

# *An Age of Murder: Ideology and Terror in Germany*

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It is best to begin with the obvious. This is a series of lectures about murder, indeed about an age of murder.<sup>1</sup> Murders to be sure inspired by political ideas, but murders nevertheless. In all, the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (Red Army Faction, hereafter the RAF) murdered thirty-four people and would have killed more had police and intelligence agencies not arrested them or prevented them from carrying out additional “actions.”<sup>2</sup> Yesterday, the papers reported that thirty-two people were killed in suicide-bomb attacks in Iraq, and thirty-four the day before, and neither of those war crimes were front-page news in the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. So there is an element of injustice in the amount of time and attention devoted to the thirty-four murders committed by the RAF over a period of twenty-two years and that devoted to the far more numerous victims of radical Islamist terror. Yet the fact that the murders of large numbers of people today has become horribly routine is no reason to dismiss the significance of the murders of a much smaller number for German history. Along with the murders came attempted murders, bank robberies, and explosions at a variety of West German and American institutions. The number of dead could have been much higher. If the RAF had not used pistols, machine guns, bazookas, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), remote-controlled

1. This article was originally delivered as the opening lecture of the lecture series “The ‘German Autumn’ of 1977: Terror, State, and Society in West Germany,” held at the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, on Thursday, September 27, 2007.

2. The Red Army Faction, or RAF, was also often referred to as the “Baader-Meinhof Gang” with reference to two of its founding members, Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof. Meinhof’s leadership role was surpassed by others. The group referred to itself as the RAF, and I will use that term here.

bombs, and airplane hijackings, and if the West German radicals of the 1970s through the 1990s had only published turgid, long-winded communist manifestos, no one would have paid them much attention at the time. I doubt that the German Historical Institute would have decided to sponsor a series about Marxist-Leninist sects of the 1970s.

First, to understand the impact of the RAF, we need to expand our focus in time and space. The periodization of West German terrorism was not limited to the German fall of 1977. The RAF began in 1970 and did not dissolve until 1998. It waged an almost thirty-year war against the Federal Republic of Germany. Moreover, as a number of contributors to Wolfgang Kraushaar's indispensable two-volume collection, *Die RAF und der Linke Terrorismus* (in particular Martin Jander, Thomas Skelton Robinson, and Christopher Daase), have pointed out, the RAF must be understood in the context of its connections to the international terrorist networks focused in the Middle East as well as to the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the tendency to romanticize the RAF, its international links—and its trans-national link to East Germany—belie efforts to present it as an isolated group. These links were crucial to understanding its political significance. That significance lay in a larger political effort that combined the various motivations of West German terrorists with the efforts of Communist intelligence services to weaken West German ties to the United States and of Palestinian terrorist organizations to weaken or break—or at least raise the cost—of West German support for the state of Israel. In this sense, the story of West German terrorism is a chapter in the history of the cold war. The RAF wanted to destroy both capitalism and liberal democracy in the Federal Republic in the hopes of giving support to an expected global communist revolution, led by “liberation movements” from Vietnam to the Middle East to Latin America, against global imperialism led by the United States. In those twenty-eight years, more than a thousand police and government officials

3. Martin Jander, “Differenzen in antiimperialistischen Kampf: Zu den Verbindungen des Ministerium für Staatssicherheit mit der RAF und den bundesdeutschen Linksterrorismus,” in Wolfgang Kraushaar, ed., *Die RAF und der Linke Terrorismus*, 2 vols. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006), 1:696–713; Thomas Skelton Robinson, “Im Netz verheddert: Die Beziehung des bundesdeutschen Linksterrorismus zur Volksfront für die Befreiung Palästinas (1969–1980),” in *ibid.*, 2:828–904; and Christopher Daase, “Die RAF und der internationale Terrorismus: Zur transnationalen Kooperation klandestiner Organisationen,” in *ibid.*, 2:905–29. See also Christopher Andrew and Wassili Mitrochin, *Das Schwarzbuch des KGB*, vol. 2, *Moskaus Geheimoperationen im Kalten Krieg* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2006).

worked to capture members of the Red Army Faction. The publicly available files of government investigators and trial records encompass eleven million pages.<sup>4</sup> Work in the archives of the intelligence services of the former Communist states, including those in East Germany, is still in the early stages, while the files of Western intelligence agencies—the CIA, U.S. military and diplomatic intelligence services, the Federal Intelligence Service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*), the Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*), and the West German Justice Ministry files—will hopefully be made available to researchers in accordance with the thirty-year rule.

Second, the terrorism of left-wing groups beginning with the Tupamaros and the June 2nd movement in West Berlin in 1969, and then evolving into the Red Army Fraction, was a chapter in the history of two major European and German political traditions: communism, and antisemitism. To be sure, many communists and antisemites did not engage in politically inspired murder, but the terrorism that emerged in West Germany in 1969 had its fundamental ideological roots in the communist tradition. German left-wing terrorism is incomprehensible outside that context. In addition, Communist states—East Germany, perhaps the KGB—and movements of the radical left inspired by communist anti-imperialism—most importantly radicals in the Palestinian Liberation Organization and its offshoots—offered money, weapons, fake travel documents, travel assistance, and escape routes.<sup>5</sup> The role of communism, particularly the Marxist-Leninist analysis of fascism that was central to it, is no less indispensable for understanding why the post-New Left sects in Germany, Italy, and Japan were so much more murderous than was the aftermath in the United States, France, and Britain. The communist interpretation of the causes of the Axis dictatorships was that they were the product of capitalism. Hence, as capitalism was reproduced in all three societies—and as many persons who had served the governments of Imperial Japan, Fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany returned to positions of influence in the postwar democracies—the terror groups could draw on a long communist tradition, sustained as

4. Butz Peters, *Tödlicher Irrtum: die Geschichte der RAF* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2007), p. 17.

5. Richard Herzinger, “Deutsch-palästinensische Achse des Terrors,” *Die Welt am Sonntag*, September 2, 2007, p. 17. Martin Jander’s research in the Stasi files indicate that the RAF had multiple contacts and forms of assistance from the East German intelligence services. See Jander, “Differenzen im antiimperialistischen Kampf.”

well by the existing Communist regimes, including East Germany, which described and denounced Italian, Japanese, and West German democracies as “fascist” or “neo-fascist” governments.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, and very importantly, the Vietnamese Communists’ Tet Offensive was a military failure and a propaganda success for the international Left, which interpreted it as evidence that the United States might be defeated in Vietnam.

Third, this age of murder was also a product of the intersection of antisemitism with left-wing radicalism. Indeed, as Kraushaar among others has noted, a peculiarity of the German—but also of the Italian and Japanese—terrorists of the 1970s and 80s was its close links to Palestinian terrorist groups. Indeed, he makes a good case that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict became even more central for West German radicals than did the war in Vietnam. The placement of a bomb by the West Berlin Tupamaros in the Jewish Community Center in West Berlin in 1969 and the 1992 attempt by the RAF to blow up a bus in Budapest filled with Russian Jewish émigrés on their way to the Budapest airport and from there to Israel are two antisemitic acts that serve as starting and end points to the age of murder.

The writing of history often entails an injustice insofar as we pay more attention to the perpetrators of crimes than to their victims. Tragically the latter often vastly outnumber the former, even when both numbers are considerable. The commentaries about the RAF suffer from this injustice as well, so that the names of the most prominent killers become familiar while the identities of their victims sink into oblivion. At the many trials and then in some recent books, such as those by Butz Peters and Anne Siemens, the family members, friends, and colleagues of the murdered have rescued their memory from oblivion. So, before we turn to historical analysis or avoid the essential with a flight into theories and causal analysis, I think it appropriate to recall the names of the people murdered by the RAF and to indicate when, where, and how they were murdered. The RAF dismissed them as “pigs” or, in more intellectual moments, as “character masks” for

6. For analysis of these comparisons, see Dorothea Hauser, “Deutschland, Italien, Japan: Die ehemaligen Achsenmächte und der Terrorismus der 1970er Jahre,” in Kraushaar, *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, 2:1272–98; and Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2004). On the centrality of anti-fascism in the history of twentieth-century communism, see François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000).

capitalism. Not one of these people had done anything to deserve having their lives cut short and their families and friends shattered:

1. **Norbert Schmid**, 33, October 1971, policeman in Hamburg, shot while checking the identities of two RAF members.
2. **Herbert Schoner**, 32, December 22, 1971, police officer, shot by the RAF in the course of a bank robbery in Kauserslautern.
3. **Hans Eckhardt**, 50, March 3, 1972, police detective (*Kriminalhauptkommissar*), shot to death in the course of the arrest of two members of the RAF, Manfred Grashof and Wolfgang Grams, in their safe-house apartment in Hamburg.
4. **Paul A. Bloomquist**, 39, May 11, 1972, First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, murdered when the RAF set off a bomb in the Main headquarters of the U.S. Army in Frankfurt.
- 5–7. **Clyde R. Bonner**, Captain in the U.S. Army; **Ronald A. Woodward**, specialist in the U.S. Army; and **Charles L. Peck**, also specialist in the U.S. Army, all killed by the RAF's bomb attack on the European headquarters of the U.S. Armed Forces in Europe on May 24, 1972.
8. **Andreas von Mirbach**, 44, May 24, 1975, military attache of the German Embassy in Stockholm. Shot several times at close range by RAF member and thrown down a set of stairs in an effort to compel the West German government to release previously imprisoned members of the RAF.
9. **Heinz Hillegaart**, 64, May 24, 1975, the economics attaché in the Stockholm Embassy, shot in the back of the head and killed by the RAF in the embassy seizure.
10. **Fritz Sippel**, 22, May 7, 1976, police chief of the town of Spendlingen (near Offenbach), shot in the head by an RAF member in the course of a check of identity papers.
11. **Siegfried Buback**, 57, April 7, 1977, the Attorney General of the Federal Republic (*Generalbundesanwalt*) from 1974 to 1977, murdered in his official car on the way to work by an RAF member firing a rapid-fire weapon from a motorcycle.

12. **Wolfgang Göbel**, 30, April 7, 1977, Buback's driver, murdered on the same day and in the same way.
13. **George Wurster**, 33, April 13, 1977, in charge of chauffeurs of the Attorney General's office. He sat next to Bubeck in the back seat and died of his bullet wounds a week later.
14. **Jürgen Ponto**, 53, July 30, 1977, chief executive of the Dresdner Bank (*Vorstandssprecher*), shot to death with five bullets fired at close range by RAF members Christian Klar and Brigitte Mohnhaupt in his house in Oberusel. His wife, Iignes Ponto, witnessed her husband's murder.
- 15–18. On September 5, 1977, the RAF kidnapped Hanns-Martin Schleyer in Wuppertal-Elberfeld. Schleyer was president of the National Association of German Employer Groups (*Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Arbeitgeberverbände*), the main national association of German big business. Schleyer had been on an RAF hit list found by the police and thus had extra security. The kidnapping, in which about twenty members of the RAF participated, began with a massacre, carried out with machine guns and machine pistols, of the drivers of his two-car convoy and his body guards. They were: **Heinz Marcisz**, 41, Schleyer's driver; **Reinhold Brändle**, 41, driver of Schleyer's second security car; **Helmut Ulmer**, 24, a police officer in the accompanying car; and **Roland Pieler**, 20, a police officer who was sitting in the backseat of the security car. Both Brändle and Pieler's bodies were riddled with over twenty bullets.
19. **Arie Kranenburg**, 46, September 22, 1977, police official (*Hauptwachtmeister*) in Utrecht in the Netherlands, shot by RAF member Knut Folkerts in a car-rental office.
20. **Hanns Martin Schleyer**, 62, October 18 or 19, 1977, murdered by RAF member with three shots to the head in an as yet unknown location. After a call from the RAF to officials, his corpse was found in the trunk of an Audi in Mulhausen, Germany.
21. **Hans-Wilhelm Hansen**, 26, September 24, 1978, police official, shot as he and several colleagues surprised RAF members Angelika Speitel, Michael Knoll, and Werner Lotze when they were engaged in target practice in a forest near Dortmund.

22. **Dionysius de Jong**, 19, November 1, 1978, a Dutch customs officer, shot after he and colleagues stopped RAF member Rolf Heißler as he illegally crossed the border from Germany to the Netherlands.
23. **Johannes Goemans**, 24, November 14, 1978, a Dutch customs officer who died of wounds suffered in the same shoot-out in which Rolf Heißler died.
24. **Edith Kletzhändler**, 56, November 19, 1975, a housewife shot in the throat by a bullet fired by RAF members Wagner, Klar, and Beer, who were firing at police.
25. **Dr. Ernst Zimmermann**, 55, February 1, 1985, chairman of the executive committee (*Vorstandsvorsitzender*) of the Machine and Turbine Union (MTU), murdered by an RAF commando with a bullet to the head in his home in Gauting.
26. **Edward Pimental**, 20, August 8, 1985, American soldier. RAF member Birgit Hogefeld met him at a club, then invited him to an apartment where he was shot by RAF members in order to get the use of his army ID card.
- 27–28. **Frank H. Scarton**, 20, American soldier, and **Becky Bristol**, 25, civilian employee, both killed on August 8, 1985, when the RAF used Pimental’s ID card to enter and place a bomb on the U.S. Air Force base in Frankfurt am Main.
- 29–30. **Prof. Dr. Karl Heinz Beckurts**, 56, July 9, 1986, member of the board of directors of the Siemens corporation and responsible for research and development; and **Eckhard Groppler**, 42, Beckurts’s driver. Both were killed in the same RAF car-bomb attack in Straßlach in Bavaria.
31. **Dr. Gerold von Braunmühl**, 51, October 10, 1986, Political Director of the Federal Republic’s Foreign Ministry, close adviser to Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (and former member of the German Embassy staff in Washington), shot at close range in front of his home in Bonn. His wife heard the shots and found his body lying in the street.

32. **Dr. Alfred Herrhausen**, 59, November 30, 1989, Chief executive officer (*Vorstandssprecher*) of Deutsche Bank, murdered by the RAF on his way to work by a bomb that blew up his armored, chauffeured car.
33. **Dr. Detlev Rohwedder**, 58, April 1, 1991, Chief executive officer (*Vorstandsvorsitzender*) of the “Treuhandanstalt,” the German government office responsible for privatizing and in some cases closing former East German factories. An RAF sniper murdered Rohwedder with a shot into his bedroom window from a distance of about 80 yards. Rohwedder’s wife, Hagard Rohwedder, an administrative judge, rushed to his aid and was shot in the arm.
34. **Michael Newrzella**, 25, June 27, 1993, senior officer of the GSG-9 (Border Guards, Group 9), the counter-terrorism unit of the German Federal Police, shot by RAF member Wolfgang Grams in the train station in Bad Kleinen in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

While we do not know of all of the attempted murders that the German police and intelligence services were able to prevent, several notable events are public knowledge: the aforementioned June 2nd Movement placed a bomb in the Jewish Community Center in Berlin in 1970; an unsuccessful attempt on August 25, 1977, to launch forty-two projectiles filled with 150 kilos of explosives at the offices of the Justice Ministry (*Bundesanwaltschaft*) in Karlsruhe; and of course the hijackings of an Air France plane to Entebbe in 1976 and of a Lufthansa flight to Mogadishu in 1977. You will recall that the Entebbe hijacking was distinctive because the terrorists, including Wilfried Bose, a product of the left-wing scene in Frankfurt, separated Jews from non-Jews at the Entebbe airport. Only the armed intervention of Israeli and German commandos respectively saved the lives of the hostages, with the exception of the German pilot and an ill, elderly Jewish passenger in Entebbe. Were it not for the intervention of the security services and occasional technical errors by the RAF, the toll of those murdered could have numbered well into the hundreds.

The history of West German terrorism has been dominated by works about the RAF. In a recent collection of interviews edited by Anna Siemens, *Für die RAF war er das System, für mich der Vater: Die andere Geschichte des deutschen Terrorismus* (*For the RAF he was the system, for me he was*



*my father*), the widows and children of those whom they murdered speak.<sup>7</sup> It is well worth reading. Mirbach's son, Clais, notes that in their interviews with the German media, former members of the RAF admit to a mistake here and there but all in all often present themselves as courageous idealists fighting for a better world. They remind him of former Nazis who repressed their responsibility after World War II and "did not want to know anything about the grief of their victims." And that, he continued, was a peculiar twist of history as anger over the repression of Nazism's victims was one root of the student movement and later of the RAF, and thus one cause of his father's murder.<sup>8</sup> Corinna Ponto, the daughter of Jürgen Ponto, reflects on how close her mother came to being murdered by the RAF when they killed her father and how lucky she was to be on a trip to London. Noting that all of the RAF's victims were innocent of any wrongdoing, she stresses that even to speak of "the innocent at all in this connection is a completely false use of language." She recalls that during the funeral for her father, and despite intense police presence, the RAF set off a bomb in the family's backyard as a message of intimidation to her mother not to testify in any future trial—this, despite intense police presence. The family left Germany and came to the United States for a time. The employees of the Dresdner Bank in Frankfurt staged a protest march in the center of the city against the RAF. In the reading that I have done for this lecture and in my memory, I do not recall a single large demonstration against the RAF from the Left. So many of the same people who said that the government exaggerated the threat, never went out into the streets to denounce the murderers.

Frau Ponto speaks movingly of what a murder means. Her young children were deprived of the opportunity to kid around, argue, and discuss with their grandfather:

A part of their history has been stolen. Murder is always also murder combined with robbery (*Raubmord*). One thing is clear: the RAF perpetrators had and have the opportunity to become "ex-perpetrators." . . . Whoever has been a victim can never become an ex-victim. Many of the RAF perpetrators are today often spoken of as "ex-terrorists." This "ex" is

7. Clais von Mirbach, in "Wer ist v. Mirbach war die erste Frage der Mörder an die Geiseln," in Anne Siemens, *Für die RAF war er das System, für mich der Vater: die andere Geschichte des deutschen Terrorismus* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 2007), pp. 66–67.

8. von Mirbach in *ibid.*, p. 67.

a privilege. I will not acknowledge that anyone is an ex-murderer or an ex-child kidnapper. But everyone called the people who were in the RAF “ex-terrorists” and today they live in our society. The “ex” gets transformed from a minus into a diffuse plus.<sup>9</sup>

Gabriele von Lutzau, the stewardess aboard the hijacked Lufthansa flight, was asked if she had any interest in talking to one of her former captors to discuss her motives. “I’m not interested in the background, in her history or in understanding her. This woman acted without a single moment of humanity. Her attitude was ‘we are better than you. We’re going the righteous way against Western imperialism.’ Her distorted view of reality is not one I ever want to face again.” This willingness to give voice to the victims is a welcome change from a media obsession—and some now embarrassing radical chic among intellectuals—about the RAF members.

The relationship of the West German New Left to subsequent terrorism has aroused a great deal of debate. The following strikes me as fair and plausible. The RAF and its circles of sympathizers were by-products of the New Left and of its disintegration. To be sure, many members of the 1960s Left rejected terrorism. Yet it is no less the case that the New Left attack on Western democracy as a sham, on capitalism as an unjust and irrational system, and on anti-communism as a tool to maintain imperialism by depicting a non-existent threat, all placed Western democracy on the intellectual defensive. Kraushaar has recalled that in September 1967, two prominent leaders of West German SDS (*Sozialistische Deutschen Studentenbund*) wrote what became known as the *Organisationsreferat*, or “Paper on Organization.” It was presented to a meeting of SDS in Frankfurt am Main in 1967 and was passed by majority vote. Speaking under the flag of the Vietcong, they argued that “the propaganda of bullets in the ‘third world’ must be complemented by a propaganda of the deed in the metropolises. It is there that an urbanization of rural guerrilla activity is historically possible.”<sup>10</sup> Written with a grasp of Marxist theory, it lent intellectual legitimacy to political violence several years before the idea

9. Siemens, *Für die RAF war er das System*, pp. 120–21.

10. Rudi Dutschke and Hans Jürgen Krahl, “Organisationsreferat,” *Diskus: Frankfurter Studentenzeitung* 30 (February 1980): 6–9, cited by Wolfgang Kraushaar in “Rudi Dutschke und der bewaffnete Kampf,” in Wolfgang Kraushaar, Karin Wieland, and Jan Phillip Reemtsma, *Rudi Dutschke, Andreas Baader, und die RAF* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005), pp. 20–21. On Dutschke and political violence, see also Michaela Karl, *Rudi Dutschke: Revolutionär ohne Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Neue Kritik, 2003).

became the RAF's practice. It also weakened the opposition to the use of violence in larger leftist circles.

By 1969, the New Left was making headlines for its disruptions of the German university lectures and exams. Theodor Adorno, co-author of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, one of the most influential works of left-wing social criticism of the postwar era, found himself at the center of these disputes. In a letter of June 19, 1969, to Herbert Marcuse—his old friend, fellow member of the Frankfurt School, and by then an international hero of the New Left—Adorno spoke of his depression over the fact that leftist radicals had broken up his lectures twice that summer semester and that he had to call the police to restore order to the Institute for Social Research building. He complained that the radical Left was preventing others from speaking and attacking professors. “The danger that the student movement will turn toward fascism is one I take more seriously than you do. After people here in Frankfurt screamed at the Israeli Ambassador, I’m no longer convinced of the assurance that this has nothing to do with antisemitism. . . . You must once look into the manic, cold eyes of those who even when appealing to us (Fr. School) turn their rage against us.”<sup>11</sup> Adorno was not reassured by Marcuse’s rejection of the possibility that the student Left might revert to fascist methods. In a statement of July 17, 1969, he described the efforts of radical students to break up end-of-semester sociology exams, in the course of which one young man physically struck the sixty-six-year-old professor.<sup>12</sup> That Adorno had been struck was news.

In 1970, professors at the Free University of Berlin, including Thomas Nipperdey and Ernst Nolte, helped to form the *Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft*. The *Bund* journal indicated that Adorno’s experience was not unique.<sup>13</sup> On three occasions in 1972 and 1973, communist students threatened to shoot a professor of English at the Free University because he

11. Theodor Adorno, “Nr. 338 Brief an Herbert Marcuse, 19. Juni 1969,” in Wolfgang Kraushaar, *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung: Von der Falschenpost zum Molotowcocktail 1946–1995*, vol. 2, *Dokumente* (Hamburg: Roger and Bernhard bei Zweitausendeins, 1998), pp. 651–52.

12. Theodor W. Adorno, “Am 14. Juli sollten die Vordiplom-Klausuren.”

13. See Jeffrey Herf, *War by Other Means: Soviet Power, West German Resistance and the Battle of the Euromissiles* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), pp. 101–4. The founders of the *Bund* included Richard Lowenthal, Herman Lübbe, Hans Maier, Thomas Nipperdey, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, Ernst Nolte, Walter Rüegg, Erwin Scheuch, Helmut Schelsky, Frederick Tenbruck, and Ernst Topitsch.

would not permit disruptions of his class. In November 1973 at the University of Tübingen, following an open tribunal organized by one communist political group, a professor and two students were physically thrown out of the classroom and onto the floor. In December 1973, after an introductory economics course was disrupted for the fifth time, the president of the university closed the economics department for a week. In doing so he said that the events recalled the beginnings of Nazi domination when Marxist and Jewish professors were attacked by right-wing extremists. In February 1974 at the University of Heidelberg, radical leftists placed a stink bomb in the office of political scientist Klaus von Beyme and sprayed paint on the walls of his office after a lecturer's contract was not renewed. In the fall of 1976 in Heidelberg, police were called so frequently to keep university buildings open that they were eventually required to remain permanently in the buildings. In December 1976, at the Free University of Berlin, communist students displayed the following opinions about faculty members on posters: "Hang (Horst) Möller," "(Ernst) Nolte will be liquidated—Möller castrated—Miethke kidnapped—AND THEN studies will be done right."<sup>14</sup> According to a survey of 3,000 university professors by the Allensbach Institute in 1977, 10 percent said they had been attacked in leaflets and posters. Those who had publicly criticized the radical Left reported receiving anonymous, late-night phone calls and threats of physical violence.

These incidents reflected an important change in the political orientation of the West German Left that emerged in the 1960s. From above, Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr's policy of *neue Ostpolitik* brought with it a reluctance to criticize the Communist government of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. That, so the argument went, would undermine detente. From below, the revival of Marxism led to an association of any kind of anticommunism with Nazism, with the result that the young democratic Left—led by persons such as future German Chancellor Schröder—entered student government coalitions with smaller Communist sects to their left. The era of a popular front replaced that of Social Democratic anti-totalitarianism of the 1950s and early 1960s. In this climate, those who criticized communism or revolution or who used the word "totalitarianism" to describe communist regimes and movements could be dismissed as counter-revolutionaries or fascists. The East German and

14. Ibid.

Soviet equation of anti-communism with fascism seeped into West German Marxist discussions.

As is now well known, Israel's victory in the Six Day War in 1967 accelerated a bizarre and enduring transformation within the West German Left away from the strong support for Israel of the Social Democrats of the first postwar decades to a growing hostility. This shift rested on a number of what became familiar comparisons, or rather assertions of similarity, between fascism and Zionism, Israel and Nazi Germany, and Al-Fatah and anti-fascism. Within the radical Left, advocates of the new hostility to Israel spoke of overcoming the "Judenknax," short for "Judenkomplex," that is, a supposed guilt about the Holocaust under which West Germans were said to be suffering.<sup>15</sup>

Kraushaar thus makes a compelling argument that the RAF did not have its origins on the periphery of the radical Left. Rather, its key ideas came from well within it. He draws attention to what he calls "the badly neglected" ideas and activities of one Dieter Kunzelmann, the first of West German radicals to take the idea of urban guerillas seriously when he founded the Tupamaros West Berlin in fall of 1969. The noun "Tupamaros" came from the name of a terrorist group in Uruguay composed of students inspired by the Brazilian legislator and communist, Carlos Marighella. In spring 1969, Marighella published *The Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla*. It was quickly translated into many languages by left-wing movement presses, and it became a bible for terrorists around the world. (I saw it in my taxi-driving days in New York at bookstores near Columbia University.) In 1971, Rowohlt, the German publisher of a series of left-wing paperbacks, published *Handbuch der Stadtguerillo*. In 110 pages, Marighella made the case for a shift from Guevara's adventures in the countryside to the formation of small groups of unconnected cells of four to five persons within cities, who would engage in political murders, kidnappings, robbery, and attacks on political institutions with the intent

15. Dutschke, however, had a more nuanced view. In his notes of 1967, he wrote that "[t]he founding of the state of Israel was the *political emancipation* of Jewry. It must absolutely be preserved" (*Die unbedingt erhalten bleiben muß*). If the Israeli "system of domination" that served as an outpost of American and English interests would be displaced with an embrace (*Verbrüderungen*) with the Arab mass, that would constitute "human emancipation." But in order to reach this goal, Israel needs to be preserved: "The Arab great power chauvinism... is the pendant to Israeli imperialism." Rudi Dutschke, "Notizen," *Mappe 2*, Blatt 1/2, June 1967, K21/48, Archive of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, cited in Kraushaar, *Rudi Dutschke*, p. 48.

of shattering the ability of the ruling powers to maintain law and order. These actions would, he predicted, spark a mass revolt. The tactic failed everywhere. Marighella, was shot and killed by Brazilian police in São Paulo in November 1969, only five months after he published the original edition of the *Minimanual*. (He was 58 years of age.) The first sentence captured its key message: “The urban guerrilla’s reason for existence, the basic condition in which he acts and survives, is to shoot.” It included chapters on assaults, surprise, bank robberies, occupations, ambushes, street tactics, strikes and work interruptions, desertions, seizures, theft of ammunition and explosives, liberation of prisoners, executions, kidnapping, sabotage, terrorism, armed propaganda, the war of nerves, rescue of the wounded, the seven sins of the urban guerrilla (inexperience, vanity, boasting, etc.), and popular support.<sup>16</sup> Kunzelmann’s accomplishment, and later that of the RAF, lay in applying Marighella’s doctrine to West German circumstances. The fact that the author had been shot, far from suggesting that there may have been a flaw in the doctrine, added to his luster as a martyr of the revolution.

The idea of the urban guerilla and the attack on Israel and on West German Jews became radical left-wing practice on November 9, 1969 (yes, the anniversary of Kristallnacht). On that day, a bomb was found in the Jewish Community Center in Berlin. In his *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus*, Kraushaar has filled in details of this bizarre and disturbing event. The bomb did not explode, a result that was intended by Albert Fichter, the man who admitted to Kraushaar that he made and placed it there.

Four days later, “Shalom and Napalm,” one of the most infamous yet defining statements of the emerging terror scene, was published in *Agit 883*, a magazine of the radical leftist scene in West Berlin.<sup>17</sup> The authors wrote

16. Carlos Marighella, *Urban Guerilla Minimanual* (Vancouver: Pulp Press, 1974), available online at the Marxists Internet Archive website, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marighella-carlos/1969/06/minimanual-urban-guerrilla/index.htm>.

17. “Shalom and Napalm,” *Agit 883* 40 (November 13, 1969): 9, cited by Wolfgang Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005), p. 46. The leaflet was also translated and reprinted in Bommi Baumann, *How it all Began: The Personal Account of a West German Urban Guerilla*, trans. Helene Ellenbogen and Wayne Parker (Vancouver: Pulp Press, 1977), pp. 57–58. The literature on the West German Left and Israel is now extensive. See, for example, Martin Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke: Zur Geschichte eines schwierigen Verhältnisses*, 2nd and rev. ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Herg and Herchen, 1994); and Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im jüdischen Gemeindehaus*.

that “the victorious end of the war in Vietnam” will mean “the beginning of Vietnam wars on all fronts.” Their focus was on the Middle East. There, European and American capital supported “the Zionists in their aggressive military operations” in the Arab world. West German restitution payments (*Wiedergutmachung*) and development aid contributed to the Zionist defense budget. “Under the guilt-laden pretext of coming to terms with the fascist atrocities against the Jews, they (West German government and industry) make a decisive contribution to Israel’s fascist atrocities against Palestinian Arabs.”<sup>18</sup> With the following sentences, the leaflet’s authors then accepted responsibility for placing a bomb in the Jewish Community Center:

The neurotic-historicist examination of the historical lack of legitimacy of an Israeli state does not overcome this helpless anti-fascism. True anti-fascism is the clear and simple expression of solidarity with the fighting fedayeen. No longer will our solidarity remain only with verbal-abstract methods of enlightenment à la Vietnam. . . . The Jews who were expelled by fascism have themselves become fascists who, in collaboration with American capital, want to eradicate the Palestinian people. By striking the direct support for Israel by German industry and the government of the Federal Republic, we are aiding the victory of the Palestinian revolution and force for the renewed defeat of world imperialism. At the same time, we expand our battle against the fascists in democratic clothes and begin to build a revolutionary liberation front in the metropole. BRING THE BATTLE FROM THE VILLAGES INTO THE CITIES! ALL POLITICAL POWER COMES FROM THE BARREL OF A GUN. Signed, Black Rats, *TW Schwarze Ratten* (Tupamaros West Berlin).<sup>19</sup>

For the West Berlin Tupamaros, a focus on the Nazi past and the fate of the Jews was an expression of neurosis, a kind of guilt complex that stood in the way of psychic health and clear thinking. The Israelis were the new Nazis, and the Palestinians anti-fascist heroes. This line of reasoning lifted the burden of the Nazi past from its advocates and opened the way for West German radicals to attack Israelis and Jews with a clear conscience. Kraushaar views it as the kind of “defensive antisemitism” that Theodor Adorno found prevalent in West German society in the 1950s, one in which the actual relation of perpetrator and victim was reversed,

18. “Shalom and Napalm,” pp. 46–48.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 48

facts were denied and avoided, while anger was expressed at the Jews for the damage they had supposedly done to postwar collective narcissism. Kraushaar views Kunzelmann's reference to the *Judenknax* as a leftist variant of the defensive antisemitism that Adorno had observed fifteen years earlier. Yet as East German Communists had demonstrated since the anti-cosmopolitan, this escape from the continuities of German history had been the norm in East Germany for twenty years before Kunzelmann and the West Berlin Tupamaros emerged. Here again, the interaction of indigenous West Germans with a transnational diffusion of ideas from East to West Germany deserves mention. On November 15, 1969—the same day that anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in Washington, DC, were accompanied by tear gas, battles with police, and thousands of people chanting “Ho-Ho-Ho Chi Minh, NLF is going to win”—the Tupamaros in West Berlin distributed another leaflet, “Transform Your Hatred into Energy.”<sup>20</sup> It called for the creation of urban guerillas. “Transform your hatred into energy! . . . fight in the street . . . make terror in all corners of the city. Good targets are the American industrial facilities, banks, police stations, and anything that makes men into slaves.” This marked the first time that a radical leftist group explicitly advocated “terror.”<sup>21</sup> The irony of this historic moment has been eloquently expressed by Ulrich Enzensberger, a

20. “WANDELT EUREN HASS IN ENERGIE,” leaflet from the Vietnam War demonstration on November 15, 1969, in West-Berlin, Archive of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, cited in Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus*, p. 56.

21. Dieter Kunzelmann, “Brief aus Amman,” cited in Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus*, pp. 66–72, originally in *Agit 883* 42 (November 27, 1969): 5. Several days later, the Tupamaros West Berlin sent a taped confession and justification for the attempted bombing of the Jewish Community Center. A woman's voice declared that “[Axel] Springer, [the publishers of a range of conservative newspapers], the West Berlin Senate and [Heinz] Galinski [the Chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany] want to sell us their *Judenknacks*. We won't join that business. . . . *Wiedergutmachung* [West German restitution payments to Israel] finances a new fascist genocide. . . . Learn from the one who placed the bomb in the Jewish Community Center [*Jüdische Gemeindehaus*], learn from the Tupamaros, Che lives! Vietnam is not here. Vietnam is in America. But listen: Palestine is here, we are fedayeen. This afternoon we fight for the revolutionary Palestinian liberation front, Al-Fatah. Strike now [*Schlag zu*].” Ten days later, Kunzelmann published a “Letter from Amman,” in *Agit 883*. There he repeated and accentuated these same points. “Palestine is for the FRG what Vietnam is for the Amis. The left has not yet understood that. Why? The *Judenknax*. Those who fight fascism are for Israel.” Things are not so simple. It is essential to grasp the “fascist ideology of Zionism” and replace “simple philosemitism with clear solidarity for Al-Fatah, which in the Middle East has taken up the battle against the Third Reich of yesterday and today.”



former member of the West Berlin radical commune scene, who noted the irony of this attack, taking place as it did at the same time that the West German government under Willy Brandt was doing more to face the facts of the Nazi past. In his words: “Just in the moment when the social liberal coalition in connection with the decisive point about Germany’s postwar borders decided to accept responsibility for German crimes, the revolt of postwar youth against the older generation shifted into irresponsibility. Among quite a number of us, the effort to escape from German history via the path of revolution ended [in a situation in which] with a clear conscience we continued our own most evil traditions.”<sup>22</sup> West German terrorism was also the third of German Communism’s attacks on social democracy in the twentieth century, the first two occurring during the last six years of the Weimar Republic and then in the “forced unification” and suppression of the SPD in postwar East Berlin.

*Die Rote Armee Fraktion* published its first manifesto on June 5, 1970.<sup>23</sup> It followed an armed attack on a jail in West Berlin that led to the escape of Andreas Baader, during which one of the prison guards was badly injured. In June and July 1970, members of the RAF traveled to Jordan where they received weapons training from the PLO and its offshoots. “The Concept of the Urban Guerilla,” the RAF’s first “position paper,” appeared in April 1971 and was followed soon after by the longer statement “On the Armed Struggle in Western Europe” (*Über den bewaffneten Kampf in Westeuropa*) and a year later by “Serve the People” (*Dem Volk Dienen*).<sup>24</sup> “The Concept of the Urban Guerilla” imported Marighella’s ideas to West Germany. All were long-winded and repetitive.

“On the Armed Struggle in Western Europe” was the RAF’s defining statement. Meinhof included forty-eight footnotes and thus much evidence of the RAF’s immersion in the Communist tradition.<sup>25</sup> Meinhof drew inspiration from the Paris Commune, the October “Revolution” of 1917, and the

22. Ulrich Enzensberger, *Die Jahre der Kommune I: Berlin 1967–1969* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 2004), p. 368.

23. “Die Rote Armee aufbauen: Erklärung zur Befreiung Andreas Baader vom 5. Juni 1970,” in *RAF: Rote Armee Fraktion: Texte und Materialien zur Geschichte der RAF* (West Berlin: ID-Verlag, 1977), pp. 24–26.

24. “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla, April 1971”; “Über den bewaffneten Kampf in Westeuropa, Mai 1971”; and “Dem Volk Dienen. Stadtguerilla und Klassenkampf, April 1972” in *RAF: Rote Armee Fraktion*, pp. 27–48, 49–112, and 112–44.

25. “Über den bewaffneten Kampf in Westeuropa, Mai 1971,” in *RAF: Rote Armee Fraktion*, pp. 49–111.

“people’s war” in China. These events made clear that “armed struggle” was “a central problem of revolutionary theory” and was in fact the “highest form of class struggle.”<sup>26</sup> In light of the fact that many commentators have suggested that West German terrorism was an effort to overcome past shortcomings regarding the Nazi past, it is important to note here that the RAF authors placed German history into a trans-national narrative of capitalism and international imperialism. In the authors’ words, “Auschwitz, Setif, Vietnam, Indonesia, Amman” demonstrated that “massacre does not belong to the past of systems of domination that have been overcome but rather now as before belong to the instruments of the dominant [rulers].”<sup>27</sup> Far from addressing the distinctive features of the Holocaust, the RAF—fifteen years before the famous *Historikersstreit*—denied the uniqueness of the Final Solution and compared it to a variety of recent conflicts stemming from anti-colonial or communist insurgencies.

Like the terrorist splinter groups in the United States, Italy, Japan, and France, the RAF authors found the new revolutionary vanguard is in the student and youth movements in the “metropolises,” which would form links with the revolutionaries in the third world. Meinhof brought Marighella to Germany without giving him due credit.<sup>28</sup> Unlike the countryside, the big city offered anonymity. On the one hand, it was filled with sympathizers, safe houses, and apartments, and, on the other hand, it had many targets. As Marighella pointed out, “the enemy” never knew where an attack would come. He had to protect many targets but could not be everywhere at once. These targets, “the class enemy,” included things (businesses, government buildings) and persons (policemen, government officials, and judges). Hence, the authors noted, “a few fighters can hold down strong forces of the enemy.”<sup>29</sup> Again, as Marighella pointed out, bombardment against urban guerillas is rarely successful. “On Armed Struggle in Western Europe” was thus a striking example of the flow of ideas from Brazil and Uruguay to Germany and Europe—that is, from what was then called the third world to the first world.

Meinhof evoked a Lenin quite different from the one sure to emerge from leftists familiar with his famous criticisms of “infantile leftism.” Three decades before major studies by Richard Pipes, Orlando Figes,

26. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

and Nicholas Werth on terror in the Lenin era were published, the RAF authors drew on the letter and spirit of the public and well-known Lenin to underscore his own support for terror.<sup>30</sup> “Lenin,” they wrote, “would be horrified” by use of quotations from his own works to suggest that he opposed the use of terror.<sup>31</sup> They then cited two of Lenin’s early writings on the subject. First, his notes for the Second Party Conference of the Russian Social Democratic Party of 1905, in which he insisted that “Terror must in fact merge with the mass movement”;<sup>32</sup> and second, his 1906 essay on “Partisan War,” in which he wrote that “Armed struggle has two different goals which must be kept separate from one another. The goal of this battle, first of all, is killing individual persons . . . subalterns in the police and army, and second, theft of money from the government and private persons.”<sup>33</sup> The RAF authors concluded that “Lenin had especially advocated the first goal of armed struggle, that is, the liquidation of individual functionaries of the apparatus of oppression.”<sup>34</sup> In view of their repeated and emphatic evocation of their communist convictions, it is interesting to note how infrequently the word “communist” is associated with the RAF in much of the literature. So I will restate what I said at the outset: the history of twentieth-century communism in Germany, Italy, Japan, France, or the United States includes movements like the RAF. They should not be studied only under the separate category called the history of terrorism.

Albert Camus in *The Rebel* had explored the links between Lenin and terrorism, but it was safe to say that the radical Left was not preoccupied with what the former leader of the French Resistance against the Nazis had to say about the disastrous consequences of philosophical justifications for murder. (Camus’s anti-terrorist manifesto of 1951 was first published in German translation by Rowohlt in 1953, with the title *Der Mensch in Revolte*. Between 1953 and 1969, it had sold a modest 30,000 copies. The

30. See Richard Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1996); Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990); Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891–1924* (New York: Penguin, 1996); Nicholas Werth, “A State Against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union,” in Stéphane Courtois, ed. *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999), pp. 33–268.

31. “Über den bewaffneten Kampf in Westeuropa,” pp. 78–79.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

34. *Ibid.*

decade of terror was good for sales. By the time the seventh Rowohlt edition was published in 1977, sales had almost tripled to 80,000 copies.)<sup>35</sup>

The RAF meant what they said. In 1970, “theory” became practice. RAF members robbed several banks in Berlin in October. The police found and arrested a number of them. In July, one of their members, Petra Schelm, was killed in a shoot-out with police. In October and December of that year, RAF members murdered two policemen, Norbert Schmid and Herbert Schoner. In 1972, the group set off bombs at U.S. Army headquarters in Heidelberg and other installations in Munich, Augsburg, and Hamburg, which caused four deaths and injured thirty people. Placed in solitary confinement, to prevent them from conspiring in prison with their lawyers to plan further attacks, they described this treatment as “isolation torture” and asked instead to be treated as prisoners of war. (It is interesting in retrospect that the West German government did not bring charges of war crimes against the RAF.) Periodic hunger strikes aroused sympathy from left-wing and some left-liberal circles, more sympathy apparently than these people expressed for those the RAF had killed and injured.

In November 1972, Palestinian terrorists kidnaped Israeli Olympic athletes at the Munich Olympics. In the midst of efforts to free the hostages, the kidnappers murdered them. Following the murders, Meinhof wrote and the RAF issued “The Action of Black September in Munich: On the Strategy of Anti-Imperialist Struggle” (*Die Aktion des Schwarzen September in München: Zur Strategie des Antiimperialistischen Kampfes*).<sup>36</sup> In this remarkable text, she again made clear how crucial anti-Zionism and antisemitism would be in the history of the RAF. Far from condemning the murders of the Israeli athletes, she celebrated the deed: “The action of Black September in Munich . . . was simultaneously anti-imperialist, anti-fascist, and internationalist.” What she called the Munich “action”—note her avoidance of the word murder—drew attention to “Israel’s Nazi fascism”

35. Albert Camus, *Der Mensch in Revolte* (Reinbek near Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1953). Figures on print runs and editions are from the German National Library. Based on his reading of these most famous of Lenin’s texts, Camus wrote: “Forsake of justice in far-away future, [Lenin’s doctrine of revolution] authorizes injustice throughout the entire course of history and becomes the type of mystification which Lenin detested more than anything else in the world. It contrives the acceptance of injustice, crime, and falsehood by the promise of a miracle” (Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower [New York: Knopf, 1954], p. 233).

36. “Die Aktion des Schwarzen September in München. Zur Strategie des Antiimperialistischen Kampfes,” in *RAF: Rote Armee Fraktion*, pp. 151–77.

and served as an example of “how practice pushes theory forward.”<sup>37</sup> “Just as the essence of imperialism is fascist,” Mienhof continued, “so anti-fascism is, in its tendency, anti-imperialist.” Ergo, the attack on the Israeli athletes was anti-imperialist and hence anti-fascist.

The RAF was thus part of this global anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, communist revolution and had nothing to do, as some of its critics suggested, with the anarchism inspired by Blanqui to Kropotkin.

Meinhof expressed hatred at West Germany’s only recently elected left of center government. Chancellor Willy Brandt would have been surprised to learn that since he and the Social Democrats entered the Bonn government in 1966, “more democracy had been abolished in the Federal Republic than was the case in the seventeen years before under all CDU [conservative Christian Democratic Union] governments taken together.”<sup>38</sup> The Social Liberal coalition had created a “*schmackhafte Imperialismus*,” a “tasteful or palatable imperialism.”<sup>39</sup> The goal of the West German government was “not to be in any way inferior to the Moshe Dayan fascism—Dayan, this Himmler of Israel.”<sup>40</sup> Following the death of its athletes, “Israel cries crocodile tears. It used its athletes as the Nazis used the Jews—as fuel to be burned for its imperialist policy of extermination.”<sup>41</sup> The “action” of Black September in Munich was thus a great revolutionary accomplishment. It had “torn away [*entlarvt*] the character masks of the social liberal coalition and their propagandists” by pushing the contradictions of imperialism to their limit. “The Arab peoples have massively understood that in West Germany they face an imperialist strategy of extermination.”<sup>42</sup> Of course, the deaths of the Israeli athletes were not the fault of the terrorist as it would be “idiotic to believe that the revolutionaries wanted it. They wanted the release of the prisoners.”<sup>43</sup> The terrorists of Black September were in fact blameless for the deaths of the athletes: “They took hostages from a people that has pursued a policy of extermination against them. . . . They did not want to kill. . . . The German

37. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

41. *Ibid.* The German reads as follows: “Israel vergießt Krokodilstränen. Es hat seine Sportler verheizt wie die Nazis die Juden—Brennmaterial für die imperialistische Ausrottungspolitik.”

42. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

police massacred the revolutionaries and their hostages.”<sup>44</sup> The statement ended with a round of rousing communist slogans, including “The action of Black September in Munich will not be extinguished from the memory of anti-imperialist struggle. Solidarity with the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people! Solidarity with the revolution in Vietnam! Revolutionaries of all lands, unite!”<sup>45</sup>

As I noted earlier, Meinhof and her comrades deserve space in subsequent histories of European and German antisemitism. As a strategic document, it also made clear that the RAF was going to do all it could to make the Federal Republic pay as high a price as possible for its support for Israel. Far from coming to terms with the Nazi past, the RAF—like East Germany—took aim at West German forms of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, especially its diplomatic, military, and economic relations with Israel.

Following a now minutely documented series of attacks and arrests, the leaders of what became known as “the first generation” (there were three) of the RAF were arrested in 1972. In April 1974 they were transferred to a high-security prison in Stammheim, not far from Stuttgart. They lived there preparing for their trials until, by October 1977, all but one had succeeded in committing suicide, following the successful liberation of hostages on a Lufthansa jet in Mogadishu and the end of their hopes that those hostages could be a bargaining chip to gain their release from prison. The conditions of their lives and deaths in Stammheim were soon surrounded with a cloud of lies, lies unfortunately believed by parts of a leftist and liberal public inside and outside the Federal Republic, which was willing to believe the worst about the Germans after Hitler, even in the era of Brandt and Schmidt. Butz Peters, in his important work *Tödlicher Irrtum*, draws on massive and numerous legal and parliamentary investigations to set many myths aside and restore the mundane though still awful truths that the RAF did its best to obscure.<sup>46</sup> In fact, the RAF turned Stammheim Prison into an organizational center for the conduct of terrorist operations.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

45. *Ibid.* Note again that the essay rejected the notion that there was anything at all unique about the Holocaust. In the Federal Republic, efforts to dissolve the uniqueness of the Holocaust did not begin with Ernst Nolte and the conservative historians of the 1980s. As far as I recall and have read, the RAF’s comparisons did not meet with anywhere near this level of indignation. On the contrary, they entered into and reflected the moods of the radical Left.

46. On the RAF in Stammheim, see Peters, *Tödlicher Irrtum*, pp. 305–52.

In Stammheim, the RAF prisoners—Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, and Raspe—were not at all isolated. They were all together on the seventh floor of the prison, a floor reserved for them alone. They were able to meet, drink coffee, smoke, and discuss the political situation. Horst Bubeck, the prison warden, ordered guards to remain “15 to 18 meters” away from them. For eight hours during the day, the cell doors of the RAF prisoners were open so the prisoners could walk around the seventh floor at will. For the first and last time in the history of the Federal Republic, two basic rules of prison management were broken. First, those accused in a crime were allowed to have contact with one another—and thus coordinate their stories before trial. Second, men and women were not kept separate from one another. Each had a cell of up to 150 square feet. One floor below, where common criminals were placed, six men shared a cell that was intended for three. Each of the RAF prisoners had a television, radio, record player, typewriter, and a large number of books. The other “non-political” prisoners were only allowed television once a week. Moreover, the four RAF prisoners had access to fresh fruits and vegetables, yogurt, fresh meat, a “sports room” with exercise machines, a book room with over 300 volumes, and a trial room with about 300 *Aktenordner*, or German style bound files, related to their cases. Baader complained of back pains so—again according to detailed testimony taken by the *Oberlandsgericht* (comparable to a State Supreme Court) in Stuttgart—Bubeck approved visits three times each week by a masseuse to ease his aching back. Baader played his stereo so loud that it could be heard two floors below.

Prisoners complained to Lubeck. One prisoner asked if “they are having parties up there.” Lubeck, in order to avoid a hassle with Baader, said that he could not hear a thing. A group representing the 800 common criminals in Stammheim sent a letter to Lubeck to protest the “privileges for the RAF.”

The RAF prisoners repeatedly refused to have any contact with other prisoners—actually proletarians and lumpenproletarians—supposedly out of fear of informers. They also knew that if pictures of them together with other prisoners appeared in newspapers, then their theme of “isolation torture” would collapse. The RAF was able to convince their sympathizers, including a public outside of Germany that was always ready to believe the worst about a German prison, that they were being horribly mistreated.

Meinhof, the former journalist, and Baader invited Jean-Paul Sartre to Stammheim. On December 4, 1974, the French philosopher arrived. He

spent an hour in the visitor's room with a translator, Lubeck, and Baader. Afterwards, Sartre said at a press conference at the Stuttgart main train station that "Baader had the face of a man who'd been tortured. It's not the torture of the Nazis. It's another torture, one that leads to psychological disturbances. Baader and the others live in a white cell. In this cell they hear nothing other than three times a day the steps of their guards who bring them food. The light is on for 24 hours."<sup>47</sup> The following day, the German and European press ran front page stories about Sartre's criticism of the RAF's treatment in Stammheim.

In fact, Sartre's utterances added another chapter to the history of gullible intellectuals who served as front men for totalitarian regimes and movements. Lubeck pointed out that Sartre sat in the visitor's room, but had not been in Baader's cell. Had he done so, he would have seen that Baader's room was anything but all white. His walls were adorned with a poster of Che Guevara and multi-colored maps. He, like the other RAF prisoners, had a window. Lubeck called Sartre's claims "sheer lies, nothing else." The lights in the prisoners' cells were not on twenty-four hours a day. They were turned off each night at 10 in the winter and 11 in the summer. Every day, the RAF prisoners sat together for several hours and talked. Prison officials were ordered to remain out of earshot. But for a left-wing public outside Stammheim, who knew only that Horst Lubeck was a German prison official, Sartre's word to the contrary was more convincing.

The RAF had earlier demonstrated an ability to convince a circle of sympathizers and part of the media that it was being mistreated in prison. In 1974, Holger Meins, who had been arrested in a shoot-out with police in 1971, went on a hunger strike for two months. He refused all efforts to feed him. He died on November 9, 1974. Otto Schilly was then one of the RAF's lawyers. You will recall that he later became the Attorney General of a unified Germany. After 9/11 a famous photo was taken of him next to John Ashcroft, the conservative Attorney General of the United States and Schilly's comrade in the recently declared "war on terror." In 1977 a younger and different Otto Schilly declared that the RAF prisoners who engaged in hunger strikes had been "executed."<sup>48</sup> Hundreds of RAF sympathizers came to Meins's funeral and burial in Hamburg, some carrying banners claiming that "the guerilla Holder Meins was murdered by the state security and justice officials." Rudi Dutschke stood by Meins's grave,

47. Sartre, cited by Peters, *Tödlicher Irrtum*, p. 330.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 321.



raised his right arm and clenched fist, and yelled, “Holger, the struggle continues!” (*Holger, der Kampf geht weiter!*). Indeed it did. Mein’s long, extended suicide was turned into the myth of his murder at the hands of the “fascist state.” It became one of those key “facts” that led younger people such as Sigrid Sternebeck, Ralf Baptist Friedrich, Silke Maier-Witt, and Susanne Albrecht to join the RAF.

On October 18, 1977, after learning that the GS-9 commandos had freed the hostages in Mogadishu and that therefore the only bargaining chip for getting out of prison was gone, Andreas Baader, Jan-Carl Raspe, and Gudrin Ensslin committed suicide. Irmgard Möller tried but failed to kill herself with a knife.<sup>49</sup> She was rushed to the hospital, where the doctors saved her life, a gift she repaid by spreading the lie that her associates had been murdered. Baader and Raspe killed themselves with self-inflicted gunshots to the head; Ensslin hanged herself. (Meinhof had sunk into depression due partly to conflicts with the other prisoners and had committed suicide a year earlier.) Of course the RAF sympathizers and the RAF lawyers claimed that they were all murdered. That legend continued into the 1990s, in the radical Left in West Germany and probably elsewhere. In 1990 on the thirteenth anniversary of the suicides, over five hundred RAF sympathizers marched through Berlin, shouting “Nichts ist vergessen, nichts ist vergeben” (“Nothing is forgotten, nothing is forgiven”).<sup>50</sup> All of many subsequent investigations by medical experts came to the opposite conclusion: the RAF prisoners committed suicide. After hearing from ninety-seven witnesses, an investigation of the Baden-Württemberg state parliament (*Landtag*) also arrived at the same conclusion. In two trials in Stuttgart, several of the RAF lawyers were found guilty of smuggling the guns into the prison, which Baader and Raspe used. In 2002, eight years after her release from prison, Möller insisted that the German intelligence services, the government of the Federal Republic, NATO, and of course—who else—the CIA were all involved. As you might expect, the conspiracy theory found many adherents.

Members of the RAF who observed events from a distance in their refuge in Saddam Hussein’s Bagdad knew better. As Peters points out, in one of the trials in Stuttgart, one of the RAF members, Monika Helbing, testified that Brigitte Mohnhaupt, the true iron lady of the RAF terrorist

49. Peters, “Die Todesnacht in Stammheim,” in *Tödlicher Irrtum*, pp. 450–67.

50. Peters, *Tödlicher Irrtum*, p. 785.

scene in the 1980s, yelled at her comrades to stop crying and screaming when they heard the news of the Stammheim deaths. “What’s going on here, a funeral with weeping women [*Klageweibern*]? Can you really see the *Stammheimer* [the Stammheim prisoners] only as victims. That [the suicides] was an action [*Aktion*]. Do you understand? An action. You assholes can stop bawling.”<sup>51</sup> Mohnhaupt continued that “the suicide action” was the prisoners’ means of advancing the RAF’s goals.

Susanne Albrecht, who as a friend of the Ponto family rang the front door that made possible his killer’s unforced entry, testified that even within the RAF the “collective suicide” in Stammheim was a secret. “Behind the lie,” she said, “stood a corresponding political calculation. . . . Toward those outside the RAF, only that could be said which corresponded to the group’s ‘theoretical self-conception,’ but not that which corresponded with the reality.” Indeed, she continued that the suicides in Stammheim became the group’s “greatest taboo” because—again quoting her—“the claim that they had been murdered built a whole political movement from which the RAF gained legitimation as well as support.”<sup>52</sup> Only the twelve members of the RAF then in Bagdad and members of the hard core elsewhere knew the truth. They kept it secret and were able to count on hundreds—and in the climate of 1977, thousands—of supporters to repeat the lies about their suicides in legal, above-ground political activities. In so doing, they could also count on intellectuals such as Sartre to repeat fictions about Stammheim as a symbol of the violation of human rights in the Federal Republic.

As came out in subsequent judicial proceedings, the weapons used in the suicides were smuggled into the prison by their lawyers, Arendt Muller and Admin Gnarly. Metal detectors were rudimentary and, astonishingly, seldom used. The police never suspected that lawyers would smuggle weapons into a prison. But by hollowing out the inside of books, they did just that. After his death, the prison officials collected 470 books and 400 magazines from Baader’s cell. Ensslin had 450 books and 400 magazines and brochures and Raspe had 550 books and 280 magazines and brochures. It was a massive amount of paper and—as anyone who does serious work in a study knows—it was very difficult for anyone else to find anything. Again, the alleged “fascist” prison guards left the mass—and mess—of

51. *Ibid.*, p. 452.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 452–53.

books and paper alone, and the guns were hidden within it. After the suicides, the prison officials also found 650 grams of explosives, cables, and no less than ten hiding places made with tools and carefully covered up with plaster, which the RAF prisoners had simply taken from materials during some renovations in the prison. Far from “isolation torture,” the RAF prisoners could simply talk to each other by sticking their heads out of their windows and turning right and left, but they also managed to use their stereos and radios to build an internal speaker system. They heard the news of the liberation of the hostages in Mogadishu on the evening news of ARD from *Sender Freies Berlin* around 12:40 am. They received the news and communicated it among themselves, and, in Mohnhaupt’s words, carried out “the action.”<sup>53</sup>

As I pointed out earlier, the second and third generation of the RAF continued to engage in murders and violent attacks until 1992.

### **Conclusion**

First, the most important point to make about the West German terrorists is familiar. Like the terrorists that Fyodor Dostoyevsky described so well in *The Devils* or that Albert Camus examined so acutely in *The Rebel*,<sup>54</sup> these people did evil things because they came to believe in the absolute righteousness of a set of wrong ideas. Their inhumanity was inseparable from the ideas of communism and armed revolution. To be sure, like all major political and intellectual traditions, the communist idea in the twentieth century took a variety of forms, some of which had nothing to do with terrorism and political murder. Yet some did, and they are too often left out of the history of European communism.<sup>55</sup> In the polarized political climate of recent decades, such an insight is sometimes called conservative, or at times neo-conservative, and there is something to be said for the label. Yet doing so underestimates some of the self-reflection of West German leftists. In the midst of the German fall, Rudi Dutschke distanced himself from terror when he wrote in *Die Zeit* that “we know only too well what the despotism of capital is. We do not want to replace it with a despotism

53. Ibid, pp. 453–60.

54. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Demons: A Novel in Three Parts*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1995).

55. For an excellent synthetic history of the communist idea in the twentieth century, see Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*. The German edition received the Hannah Arendt Prize in Germany, and one of the members of the jury was Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a leader of the May revolt in 1968 in Paris and later an active member of the Green Party in Germany.

of terror.”<sup>56</sup> In view of those already murdered by the RAF, Dutschke’s second thoughts came rather late. Yet they were better late than never. Coming from Dutschke they helped to stimulate an impressive and important rethinking and deradicalization of the West German Left. Likewise it was, as they say, no accident that it was one of Adorno’s students, the social theorist Detlev Claussen, who in 1976 clearly and unequivocally denounced the antisemitism that led to Wilfried Bose’s “selection” of Jews and non-Jews in Entebbe, in an essay entitled “Terror in the Air, Counter-revolution on the Ground,” published in the leftist magazine *Links*.<sup>57</sup> It was this, in many ways impressive and historically distinctive, deradicalizing and self-reflective Left that formed the Green Party and, at times in fits and starts but without political violence, accepted the rules of the game of liberal democracy. Just as the emergence of the RAF was a chapter in the history of communism, so its demise was due to this history of deradicalization with the West German Left as well as the all encompassing collapse of the Communist states in Europe in 1989–90.<sup>58</sup> The romance and lure of the communist revolution was replaced for younger generations with realities about police states and economic failure. Moreover, after 1990, the Communist intelligence services that had offered money, weapons, and escape routes were now out of business.

Second, there is much research to be done in the archives to find out what the West German government under Brandt, Schmidt, and Kohl knew about Soviet and East German support for the RAF. Is it really credible that they had no idea of their involvement until 1990, when ten RAF members being sought for crimes were arrested in East Germany? What did the West German government and its intelligence services know and when did it know it about foreign support for the RAF? Was there a reluctance

56. Rudi Dutschke, “Kritik am Terror muß klarer werden,” *Die Zeit*, October 1977. See also Rudi Dutschke, “Toward Clarifying Criticism of Terrorism,” trans. Jeffrey Herf, *New German Critique* 12 (1977): 9–10. Available in German at the *trend onlinezeitung* website, <http://www.trend.infopartisan.net/trd0407/t060407.html>. The German reads: “Wir wissen nur zu gut, was die Despotie des Kapitals ist, wir wollen sie nicht ersetzen durch Terrordespotie.”

57. Detlev Claussen, “Terror in der Luft: Konterrevolution auf der Erde,” in *Links: Sozialistische Zeitung* 80 (September 1976): 6ff. See also Detlev Claussen, *Vom Judentum zum Antisemitismus: Materialien einer verleugneten Geschichte* (Neuwied: Darmstadt, 1987).

58. On the concept of deradicalization, see Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1987).

to discuss the issue publicly for fear of endangering the policy of *détente*? There is much research to be done in the archives of the former Communist governments. Perhaps files survived the chaos of 2003 in Baghdad and are in the archive of Kanan Makiya's Iraq Memory Foundation. There is also much work to be done in the archives of the U.S. government, including those of the State Department and the American Embassy in Bonn, as well as those records of the CIA and the U.S. military in the Federal Republic. Hopefully, these records will now be opened, given that thirty years and more have passed since these events took place. This chapter of the cold war deserves attention from the Cold War International History Project based in Washington. There is a great deal of research to be done as our understanding of these events moves from the level of journalism to historical work in the archives.

Third, the RAF made an unintended contribution to the collapse of the romance of revolution in Germany. Having fanatically pushed a set of assumptions to their absurdly logical conclusion, they demonstrated yet again how dangerous and destructive totalitarian ideas are. In this sense, again unintentionally, the RAF fostered the above-mentioned deradicalization evident in the now famous careers of former radical leftists such as Joschka Fischer and Otto Schilly. The RAF terrorists left a legacy of violence, destruction, and grief. They made no contribution whatsoever to understanding Germany's past and succeeded only in ending the lives of thirty-four people who, at the time of their murders, were active contributors to a free and democratic society. They failed to turn Germany into a police state. The universities, the press, and intellectual life remained vital and pluralistic. In 1979, two years after the Stammheim suicides, a new left-wing party, the Greens, emerged and remains an important component of German politics.

Third, while the RAF murders caused prominent West German leftists to step back from taking the leap to political murder, reflection on the horror of the RAF's actions may have stiffened the resolve of the West German establishment to resist political and military pressures coming from the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact, and Middle Eastern dictators. During the middle of the German Autumn, the chancellor gave a speech in London at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "The London Speech," as it came to be known, was a complex, dry, technical analysis of medium range nuclear arms negotiations. It was the beginning of what became the NATO double-track decision of 1979. I thought then and believe to this

day that the implementation of that decision—more than anything that happened in Afghanistan or Central America—was the decisive turning point in world history that marked the end of the global momentum to the radical Left and the beginning of the end of communism in Europe. When I interviewed Schmidt in 1985 while doing research for my history of the battle of the euromissiles, it did not occur to me to ask him if the experience of the years of terror had stiffened his resolve to resist Soviet pressures. Coincidence in time does not prove causality, but it does make it a possibility; and not only regarding Schmidt but also Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, Helmut Kohl, Schmidt's successor in the chancellor's office, and many other West German government officials and people in public life. While the RAF members would certainly be unhappy to hear this, it may be that they made an important yet unintentional contribution to the collapse of communism in Europe.