

# Repression and Resistance In W. Germany

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The Red Army Faction's (RAF or Baader-Meinhof Group) initial phase of struggle (1968–72) was guided by the belief that it was possible to crack the imperialist “paper tiger” at any point through militaristic actions (the idea of creating “many Vietnams”). It was based on the perspective that the struggle would on one hand provoke a repressive reaction on the part of the State (already weakened by assassinations, bombings, etc.) thereby provoking the revolt of the “masses.”

On the other hand the example of the deed was both to inspire the oppressed to rise against the ruling class and to overcome the “economism” and “trade union consciousness” supposed to be characteristic of working class struggles. However false this perspective proved to be, it nevertheless was how the RAF saw its struggle in the road to establishing their Marxist-Leninist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

With the arrest of Baader, Meinhof, Raspe, Ensslin and others in June 1972 a specific phase of struggle ended and a “new” one began. The struggle revolved less and less around the imperialist “paper-tiger” and increasingly around the condition of those in prison. This was the case with the shooting of Siegfried Buback, chief prosecutor in the RAF cases, earlier this year and with the kidnappings of a candidate for mayor of West Berlin and industrialist Hans-Martin Schleyer. Both kidnappings were accompanied by demands for the release of RAF prisoners.

While the W. German government increasingly insists that the activities of the terrorists are purely criminal (i.e. non-political) on a more subtle level the enlightened conservative/liberal press can compare the German terrorists of today with the Russian terrorists of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (the “dreamers of the absolute”)! By comparison, the current terrorists of Germany are seen as purely savage, unidealistic murderers, whose only emotion is one of violence. This is, of course, but another aspect of the “criminalization” of terrorism.

State repression escalated with the kidnapping of Schleyer. A new law was passed enabling the Justice Minister to cut the imprisoned terrorists' contacts with the outside world absolutely. (The only “visitors” being the prison guards.) This is clearly a partial abolition of bourgeois rights by the State. Around the time of the kidnapping, 90 prisoners were so isolated. Their number included Horst Mahler and Peter Paul Zahl—both of whom have openly spoken out against the RAF. The recent “suicide” of Ingrid Schubert in an all-male prison on November 12<sup>th</sup> shows that the State will stop at nothing to break those in prison on “political” grounds.

## Law Obstacle to Defense Efforts

This law, the *Kontaktsperregesetz*, also exists as an obstacle to people trying to prove their innocence. Nora Poensen of Frankfurt was arrested and accused of the murder of bank director Jurgen Ponto. She was able to prove that she traveled on certain buses and trains at the time of the assassination since other passengers remembered her. Had the new law existed at the time of her arrest, she would have been shut in prison for a long time with no access to a lawyer.

Paragraph 129a (a law) states that one can be imprisoned for supporting a criminal (terrorist) organization. This has come to include lawyers announcing why their clients have gone on hunger strikes as well as passing information from one prisoner to another being prosecuted. Thus it is hardly surprising that an increasing number of lawyers are being charged with supporting criminal organizations. Nor is it surprising that when a lawyer (Spangenberg) defending the RAF asked a colleague if he would help him, his colleague replied, “Do you think I’m mad?”

It was due to paragraph 129a that four printers of the Agit Printing Collective were arrested in Berlin on 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup> of October. Their crime was to print the “Sponti” paper Info.\* They are thereby accused of supporting a terrorist organization even though they print a wide range of other material (including some from the Protestant Church!). Their arrest led to a demonstration of about 5,000 in Berlin on October 31. They are still awaiting trial. Other demonstrations against the new legislation and the repression in general have been held throughout Germany: In Göttingen with 6,000 participants, in Hamburg with 3,000 and in Stuttgart with 30,000.

The burial of Baader, Raspe and Ensslin did not escape state repression either. Given the atmosphere, the one thousand who turned up at the funeral was a reasonable number of people. However the police outnumbered them and at the end of the funeral surrounded those present, demanded identity papers and set about smashing up people who refused to prove their identity. Forty-five were arrested and later released.

Since Schleyer’s death the campaign of repression has escalated. The hunt is on, not just for the RAF, but for every “sympathizer,” e.g. not only Rudi Dutschke but also Heinrich Boll, a radical liberal, and even Willy Brandt. Like the McCarthy era in the states, the vaguest left-wing utterances in public become a signal for the most vicious witch-hunting. For example the notorious Springer press has “tipped off” the police that Boll’s sons are involved with terrorists and is carrying out the most disgusting and slanderous campaign against Boll himself.

## The “Clean Up”

As Strauss (Christian Socialist Union leader and admirer of Chile) said in 1974: “...and we are going to clean up so that for the rest of the century no more of these bandits will dare to open their mouths in Germany” (bandits = leftists). The most frightening mobilization of the population is daily being acted out by the State and the mass media against the Left. “Whoever at this point still criticizes or hinders an energetic introduction of anti-terror laws is himself guilty” (the *Bild* newspaper, part of the Springer chain).

Like the Jews of the 1930s the intellectuals and leftists of the 1970s are the evil perpetrators of all the ills of German society. They not only turn school children into perverted rebels, but they are even leading innocent adults into anti-nuclear power demonstrations.

The distribution of leaflets with photos of 16 people wanted for terrorist activities leaves you with an uneasy feeling. A friend of mine said that he was sitting in the subway when he noticed an old lady looking first at the pictures and then at him. That experience, and the bad luck to have got caught up in three police traffic controls to look for terrorists in one day made him stay indoors for a week or so.

Road blocks, flat searches and bookshop searches are becoming sickeningly familiar. One bookshop in Berlin is regularly searched—once a week—and those who work there also receive police visits in their flats from time to time. Traveling to work along the main shopping street you are confronted with the sight of two cops with machine guns standing outside the same bank everyday. As someone said “You’d think war has broken out.”

Anti-nuclear power demos may be legal but the show of arms: tanks and machine guns, by the police, plus the holding up of cars on the way to demos makes their occurrence in practice ever more difficult. The aim of the demonstrators to be both effective and peaceful is rendered exceedingly difficult by the state’s present strategy. At Kalkar a bus attempted to make a U-turn, an announcement came from a tank: “Turn and we’ll open fire!!” People had tools, bottles of orange juice and even food confiscated. Such “dangerous weapons” were immediately presented on the same level as the weapons of the police. (except that everyone knows that if someone successfully throws a bottle of coke into a tank the poor cops just don’t stand a chance.). This tendency clearly raises the question of whether demos are at all possible in the future. Not able to divide the normal citizens at such demos from the

left groups participating the state is forced to divide all demonstrators from the rest of the population and then to use maximum intimidation to wreck the entire demonstration.

The Christian Democratic Union and Christian Socialist Union are putting pressure on the German Socialist Party to make all the Maoist-Leninist groups legal.

It's hardly a cheering situation: The Bertram Russell Tribunal, here to investigate the violation of human rights in Germany; is received with either Brandt's hostility, and accusations of supporting terrorists, or else a wall of silence from the press.

As at the beginning of the Fascist era in Italy we are faced with the question: "Is the State introducing these measures out of its strength or out of its weakness?" The present weakness of the left and the absence of a major working class movement give no grounds for a very optimistic answer at the moment.

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