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You were personally active in the peace movement in the GDR and subsequently researched and compared feminist movements in the East and West. How would you summarize the most important differences?

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“The biggest difference was that the West German peace movement always had the option of using the public as a medium and getting legal assistance in cases of conflict. In West Germany, public protests could take place and the media could be used; the peace movement’s main strategy was really to create publicity and thus generate public discourse about the issue. In the event that this resulted in conflicts with the state or police — which, of course, was also possible in the West — it was always possible to get legal assistance and a transparent trial. In the GDR, none of this existed. It was impossible to raise public awareness about such issues. The mere planning of a protest would have had legal consequences; the actual implementation most likely would have landed you in prison. For this reason, the independent peace movement in the GDR always relied on the protestant church, since this was the only space that offered some sort of protection. In this semi-public space, it was possible to engage in critical discussion. Movements involving the public outside the church were very dangerous and usually resulted in arrests. In the case of arrests, there were no transparent and fair trials. In the criminal law code, there was a





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“paragraph (16) entitled “Subversive Agitation”, which was so loosely worded that nearly every critical utterance could have been defined as a crime and penalized with two to ten years in prison. For example: In the West, the primary concern was finding a way to distribute flyers as widely as possible to get any attention at all in the multitude of public information. In the East, the goal was to design flyers that would go unnoticed by the authorities and then distribute them conspiratorially, usually via one’s circle of friends. While in the West an unlimited number of flyers could be printed without necessarily being read, in the East only a small number of flyers could be conspiratorially produced, each of which was usually read and passed on by multiple people. Anyone who read these flyers and did not report them to the police was just as liable of being prosecuted as those who had produced them.²

