4.2.4 TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

DER SPIEGEL

'We Are the People:'

A PEACEFUL REVOLUTION IN LEIPZIG

By Andrew Curry
October 9 , 2009

LEIPZIG—Oct. 9 is a monumental day in German history. Twenty years ago, the residents of Leipzig took to the streets under the banner 'We Are the People' and sparked peaceful protests that would lead to the fall of the Berlin Wall only a few weeks later.

Pastors Christian Fuehrer and Christoph Wonneberger had never seen so many people in the Nicolaikirche, an 800-year-old church in downtown Leipzig. It was Oct. 9, 1989, and the two young pastors knew they were on the verge of something huge. "There were 8,000 people inside -- more couldn't fit," Fuehrer said. "When we came out of the church there were so many people expressing themselves and demanding their freedom."

This was no spontaneous flash mob. By the summer of 1989, East German dissidents had been meeting at Leipzig's 800-year-old Nicolaikirche for almost a decade to pray and talk politics. At times there were fewer than a dozen people in the church, but all through the 1980s the meetings happened every Monday without fail. Eventually, they attracted people eager to discuss a wide range of causes, from the environment to the right to travel freely.

By the fall of 1989, the prayer meetings had evolved into a nationwide movement centered in Leipzig. And on Oct. 9, Leipzig hosted the largest protest demonstration in East German history: Between 70,000 and 100,000 peaceful demonstrators braved warnings from the feared Stasi, or secret police, and thousands of armed riot cops to march around the city center. In the end, the police did nothing, setting the stage for a peaceful revolution that swept across East Germany.

On Friday, Leipzig is celebrating its pivotal role in the fall of communism with concerts, exhibitions, light shows and an anniversary march tracing the steps of the Oct. 9 demonstration that rocked East Germany and helped pave the way for the collapse of the Berlin Wall more than a month later.

'People Were Willing to Take Risks Outside Berlin'

The events in Leipzig tend to be overshadowed by the sudden collapse of the Berlin Wall, which was photographed and filmed by hundreds of journalists and broadcast around the world. Leipzig was out of the way. There are just a few grainy tapes of the huge Monday Demonstrations, and outside of Germany they have mostly been forgotten.

But at the time, it helped that Leipzig was out of the spotlight. Although activists in Berlin had better contacts with Western journalists, the capital was under constant scrutiny. "Berlin was the showcase. In Berlin, everyone was minding their Ps and Qs for fear they'd get sent back to Karl Marx Stadt," Peter Claussen, a US diplomat who worked in the American embassy in Berlin in the late 1980s, told SPIEGEL ONLINE. "People were more willing to take risks outside of Berlin."

By the late 1980s, fueled in part by East Germans frustrated that they couldn't leave the country, the Monday prayer meetings in Leipzig were attracting hundreds, and then thousands, of people -- the largest regular meetings in Germany. Average citizens began to take notice. So did the Stasi: Dozens were jailed for weeks for their involvement.

Fuehrer and Wonneberger, long the targets of intense secret police surveillance and pressure, were arrested in late September and told to call off the Monday meetings -- or else.

'It Wasn't at all Clear it Would Be Peaceful'

It wasn't an empty threat. In the summer of 1989, East German politicians praised the Chinese decision to use violence against democracy activists camping in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. In September and early October, East German police had cracked down forcefully on protesters in Dresden, Berlin and Plauen. Protesters marching in Leipzig on Oct. 2 were beaten by police. "People had seen pictures from Beijing," Jens Schoene, a historian and author of "The Peaceful Revolution: Berlin 1989/90 -- The Path to German Unity," says. "It wasn't at all clear it would be peaceful."

On Monday, Oct. 9, Fuehrer, Wonneberger and the others at the Nicolaikirche decided to go ahead with the scheduled protests. All of East Germany, it seemed, was holding its breath. "We were so worried they would come in and shoot everybody," said Dorothee Kern,

then a graduate student in the nearby city of Halle. "We had goosebumps the whole day and the day before."

Dissidents prepared for the worst. Couples with kids made sure one parent stayed home, in case there was a police crackdown. Rumors flew around the city: Hospitals had been stocked with extra blood and beds; stadiums were readied to hold masses of arrested demonstrators. On his way home from work at the opera house in the middle of town that day, Leipziger Hans Georg Kluge remembers seeing the city filling with soldiers and police. "Everyone had to reckon with the state suppressing any demonstration," he says. "Violently, if necessary."

'We Are the People'

At 5 p.m., more than 8,000 people crowded into the Nicolaikirche. Four other Leipzig churches opened to accommodate thousands more protesters. After an hour-long service, Fuehrer led worshipers outside. The nearby Augustusplatz was jammed with demonstrators clutching lit candles. Prominent Leipzigers -- including Kurt Masur, the conductor of Leipzig's Gewandhaus Orchester -- read an appeal to protesters and police alike, urging them to keep the peace.

Slowly, the crowd began walking around Leipzig's ring road, past the Stasi headquarters and towards the train station. There were so many people on the road traffic and trams were blocked. Drivers left their cars in the middle of the streets and joined the march. Behind the scenes, police and Stasi officials were frantically trying to communicate with higher-ups in Berlin -- to no avail.

As the crowd made its way towards the city's century-old train station -- accompanied by thousands of helmeted riot police -- tension grew. But at the decisive moment, the police stood aside and let the protesters march by. "They didn't attack," Fuehrer says. "They had nothing to attack for." Organizers made sure the crowds gave the police no excuses. They carried nothing but candles and banners reading "We are the people." The Stasi planted plainclothes officers in the crowd to cause trouble, but they were all quickly surrounded and neutralized by protesters chanting "no violence."

Historian Erhard Neubert later called that night East Germany's "October Revolution." At least 70,000 people – perhaps as many as 100,000 -- took to the streets, making Oct. 9, 1989 the largest protest East Germany had ever seen. "People were on the streets and had the courage," Schoene says.

The time for violence was over. Secretly recorded footage of the march was broadcast on West German television, inspiring Monday Demonstrations all over East Germany in the weeks to come. The demonstrations in Leipzig doubled in size every week, attracting protesters from all over East Germany. By Oct. 23, 1989, a little less than two weeks before the Berlin Wall came down, more than 300,000 people filled Leipzig's city center, carrying candles and banners. Leipzig was nicknamed "Heldenstadt," or "hero city."

No one knew it at the time, but the peaceful Leipzig demonstrations exerted irresistible pressure to reform on the East German regime -- and led directly to the fall of the wall five weeks later. "It was a self-liberation. We did it without the dollar or the DAX, without the US or Soviet armies," Fuehrer says. "It was the people here who did it."

Source:

Curry, A. (2009, October 9). A Peaceful Revolution in Leipzig. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,654137,00.html

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Clergyman of the Streets Leaves His Historic Pulpit

By Nicholas Kulish
January 12, 2008

LEIPZIG, Germany—The problems in the eastern part of Germany have changed. The Rev. Christian Führer, pastor of the Nikolai Church here, has not.

Pastor Führer fought political injustice as one of the leading figures of the Monday Demonstrations in 1989 that gathered tens of thousands in the streets of Leipzig and helped bring down the former East German government. After German reunification, he refocused his energies on the region's emerging economic injustices, helping the unemployed find not only jobs but also a voice for their problems.

Speaking out for others seems to come easily to the pastor. Since the end of Communism, he has taken a stand against everything from the Iraq war to the closing of a brewery, from right-wing extremists to the curtailing of unemployment benefits.

But in March, change will be forced upon him. Pastor Führer will have to step down as leader of his historic Protestant church in the center of town here. He is turning 65, the church's mandatory retirement age. This past Sunday, he introduced his successor to the congregation, who at 39 is two years older than Pastor Führer was when he took the job in 1980.

While stepping down is unlikely to silence him — indeed, he said he would use some of his newfound free time to work on a book — it will mark the beginning of a slow retreat from his leading role in the city and beyond.

Outspoken and energetic, the minister seems far younger in person. He has arresting blue eyes and a commanding yet calming presence. With his signature denim vest and his spiky white hair, he looks more like a taxi driver than a man of God, but that fits perfectly with his philosophy of active engagement.

"I always wanted also to move in the earthly realm," Pastor Führer said. "It is not the throne and the altar but the street and the altar that belong together."

CHRISTIAN FÜHRER was born in Leipzig in 1943, during World War II. Aside from how fitting his given name, Christian, is for a minister, his last name, Führer, simply means leader. Yet, for many — especially non-German speakers — the word is all but inseparable from Hitler. In addition to meaning leader, however, it also means guide, appropriate for a spiritual counselor.

A sickly child, he was fascinated by the way Jesus cared for the abject and the outsiders, and from a young age he knew he wanted to follow his father into the ministry. It was not a monastic life, however, but one of involvement that he sought. Pastor Führer cited Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the prominent German Protestant theologian who was part of a plot to overthrow Hitler, and was eventually executed in a concentration camp, as among his greatest influences.

"The church must always be political," he said, "but there is a difference between political and party-political."

He learned Greek and Latin and studied theology at what was then Karl Marx University (now the University of Leipzig). At the same time he worked three summers in a car factory, and said he also loved to ride motorcycles as a telegram delivery boy. He was fascinated by the lively discussions that he heard in his days as a train waiter, and noticed that as a student of religion people spoke more freely with him than was usual, assuming he was outside of the Communist system.

"All critical people, they could only assemble and articulate their thoughts in the church," he said in an interview here in his home office.

Painted a shade of pink reminiscent of the pastel colors decorating the interior of the Nikolai Church, the office is a masterpiece of organized clutter, filled with stacks of papers and files, including one particularly precarious tower of stacked books on the corner of his desk. On one side of a window overlooking the church square are pictures of his wife, children and grandchildren, on the other depictions of Jesus, including one where he is breaking a rifle over his leg.

It was through the peace movement that Pastor Führer eventually found himself at the center of the protests against the East German government. In 1982, two years after being appointed head of the congregation, he began leading prayers for peace regularly on Mondays. He led demonstrations against the arms race, drawing caricatures of two bombs, one black with "NATO" painted on the side and one white, with "Warsaw Pact" written on it, satirizing the notion of the good bomb versus the bad bomb.

In February 1988, he invited 50 people who were part of a movement that advocated the right to leave East Germany to a discussion at the church. Instead, about 600 showed up and many began attending his regular prayer sessions. "They brought the masses," he said. The prayers and the vigils that followed drew more and more people. In May 1989, the police, concerned, began blocking traffic in the direction of the church.

Although East Berliners streaming through the recently opened wall became the iconic images of the time, the Monday Demonstrations here were the vanguard of the peaceful revolution. Despite the beatings and arrests of demonstrators at previous rallies in Leipzig, Berlin and Dresden, over 70,000 people took part in the Monday Demonstration on Oct. 9, 1989, with the famous chants of "We are the people." At the urging of Pastor Führer and other speakers, the protest remained nonviolent and the police did nothing to stop it, a turning point that encouraged more protests and helped hasten the opening of the country. The next Monday, 120,000 people showed up. On Nov. 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, with celebrations and high expectations for the future.

The expectations were too high, Pastor Führer said, with East Germans imagining that they would immediately have everything that their West German counterparts did. Instead, after unification, factories closed and entire industries collapsed.

He traveled to the former West Germany to learn how churches could help the unemployed, and in February 1991 started the Nikolai Church's initiative for the jobless. The emphasis was not on handouts, but on finding work, even if it was just volunteer work to get them out of the house, dealing with debt, and navigating the complicated system of benefits. "Those without help, they give up and don't even get what little is coming to them," Pastor Führer said.

GERMANY'S economy is in the midst of a much heralded revival, and Leipzig's rehabilitated downtown features plenty of luxury stores, with their jewelry and designer clothes. Yet government statistics show that the East has never caught up with the West; unemployment in Leipzig hovers around 19 percent.

The services they provide at the church's initiative are like "a drop of water on a hot stone," Pastor Führer said, but someone "has to give a sign of hope." Germany has no minimum wage and the widening gap between rich and poor has become a hot political topic. Pastor Führer deplores what he says are outsize executive salaries and supports not just a minimum wage but also a minimum income for all people, working or not.

But he also maintains some perspective on the situation in Germany, where even the scaled back social benefits are more generous than in most countries. Compared with East German times, the majority of people are doing better. "In Poland, in Ukraine," he added, "one would say, 'They live in a paradise.'"

Source:

Kulish, N. (2008, January 12). A Clergyman of the Streets Leaves His Historic Pulpit. *The New York Times*, Retrieved from *The New York Times*.

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Leipzig, 9 October 1989: When the Church Led a Peaceful Revolution

SERMON PREACHED AT ALL HALLOWS

By Trish Davie
October 13, 2002

"Do you remember the Cold War? Strange how it seems such a long time ago now, and yet it only ended 12 years ago. The images of missiles on each side of the Iron Curtain pointing at the other, and of their leaders each with a finger on the nuclear button, seem forgotten now, as Russia joins the G8 and more and more former Eastern Bloc countries seek to enter the European Union. Yet the threat of war in Europe was very real and frightening.

Germany of course was at the center of this theater of war, divided since the Second World War into two states, one in NATO, the other in the Warsaw Pact. Perhaps this added pain of their divided nation, where villages and communities were literally cut in half by the border, strengthened the protest on both sides against the stationing of medium-range missiles on German soil. Integral to this protest movement were the prayers for peace, which started as a decade of prayers every year — but in Leipzig it was decided that once a year was not enough, and so from September 1982 prayers for peace were held in St. Nicholas church — the *Nikolaikirche* — every Monday, with the words of the Beatitudes, which we heard in our gospel reading, central to the worship.

Under the East German regime, political meetings were of course forbidden, but the churches had an agreement with the state whereby, at least in theory, they were allowed to continue practicing their faith unhindered — the reality was very different, as the regime desperately tried to quash the churches' influence, and succeeded in many ways.

In 1986, though, the Nikolaikirche became a focus of hope through its support of people desperate to leave the GDR, which was forbidden. The church held a discussion as part of the prayer meeting on 'Living and Staying in the GDR,' and hundreds of people came, not just from Leipzig but also from other cities. So the Monday prayers became a place where all kinds of groups came together to express their longing for change.

In January there was the first big demonstration of ordinary citizens joining the opposition groups on the streets. The police responded by arresting opposition leaders and people who handed out leaflets. Tensions rose as week upon week more people came to the Nikolaikirche to find out what was going on. They attended the prayer service, then simply stood in the big square outside the church. Flowers were stuck in the grille covering the windows, with notes demanding the release of prisoners. As word spread beyond Leipzig about the Monday meetings at the Nikolaikirche, the authorities became more unnerved, and reacted in May by sealing off all access roads to the church, including nearby motorway exits. But the numbers of people attending the prayers grew and grew, and the sign outside the church saying 'Open to all' became a reality, as members of the Stasi — the much feared State Security Police — gathered to spy on the Christians and non-Christians, regime critics, environmentalists and simply curious [attendees] who were drawn to the church.

On June 4th the news came of the brutal events in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, [China] — mockingly the name means 'the square of heavenly peace' — where tanks met pro-democracy demonstrators, killing and injuring many students. This was a stark and chilling reminder to the people of East Germany of what could happen there. Six days later, on June 10th, police broke up the street music festival in Leipzig. People stood weeping as musicians were forced, with their flutes and double basses, into trucks and taken away.

As the GDR approached its 40th anniversary celebrations on October 6th, the regime was becoming more and more anxious to calm a situation which was out of control. Thousands of its citizens were escaping across the Czech border to Hungary, which had opened its borders to the West, and attempts to stop this resulted in more angry protests and police using water cannons and batons to drive back the crowds.

The next Monday prayers were due on October 9th, and the numbers of both police and demonstrators had been steadily growing. Both the demonstrators and the authorities knew that October 9th would be decisive. Leaders on both sides began to make preparations. An article appeared in the press saying that force must be used if necessary to put an end to the so-called counterrevolution. Documents from the time reveal that this was not just a threat. A force of eight thousand police officers, soldiers and members of the dreaded security police was assembled with batons and firearms. Specialists in the treatment of gunshot wounds were told to prepare for casualties.

Meanwhile, the pastor at the Nikolaikirche urged three other inner-city churches to open their doors and hold the peace prayers, so that as many people as possible would be inside, protected from the police. A university professor traveled to Berlin to urge the authorities to avoid bloodshed. Local dignitaries, including the director of the Leipzig Philharmonic Orchestra and local government officials, met to prepare a plea for non-violence to be read out over the pu-

blic address system. The area bishop prepared his own appeal for non-violence, which he would read out in each of the four churches.

And thousands of ordinary people left their homes, said goodbye to children and partners, and converged upon the city center. Eyewitnesses tell of the turmoil of emotions they felt: terror, as they wondered if they would be returning home, and yet at the same time a determination arising out of the despair of knowing that if they stayed at home nothing would ever change. '*Demokratie, jetzt oder nie*' — 'Democracy, now or never' — was both the slogan and the feeling on October 9th.

There's an amusing story amid all the tension. The pastor at the Nikolaikirche, Christian Führer, walked into the church at 2:30 p.m. to find the nave full with over a thousand people. He recognized at once who they were, and was amused. These were party officials and Stasi members who had been told to fill the pews of the Nikolaikirche where, according to their sources, criminals and troublemakers (the Germans call these *Rowdies*) were banding together to stage a counterrevolution. Pastor Führer wanted them to know that he knew exactly who they were, so he addressed his impromptu congregation: 'The Nikolaikirche is open to everybody, and it really means just that, with no exception. You are most welcome. I'm just a little surprised that you are already here at 2:30, when the working proletariat can only come after 4 o'clock, which is why we have the prayers at 5 p.m. But still, you are very welcome. But you will, of course, understand that we are keeping the gallery closed, so that a few of the working population, and a few Christians, can get into the church.' [. . .] And so the party officials and secret police sat quietly in their pews and waited for the *Rowdies* to storm the church.

5 p.m. came, and this is what they heard:

Jesus said: 'Blessed are the poor,' and not 'Happy are the wealthy.'

Jesus said: 'Love your enemies,' and not 'Down with your opponents.'

Jesus said: 'Many who are now first will be last,' and not 'Everything stays the same.'

Jesus said: 'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose her life for my sake shall find it,' and not 'Be very careful.'

Jesus said: 'You are the salt,' and not 'You are the cream.'

The irony — and the wonder of this — is not lost on Christian Führer. 'I always appreciated that the Stasi members heard the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount every Monday. Where else would they hear them?' The following day, these people actually came to thank him for the peace prayers.

It's worth quoting the powerful words of the preacher that evening, Gotthard Wendel:

"My dear people, I have the impression that people here, on this day, want to change our society for good. There is a pressure to succeed: today we must be the victors, now or never. But do we want to win at any price, even with blood and tears? I think enough blood has already been spilled in the last few days. God will help us! The reforms that we seek will come if we allow the spirit of peace, calm and tolerance to enter us. For anyone who kneels before God, words of peace become a drive to action. Is there any greater charge that we could be given than to be peacemakers in our city? Everybody who takes part in this service has the duty to be an instrument of peace. The spirit of peace must go out beyond these walls. Take great care that you are not rude to police officers. Be careful that you don't sing songs or chant slogans which could provoke the authorities. Take the stone out of your clenched fists. Our help and protection are in the Lord alone."

The Reverend Christian Führer describes what happened as the service ended with the bishop's blessing and urgent call for non-violence:

"More than 2,000 people leaving the church were welcomed by tens of thousands waiting outside with candles in their hands. I will never forget this moment. A person needs two hands to carry a candle: one to hold it and the other to protect the flame — so you can't carry sticks or stones at the same time. The miracle happened. Jesus' spirit of non-violence seized the masses and transformed them into a real and peaceful, powerful presence. Troops and police officers were drawn in and became engaged in conversations. The crowds chanted 'No violence,' and the police withdrew. The city of Leipzig was literally circled by a massive cordon of peacemakers as the leaders of the demonstration met the tail end on the inner ring road. There were no winners or losers, nobody triumphed over anyone else, nobody lost face. There was just a tremendous feeling of relief.

There were 70,000 demonstrators on the streets that evening and yet there wasn't a single shattered shop window. This was the incredible experience of the power of non-violence. Within a few weeks of further peaceful demonstrations, the party and ideological dictatorship had collapsed. 'He hath set down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek.' 'You will succeed, says the Lord, not by military power or by your own strength, but by my spirit.'

A member of the ruling party said before his death: 'We had planned everything. We were prepared for everything. But not for candles and prayers.'"

I could stop there, and we could all bask in the afterglow of an amazing story with a happy ending. But this story speaks urgently to us here and now. I don't know about you but I'm scared. I'm scared because we live in a world, particularly since September 11th [2001], where not only do we have nowhere to go to protect ourselves from terrorists, but we no longer seem to have the power to defend ourselves from the crazed logic of our rulers. As an American politician said recently, the world is not so much frightened by what the

terrorists might do as by what we are going to do. The democracy that we are supposed to be fighting for seems powerless to stop the madness, which threatens to destroy us all. The world is crying out for a new understanding, for a lasting, true peace.

It's so easy to fall into despair and its close relative, apathy. But we have just heard a remarkable story that can truly inspire us. It teaches us that **prayer** is **action**. Not sabre-rattling, not getting in our retaliation first, not building more defenses — but prayer. Out of a tiny mustard seed of prayer and eventually the unlikeliest team of worshippers, a peaceful revolution was born: some were there to spy, some half-listening, cynical, some committed, some believers, many unsure. We too can plant a mustard seed: ourselves, our prayer, be it mixed up with doubt and fear and helplessness. Jesus said: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' not 'Happy are those who rely on their own certainty.' The God we worship is a vulnerable God, vulnerable like us, vulnerable with us. Our shaky, faltering steps toward hope, when we are full of fear but choose not to rely not on our own strength but to listen to truths that we know deep inside ourselves, are an **act** of peace. Prayer is like the drop on the pond, sending ripples far and wide — or like the steady drip which gradually wears away the stone. Prayer and action become one. The people in the Nikolaikirche left the peace prayers and went onto the streets chanting '*Wir sind das Volk!*' — 'We are the people!' '*Keine Gewalt!*' — 'No violence!'

When I was in Leipzig in August I visited the Stasi museum, which is housed in the original state security police building. What struck me was how pathetic these power freaks really were. In order to keep control, or convince themselves they were so doing, they invented all sorts of silly contraptions that look like something Mr. Bean invented, to listen in and spy on their people and intimidate them. I could hardly believe the ridiculous make-up and wigs, false eyebrows, noses, moustaches, etc. that the secret police used as disguise. It gives you a really good picture of how weak and little these people really are, and how flimsy are the structures on which they build their illusion of strength….When Bush came to power, I often thought he resembled a helpless little boy. It is interesting how he too has developed his mask so as to appear strong and mighty.

In his recent sermon to mark the 20th anniversary of the peace prayers, Reverend Christian Führer challenged the American people and their president to reflect on the bronze sculpture entitled 'Swords into Ploughshares' outside the UN building. He then exhorted us to respond to the fear within and the violence around us in the words of St Paul: 'rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation and remain constant in prayer.'

Amen" (Davie, 2002).

Source:

Davie, T. (2002, October 13). *Leipzig, 9 October 1989: When the Church Led a Peaceful Revolution*. Sermon preached at All Hallows Church in Leeds, United Kingdom. Retrieved from http://allhallowsleeds.org.uk

GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

The Triumph of Nonviolence in Leipzig (October 9, 1989)

Translated by Jeremiah Riemer
2011

A contemporary witness recounts the events of Monday, October 9th in Leipzig, beginning with the GDR regime's early-morning preparations for the city-wide demonstrations scheduled for later that day. As author Wolfgang Schneider recalls, local communist authorities and police forces anticipated violence and prepared themselves accordingly. In the end, however, 70,000 "fearful yet unyielding" demonstrators remained calm and peaceful in the face of massive security forces, and local leaders opted for restraint. This opened the door for further protests under the slogan "we are the people."

A great deal has been written and even more has been speculated about the course of events on that fateful Monday. It is still unclear whether a special order to shoot was in place on October 9th in Leipzig. The clarification of this question, still pending, is not even of decisive historical relevance, since Secret Order No. 8/89 (decreed on September 26th by the chair of the National Defense Council, Erich Honecker) was still in force with no restrictions. With respect to the expected "riots," it clearly stated, "They are to be prevented from the start." And there was yet another clear instruction: "hostile actions should be prevented offensively."

Just how literally the Leipzig police leadership, chaired by the acting first secretary of the SED [Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands or Socialist Unity Party of Germany] district leadership, Helmut Hackenberg, took this order was already evident early that morning. Factory employees were warned against entering the downtown area after 4 p.m.; mothers were supposed to pick up their children from inner-city daycare centers and kindergartens by 3 p.m.; schoolchildren and [university] students were threatened with expulsion should they participate in "actions." The city was abuzz with rumors. There were furtive whispers about gunmen on centrally located buildings, fears about the deployment of paratroopers, and it was understood that the NVA* helicopter squadron in Cottbus had been put into "command-readiness." Reports about security-force bases in Küchenholz and Rosental were more reliable, as were those on preparations being made at the agricultural fairground in nearby Markkleeberg for the internment of "the delivered" (this had already been rehearsed on October 7th). Churches were to be kept open for escapees, and a medical station was set up in St. Thomas [church] posthaste. Emergency beds were set up in hospitals, and particular attention was given to the staffing of surgical and intensive-care stations. Thousands of additional units of stored blood were ready and waiting. [...]

That day Leipzig resembled an armed camp. According to later testimony from the riot police, officers had been told that morning that a peaceful outcome to the demonstrations was unlikely, and that they should prepare for possible acts of violence. Accordingly, they wore riot gear: helmets with visors and neck protection, shields, gas masks (tear gas had been acquired in large quantities), truncheons, and socalled RKWs**; officers were armed with pistols, and dog teams were also deployed. On the courtyard of the VP*** District Authority, "munitioned up" armored trucks stood ready, huge steel giants with bulldozing capacity; the drivers were armed with submachine guns and sixty shots of ammunition apiece. The police troop numbered three thousand men, twelve hundred of whom had been brought over from the Halle and Neubrandenburg districts. In addition, there were five squadrons of Factory

Combat Groups [Betriebskampfgruppen] and a special police task force from the Ministry for State Security. The number of those called in ran into the four figures, and their arsenals contained more than just handguns. [. . .]Six important Leipzig personalities issued a call for calm, which was read aloud during peace devotions in St. Nicholas Church [*Nikolaikirche*] and three other churches: "Our common concern and responsibility has brought us together here today. We are taken aback by the developments in our city and are searching for a solution. We all need a free exchange of views about the continuing development of socialism in our country. Therefore, the public figures whose names are being read today promise all citizens that they will apply their full power and authority to advancing this dialogue, not only within the district of Leipzig, but also with our government. We urgently request that you remain calm, so that a peaceful dialogue is possible."

This joint appeal by cabaret artist Bernd-Lutz Lange, *Gewandhaus* music director Kurt Masur, and theologian Peter Zimmermann, along with secretary of the SED district leadership Kurt Meyer, Jochen Pommert, and Roland Wötzel was also broadcast at 6 p.m. by the *Sender Leipzig* television station and about an hour later by the local radio station. This request to speak, as committed as it was courageous, undoubtedly contributed to the day's peaceful development, though it did not play the decisive role prematurely attributed to it. Only the concentrated power of the 70,000 fearful yet unyielding people who occupied the downtown and lined the city ring forced the ultimate retreat of the armed units at around

6:25 p.m. It was undoubtedly these anonymous people that Christof Hein had in mind when he proposed naming Leipzig the GDR's "City of Heroes.".

On October 9th in Leipzig, the German Democratic Revolution of 1989 triumphed. On that Monday, the cry "We are the people" became the material force that gave rise to, and accelerated, every hesitant concession by the party and government from that point on." [...]

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* NVA [Nationale Volksarmee]: literally, National People's Army – trans.

** RWK [Reizwurfkörper]: CS gas projectiles – trans.

*** VP [Volkspolizei]: People's Police – trans.

Source:

German Historical Institute. (2011). *The Triumph of Nonviolence in Leipzig (October 9, 1989)*. Retrieved July 2011, from http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter1_Doc5English.pdf