

Who Are the Real Terrorists?

Letter from Hamburg

anon.

1978

The following is a letter forwarded to us (after translation) by friends in Seattle. Though some of the factual information has already been published previously in the FE (see Oct./Nov. and Dec. '77 issues) we found its first-hand nature and compelling sense of urgency more than sufficient reason to reprint it intact. Thanks to Wayne Parker and Helene Ellenbogen.

Hamburg, November 9, 1977

Dear friends,

We didn't write for a long time, and now there's such a lot of things to tell about the past months and the present, because it is very very necessary that the left all over the world becomes more informed about what is going on here.

Since the beginning of the year the fight has increased on all levels. For many people it no longer seems possible to live a more or less liberal, calm life; the decision (on which side am I actually standing) has become urgent and sincere. For the atomic power movement, the government (or whoever is making these kinds of decisions) has now developed the strategy of pushing us into a criminal status, which means in practice that a whole lot of people have proceedings against them. The trials are starting now, in Autumn, and the typical charges are disturbing the peace, resistance against executive authority, bodily injury (against policemen), and so on.

When we had a small demonstration two weeks ago at the court-house they again took three persons without reason; the new charges: attempting to free the prisoners. Many of the people can get prison for these crimes, and as a matter of fact in Hamburg alone at least every third leftist is waiting for some kind of trial. Last week came a new shock: 21 persons got letters that they have to pay \$2,500 for police activity in Brokdorf where some people made a summer camp which was cleared violently by police (even though it wasn't on the site of the nuclear plant but only nearby on the land of a farmer). It shows that another part of the strategy is to ruin peoples' material existence base, because some of the people are in quite normal jobs. (This also was the other effect of this movement, that quite established people have become more or less radical through what they experienced this state is like when people are fighting for their rights.) All this together is a real threat for all the rest, who want to continue the fight.

Nevertheless, a few weeks ago two big demonstrations took place (maybe you've heard of them), one in Malville, France, the other in Kalkar (Ruhrgebiet), Germany. Both were international demonstrations; about 40,000 came to the first, and about 70,000 came to Kalkar. In Malville, the French police killed one demonstrator. In Kalkar, the police had another tactic: the night before they built barricades on all autobahns and other roads leading to Kalkar. Everybody was controlled and registered, and they confiscated everything which they thought could be a weapon—for instance, tampons which could be one part of a molotov cocktail. People had to wait at the barricades from 4 to 12 hours, and when they reached Kalkar, everybody was tired and frustrated. The police state showed its face and power without any attempt to disguise it under democratic rules. As a result, people don't believe in big demonstrations anymore. It also seems that the state reached one of its own aims, because I think we were quite powerful in these demonstrations. Such a lot of people had the same experiences, we can rely on that now too.

O.K. — this is one part of what's happened, which for sure relates to the other: this year there were a lot of actions of the urban guerrillas, of the Red Army Fraction (RAF). Since April, when the general state prosecutor Buback (mainly responsible for the trial in Stuttgart Stammheim) was killed, the escalation went on very heavily, climaxing in the kidnapping of Hanns Martin Schleyer (I think you know who he was!), and the hijacking of the Lufthansa jet. I don't want to discuss these actions in this letter, but I want to describe what has happened here "because" of them. It is not overestimated to say that the whole country was and partly still is in hysteria and panic, and that this is also part of the counter-strategy of the imperialists. The main point was and is to "force away the position of the fellow-travelers, Sympathisanten," which actually means that "everyone who still says 'Baader-Meinhof Group' is also a criminal." Sentences like this have been on every front page.

The reaction was that a big part of the left really hurried to distance themselves from the tactics of the urban guerrillas, or more specifically, they all had to say openly in their papers: this isn't political, this is brutal, criminal, and so on. It really is horrible to see these leftists (I don't know anymore if I should call them left) serving the ends of reactionaries, to even help build up a situation which is turning people against each other, to hunting people down. The entire media is totally co-ordinated, no word of doubt or anything critical appears.

As a matter of fact, the whole left is intimidated, not only ideologically, but also by police force. Whenever one lonesome left group dared to say: maybe, just maybe, Buback and Schleyer are not the nice human beings which the press is presenting, their bureaus were searched, their papers were taken, and the people were arrested, accused of helping the 'criminals.' So it was easy for them to put through their 'final solution' in Stammheim, to kill the prisoners. They had already made a new law, which says that in a time of danger to a person, all political prisoners are put in total isolation, which means as a matter of fact that they are in prison without any contact with the outside. They can be tortured physically, they are tortured mentally for sure by total isolation, and they can be killed. And though a whole lot of people are sure that the story of suicide isn't true, nobody dares to say openly "they were killed." You would be charged immediately with lying.

The first effect: At the funeral, we were only about 100–200 people, the rest didn't dare come. There they forced us with guns to give our personal identities, then once again they arrested 50 people without any reason, finger-printed them, and so on. All 50 got the same charges I have already mentioned. The population of Stuttgart partly helped the police by chasing the people in the stores and so on. Anyway, with the "search for the terrorists" a lot of denunciations took place everywhere, a lot of raids were made, for sure. At one of them they also arrested me, without any reason, my prints were taken, and I was beaten in the police station, until I was really wounded, in the face until I bled. The brutality of the police and my own helplessness shocked me quite a lot, although I knew it before, but it's different when it happens to yourself.

The situation of the political prisoners is really bad: though officially the isolation is suspended for now, a lot of them are in suicide cells, which means they are checked every fifteen minutes, even through the night, that they have no contact with other prisoners, that they are in so-called dead tracts, with no acoustic or visual stimulation, seldom allowed visits, because most of our petitions to visit the prisoners are refused because of "danger of influencing" the trials. In the last months it has become very obvious that they are using the political prisoners as hostages, so that when the next guerrilla action is going on, they maybe will kill them next.

And on the other hand they are trying to criminalize all lawyers of political prisoners, and all people who do any prison work. It's not only Croissant (who is in France now and will be extradited, I think) (See last issue of FE, Dec. '77), but also every lawyer who tried to take information to and from the political prisoners. That's what they are accused of, ideological help.

One very important point is that this "model Germany" (Schmidt's saying) is rolling over Europe, it is as if all other countries are just under Helmut Schmidt's orders, and if a country has any resistance, they put a lot of economic pressure on this country, as with Algeria, which doesn't want to have the German military on their airports (to provide security for Lufthansa!), and gets lots of threats now. This is imperialism in a really pure form.

So this in short is the situation we are in now, a situation where the struggle has to continue also, but for many of us there will come a point where we have to emigrate or go to prison. This situation can come very suddenly, but because of the international nature of this, it may be very difficult to find a refuge (Ain't no country, ain't no land...)

Maybe I have written a bit too cool about all this—W. criticized me for not having written about the depressing feelings we have. I thought it more important to tell the facts—the transition to open fascism in this country results out of them, and some new facts. They killed the next prisoner—Ingrid Schubert—four days ago.

And because of this the rest of the political prisoners have decided to start a hunger and thirst strike unlimited from November 17th on. They say that they cannot go on living like this—so now they want the decision. Their demands are: either to be deported to another country, or to be concentrated in groups of 15 here. I think this will bring a more or less final decision anyway.

Maybe it is possible for you to publish this anyway and to ask liberal personalities to send telegrams to the Chancellor H. Schmidt in support of the demands of the political prisoners. It is quite clear that otherwise sooner or later all of them will be killed/murdered.

I don't have the words to show how urgent this is. All the things that have happened, and happen all the time, are so monstrous that I often can't even cry, to say nothing of rage, but just sit without words and thoughts—paralyzed. But that's what they intend, and I try to take all my energy together to do at least the things I can—something against it. So it would be good if it would be possible for you to do something.

In Love,

P.S. There is a German left song: "When the night is deepest, the day is nearest."



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