interplay of social, ecological, economic, and political forces. They maintain that overbureaucratization and the hierarchical structure of government thwart the initiative of citizens. Moreover, the Greens state that the impenetrability behind which various economic and political interests hide has become a danger to democracy. They oppose the strong tendencies in industrialized nations toward authoritarian measures, such as surveillance and censorship of books. To facilitate greater participation by citizens, the Greens
advocate decentralizing and simplifying administrative units with a greater share of government revenues going to states, regions, counties, towns, and neighborhoods. The Greens, then, are the vanguard in West Germany of the movement to reclaim power from the centralized state. This same impulse is finding expression in the United States.

The Greens advocate not only smaller units of domestic government but also smaller countries, which they refer to as regions. They believe the nation-state is inherently dangerous because the enormous centralization of power is inevitably used for economic competition, large-scale exploitation, and massive wars. Many Greens mentioned Max Weber's observation that the state is the seat of legitimized violence. They argue that smaller units of population would result in a safer world on all counts, and they suggest that cultural and ecological boundaries could determine the regions. There are many such regions in Europe, usually determined by a shared dialect. They often cross national borders, such as Friesland (West Germany and The Netherlands), Flanders (Belgium and France), Alsace-Lorraine (West Germany and France), and Dreyeckland (West Germany, France, and Switzerland).*

The increase in regional consciousness in Dreyeckland is an example of the entwining of the issues and actions that inform Green politics. In the early 1970s the people of the region—who speak Allemannisch as well as German or French—discovered that the national governments had devised a plan to make the entire Rhine Valley an industrialized zone from Basel to Rotterdam. In 1972 the Allemannen from the German side of the Rhine crossed the river to occupy the site of a car battery plant that would have produced lead wastes—and was funded with German capital. The following year the Allemannen from France and Switzerland crossed the river to join the long occupation of the two sites, first Breisach and then Wyhl, proposed for a nuclear reactor in the Black Forest area. The Friendship House built by the protesters at Wyhl hosted programs on numerous political issues and highlighted their interconnections for activists who came from all parts of Germany. The local people strengthened their transnational bonds and established an underground radio station, Radio Dreyeckland, which now broadcasts twice a week—in Allemannisch, of course. They also print posters for antinuclear demonstrations and other actions in Allemannisch, and they speak once again of their long history of resisting government oppression by the princes. Every year on Pentecost Sunday the people of Dreyeckland hold a bicycle race that crosses the bridges linking the Swiss, French, and German sections of their region; at the climax of the race they throw the flags of all three nations into the Rhine.

The opposition that the Allemannen feel toward intrusive, damaging projects masterminded by politicians and financiers in distant capitals is representative of localist sentiments all over the world. Although the Allemannen themselves do not speak of secession, many other regional peoples do demand independence. In fact, the central government of nearly every major nation today is battling the open rebellion, or simmering discontent, of at least one regional group. The Greens advocate a nonaligned "Europe of the regions" and hope that the model would eventually be adopted by the entire northern hemisphere as well as the Third World. They admire the federal system of the United States, although they strongly oppose a "United Europe" that would become a third military power and would continue the forced exploitation of the Third World. They favor cooperative economic exchanges and only minimum coordination, such as would be necessary for transportation systems. The eco-decentralist model in Green politics for all economic, social, and political structures is that they be 'UBERSCHAUBBAR', that is, overseaable or manageable units. Appropriate scale is the central issue.

Since the Greens oppose all exploitation, they are keenly aware of the exploitation of women in patriarchal society. Their official programs are unequivocally nonsexist, and the party is committed to the goal of a postpatriarchal future. The leading roles of Green women in election campaigns and in legislative bodies at all levels signal a radical departure from customary electoral politics in West Germany and are a key aspect of the Greens'
public image. For example, the first news photograph of the Greens in the Bundestag featured the two women among their three speakers, Marieluise Beck-Oberdorf and Petra Kelly, the former of whom delivered their opening statement in parliament.

The Green party strongly supports women's rights in numerous areas. However, in the analyses of other major issues in their Federal Program, such as militarism, economics, education, and healthcare, the feminist perspective is absent or nearly so. We asked Green men all over West Germany why the “holistic” analyses of the Greens were often missing this part. Almost invariably they answered, “Oh, yes, we’re extending the guideline of having fifty percent men and fifty percent women on all elected committees and electoral lists into a rule!” The first few times we heard this response, we laughed, and later merely sighed, after which we politely explained that their answer had little to do with our question. While quotas are clearly needed in that situation, as in other patriarchal societies, such a mechanical solution is mistaken by many men as an adequate response to sexism within the Green party.

Although the average proportion of women on elected committees is one-third, the national steering committee in 1983 had only two female members among its forty. Even as the fifty-fifty rule is being adopted more widely, the Greens sometimes are unable to find enough women willing to be candidates for committees and electoral offices. We asked the men why, and the reply was nearly universal: “The women are busy with their families.” “Come now, isn’t there another reason?” we inquired. They answered slowly, “Yes, they say it’s something about the style of politics we use, that it’s too aggressive and competitive.”

We asked women the same questions, and the level of agreement among them was as high as among the men but the consensus was quite different. Although women comprise one-third of the membership in the Greens, their numbers are declining in some areas. Many women in the citizens' movements, where female activists usually play a strong role, refuse to join the Green party at all. They told us that men often vote for women merely as quota fillers rather than considering and valuing particular qualifications. In order to be respected and be awarded political jobs by the male majority, we were told, women must “work in the way of men,” that is, make aggressive arguments and allow no emotions or feelings into discussions. Most women are not interested in learning how to operate in such a style, which they consider crude and out of keeping with Green ideals. They told us that some men, too, are dissatisfied with the patriarchal style of politics but put up with it “because of their greater need for a public identity.” Many thoughtful men told us they know there is something wrong with trying to make new politics by using the old style, but could not suggest any changes or concluded that the standard, “efficient” ways are necessary since the Green party is small and faces such huge tasks.

At several local and state offices we visited during the summer of 1983, we were told that sexism in the style and content of Green politics was to be the topic of the first meeting in the fall. Women and men are working together to address this problem in some local chapters, less so at the state level, and very little at the federal level. We asked several female parliamentarians in the Bundestag Fraktion whether the Green principle of “the emancipation of both sexes” was practiced. Petra Kelly explained:

Inside our parliamentary group women have to fight very hard, even more than before we entered the Bundestag, to get our views collectively known. The men now tend to consider abortion and other social issues less political and therefore less important than others. We women sometimes have to argue very aggressively to make sure that the questions are treated as part of the larger question.

When a strong male figure operates in our group, he can make people think along his lines and then they fall into traps. A few of our women have fallen into those traps, but I would say there are five or six [of the ten] who are not susceptible. They stay cool and spontaneous and won’t let themselves be corrupted.

Gabi Potthast is a parliamentarian whose office contains political novels by Marge Piercy and a citation from Virginia Woolf: “As a woman I have no country. . . . As a woman my country is the whole world.” She has long sandy hair, a quick sense of humor, and a very clear sense of sexual politics:

The patriarchal structures here and the hectic schedules mean that all interpersonal contacts are superficial and everyone functions on the outer level. The men like that because it’s safe. Only the
women are conflicted, and each woman must try to figure out how conflicted each of the others is. Because of that, you often find that women and men in patriarchal institutions understand each other better than do women and women.

Another female parliamentarian, Waltraud Schoppe, whose address on abortion rights and marital rape caused pandemonium in the Bundestag and attracted national attention (see Chapter 5), concurred that the patriarchal style of politics is often obnoxious and boring, but called on the Green women to begin criticizing the content as well:

Most of the men in our Fraktion make the mistake of feeling they must compete with the men in the other parties. By fighting back they bring attention to themselves as competitors. But when these men—not our own men in the Fraktion—make a speech that is so clearly wrong, I and other Green women simply do not listen. Only the men feel they must indulge in competition.

The Greens, like all of us, are still conditioned by patriarchal socialization. The struggle to move beyond that mode of being is usually slow and difficult, yet essential. Marieluise Beck-Oberdorf spoke of the need for compassion toward men as well as women:

There is simply a cultural lag. We simply carry our history around with us, and to act as if it weren’t so is doing violence. It is also difficult to judge how strong chauvinism is among men. Even “soft” men [she used the English word] are certainly chauvinistic. But they no longer dare to articulate it, because in our circles you would fall flat on your face as a man if you spoke like a chauvinist. Now, there are really men who want to find a new approach to things. But in spite of this, I think that it simply pains them when they see a woman standing there up front.

Even with all the problems, the Greens propose much more feminist legislation and have a much higher proportion of women in leading positions than any other party in West Germany. Most of the Green women, and many of the men, see issues of women’s rights as part of a larger context of postpatriarchal values that are essential to the goal of a nonexploitative society. This sense of “big-picture feminism” is slowly gaining more ground among the Greens but is not widely understood outside the Green party and the feminist movement. As Petra Kelly related: “I am shocked when people say to me, ‘Feminism has nothing to do with ecology. What are you talking about?’ To me feminism is ecology and ecology is feminism. It’s a holistic way of looking at things.”

The Greens include in their analysis of our interrelated crises the “spiritual decay” and “spiritual impoverishment” of our industrial societies, and they call for the inclusion of “spiritual subjects” in the education of our children. We were especially interested in the spiritual aspects of Green politics because both of us have spent many years of our personal and professional lives exploring the connections between ecology, politics, and spirituality. We feel that deep ecology is spiritual in is very essence. It is a world view that is supported by modern science but is rooted in a perception of reality that goes beyond the scientific framework to a subtle awareness of the oneness of all life, the interdependence of its multiple manifestations, and its cycles of change and transformation. When the concept of the human spirit is understood in this sense, as the mode of consciousness in which the individual feels connected to the cosmos as a whole, the full meaning of deep ecology is indeed spiritual.

Many, if not most, of the Greens we met consider themselves Christians but are not often involved with institutionalized religion. When we asked Greens at all levels of the party and in most parts of the country whether there is a spiritual dimension to Green politics, most emphatically answered “Yes” although almost no one could discuss the concept except in vague terms. The main reason spirituality remains largely unarticulated in the Green party is that Hitler manipulated the pre-Christian Teutonic myths, or sacred stories, to serve the propaganda machine of his National Socialist party. Hence, as Petra Kelly remarked, the overt linking of spiritual values and politics is nearly forbidden: “A problem in the Reopokilik of West Germany is that any time you mention spirituality people accuse you of talking about something perverted—because it was perverted by the Nazis.” In addition to the Nazi legacy, there is the Marxist insistence among most of the radical-left Greens that the spiritual dimension of life does not even exist so naturally it is not permitted to be discussed in connection with political goals.

Many of the early members of the Greens recalled that the
spiritual impulse was stronger in the days before the movement became a party, partly because moving into party politics within the post-Nazi context made them cautious about expressing spiritual principles and partly because the influx of radical-left members after the impressive showing in the European Parliament campaign in June 1979 squelched expressions of spirituality. However, during the early period of the Green movement the Anthroposophists, followers of Rudolf Steiner’s spiritual and ecological teachings, played an important role, as we discussed in Chapter 1. They are still a strong force in the Green politics of Baden-Württemberg: Dr. Gisela von Kügelgen, a wise and charming white-haired woman who is well known in the Anthroposophist community, was the top vote-winner for the Greens in the Stuttgart city council election of June 1980.

In addition, To Have or to Be? by Erich Fromm (Bantam Books, 1981) was mentioned frequently as having influenced the spiritual development of many pre-Green ecological activists after its hardcover publication in 1976. Fromm delineated two modes of existence: having (acquiring, controlling) and being (experiencing, sharing) and argued that it was an economic necessity of humankind to shift from the former to the latter orientation. The final chapter, “Features of a New Society,” is a remarkable previewing of Green politics. Fromm, by the way, believed that the United States, which was his home most of the time after fleeing Nazi Germany until his death in 1980, was the country closest to a breakthrough into a new consciousness: “It’s just that the wealth is greater here, and therefore the consciousness that there must be more to life than buying and owning is also most powerful here.”

One obvious expression of spirituality in Green politics is the holistic sense of our embeddedness in nature and the interconnected character of all phenomena, which is parallel to the principles of the Native American, pre-Christian European (that is, Pagan), Taoist, and Buddhist traditions. A poster the Greens used in the state of Hesse showed vibrant green tendrils overgrowing a bleak field of “developed” tree stumps, conveying the life force of cyclic regeneration and renewal. Precisely that, not any artificial and hierarchical structures of control, is sacred in life. A pre-Christian German would surely have concluded that such a poster is spiritual art, although the Greens emphasize that their symbols and posters are merely selected casually from various artists since the Nazis manipulated such political devices so successfully that symbols are regarded suspiciously in West German politics.

Petra Kelly stresses that true acceptance and understanding of Green politics requires inner change and growth:

The spiritual content of Green politics—which unfortunately is not expressed, and is almost opposed, in the party structure—means understanding how everything is connected and understanding your relationship with planet Earth in daily life. We’ve become so divorced from our ties with the Earth that most people don’t even understand what the Greens are fighting for. With the holistic sense of spirituality, one’s personal life is truly political and one’s political life is truly personal. Anyone who does not comprehend within him- or herself this essential unity cannot achieve political change on a deep level and cannot strive for the true ideals of the Greens.

This consciousness of deep ecology and its exemplary expression in Native American spirituality was mentioned by Kelly and many other Greens. When Waltraud Schoppe observed that developing such an understanding must be much easier in the United States since we are fortunate to have the living traditions of the Native Americans here, we explained sadly that their wisdom is not valued, except in small circles, and that it is a rare federal judge who even comprehends the meaning of their claims to the small parcels of land onto which they have been pushed: “The Earth is our church.”

Lukas Beckmann is another Green who believes in the spiritual core of their politics, but from his former position as general manager of the national party he knows this view is not unanimously held. “If people do not understand that ecological politics involves a changing of themselves, that problem will become a major danger for the Greens in the next few years. For me, I would say the Greens are a spiritual movement, but our members who still think in the old ways cannot feel that way.” That radical left faction is the audience Rudolf Bahro has addressed numerous times on the political need for spiritual transformation. In general, they feel he is going too far or just plain
crazy. The following is a passage from an article Bahro wrote for *Rot und Grün (Red and Green)*, a leftist publication:

I am interested in the forces for cultural revolution that lie, in no small way, in Christ, Buddha, and Lao Tzu. Forces that have made history. We need the gnostic tradition—as one aspect, not to fill the whole of life. I have long been drawn to such thinkers as Joachim di Fiore, Meister Eckhart, Spinoza and Pascal on account of the affinity of their mysticism to real freedom, which remains incomplete as long as it does not also include freedom of the spirit. I recently read that someone discovered a mystical experience of the young Marx, which would then be analogous to Luther’s experience in the tower. I can well see this as possible. Taken realistically, mysticism, at least clear-headed mysticism, means a profound mobilization of emancipatory forces in the human psyche, a phenomenon that has nothing otherworldly about it, and should be made accessible to everyone, for example by a practice of meditation.

Finally, many Greens cited spiritual feelings that arise in the context of peace work. Gert Bastian told us, “I feel it in myself and in men my age. It is a new spirit, a very strong power which grows in their own hearts and their own heads.” We asked him how the “new spirit” was awakened in him and in others:

By the doing of peace actions. By being side-by-side with others in the same situation—men, women, friends and not friends, strangers—who sit or stand or walk by your side, all moving together with the same life-protecting values and convictions. This creates a force, a peaceful power that is a spiritual power.

All seven of the principles we have presented—ecology, social responsibility, grassroots democracy, nonviolence, decentralization, postpatriarchal perspectives, and spirituality—are intertwined, although we have separated them for the purpose of discussion. They are further linked by the principle that all things—abstract and concrete, personal and political, or economic, or social—are in process. The Greens are quick to declare that theirs is a politics of transition. They strive to be not the end but the means, which, like the visionary goal of an ecological society, is continually evolving.