

State Terrorism in West Germany

Fifth Estate Collective

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As the letter on the preceding page indicates ["Who Are the Real Terrorists?," FE #289, January 24, 1978], though the more spectacular aspects of the repression in West Germany are now fading from the popular imagination, the "policification" of the Federal Republic proceeds apace.

In recent weeks the criminalization of all who express even the slightest sympathy for the "terrorists" has intensified markedly; though it becomes increasingly difficult to say which is the most astounding of the actions taken by the state to achieve this, a sure candidate can be found in the charges recently brought against the father of murdered RAF member Gudrun Ensslin. For having the temerity to suggest that his daughter had no reason to kill herself but was in fact killed by the state, Ensslin (a minister) is now accused of "defaming the state" and faces three years in prison if convicted.

Similar charges were also brought against the Living Theater's Julian Beck after the LT collective performed "Seven Meditations on Political Sado-Masochism" at a free theater festival in Munich. In the course of the performance Beck discussed the use currently being made in West Germany of tortures involving sensory deprivation and electrical shocks to the genitals. In West Germany, he said after learning of the charges, there is "a marked absence of protest, of criticism, of questioning...It is forbidden to doubt." Worse, he added, "In two days, the government received no less than 500 thousand phone calls suggesting, hinting that someone might be a terrorist. The whole country was turned into a police force for a conservative government."

This internalization of the police force is reinforced daily by the presence everywhere of armed patrols and the ubiquitous wanted posters, which feature pictures of the fugitives still at large (reward: 700,000 marks), blank spaces for those killed and pictures with Xs through them for those captured. The Springer papers continue to invoke the vital defense of the state against all nonconformity (see story at top of page) and a recent declaration by the council of Interior Ministers of the Federated States calls for the sounding of sirens over the entire country whenever a "terrorist" incident takes place. Good citizens are thereafter instructed to listen to their radios for further instructions from the police!

Law and Order

Presently more than 500 West Germans are under investigation on charges relating to "terrorism" and terrorist conspiracy, including more than 60 lawyers accused of "associating with terrorists," i.e., communicating with their clients. Chief among these is RAF lawyer Klaus Croissant, 46, who still awaits trial on charges of "providing the infrastructure of the armed struggle."

In addition to the present efforts to criminalize lawyers like Croissant (and the systematic use of *Berufshilfe*, the blacklisting of radicals from the enormous government civil service, thus insuring a huge, compliant bureaucracy sworn to loyalty to the state), recent measures have been adopted by the state in which:

1) Accused “terrorists” cannot be defended by a group of lawyers working together—this means no collective defense and each lawyer is forced to sift through vast quantities of documentation and evidence.

2) Lawyers can be (and have been) barred from the courtroom merely on suspicion of “support” for a criminal conspiracy.

3) The right of defense lawyers to comment publicly on courtroom proceedings has been restricted, while the State prosecutor now has virtually unlimited power to cross-examine witnesses, even before the trial has begun.

4) Lawyers’ offices may be searched, documents seized and private bank transactions scrutinized on the slightest pretext.

5) Certain court proceedings can be conducted entirely in the absence of the defendants and defense lawyers.

Though it is easy to evoke comparisons of the present situation in West Germany with that of the Nazi Reich, the significance of recent developments there should not be deflated by dismissing such comparisons, as mere rhetoric. As the letter from Hamburg points out, the suppression is nearly total and popular resistance, at best, forced to remain unseen and unheard. Furthermore, the intention of the “authorities” to develop the West German State as a model for all of Western Europe is very real, and the Bonn government has the economic clout to see to it that its model is adopted even among those nations with a “cherished” history of defense of civil liberties (witness the deportation of Croissant from France, despite the outcries of the radicals and liberals, and despite the constitutionally-guaranteed right of asylum for political fugitives).

And while it is also easy to slip into conspiratorial theories of world domination, it is also wise not to dismiss as mere coincidence the fact that:

1) a recent report by a committee of the Trilateral Commission (David Rockefeller’s transnational organization of “progressive” political and business leaders whose aim it is to clear the way for the smoother operating of international capital) recommended more authoritarian government structures for Western Europe to combat an expected increase in “social unrest;”

2) the top sixteen members of the Carter administration are all members of the Trilateral Commission, including Carter himself, Mondale, Breszinski and all the secretaries with any real power in the Carter cabinet (Defense, State, etc.);

3) even with the liberal Bertrand Russell Foundation’s recently announced intention to mount an international investigation into the “possible” violation of human rights in W. Germany, not a single mention of the systematic suppression of all dissent and the installation of a climate of conformist hysteria in that country has ever appeared in any of the U.S. government’s breast-beatings over the issue of human rights.

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