

# Chapter 6

## Youth and Politics at the End of the Great War: Rudolf Carnap's *Politische Rundbriefe* of 1918



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My brothers, let us work with brave, cheerful hearts, even right underneath the cloud, for we are working towards a great future. And let us imagine our goal to be as pure, as bright, as untainted as we possibly can, for we are treading in treacherous light, at dusk, and through fog. *Johann Gottfried Herder*<sup>1</sup>

This essay presents nine *Politische Rundbriefe* (Political Circulars) that the young philosopher and scientist Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), later a well-known member of the Vienna Circle (*Wiener Kreis*), sent to his friends for discussion in 1918. The first four *Rundbriefe* consisted of excerpts from Entente newspapers that were critical of the war and Carnap's comments on these clippings. The subsequent circulars addressed general political topics—such as preserving peace, arbitration, or international law—typically with reference to a specific publication on the subject. Having been recalled from the front in summer 1917 to work at a Berlin military institute that was seeking to develop wireless telegraphy, Rudolf Carnap sharpened his political positions in the German capital's stimulating atmosphere and by engaging intellectually with his friends from the Free German Youth (*Freideutsche Jugend*).

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<sup>1</sup>Herder, 2004, 91–92. Rudolf Carnap quoted these sentences in their original German in a letter to Wilhelm Flitner from 15 April 1917; see Wilhelm und Elisabeth Flitner Papers, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg (hereafter cited as Flitner Papers, SUB Hamburg). In addition to thanking Dr. Hugbert Flitner for permission to quote from the letters of his father Wilhelm Flitner, I also thank the Special Collections department of the University of Pittsburgh for allowing me to quote from Carnap's *Politische Rundbriefe* (RC 081-14 to 081-22), which are part of the Rudolf Carnap Papers held at the Archives of Scientific Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh; hereafter cited as RC. This essay is a slightly reworked translation of Werner, 2015.

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Thus, the views expounded in the *Politische Rundbriefe* can only be understood in the political, technological, and social contexts of the last two years of the war.

In German history, as well as in world history, 1917 is considered an epochal year. The German government's assumption that Germany would be able to defeat England within a few months after resuming unrestricted submarine warfare soon proved illusory. In contrast, by drawing the United States into the war (on 6 April 1917), Germany's maritime strategy significantly tipped the balance of power—in terms of manpower, material, and initiative—towards the Entente and set the United States on its course to becoming a world power. At the same time, the fall of the Romanov dynasty in Russia and the outbreak of revolution in Petrograd (today St. Petersburg) in February 1917 marked the first downfall among the old European monarchies. Both German Emperor Wilhelm II and Austrian Emperor Karl I abdicated in November 1918.

This turning-point period was further characterised by a mobilisation of the masses through strikes, revolution, and civil war, all of which had far-reaching social, political, and economic consequences. The catastrophic supply situation at home, food shortages, and general war weariness also contributed to undermining the domestic truce of 1914 (*Burgfrieden*) within not only the government but also the population. While the proponents of the (failed) peace resolution of July 1917 demanded a negotiated peace, the radical nationalist German Fatherland Party (*Deutsche Vaterlandspartei*), founded 1917, pursued an annexationist policy of “victorious peace.” On the left end of the party spectrum, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, USPD) in April 1917 split from the SPD, a shift that evoked the SPD's pacifist policy prior to the war's outbreak.<sup>2</sup> In any event, after the forced resignation of Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg in July 1917, Germany had for all intents and purposes become a military dictatorship under the leadership of Erich Ludendorff and Paul von Hindenburg.<sup>3</sup>

As they had at the war's outset, intellectuals, academics, artists, and young people who were particularly affected by the murderous conflict joined in the debates. As early as November 1914, a number of ardent war opponents—including Eduard Bernstein, Rudolf Breitscheid, Lujo Brentano, Albert Einstein and his wife Mileva Einstein-Marić, Hellmut von Gerlach, Magnus Hirschfeld, and Helene Stöcker—founded the nonpartisan pacifist New Fatherland League (*Bund Neues Vaterland*), from which the German League for Human Rights (*Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte*) emerged in 1919. *Die Aktion* (The Action), a magazine founded in 1917 by young leftist intellectuals (together with a bookshop of the same name on

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<sup>2</sup>Several Social Democrats had rejected the SPD's patriotic party line as early as 1914, among them Karl Liebknecht, who on 2 December 1914 refused to approve the loans requested for the second war year.

<sup>3</sup>For further context, see Leonhard, 2014, especially parts VI (“Expansion und Erosion: 1917”) and VII (“Plötzlichkeit und Zerfall: 1918”), 614–938, and the highly informative diaries of Harry Graf Kessler (Kessler, 2006) and Thea Sternheim (Sternheim, 2002).

Berlin's Rankeplatz), published a collection of poems entitled *Die Aktions-Lyrik 1914–1916* as its contribution to the fight against the war.

That same year, Helmut and Wieland Herzfelde launched the anti-war journal *Neue Jugend* (New Youth) and founded the famous left-wing publishing house Malik-Verlag. In December 1917, Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch, with support from historian Friedrich Meinecke and Social Democratic politician Gustav Bauer, helped establish the nonpartisan and nondenominational People's League for Freedom and Fatherland (*Volksbund für Freiheit und Vaterland*). Publicly advocating moderate war goals and domestic parliamentarisation, this group sought to counterbalance the German Fatherland Party. Unlike many of his young disciples, the poet Stefan George had maintained his distance from the nationalist fervour from the beginning. However, in July 1917, he broke his silence by publishing a widely circulated anti-war poem, "Der Krieg" ("The War"). Failing to challenge the German belief in fighting a defensive war, the oppositional *Freideutsche Jugend* of 1913 accepted participation in the war as a self-evident duty. By 1917, however, the horrors of trench warfare and the *Freideutsche Jugend's* ethical idealism led many of its members to embrace the anti-war protests. Rudolf Carnap was one of them. Another, although a member of an older generation, was Jena-based publisher Eugen Diederichs. Like Carnap, Diederichs had participated in the first *Freideutsche Jugendtag* on the Hoher Meißner, a mountain near Cassel (today's Kassel) in northern Hesse, in October 1913. In addition, he had published the *Meißner Festschrift* as well as numerous pamphlets written by members and supporters of the German Youth Movement. As a student in Jena, Carnap played a central role in Diederichs' Sera Circle (*Serakreis*), one of the twelve youth leagues that organised the Meißner Festival.

## 6.1 The Failure of Consensus: The Lauenstein Cultural Conferences 1917/1918

In May 1918, Eugen Diederichs announced the third of his ambitious Cultural Conferences at Lauenstein Castle, located in a remote corner of the Thuringian Forest. The overarching theme of the conference series, convened in 1917 and 1918, was Germany and Europe's social and political reordering. In this third conference, the focus was to be on youth and women's rights. The first two conferences, which had taken place the previous year (1917), had left the representatives of the younger generation deeply disappointed. In his 1933 autobiography, playwright Ernst Toller vividly recalled the fall 1917 meeting:

And so it went on, talk, endless talk, while the battlefields of Europe shuddered beneath the blows of war. We waited, we still waited, for these men to speak the word of deliverance; in vain. Were they deaf and dumb and blind? Was it because they themselves had never lain in a dugout, never heard the despairing cries of the dying, the dumb accusation of a devastated wood. [...] And I cried: "Show us the way; we sit here wasting day after day when every minute counts: We have waited long enough!" (Toller, 1934, 98).

From the young generation's perspective, the discussions of the scholars, artists, writers, and *Lebensreform* proponents invited in 1917—which included prominent public figures such as economist Max Weber, politician and publicist Max Maurenbrecher, historian Friedrich Meinecke, sociologist Werner Sombart, women's rights activist Gertrud Bäumer, educator Robert von Erdberg, and poets Richard Dehmel, Walter von Molo, and Karl Bröger—no longer held any answers. Instead, the controversial debates between Weber, who eloquently argued for a parliamentary democracy, and Maurenbrecher, who equally eloquently spoke out in favour of an authoritarian state, clearly revealed that Germany's elites were no longer capable of achieving consensus. As Gangolf Hübinger has shown, the Lauenstein Conferences in that pivotal year of 1917 marked the end of the political and intellectual truce (*Burgfrieden*).<sup>4</sup>

Shaken and disillusioned by the brutality of trench warfare, the younger generation found itself left to its own devices. The response to Diederichs' invitation to a third conference on the youth movement and women's rights was so weak that the conference became merely a rather informal meeting between several worker poets and leftist members of the youth movement in June 1918.<sup>5</sup> The only participant from Diederichs' personal youth group, the *Freideutsche* Sera Circle, was Alexander Schwab. Like most of his Sera friends, Schwab had volunteered for military service in August 1914 but had soon been released from duty because of a lung ailment and subsequently became an ardent pacifist. As early as 1917, he joined the newly founded USPD, the party that had split from the SPD because of its opposition to the war.<sup>6</sup> There is no indication in either the Eugen Diederichs Papers or the documents and letters we possess from the Sera friends that Diederichs ever considered involving the Sera group in the Lauenstein Conference although the group's participation seemed natural. After all, more than a hundred young women and men—former *Freistudenten*, *Freischärler*, *Wandervögel*, and artists—belonged, although in certain cases rather loosely, to the Sera Circle. By the spring of 1918, when Diederichs was planning the third cultural conference, nearly half of the male Sera friends had died in combat, including Karl Brüggmann and Hans Kremers, two revered leaders of the group. Several were hospitalised or had been discharged and declared unfit for active duty because of serious injuries; others, such as Rudolf Carnap and Wilhelm Lohmann, were working in military research institutes or, as was the case with Wilhelm Flitner, Hans Freyer, and Karl Korsch, still serving at the front.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>See Hübinger, 1996. The appendix to Hübinger's essay includes the minutes of the first Lauenstein Cultural Conference in May 1917. For a detailed interpretation of the Lauenstein Conferences, including assessment of unpublished documents, letters and photographs, see Werner, 2021; regarding the views of German philosophers during World War I, see the contribution of Gereon Wolters to this volume.

<sup>5</sup>For more details, see Heidler, 1998, 97f.

<sup>6</sup>For biographical information on Alexander Schwab, the future architectural theorist, political educator, and resistance fighter, see Kerbs, 2007, 9–22.

<sup>7</sup>See Werner, 2014a.

## 6.2 Carnap's Political Turn

The many surviving letters, discussion minutes, and published manifestos confirm that the Sera Circle, echoing Ernst Toller, had lost faith in the older generation. The discussions regarding the war's end and Germany's imminent reordering were initiated not by the older "Sera father" Diederichs but by Rudolf Carnap, who had already led the Sera Circle in planning the first *Freideutsche Jugendtag* on the Hohe Meißner in 1913. Moreover, what was required was not so much ivy-clad castle romanticism in the Lauenstein mode but an urban or at least university milieu that would help broaden and redefine the group's intellectual and political horizons.

While Toller found a more congenial environment first in Heidelberg in the circle around Max Weber and later in Munich, Carnap viewed his own 1917 transfer from the Western front to Berlin as decisive for his active embrace of politics. "I remained an officer in the army," he later wrote looking back on the period, "but I served as a physicist in a military institution which worked on the development of the new wireless telegraph and, toward the end of the war, of the wireless telephone" (Carnap, 1963, 8f.). In this intellectually stimulating environment, Carnap tried to reconnect with his Sera friends who had survived the war while continuing his close written and personal contact with Wilhelm Flitner on issues related to Germany's new postwar order. Serving at the Western front, Flitner, who had written his dissertation on *August Ludwig Hülsen und der Bund der Freien Männer (1913)* under Herman Nohl, at the time lecturer (*Privatdozent*) of philosophy at the University of Jena, had become one of Carnap's closest friends over the years.<sup>8</sup> However, since personal conversations were possible only to a limited extent, Carnap adopted the form of the personal circular letter, a genre the friends had used previously and one that was democratic, flexible, and likely to pass military censorship.<sup>9</sup> In light of the imminent breakdown of the political, social, and economic order, Carnap hoped that debate by letter would have a unifying effect on the diverging positions within the Sera Circle. He shared this desire for consensus with the *Freideutsche* movement as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

While this practice—that is, a clarifying conversation among friends as a precondition for collective action—remained unreflected in the context of the Sera activities, Carnap reformulated the idea of collaborative thinking in more programmatic terms in his first major monograph, *The Logical Structure of the World*. In the preface to the first edition of 1928, he wrote as follows:

The basic orientation and the line of thought of this book are not property and achievement of the author alone but belong to a certain scientific atmosphere which is neither created nor

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<sup>8</sup>For more details on this friendship, see Werner, 2014b, esp. 123f. Flitner's dissertation was published by Eugen Diederichs Verlag in 1913.

<sup>9</sup>It is unclear whether Carnap knew of the "political letters" of the Gruppe Internationale, signed by "Spartakus," which had circulated illegally in early 1916.

<sup>10</sup>See Schenk, 1989, esp. 163–205. Regarding the wider context of the Youth Movement, see Günther Sandner's essay in this volume.

maintained by any single individual. The thoughts which I have written down here are supported by a group of active or receptive collaborators. This group has in common especially a certain basic scientific orientation. That they have turned away from traditional philosophy is only a negative characteristic (Carnap, 1967, xvi).

Building on his experience as an active member of various German Youth Movement groups, Carnap here promoted a concept of authorship that de-emphasised the individual author in favour of collective thinking and writing. For Carnap, this approach was not new but, as I argue with respect to his *Politische Rundbriefe*, one shaped by his involvement with various groups of the *Freideutsche* movement and their emphasis on self-education during his university and war years.<sup>11</sup> The fundamental attitude of this approach was not so much academic but rather born of the youth and life reform movements and therefore critical of traditional scholarship and university life.

### 6.3 Self-Education Through the Youth Movement and War: Sera Circle, *Freischar*, and *Freideutsche Jugend*

Carnap began participating in the varied activities of the Sera Circle after enrolling at the University of Jena in May 1910 to study philosophy and mathematics. Through his mother Anna, the early-widowed daughter of educator Friedrich Wilhelm Dörpfeld and sister of archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld, Carnap had come into contact with the intellectual world of the bourgeois life reform (*Lebensreform*) movement. Open-minded yet deeply religious, Anna Carnap regularly took her two children to Schloss Mainberg (later Elmau), a “sanctuary for personal life” founded by the unconventional Protestant theologian Johannes Müller that was especially popular with unchurched members of the educated classes.<sup>12</sup> Carnap would return there for visits as late as the 1960s.

He had already distanced himself from Christian doctrine in his high-school days. Nevertheless, Carnap remained, according to his biographer Thomas Mormann, “guided by the humanistic principles of tolerance, solidarity, and the quest for truth” (Mormann, 2000, 14). Extensive and occasionally adventurous trips to Greece, Morocco, Sweden, and Italy testify to Carnap’s cosmopolitanism, in which he was rather unusual compared to most of his Sera friends. His lifelong interest in Esperanto as a means to international understanding also dates back to his school days.

After Karl Brüggemann and Hans Kremers left Jena in the spring of 1913, Carnap assumed a leadership role, not least because he was friendly with both older and

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<sup>11</sup> The *Politische Rundbriefe* have been commented on by a number of Carnap scholars; see especially Carus, 2007a, 2007b; Dahms, 2016, and Mormann, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Regarding Johannes Müller and Schloss Mainberg (later Elmau), see Haury, 2005. For a more detailed discussion of young Carnap’s religiosity, see André W. Carus’ essay “Die religiösen Ursprünge des Nonkognitivismus bei Carnap” in this volume.

younger Sera members. In addition, he brought with him the ideas of the Freiburg *Freischar*, an offshoot of the Munich *Freischar*, which he co-founded while a student at the University of Freiburg, where he spent three semesters in 1911 and 1912. Through his friend Elisabeth Schöndube, whom he married in 1917, he also came in closer contact with Hermann Lietz's reform schools, which belonged to the larger *Landerziehungsheim* movement that advocated for establishing boarding schools in the countryside based on progressive pedagogy. In sharp contrast to traditional university life in fraternities and student corporations, whose gatherings revolved around ritualised drinking and occasionally included duelling, these new forms of sociability in the *Freischar* and Sera Circle promoted the concept of self-education among like-minded young people. Self-organised reading groups, lectures, and discussion evenings on current affairs were as much part of this alternative sociability as were extensive hiking trips and creative festivities, such as singing, dancing, and staging plays, while renouncing alcohol, smoking, and often the consumption of meat.

Among university teachers, Herman Nohl, then a young lecturer in philosophy, held particular appeal for the students. Unlike most professors, Nohl took a personal interest in the lives and thoughts of his students. As Carnap recalled, "in his seminars and in private talks, he tried to give us a deeper understanding of the philosophers on the basis of their attitude toward life (*Lebensgefühl*) and their cultural background" (Carnap, 1963, 4). Carnap's conclusion that he "learned much more about the field of philosophy by reading and by private conversations than by attending lectures and seminars" (Carnap, 1963, 4) was a view shared to varying degrees among the Sera friends in general.

On Carnap's initiative, Jena's *Freistudentenschaft* (i.e., the unincorporated, or free, students) merged with the Sera Circle in November 1912 to become the *Akademische Vereinigung Jena* and, one year later, the *Freischar zu Jena*.<sup>13</sup> The call to arms on 1 August 1914 came as a shock to the members of the *Freischar*, who had come from all over Germany to attend the national *Freischar* conference in Jena. Carnap and the *Freischar's* Jena branch were among the participants.<sup>14</sup> All physically fit but as yet unscripted Sera or *Freischar* friends volunteered to serve. After several rejections, Carnap and Flitner managed to become accepted into the Naumburg Barracks. At the end of their four-month artillery training, the two friends were separated. Flitner was sent to the Western front, while Carnap, an enthusiastic skier, was detailed to the newly formed Bavarian Snowshoe Battalion (*Bayerisches Schneeschuh-Batallion*) in Munich, which, a few months later, became the German Alpine Corps (*Deutsche Alpenkorps*). He survived the Carpathian campaign in the spring of 1915, which entailed particularly heavy losses, though Carnap himself—as he describes in his diaries—mainly spent the period awaiting closer involvement while running patrols behind the lines. As we can infer from a report to his friend Flitner, Carnap regretted missing his unit's deployment in the Dolomites because he

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<sup>13</sup> For further details on the Jena's *Freistudentenschaft*, see Werner, 2003, 299–307.

<sup>14</sup> See Martha Hörmann's diary (Hörmann, n.d., 63–67) and Werner, 2014a.

was required to attend officer training in the Silesian town of Hirschberg and in Döberitz near Berlin. He was subsequently detailed to Bukovina and Serbia before his company was sent to the trenches near Verdun in April 1916. Carnap's correspondence, especially with Flitner but also with Martha Hörmann, a Sera friend who acted as a "switchboard" for correspondence among the friends at the front and at home, testifies to the friends' unbroken desire to remain in touch and share ideas and thoughts, be it regarding personal issues, encounters, landscapes, interesting books, articles or regarding scientific problems.<sup>15</sup> Because the friends accepted military service as a self-evident civic duty, politics played a rather marginal role in these exchanges. Like most of their German contemporaries, the Sera friends believed Germany was fighting a defensive war, and during the first year in particular, most of them embraced the war as a means of self-actualisation. Carnap did so too. It was only when the general international situation came to a head as a result of the dramatically worsening food supply, the Russian Revolution, and the entry into the war by the United States that questions regarding the future became more pronounced among the Sera friends: "I do not yet dare to hope for peace this year" (Flitner Papers, SUB Hamburg), Carnap wrote to Flitner on 13 April 1917. "What do you think? Can submarine warfare achieve it all and so quickly? You 'find yourself ruminating over a better future.' So do I from time to time. What will be the task of our (inner) circle, and what will be my task within this circle?" (Flitner Papers, SUB Hamburg). Ideas about forming youth movement cells with shared goals of the life reform movement, as had been discussed within the bourgeois youth movement since 1916, also circulated within the Sera Circle.<sup>16</sup> One example was Flitner's "Thesen zur Gründung eines Protestantenklosters" ("Propositions for Founding a Protestant Monastery") of February 1917 (Flitner, 2014a).<sup>17</sup> Setting forth a vision of a residential and working community far removed from party politics, the propositions met with initial approval by the friends but had no tangible results.

It was not until February 1918 that Carnap initiated another attempt at political education by circulating a series of *Politische Rundbriefe* among friends from the Sera Circle and the *Freideutsche* movement. Until they were banned by military censors in September 1918, Carnap sent a total of nine circulars, in multiple copies, to his friends on the front and around the country. The importance the circulars held for Carnap can perhaps be gauged from the fact that a nearly complete set of the circulars is preserved among his papers at the University of Pittsburgh. In the history of the bourgeois youth movement, Carnap's circulars predate Karl Bittel's *Politische Rundbriefe*, which appeared beginning in October 1918 and which Walter Laqueur considered to be the first significant initiative to educate the youth movement on political affairs.<sup>18</sup> Carnap, in fact, continued his political work in the group around Bittel after his own circulars had been banned. "I hope that by now you have

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<sup>15</sup> See Werner, 2014b.

<sup>16</sup> See Fiedler, 1989, 88–116.

<sup>17</sup> For further context, see Werner, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> See Laqueur, 1962, 111.



received the political circulars published by Bittel – Karlsruhe. I agree with them. That's why I contribute to them and abandon my old ones" (Flitner Papers, SUB Hamburg), he wrote from Berlin to Elisabeth Flitner on 17 November 1918.

In the fall of 1917, Carnap was unexpectedly transferred from the Belgian town of Chimay, where he had enthusiastically started his aviation training, to the Inspectorate of the Signal Corps and from there to one of its subunits, the Technical Radio Corps (*Technische Abteilung der Funkerinspektion*, in short Tafunk).<sup>19</sup> Its head, Max Wien, a physicist who had been Carnap's teacher in Jena, had specifically requested Carnap's transfer. For Carnap, the farewell from aviation was made easier by the fact that he once again, as before the war, could work in a "real institute of physics, only now in uniform" (Rudolf Carnap to Wilhelm Flitner, Berlin, 14 October 1917; Flitner Papers, SUB Hamburg).<sup>20</sup>

Carnap was also happy to be in Berlin, where he and his young wife Elisabeth lived on Gendarmenmarkt before moving to Tempelhof and later Westend. On his evenings and weekends off, he got in touch with *Freideutsche* circles and attended lectures and discussions. In late December 1917, he wrote to Flitner, who was stationed in Flanders, about his new life:

I am now going through a period of primarily political interests, which had been relatively weak during my time at the front, perhaps from a lack of knowledge and of opportunities for discussing them. I recently reread your propositions on Nelson's letter, now with far more understanding and empathy.

On this note: *freideutsche* meeting with Göhre; lecture by Blüher about Herrenhaus; discussions in the Kurella circle; readings about pacifism, socialism. (Landauer's "Aufruf zum Sozialismus" ["Call to Socialism"]; Friedrich Adler's "Polit. Bekenntnis" ["Political Confession"]; unfortunately, both confiscated) (Rudolf Carnap to Wilhelm Flitner, Berlin, 26 December 1917; Flitner Papers, SUB Hamburg).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See Maier, 2007, 123.

<sup>20</sup> In his "Thesen, an Carnap" ("Propositions, to Carnap"), Flitner commented on the ongoing debate regarding whether the *Freideutsche* movement should adopt a political stance. The discussion was triggered by the publication of a letter by the Göttingen-based philosopher Leonard Nelson to Knud Ahlborn, dated 16 June 1916, in which Nelson criticised the apolitical attitude of the *Freischar* members. Although he exhorted the younger members of the youth movement to take a more nuanced approach, Flitner merely expressed his hope for joint action, including political action, on the part of adult *Freischar* members. See Wilhelm Flitner, "Thesen, an Carnap", *Monatsbericht der Deutschen Akademischen Freischar und 23. Kriegsbericht* (August/September 1917): 166f.; reprinted in Flitner 2014, with extensive notes on pp. 878–883. Regarding the historical context of the Nelson debate, see Fiedler, 1989, 96–106; and Werner, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> For a time, the Berlin circle around Alfred Kurella, who joined the KPD in 1918, included Hans Blüher and Fritz Klatt. Carnap knew Blüher's controversial writings on the *Wandervogel* movement. The theologian Paul Göhre, editor of workers' autobiographies for Diederichs Verlag, had been an SPD member of the Reichstag since 1910. Inspired by a socialist and pacifist perspective, Gustav Landauer fought against the war from the very beginning. In 1919, he played a key role in the Munich Soviet Republic. Together with his father Viktor Adler, Friedrich Adler was a co-founder of the Social Democratic Party of Austria. In 1916, he assassinated the Austrian prime minister Karl Stürgkh to protest the latter's absolutism and was sentenced first to death and later to eight years in prison. He was released after the end of the war and in 1921 became Secretary of the Socialist International.

If Carnap sought guidance from the left wing of the youth movement—as indicated in particular by his references to Alfred Kurella and Gustav Landauer—this would have been consistent with the political leanings of the Sera and *Freischar* friends since their university years:

We had some general ideals, including a just, harmonious, and rational organization within and among the nations. We saw that the existing political and economic order was not in accord with these ideals, and still less the standard method of settling conflicts of interests among nations by warfare. Thus, the general direction of our political thinking was pacifist, anti-militarist, anti-monarchist, and perhaps also socialist (Carnap, 1963, 9).

In truth, most Sera friends briefly succumbed to the mobilisation euphoria of August 1914.<sup>22</sup> However, as the war dragged on and as a result of their horrendous experiences at the front and the death of many friends, the Sera members increasingly felt the need to clarify their positions on the war through in-depth conversations. In July 1917, Flitner formulated this feeling:

We were pregnant with socialist and communist ideas, but then came August 1914, and we decided to volunteer for war service. Due to our inner resolve, this decision was able to survive three years of war; as such, it also creates generally valid and understandable convictions. These convictions are deeds that our associations must expect from us in particular and that are more important and more urgent than all individual actions, in which one should not get bogged down (Flitner, 2014b, 167).

Given this attitude in favour of collective decision-making, the Sera group welcomed Carnap's prompting to discuss political and philosophical topics. In addition, as becomes clear by reading through the *Politische Rundbriefe*, the debates within the microcosm of a circle of friends reflected the overall political situation in Germany, where political positions had become more radical at least since 1917.

#### 6.4 The First *Rundbrief*: The Peoples' Voices as Harbingers of a New Time

Carnap sent off the first circular on 20 February 1918, two weeks after the bloody suppression of major munitions and metal workers' strikes in Berlin. Although Carnap experienced these strikes close up in Berlin, they are not mentioned in the circular. And yet, Carnap's cover letter to the Sera and *Freideutsche* friends conveys the urgency of educating oneself about political issues and taking a political stance. It is important to recall that military censorship at the time was very strict; however, personal letters stood at least a small chance of reaching their addressees unopened. Because of the programmatic nature of the first letter, it is worth quoting extensively:

Berlin, February 20, 1918.  
My dear friends!

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<sup>22</sup> See Werner, 2014a.

In discussions with friends, acquaintances, and comrades about that which currently concerns me and perhaps all of us the most—that is, the end of the war: what it will or should look like, what we hope for or demand (not so much as an end of a time of want but in the sense of saving and building a world that we have only just glimpsed)—I often noticed how little we know of those current events that to me seem to be the most important ones, since they reveal the forces that will shape the future: the forces of attraction that will form a cosmos out of the chaotic atomism of the world, that will replace, in the sociology of the peoples, anarchy with an organically ordered community. Since I firmly believe that these forces in mankind are stronger than the divergent opposing forces—without this conviction, no belief in a cultural (*geistige*) evolution in history is possible—I look at the events of the present and see them as the birth pangs of a new time, mankind's entry into a higher stage of legal and communal life.

This conviction is gaining acceptance among all people. The forces of understanding already penetrate deeper than those of the politics of violence, even though they are still being suppressed by those who hold the reins of power. This is where the frontlines are drawn today: the peace-desiring peoples of all countries against the warring parties; a front where cultural superiority will win out against the party of violence in the end (RC 081-14-07).

Already in this cover letter, we can note Carnap's fundamentally optimistic support for a unifying negotiated peace and the creation of a new political and social order as well as his general hope that society will evolve by embracing cultural values in opposition to the ruling classes' politics of violence and victorious peace (*Siegfrieden*), and against destruction and revolution. He views the end of the war as an opportunity to construct this new order. The newspaper clippings that Carnap enclosed and commented on were taken from the "News from the Foreign Press", published by the War Press Office (*Kriegspresseamt*). As a ranking officer assigned to a military research institute, Carnap had access to this office, which reviewed foreign newspapers, and thus possibly to information critical of the war and therefore not included in the "News from the Foreign Press".

In any case, Carnap deliberately selected dissenting voices that challenged the pro-war positions regurgitated by the German press. However, Carnap's was a minority position. He relied particularly on the international left-liberal and socialist press: *Le Peuple* (Belgium), *L'Humanité* and *La Bataille* (France), the *Daily Chronicle*, the *London Times*, the literary magazine *The Nineteenth Century* (UK), the *Statist* (USA), the *Basler Nationalzeitung* (Switzerland), the *Freeman's Journal* (Ireland), and, as the only opposition standpoint, the French nationalist newspaper *La Libre Parole*. Carnap, moreover, promoted the previously mentioned People's League for Freedom and Fatherland (*Volksbund für Freiheit und Vaterland*) with the aid of an article by *Lebensreform* proponent and pacifist Hermann Popert, author of the bestseller *Helmut Haringa* (1910) and an open pacifist who spoke at the Hoher Meißner in 1913. At the same time, Carnap's appeal—"Let us once again, in some cases after years of separation, reach out to each other through argument and counterargument, for our own pleasure and to strengthen the forces we once pledged to serve" (RC 081-14-07)—clearly indicates his efforts to create generational unity were implicitly based on the Meißner formula of October 1913: "The *Freideutsche Jugend* wants to shape their lives according to their own rules, responsible only to themselves, and guided by inner truthfulness. They will stand in unconditional

solidarity for inner freedom” (quoted from Mogge & Reulecke, 1988, 52). These high, although vaguely idealistic, expectations regarding the individual may also explain why Carnap privileged ethics over politics.

Based on the comment dates, one can infer that the *Rundbriefe* started to circulate among the friends in March 1918. The addressee was expected to keep the circular for no more than five days – eight to ten days, if he was at the front. Thus, all *Rundbriefe* circulated for at least two to three months, occasionally overlapping. Nearly twenty Sera friends and a number of well-known *Freideutsche* whom Carnap had contacted in Berlin (for example, Helmut Tormin, Harald Schultz-Hencke, and Walter Fischer) participated in the epistolary debate.<sup>23</sup> Wilhelm Flitner, Walter Fränzel, and Walter Ruge were the only letter recipients at the front – with Ruge dropping out after the first *Rundbrief* in late March 1918, after his warplane crashed and he became a British prisoner of war. Erich Gabert (like Fränzel, a student of historian Karl Lamprecht and later a well-known Waldorf educator), Wilhelm Lohmann (who held a doctorate in chemistry), Kurt Frankenberger (a mathematician who, together with Carnap, had attended Frege’s lectures on *Begriffsschrift* in Jena), and Hermann Wenhold (a lawyer and future DDP and FDP politician in Bremen) had all been discharged from active duty due to serious war injuries.<sup>24</sup> Incidentally, so had Fischer and Tormin. Others had been declared unfit for service and spared duty. These individuals included Franz Roh, who had since become assistant to the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin in Munich; Otto Modick, a teacher of German; and the theologian Fritz von Baußnern (who, however, experienced the war in Weimar as a nurse for the severely wounded). Female respondents included Martha Hörmann, who had studied science but was employed as a teacher in Bremen; Elisabeth Flitner, who was working on her dissertation on wartime social services (*Kriegsfürsorge*) in Heidelberg; and Margret Arends, who had joined the Sera Circle from the Naumburg *Wandervogel* and trained as a bookbinder in Berlin. Carnap did not have any connections with the left intellectual group—the so-called *Klicke* (clique)—that formed around Karl and Hedda Korsch, Hildegard Felisch, Alexander Schwab, and Ilse Neubart; they had already left Jena when he joined the Sera Circle. On the return of each circular, Carnap copied out the comments he received and collated them into a single document, which he re-sent as a concluding discussion.

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<sup>23</sup>After suffering a serious injury in 1916, Walter Fischer (1887–1924) founded the *Feld-Wandervogel* to facilitate communication among *Wandervögel* at the front; Harald Schultz-Hencke (1892–1953), a medical doctor and future psychoanalyst, was a member of the Freiburg *Freischar* and on the editorial staff of the monthly *Freideutsche Jugend* in 1918. Helmut Tormin (1891–1951) joined the *Freischar* while a student of mathematics and law in Heidelberg and participated in the Hohe Meißner Festival. During the Weimar Republic, he was active in the religious-socialist Social Work Guild (*Gilde Soziale Arbeit*) and in other areas.

<sup>24</sup>For more information on Frege’s lectures, see Schlotter, 2011. With his *Begriffsschrift*, Gottlob Frege (1848–1925) became the founder of modern logic.

## 6.5 *Rundbriefe* 2–9: Eternal Peace Versus Eternal War

The second circular of 18 March 1918 was again based on an essay by Hermann Popert, this time on Chancellor Theobald Bethmann Hollweg's speech to the Main Committee of the Reichstag on 9 November 1916. In this speech, Bethmann Hollweg voiced his support for the negotiated peace proposed by American president Woodrow Wilson and for the creation of a League of Nations. Carnap deliberately focused the discussion on this early peace initiative as a turning point of German foreign policy, thus passing over the Fourteen Points programme that Wilson had presented to the U.S. Congress on 8 January 1918.

Berlin, March 18, 1918.

My dear friends!

The 2nd circular does not want to deal with current affairs; let us instead reflect calmly by stepping back into history – by more than one year. What a long period of time (compared to today's standards). Full of facts and experiences. Let us look back to November 1916 – a time when we witnessed the extremely surprising and promising vision of a new era in the providential direction of the German Empire in the world. Despite all the disappointments that we have experienced since, when it seemed as though our leaders' course had veered from the goal of the League of Nations, the joyful impression of that time remains alive. So alive, in fact, that I am still convinced that our government will lead us to a true and lasting peace based on this international organization. (Yet it is not easy to maintain this belief in light of the eastern peace agreements, which justify accusing our government of deviating in practice from its proclaimed principles – an accusation routinely brought against Wilson, and rightly brought against Lloyd George) (RC 081-15-05).

In addition, Carnap argued for the crucial influence of the “voice of the people,” thus openly siding with the January strikers' demands for “peace and bread.” He was not interested in assessing a “state of affairs.” In his view, this was the job of the politicians. For him, the relevant topic was more generally a question of conscience. “Here, at this crossroads (it is my optimistic belief),” wrote Carnap, “the people will do the right thing, and the politician who works with the best, constructive forces of the people (e.g., Bethmann Hollweg, Prinz Max von Baden). But woe to him who wants to realize his sophisticated program of shaping Europe's future without consulting the people” (RC 081-15-05). He thus juxtaposed the will of the people—Carnap's selected excerpts suggest that he meant above all the working class—against the official, authoritarian government policy. To clarify the ethical, as opposed to the political, significance of this question of conscience, Carnap referred to Kant's *Zum ewigen Frieden* (*Perpetual Peace*), a fundamental text for the constitution of the League of Nations in 1920.

By his own account, Carnap largely agreed with Popert's propositions. Without going into detail regarding his specific arguments here, it suffices to present Popert's key statement: “*Only if the war leads to conditions that render impossible a new war—at least among Europeans and their descendants, and at least for the foreseeable future—the sacrifices of war have not been in vain, and our soldiers have not died in vain*” (Popert, 1917a, 4, quoted from RC 081-15-12). In contrast to the “monarchical” path to peace, i.e., the dominance of one people over all other

peoples, Carnap and Popert advocated a “republican” way, a “way of international treaties among equal peoples” (Popert, 1917a, 6, quoted from RC 081-15-12).

Without waiting for the friends’ responses, Carnap sent his third circular just one week later, on 24 March 1918. Three days earlier, the German High Command had ordered the beginning of the Great Spring Offensive. It was a last and—as would soon become obvious—doomed attempt to decide the war in favour of the Central Powers at the Western front. Both the circular’s format (a collection of newspaper clippings from the international press) and its title (“Voices of the Peoples as Harbingers of a New Time”) were identical to those of the first circular. Carnap introduced the circular as follows:

Berlin, March 24, 2018.

My dear friends!

The 3rd (and perhaps also the 4th) circular again brings you excerpts from foreign newspapers. But I will increasingly refrain from commenting on them. This time I want to try to initiate a discussion through questions. At the end, there will again be room for a general discussion. Later on, I hope to be able to have a more fundamental debate about this whole set of questions, at least to the extent they lend themselves to that. In particular, I believe we will have to look at the ethical aspects of the issue at hand. But before I have the necessary overview, I will have to continue sending around a series of circulars that will help us determine which questions are suited for a broader discussion and how opinions are distributed among us.

Provided that the circulars will continue, I intend to discuss the following, one by one: the speeches of Prince Max von Baden; Kant “Zum ewigen Frieden” [“Perpetual Peace”]; Fr. Wilh. Foerster “Deutschlands Jugend nach dem Weltkrieg” [“Germany’s Youth after the World War”], etc.; perhaps Tolstoy (RC 081-16-04).<sup>25</sup>

Whereas Carnap left open the question of whether the discussion on ethical questions should be followed by one on political-organisational issues, he did refer to the 1915 book *Europäische Wiederherstellung* (*The Restoration of Europe*) by well-known pacifist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Alfred Hermann Fried, who, like Carnap, was also active in the Esperanto movement.<sup>26</sup> In any case, Carnap used foreign press commentaries to elicit specific assessments on questions such as the following. Did Germany view the pacifist statements of Lloyd George or Woodrow Wilson as signs of weakness? Did the German peace treaty with Russia—the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had been signed on 3 March 1918—warrant the trust of the English pacifists, especially those in the Socialist Independent Labour Party? Or was it the English imperialists who alone obstructed the path towards peace? Was it right to accord the social class with the fewest rights a key role in ending the war and creating a lasting peace? Wouldn’t it be necessary for the bourgeois advocates of peace in Germany to follow the example of the English and take a more far-sighted (rather

<sup>25</sup>The writings of Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, a philosopher and educator who had been expelled from the University of Munich because of his anti-war statements and writings, had been discussed among the *Freideutsche* since 1916. His book *Die deutsche Jugend und der Weltkrieg: Kriegs- und Friedensaufsätze* (German Youth and the World War: War and Peace Essays) had been published in the same year.

<sup>26</sup>An English translation of the book was published in 1916. Regarding Carnap as an Esperantist, see Ulrich Lins’ contribution to this volume.

than contemptuous) view of Socialist conferences, such as, for example, the Stockholm Peace Conference of the Second International in July 1917? Had the German government truly done its utmost to be clear regarding its war aim to support the English worker's desire for peace? Was it desirable to govern the coexistence of different nationalities within one and the same state by international agreement?

In his fourth circular of 30 March 1918, Carnap made good on his promise and sent out another compilation of international press commentaries, again without waiting for feedback on his previous circular. He largely refrained from formulating any guiding questions and limited his comments to what he considered to be particularly pressing events. The topics he put up for debate included the English workers' declarations of sympathy for the Russian Revolution during the Glasgow demonstrations on 27 January 1918, a report on English churches and their support for the creation of a League of Nations, the handling of the issue of war reparations, speculations regarding the peace policy in the English House of Commons, the majority and minority standpoints among the French Socialists, and the "pacifist platform of the English workers and the nationality question" (RC 081-17).

In his fifth circular, Carnap presented and carefully annotated Johannes Müller's essay *Vom beständigen Frieden (On Lasting Peace)*, published in 1918 by Müller's publishing company, the Verlag der Grünen Blätter. Like the previous circulars, the arguments of Müller—a nondenominational religious thinker Carnap had known since his childhood—elicited varied responses from the friends: mostly sceptical, several even hostile. Whereas Carnap, following Müller, discussed the psychological causes of the war or elevated the League of Nations into a teleological issue and question of faith, certain of the friends responded in a more realistic and progressive way by referring to the mechanisms of international power politics, the prevailing nationalism, and the logic of capitalism. Alternatively, like Rugard von Rohden, they recommended not so much appeals to morality but rather proposed to "expand international organisations and international law" to protect the peoples against "hastiness and the outbreak of lowly passions" (RC 081-18-04).

In his sixth circular of June 10, 1918, Carnap invited comments on Kant's *Perpetual Peace*. Although he referred to the scholarly editions by Karl Kehrbach and Karl Vorländer, he once again focused on an essay by Popert on Kant's text and proposed the following issues for debate:<sup>27</sup>

1. The war as evil.
  - a) the juxtaposition: of a lawful state between individuals, a lawless state of nature between peoples.
  - b) a moral assessment of the war.
2. The striving for a lawful state as a duty.
  - a) Arguments in favour.

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<sup>27</sup>The Popert essay Carnap focused on was by Fidelis (= Hermann Popert), "Zum ewigen Frieden," *Der Vortrupp* 7:5 (1918): 81–91, RC 081-19-05.

- b) Opposing arguments.
- 3. The direction of the “plan of nature.”
- 4. Concrete forms (RC 081-18-03).

While Wilhelm Lohmann, Kurt Frankenberger, Walter Fränzel, and the brothers Friedrich and Rugard von Rohden formulated detailed opinions, we do not have any comments by Carnap on this circular. At the same time, the correspondence between Wilhelm Flitner and Carnap gained in intensity. Regarding the previous circulars, Flitner noted on 20 May 1918 “that the division in Germany is also running straight through us. However, I still believe that we will be able to reach consensus and that it is essential to continue the discussion” (RC 081-22-03). In response to Flitner’s proposal to use a diagram to organise and structure opinions, Carnap proposed refining these opinions. He also hoped that a clear and more nuanced presentation of the friends’ positions would help them reach consensus. On 6 June, he stated as follows:

Once this has been done, those representing the individual points of view among us (which the envisioned diagram would present in broad strokes) should perhaps define these standpoints more clearly, present their main thoughts, explain their opinions and arguments, and present the diversity of the standpoint by mentioning well-known politicians, scholars and writers, as well as journals, political parties, and groups which support this standpoint, and thus further illustrate it by connecting it with familiar ideas (RC 081-22-04).<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to Carnap’s attempts to nuance, Flitner urged simplification – ultimately for practical reasons. The positions were clear, in that there were two fundamentally different positions among the friends, as in the *Freideutsche Jugend* in general: on the one hand, the position of the Social Democratic pacifists and proponents of a “perpetual peace” (Carnap); on the other, the position of the “realists” who assumed a “perpetual war” and therefore favoured a *Machtpolitik* moderated by agreements and a new statecraft (Flitner). In addition, Flitner encouraged a discussion of the principles of politics that focused first and foremost on “practical” tasks without considering the possibility of destructive wars, an approach he felt would enable the participation of the young generation:

How *we*, with our cultural aims and attitudes, could take a stance on today’s pending issues, on a practical, intellectual, propagandistic level. We are, after all, faced with a government that does not share our cultural aims and attitudes because these were unknown to previous generations (RC 081-22-03).

Once again, we see the young people’s disappointment in the older generation that Ernst Toller noted.

In the seventh circular of 17 July 1918, Carnap put up for debate a published speech on the “spirit of international law” by Hugo Sinzheimer. The speech was originally given to introduce the programme of the pacifist Central Agency for International Law (*Zentralstelle Völkerrecht*), founded in December

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<sup>28</sup>A discussion of the diagrams developed by Flitner and Carnap to better engage with their friends’ positions on war and peace would be beyond the scope of this essay. However, they will be included in my forthcoming book on the *Young Carnap*.



1916 (Sinzheimer, 1917). A prominent labour law expert and later known as “the father of labour law,” Sinzheimer joined the SPD at the war’s outbreak and in 1919/20 served as a member of the constituent Weimar National Assembly. Carnap intended the brochure to serve as an introduction to the development of international law. He focused on two points in particular. First was the question of the “nature of the state”. For Carnap, the state was a social organisation—a member of a community of nations—one that may be by definition an organisation of power but one that existed not for power’s sake but for the people’s sake. Second, Carnap was concerned with the role friends would play in this future state, namely, the role of promoting international law to prevent war.<sup>29</sup> The meagre feedback from friends this circular received might be explained by the looming political and moral dissolution. After initial successes, the German Spring Offensive had failed for good. Thus, the Central Powers lost all manoeuvring room vis-à-vis the Entente, and Germany’s defeat was only a matter of time.

The eighth circular of 4 August 1918 was devoted to a speech about the League for World Peace (*Weltfriedensbund*) delivered in December 1916 by Walther Schücking, an expert on international law at the University of Marburg (Schücking, 1917). This circular was met with a similarly poor response. Carnap called on the friends to discuss the legal forms of the Hague arbitration, which had been developed before the outbreak of the war, with a special focus on the organisational method on which these forms were based.<sup>30</sup>

For the ninth circular of 16 July 1918, we only have preliminary although extensive notes for a diagram of the various positions on the peace question. Carnap also developed a questionnaire for the friends as a means to record their positions on the war. If one views the nine circulars as a whole, certain trends in the debates emerge. For one, there is a gradual thematic shift from German domestic policy to German foreign policy and from an amorphous idea of the people to national or international peacekeeping organisations. There are also increasingly concrete ideas of what the friends may be able to contribute personally to the anticipated postwar reordering of the state.

However, starting in August 1918, if not before, political events caught up with these attempts to define a collectively shared position. A fear of being accused of high treason played a major role. After all, the circle of friends included members of the German army who were espousing pacifist positions. At the same time, the retreat of the German army and the hopeless military situation raised great concern. Some, including Carnap, welcomed the inevitable defeat and revolution: “My grief about the military defeat and its consequences is more than outweighed by my joy about the revolution and my faith in its fruitful nature” (Rudolf Carnap to Elisabeth Flitner, Berlin, 17 November 1918; Flitner Papers, SUB Hamburg). Others, such as Flitner, resolutely differed, “Above all, I would oppose a violent revolution, whereas

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<sup>29</sup> See RC 081-20-02.

<sup>30</sup> Carnap once again circulated an essay by Hermann Popert, this one addressing the Court of Arbitration in The Hague; see Popert, 1917b, RC 081-21-04.

I would help support an intellectual-spiritual revolution that works in politically organic ways” (Wilhelm Flitner to Rudolf Carnap, Ilse Necker, and [Wolf] Gruber, *At the Front*, 9 September 1918; Flitner Papers, SUB Hamburg). Both positions dovetailed, however, when it came to their basically optimistic hope for a new beginning. Nevertheless, on 11 September 1918, the Commander-in-Chief to whom Carnap reported as a lieutenant in Berlin prohibited “the further dissemination of circulars of any kind” (note dated 11 September 1918; Flitner Papers, SUB Hamburg).

A few days earlier, on 5 September, Rugard von Rohden, responding to the last circulars, sent the following observation from the front:

In recent times, I have much experienced and observed in others the feelings of horror and disgust of war, but as soon as the violence of the sensory impression fades away, we also see a fading sense of responsibility of doing our utmost to bring about a change, faced as we are with the notion that these horrors are inevitable and that individuals lack power. It is this idea, rather than the desire to do anything against it, that is routinely strengthened in those who have long and much suffered from the war. The desire to improve things will rather be found in those who do not directly feel the oppressive effect of personal war experiences and yet have enough human feeling to feel responsible for such suffering. The great mass of the people, however, will learn to detest war and actively take an interest in securing peace only if it has been proven to them through actions that war is not an unavoidable necessity (RC 081-21-05).

In a way, Carnap took a logical step, when he, like many of the surviving *Freideutsche*, heeded Karl Bittel’s call to leave the educational communities of the youth movement—the Sera Circle was one of them—and the primarily private circles of friends and instead commit to realising the ideals of the *Freideutsche* movement in public life. “Let us raise anew the old ideals of freedom—an inner and an outer freedom—and of truth and justice” (Bittel, 1918, 1, quoted from RC 110-01), Bittel demanded in his first *Politischer Rundbrief*. Bittel himself became a member of the Workers and Soldiers Council in Karlsruhe during the November Revolution and joined the KPD in 1919. Carnap, instead of continuing his own, privately circulating *Politische Rundbriefe*, now contributed to Bittel’s *Politische Rundbriefe*.<sup>31</sup> He had joined the USPD on 1 August 1918, and in December of that year, he—together with Knud Ahlborn, Bittel, Eduard Heimann, Schultz-Hencke, Tormin, and others—signed an appeal to the *Freideutsche Jugend* to vote for the Social Democrats in the first Reichstag elections.<sup>32</sup> After returning from the front in December 1918, Flitner decided to join the emerging field of adult education. In April 1919, he became a member of the SPD in Weimar, while Franz Roh—to mention just one other

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Kernberger (= Rudolf Carnap), “Völkerbund – Staatenbund,” in 1. *Politischer Rundbrief* (5 October 1918), 4, and 4. *Politischer Rundbrief* (20 October 1918), 3f., RC 110-01-01 and RC 110-01-04. A manuscript entitled “Deutschlands Niederlage – Sinnloses Schicksal oder Schuld?” (“Germany’s Defeat – Senseless Fate or Guilt?”), written under the same pseudonym, was not published in Bittel’s *Politische Rundbriefe*. The manuscript, with an introduction by Christian Damböck, is included in this volume, @@@.

<sup>32</sup> “Freideutsche Jugend: Bürgertum oder Sozialismus? Jeder Freideutsche wähle sozialdemokratisch!“, 20. *Politischer Rundbrief*, 69-70, RC 110-01-16.

member of the circle of friends—was active in the November Revolution and later in the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic in Munich.

By supporting socialism after witnessing the brutal slaughter of the war, the anti-bourgeois prewar Meißner youth became political, at least for a short period of time. For example, a manifesto speaking for the *Freideutsche* on the left, co-authored by Carnap, proclaimed as follows:

*Freideutsche*, do not be tempted by the bourgeois circles who want you to believe that they desire a national community, freedom, and an empire of the spirit. What they mean is always only the community of the “bourgeoisie,” the freedom of the “bourgeoisie,” and the limited horizon of the “bourgeoisie.” It is propaganda under a new guise from the old men of yesterday’s collapsed era. Friends, women and men, be aware that socialism is the logical consequence of your *Freideutschtum* (RC 110-01-16).

The commitment of the friends to a new, cross-class model of society, which represented a way out of what was perceived as the prison of a capitalist economy, not only testified to their disappointment with the older generation, whom they held responsible for the war; this new social model also held out the promise of a future that would enable realising the ideals of the *Meißner* youth: democracy, freedom, justice, self-determination, culture, and community.

Translated by Manuela Thurner

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