

Monday, June 1, 2009: Graben-Neudorf to Wiesental, stopping at Phillipsburg Nuclear Power Plant

It is another beautiful day for walking. As we leave our comfortable field for today's walk we can see the nuclear power plant in Phillipsburg in the distance, with huge power lines connecting to it.

The day's walk is mostly on bike paths through beautiful forests. As we enter Phillipsburg we walk past a medieval fair with many people dressed in period outfits. As we pass many of them peer out through the fence at our motley crew while we look upon them with the feeling that we are connected to the period they are dressed to represent because we walk from village to village in Europe carrying a



message. Then suddenly we realize we are approaching the power plant and a young man who we are later introduced to as John rolls a big inflated earth towards with a cheerful greeting. We are greeted by local activists from "Bruhrainer Burger fur eine Atom Freie Zukumft" with cakes and coffee and other refreshments.

Jun-san finds a secluded place to drum and chant, others sit and meditate on the evil plant, while the rest chat with our hosts. After a while we hold a circle to discuss the action we have planned, a die-in. Several of the locals decide to join our action, so we continue walking towards the gates. When we are all there we gather in front of the gate and mill around as if we are normal citizens, chatting, laughing, singing, dancing, and enjoying life. Suddenly two atomic figures appear infecting us with their poison, and one by one we die. Investigators outline our bodies with chalk while we lie dead on the ground. The guards at the gate watch with alarm but in silence. Of course the beautiful day turns ominous and a heavy rain falls. The signal to revive is given by Marion's flute, and our jubilation causes the atomic figures

to wither and die. Just then the rain stops and the sun come back out. Everyone is pleased by how the action went, and soon we are walking the last 8 km to Wiesental with our hostess Ilse showing us the way. Jon



June 3, 2009: Weisental to Schwetzingen

After a rest day in Weisental where our hosts Ilse and Armin Baumann let us use their house for laundry and the internet and another long circle on the drum where nothing is resolved, we walk to Schwetzingen for a nuclear free future.





Friday 5 June – Mannheim to Worms 31km

After making use of the gym's hot shower facilities, we tucked into a sumptuous breakfast and lunch spread prepared for us by our hosts – fresh rolls and breads, fresh coffee, tea, fruit juices, various jams, spreads, cheeses, fruits and cereals, and boiled eggs. I gather this made a welcome change from the usual daily porridge. Jonathan had spent the night out and crashed at some biker's home. He strolled back in



the morning sporting a new green Mohican hairstyle, looking every bit the eighties punk rocker. Feeling a bit jaded, he was going to take the day off. This was my first day's walking, so the folks thought they'd break me in gently with a nice 30+k-er! Jill and

Marc took the van ahead and the rest of us walked. The first half of the walk on this warm and pleasant day took us into Mannheim city centre, where we gave out plenty of flyers to shoppers, and then out into more tranquil rural surroundings – apart from the sprawling Siemens factory and other industrial facilities – mostly flat and along or

close to the banks of the river Rhine and along the edges of maize fields. Some interesting birdlife passed overhead – first a stork and then several hawks, a couple of them being chased away by crows. Crossing the Rhine to enter the curiously-named city of Worms, we were greeted by our local host, Andreas. The impressive bridge tower caught my eye, reminding me of Tower Bridge in London, though this one was brick-coloured. Andreas guided us to our stay place for the next few nights, a currently vacant shoe shop in the Turkish quarter of the town. We met Andreas' wife Regina and their boy and girl. The shop had a bath and hot shower in the bathroom, which was very welcome. For dinner we enjoyed a tasty vegetable soup prepared by Jill and others, followed by a dessert of stewed rhubarb with cake.
Dan



Saturday 6 June – Worms to Biblis and back 23km



It had been raining overnight and was spitting as we left Worms at 9.40am, but the weather cleared up and we enjoyed an afternoon of sunshine. We arrived at Biblis nuclear power plant shortly before 2pm. The site is owned by German energy giant RWE but is not currently in operation. RWE (owners of npower) and fellow German energy giants E.On have formed a consortium to build and operate new nuclear power plants in

England and Wales, just like our friends EDF from France, who we know well from last year's

walk. About thirty local activists met us in the power station car park, setting up lots of refreshments for us. Some of them were already known to other walkers from their recent visit to Philipsburg. We were given a surprise of some young circus performers carrying out juggling and acrobatics. A sheet of cloth was then laid out on the ground on which people made footprints with different coloured paints. We then all processed round the corner



carrying our banners and flags (including the new one with freshly-painted footprints) to the front gates, which were closed, with hardly anyone else around – just a few local journalists,



police officers, security guards and RWE workers. Banners were laid down by the gates and different coloured peace cranes placed atop them, and Jun-san banged her little drum. Then Jutta began playing her guitar and everyone started dancing. Then two of us dressed in hooded white paper suits decorated with black and yellow hazard tape, and wearing face masks, passed over dancers who then lay down

“dead” on the ground, symbolizing victims of

radiation. Others chalked around the outlines of the “corpses”, leaving the impressions of their bodies after they eventually got up. We bid our friends goodbye, then retraced our steps to Worms, arriving shortly before 8pm. We were joined on the way back by a new walker, Manuel from Brittany, northwest France, already known to a few of the walkers from an anti-nuclear camp in Normandy after last summer's walk. The friendly Turkish man “Papa” who ran the shortly-to- open bistro-bar just opposite the shoe shop in Worms had invited us round for a meal that evening, paid for by his German friend.





Carnivores had chicken kebab meat with salad, whilst veggies enjoyed a Greek / Turkish-style salad with feta cheese, all served with lots of tasty Turkish bread. We learned that Papa makes wheelchairs for disabled people which he sends around the world. We later made a collection for his charity, our way of thanking him for his generous hospitality.

Sunday 7 June – Rest day in Worms

I used my first rest day to rest! Two days of walking and I was already knackered! Others went out and about exploring, using the Internet and attending to various tasks.

Dan



Monday 8 June – Worms to Offstein 11km

A short walk today as we finally wriggled out of Worms. As we passed through a town giving out flyers, one was taken through the doorway by a lady with scarlet-coloured hair. We thought she might be a friend of Jonathan's. Anyway, as we stopped for a break nearby, Elda took a call from the same lady, a German lady called Britta, on the walk mobile (she got the number from the flyer). She wanted to invite us all round for lunch! It was a short day for us, so we gladly accepted. We noticed the rainbow flag with peace symbol she had hung up in the passageway.



She had similarly spotted our flags at the window as we passed by and had gone out to take a look. It had been her youngest, Leonardo's second birthday party and she had loads of bowls of pasta and potato salads left over from their barbeque, and soft drinks and cake. Britta was married to a Sicilian whom she met about fifteen years ago. He worked at the nearby pizzeria and they soon fell in love with each other, even though he couldn't speak German and she didn't know Italian. Anyway, she now speaks Italian fluently, so Elda and I were able to converse with her in this language. Later, other family

members appeared: the mother, the kids, the brother-in-law and nephew from Sicily, and then the husband, Giovanni. With sated bellies, we offered our generous lunch hosts peace cranes and our warm thanks and went on our way. Unfortunately, Jutta has now had to leave the walk for a few days at least to look after her grandfather who is poorly. We wish him well and hope to

see Jutta again soon (and not just so she can help with translation!). We arrived at our stay place in Offstein early in the afternoon. It was a leisure centre where we would camp outside. There was a barbeque hut where we could prepare food and sit. After putting up our tents, some folk went off to get an ice cream. Later, Jonathan, Aristide, Noe and Manuel found the energy to play football on a small artificial pitch outside with two German girls. Jen and others prepared a delicious minestrone soup. It had been a



mild day, but there was some light rain in the evening.

Tuesday 9 June – Offstein to Ebertsheim 18km



Today it was mild and cloudy with some sunny spells and the odd light shower. We walked along roads surrounded by verdant hills decorated with vineyards and wind turbines. We stopped for a sunny lunch break in the town of Grunstadt for a press conference that never quite materialized. We nevertheless took the opportunity to sample the local pastries and Italian ice creams. We arrived at the old paper mill in Ebertsheim with its

distinctive brick tower at 3.30pm. This site had been bought up and turned into a cooperative eco-community. We were warmly welcomed and given a tour of the beautiful and extensive gardens, where fruit and vegetables grew, and donkeys and a piebald horse trotted in their paddock. We were shown a demonstration beehive – they produce their own honey – and the peaceful woodland areas.



– and the peaceful woodland areas.

Some of us put up tents outside on this lovely summery evening, whilst others would sleep indoors. We enjoyed coffee, tea and biscuits with our hosts. Elda and others prepared a tasty pasta dish with walnuts for dinner, accompanied by salad with rocket and other leaves freshly picked from the garden. For dessert we enjoyed fresh strawberries picked from someone's garden. After

dinner, Aristide lit a campfire in the garden, around which we passed the evening with our hosts.
Dan



Wed, June 10th Ebertsheim- Kaiserslauten



We left our cozy accommodations and friends at the Eco Center and headed towards Kaiserslauten. It was a very long day of walking and the weather jumped between being cloudy and cold to warm with bright spots of sun. We took many bike routes and small roads to avoid the direct traffic. It was a pleasant route full of trees and nature with many areas to rest and have our lunch. We walked thru the busy

village of Kaiserslauten and past a very creative fountain. Our arrival at the Peace Church in Kaiserslauten after a long and exhausting day of walking was marred by a conflict between two walkers which ended up in a physical scuffle on the floor at the beginning of dinner. How shocking to present ourselves at the Peace Church throwing punches at each other!! Our dinner and gathering afterwards seemed strained due to the emotional events and feelings among us and those in conflict.

Jenn



Thursday, June 11th, Kaiserslauten- Landstul

The next morning we hurriedly said goodbye to 3 of our walkers who decided to part ways with us. We walked to Landstul, a small village with a few churches, one of which we were welcomed to spend 2 nights in. We arrived after a short day of walking and decided to check out the view above which housed a crumbling Knights Castle and a good view of the largest U.S military base in Germany where we planned to do an action the next day which was our rest day.

Jenn



Friday, June 12th Rest day, Landstul- Memorial site and Military base action.

We woke at the church in Landstul and after breakfast headed out with Wolfgang, our generous host, to visit a local memorial site which was on the way to the Military base. Remembered at this site is a tragic day in Landstuls community where in 1988 over 70 people died when an accident occurred at a Military air show which was viewed by over 100,000 people. Previous to the accident, the Military decided it would be in the communities interest to show the German public what was on the military base once a year. This particular year they invited the Italian Military to participate in the festivities. There was a terrible accident where 3 planes crashed and 2 fell into the crowd killing spectators. Wolfgang told us the local community of Peace workers had protested the gathering as Military propaganda. After the tragedy there was a decision to ban any future air shows. We stopped at the memorial site and circled up to observe their untimely deaths and all the other senseless deaths and victims of Military violence. After this we continued on to the gates of the Military base. We walked with our flags and a banner wrestling the strong wind and we received many honks and a few odd gestures from the many cars that passed on their way to the base. We didn't quite get up to the gate when a German woman, private security, approached us strongly urging that we couldn't be there and that we needed to back up to where the intersection was several blocks from where we had come. We had planned a simple action to go to the gate and observe silence for one hour and then hang a peace crane. Obviously this was not possible as we were still far from the gate when we were advised to turn around. We stalled for about 30 minutes, our banner still visible which read "Civil Society against all Nuclear Weapons", and some of us had our passports checked. We eventually made our way slowly back towards the consented zone and on our way we uniquely positioned ourselves on top of a grassy mound in the middle of a trafficy turn about. This gave our message a great viewing point for all the drivers to and from the base and we stayed here looking perfect and bright with all our flags under the sunny sky for about 30 minutes.

Jenn



Saturday, June 13th Landstul- Offenbach Hunden

I woke up sick to my stomach and unfortunately spent the day sleeping and vomiting (sorry to share) so my perspective of this day is rather skewed and I can't say much about the walking. I do know that everyone took really good care of me and that I felt the love of these people in their small gestures and concern. Everyone walked a long day and we found our evenings accommodations at a Sportz Platz, a soccer field where we set up our tents and shared food and time with our great supporters and friends Andreas and Regina. They joined with us with their two small children Hanna and Paulo to camp. It was nice to hear the small voices and also to share time with about 10 local teenagers who made a fire with us and listened to stories of the walk and nuclear issues and shared with us their organizing efforts against fascism in their community.

Jenn



Sunday, June 14th, Offenbach Hunden- Kirn

We left early, shaking the thick dew off our tents and walked through a string of villages, our rag tag group possibly the strangest thing to pass here in a while. We wave hello to local villagers and hand our flyers to them in turn receiving openness and a curiosity and an occasional monetary donation. The day was sunny and hot and Germany is in full bloom with Nettles and Chamomile, Mugwort, Poppies, Wild Strawberries, Lupine, and Cherries accompanying our many steps along the roadway. I admire the tidy abundant gardens full of lettuces and kales and the easy walking on the winding country roads. The cows stare at us and wonder....?? We find our sleeping accommodations for the night and a warm welcome at the Evangelical Church in Kirns where we were happily shuttled off to the local pool for showers. We gathered back to have amazing food made by an Iranian man. We dined with Pastor Siggie who works with refugees and shared his ideas and work with us in conversation.

Jenn



Monday, June 15th, Kirn – Dickenschied

We woke up today with overcast skies and walked for a few hours with no rain observing the landscape changing as the land becomes more hilly and rocky and we pass by more streams and waterways. We are afforded beautiful views as we gain elevation and after steep walking we reach high points and see the patchwork of colors. In the distance the gold of wheat fields buffer the blue green potato fields, which hug the dense forests, which surround small white shapes that join together to form villages, their happy orange rooftops visible at a distance. At around 12pm it began to rain and we are quickly drenched and wet but the magic of flimsy cloud shapes rising and dissipating distracts me from any misery of wetness. We luckily found the perfect refuge for a dry lunch in a church whose doors were open and candles lit, which is common here. We ate cheese and bread and sat still like the sober cold bricks surrounding us. We continued walking and the rain eased a bit and then came down on us again. We all packed into a covered bus stop for a break which made for a silly sight I am sure. We found our way to Dickenschied and just had a lovely meal of salad and bread at an Evangelical school where we all seemed relieved to get out of our wet clothes and relax.

Jenn

