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Staying Alive: Sensory Deprivation, Torture, and the Struggle Behind Bars

By 1972, practically the whole founding generation of the RAF were behind bars. Yet there was still a second generation and a third generation. Why? Primarily because of the conditions of imprisonment and state-organized terror.

Dieter Kunzelmann
former K.1 Communard[1]

Having captured the ideological leadership of the RAF, the West German state set in motion the second element of their counterinsurgency project: one which would eventually become known as the "Stammheim Model." The mere incarceration of the guerilla was insufficient. Those captured were to be rendered ineffective not only as combatants, but also as spokespeople for the anti-imperialist resistance. If at all possible, they were to be deconstructed as human beings and reconstructed as representatives of the counterinsurgency project. If this was not possible, at a bare minimum, they were to be destroyed.

The state's weapon on this terrain was complete and total isolation of the prisoners, both from each other and from the outside world.

As early as June 7, 1972, the importance of isolation was enunciated by Horst Ehmke, the SPD minister responsible for coordinating

1 *Baader Meinhof: In Love With Terror.*

intelligence operations. "We all… have an interest in completely breaking all solidarity [with the RAF], to isolate them from all others with radical opinions in this country," Ehmke told the *Bundestag.* "That is the most important task."[1]

The prisoners were scattered around the country.[2] While they would all be targeted by the state, particular pains were taken to attack those who were considered the five ringleaders: Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin, Holger Meins, and Jan-Carl Raspe.

Andreas Baader was held in total isolation from the day of his arrest on June 1, 1972, until November 11, 1974. In that entire time, he did not see another prisoner.

As of April 11, 1973, Holger Meins was held in Wittlich prison in solitary isolation, with the cells above, below, to the left, and to the right of him kept empty. His cell was searched daily, he was denied all group activities, including church services,[3] and he was shackled whenever he left his cell.

Ulrike Meinhof was put in the so-called "dead wing" at Cologne-Ossendorf prison,[4] where Astrid Proll had previously been held. In order to ensure the women remained separate, Proll was transferred to the men's wing.

The "dead wing" was intended not only to isolate, but also to induce a breakdown through sensory deprivation torture. It consisted of a specially soundproofed cell painted bright white with a single grated window covered with fine mesh, so that even the sky could not be viewed properly. The cell was lit twenty-four hours a day with a single bald neon light. It was forbidden for the prisoner to hang photographs, posters, or anything else on the walls. All other cells in the wing were kept

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1 Statement to Bundestag, June 7, 1972, quoted in *Texte des prisonniers de la "fraction armée rouge" et dernières lettres d'Ulrike Meinhof,* Draft Version, Cahiers Libres 337 (Paris: François Maspero).

2 For instance, Andreas Baader was in Schwalmstadt (Düsseldorf), Gudrun Ensslin in Essen, Holger Meins in Wittlich (Cologne), Irmgard Möller in Rastatt (Baden), Gerhard Müller in Hamburg, Jan-Carl Raspe in Cologne, and Horst Mahler in Moabit (West Berlin). (Aust, 231.)

3 RAF members' desire to attend church services was not due to any religiosity, although in their youth Meinhof, Ensslin, and Meins had all been quite devout. Rather, these services provided one of the only places where they could meet with and be amongst other prisoners.

4 The formulation used in Germany is to put the city name first, and then the name of the prison. So Cologne-Ossendorf refers to Ossendorf prison in the city of Cologne.

vacant, and when other prisoners were moved through the prison—for instance, to the exercise yard—they were obliged to take a circuitous route so that even their voices could not be heard. The only minimal contact with another human being was when food was delivered; other than that, the prisoner spent twenty-four hours a day in a world with no variation.

The use of sensory deprivation had been studied by doctors in Canada and the United States since the late 1950s, the line of research being taken up in the FRG by Dr. Jan Gross of Hamburg's Eppendorf University Hospital. Studies carried out by Gross found that sensory deprivation consistently caused feelings of unease ranging from fear to panic attacks, which could progress to an inability to concentrate, problems of perception (including hallucinations), vegetative disorders including feelings of intense hunger, chest pains, disequilibrium, trouble sleeping, trembling, and even convulsions.[5]

(It is worth noting that just as research into isolation was not limited to the FRG, many prisoners in the United States today are also subjected to various forms of isolation clearly intended as a form of torture.)[6]

Astrid Proll had been held in the dead wing for two periods, from November 1971 to January 1972 and from April 1972 to June 1972. She would later describe this experience:

> *…I was taken to an empty wing, a dead wing, where I was the only prisoner. Ulrike Meinhof later called it the "Silent Wing". The shocking experience was that I could not hear any noises apart from the ones that I generated myself. Nothing. Absolute silence. I went through states of excitement, I was haunted by visual and acoustic hallucinations. There were extreme disturbances of concentration and attacks of weakness. I had no idea how long this would go on for. I was terrified that I would go mad.*[7]

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5 Sjef Teuns, "La Torture par Privation Sensorielle," in *à propos du procès Baader-Meinhof, Fraction Armée Rouge : de la torture dans les prisons de la RFA,* Klaus Croissant (ed.) (Paris : Christian Bourgeois Éditeur, 1975), 65-66.

6 Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, "The People's Tribunal to Expose the Crimes of the Control Units"; Dr. Mutulu Shakur et al., "Genocide Waged Against the Black Nation Through Behavior Modification/Orchestrated by Counterinsurgency and Low-Intensity Warfare in the U.S. Penal System." Both reprinted in Matt Meyer, ed. *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners* (Montreal/Oakland: Kersplebedeb-PM Press, 2008.) Also: Russell Maroon Shoatz, *Death by Regulation: Pennsylvania Control Unit Abuses* (Montreal: Kersplebedeb 2008).

7 Proll, 11.

After four and a half months of this torture, Proll's physical and mental health were so badly damaged that she could hardly walk. When she was brought to trial in September 1973, the court ordered her examined by a heart specialist, a man who happened to be a former POW from Russia: he testified that her condition reminded him of the prisoners interned in Siberia.[1] The state was obliged to release her to a sanitarium in the Black Forest where she stayed for a year and then escaped, making her way to England.

Even when recaptured years later, she remained scarred by her ordeal, as she wrote in 1978:

> *During the 2½ years of remand I was 4½ months completely isolated in the Dead Wing of Cologne-Ossendorf. Not even today, six years later, have I completely recovered from that. I can't stand rooms which are painted white because they remind me of my cell. Silence in a wood can terrify me, it reminds me of the silence in the isolated cell. Darkness makes me so depressive as if my life were taken away. Solitude causes me as much fear as crowds. Even today I have the feeling occasionally as if I can't move.*[2]

Ulrike Meinhof was held in these conditions for 237 days following her arrest on June 15, 1972, and for shorter periods in December 1973 and February 1975. After eight months of this torture, she wrote:

> *I finally realized I had to pull myself out of this, I myself had no right to let these frightful things keep affecting me—it was my duty to fight my way out of it. By whatever means there are of doing that in prison: daubing the walls, coming to blows with a cop, wrecking the fitments, hunger strike. I wanted to make them at least put me under arrest, because then you get to hear something—you don't have a radio babbling away, only the bible to read, maybe no mattress, no window, etc.—but that's a different kind of torture from not hearing anything. And obviously it would have been a relief to me…*[3]

Through it all, she would remain unbroken.

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1 Ibid., 12.

2 Friends of Astrid Proll, *Astrid Proll: The Case Against Her Extradition* (London: 1978), 8. It is worth remembering that she was being charged with attempted murder for shooting at police, an incident that the state already knew had not happened, thanks to the surveillance reports of its own intelligence agents. Cf 60.

3 Aust, 246.

Having failed to destroy Meinhof through such severe isolation, the state moved to directly and medically attack her brain. On the basis of an operation she had undergone in 1962 to correct a swollen blood vessel in her brain, Federal Prosecutor Peter Zeis theorized that her political behavior might be the result of some neurological problem.

In a letter dated April 18, 1973, Zeis asked the right-wing[4] director of the University of Homburg-Saar's Institute for Forensic Medicine and Psychiatry, Dr. Hermann Witter, to ascertain what interventions might prove necessary. In a letter dated May 10, Witter responded that he felt both x-rays and a scintigraphy—a routine and normally harmless diagnostic test which involves the injection of radioisotopes—would be required to establish a diagnosis. On July 13, Federal Supreme Court Judge Knoblich ruled that the state could proceed with these tests, even against Meinhof's will, and with the use of constraining devices or anesthesia if she resisted.[5] Correspondence between Witter and the Attorney General indicates that an appropriate diagnosis would have been used to mandate neurosurgery, regardless of the prisoner or her relatives' wishes.[6]

All of this was a transparent attempt to discredit the RAF by pathologizing Meinhof: "It would be so embarrassing," Zeis mused at the time, "if it turned out that all the people began to follow a mad woman."[7]

It was only through public protests organized by the prisoner support group Red Aid, which mobilized many doctors, that the government was forced to drop its plan.[8] Yet as we shall see, this was not the last time that the state would seek to score a propaganda victory by attacking and discrediting the woman who was routinely described as the RAF's chief theoretician.

On top of imposing internal isolation, the state did all it could to cut the prisoners off from the outside world. They were limited to visits from lawyers and family members. Visits from family members were overseen by two state security employees who recorded all conversations, the contents of which could be introduced at trials, sometimes

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4 Formerly associated with the Nazi regime, Witter had publicly opposed the payment of reparations to victims of the Holocaust.

5 Commission internationale d'enquête sur la mort d'Ulrike Meinhof. *La Mort d'Ulrike Meinhof: Rapport de la Commission international d'enquête* (Paris: Librairie François Maspero, 1979), 78-79.

6 In this volume see the interview with *Le Monde Diplomatique,* pages 410-412.

7 "Political Internment in the FRG," in *War on the War Makers,* 27.

8 Komitees gegen Folter, 131, 133.

followed by analysis from a psychologist. Political letters, books, and packages were routinely withheld.

Starting in 1975, everyone arrested under §129 in connection with "political crimes" would be held under the so-called "24-Point Program." This formalized many of the conditions that had been imposed unevenly up until then, while also adding new restrictions. The program specified, among other things, that the prisoners were banned from all common activities. The prisoners now received one hour of solitary yard time each day, which was immediately interrupted if they failed to heed an order, insulted a staff person, or caused any damage. The prisoners were permitted to keep twenty books in their cells. Visits were limited to people cleared by the authorities, and could only last a maximum of thirty minutes (the standard was two such visits a month). It was prohibited to discuss activities of the so-called "terrorist scene" or its support groups (the latter was a grab bag for all revolutionary organizations), prison revolts, or hunger strikes. All visitors were searched, and this included lawyers.[1]

In a statement regarding such isolation, Till Meyer and Andreas Vogel, both 2nd of June Movement prisoners who were subjected to these conditions for years, wrote:

> *With the isolation wings, years of isolation have been carried to the extreme and the process of extermination has been perfected: the perfection of spatial limitation and the total isolation, electronic observation with cameras and microphones (openly in each cell)—and we are guarded by special corps (corps who are trained in psychology and conditioned through BKA training).*[2]

RAF prisoner Helmut Pohl would express himself similarly:

> *Isolation represents a more intense version of the situation which dominates on the outside, which led us to engage in clandestine armed struggle in the first place. Isolation represents its pure state, its naked reality. Whoever doesn't find a way to struggle against this situation is destroyed—the situation controls him and not the other way around.*[3]

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1 "24-Punkt-Haftstatut." http://www.nadir.org/nadir/archiv/PolitischeStroemungen/Stadtguerilla+RAF/RAF/brd+raf/053.html.

2 Bewegung 2. Juni (2nd of June Movement), *Der Blues: Gesammelte Texte der Bewgung 2. Juni, Vol. 2*, self-published illegally in the FRG, n.d. (1982?), 680.

3 Helmut Pohl's Testimony at the Stammheim trial, July 29, 1976.

As Andreas Baader described it:

> *Isolation aims at alienating prisoners from every social relationship including their history, their history above all… It makes the prisoner unconscious or kills him or her.*[4]

Professor Wilfried Rasch of the Institute of Forensic Psychiatry at the Free University of Berlin, who was called upon to examine the RAF prisoners, had this to say about the isolation conditions in which they were held:

> *The high security wing has simply the quality of torture, that is to say, an attempt to use special measures to achieve something amongst the prisoners through difficult or unbearable conditions, specifically, a change of heart, a defection.*[5]

Even those visits that were permitted were designed to add to the prisoners' stress-level. Eberhard Dreher, held on charges of supporting the 2nd of June Movement, described the closed visiting conditions:

> *[T]he screen offers a pretense of contact, simultaneously limiting the contact to visual contact and making the contact unfamiliar due to the reflective quality of the glass… Further pain is created by the lack of air and the particular acoustics. The construction of ventilators would rectify this problem… To make oneself understood, one must speak very loudly. One's own voice within the aquarium-like cabinet is amplified into an acoustic mountain crashing down directly onto one's own head.*[6]

Dreher further described the effect of one such visit with his lawyer as follows:

> *After… forty minutes, I had a splitting headache and, with the consent of my lawyer, had to break off the visit. I had a headache, needed air, was fed-up, wanted to be in my cell in peace.*[7]

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4 Bakker Schut (ed.), *Das Info: brief von gefangen aus der raf aus der discussion 1973-1977* (Neue Malik Verlag, Plambeck & Neuss, 1987), 218.

5 Bewegung 2. Juni (2nd of June Movement), *Der Blues: Gesammelte Texte der Bewgung 2. Juni, Vol. 1,* self-published illegally in the FRG, n.d. (1982?), 341.

6 Ibid., 320.

7 Ibid., 321.

In 1978, the European Commission of Human Rights would observe that their prison and trial conditions had contributed to Gudrun Ensslin, Jan-Carl Raspe, and Andreas Baader all developing "problems of concentration, marked fatigue, difficulties of expression or articulation, reduced physical and mental performance, instability, diminished spontaneity and ability to make contacts, depression."[1]

If the results of imprisonment in the isolation wing were horrifying, isolation combined with sensory deprivation was even more destructive, as is indicated in Ulrike Meinhof's harrowing description of her ordeal in Cologne-Ossendorf (see Ulrike Meinhof on the Dead Wing, pages 271-73).

Early on, it became clear to the prisoners that their only hope lay in resistance, and so on January 17, 1973, forty captured combatants from the RAF and other guerilla groups began a hunger strike, demanding access to independent doctors and transfer to the general population.[2]

This first hunger strike lasted four and a half weeks, and was only called off when Attorney General Ludwig Martin agreed to move Meinhof out of the dead wing—a promise which was not kept, and was likely never meant as anything but a ploy.[3]

Nevertheless, even though the hunger strike did not achieve any immediate victory, it did manage to break through the wall of silence surrounding prison conditions, galvanizing support from a section of the far left. In a way that was perhaps impossible to foresee, it marked the beginning of a strategy which would give the RAF a new lease on life.

Support had so far come mainly from the Red Aid network, a situation which was less than satisfactory in the eyes of the prisoners, as Red Aid offered solidarity while remaining critical of the RAF's politics. Furthermore, within Red Aid, the focus on the RAF prisoners had begun causing dissension, especially in Munich, as Bavaria held a large number of prisoners from the antiauthoritarian scene, and it was felt that they were being neglected, too much energy being spent defending the Marxist-Leninist RAF.

Thus, following the first hunger strike in April 1973, several lawyers came together with some of the RAF's closest political sympathizers to

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1 European Commission of Human Rights, *Decisions and Reports 14*, Strasbourg, June 1979, 96-97.

2 Rote Armee Fraktion, 181.

3 Vague, 50.

set up the *Komitees gegen Folter* (Committees Against Torture) that would take over support work for the prisoners in the future, while promoting the RAF's particular brand of anti-imperialist politics. This political orientation was no great liability for the legal left, as even many liberals were not yet ready to completely repudiate those who engaged in armed struggle.[4]

Several lawyers took leading roles in the Committees, Hans-Christian Ströbele, Klaus Croissant, Otto Schily, Siegfried Haag and Kurt Groenewold being their most prominent members. It was Groenewold who took the lead in establishing the Committees, their Hamburg headquarters being a block away from his office.[5]

As it turned out, the decision to set up the Committees proved fortuitous. Due in part to ongoing tensions between antiauthoritarians and others, the Maoist KPD/ML managed to take control of Red Aid at a national conference in April 1974. This was the second successful attempt by a K-group to move in on the network: the KPD/AO had already formed a rival "Red Aid registered association" to capitalize on its reputation. While the KPD/ML and KPD/AO may have been occasionally sympathetic to the RAF prisoners, they were definitely hostile to their politics, and so the RAF would have been at a disadvantage had they remained dependent on either Red Aid network for support.

Committees Against Torture were established West Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Kassel, Cologne, Munich, Münster, Stuttgart, Tübingen, and Heidelberg[6]—the latter in particular being a magnet for former SPK members.[7] Backed by many progressive intellectuals, they worked to focus public attention on the prisoners' struggle and the destructive conditions in which they were held, setting up information tables, issuing leaflets, and holding teach-ins.[8] The hope was to win the support of people with their roots in the sixties antiwar movement, people who shared much of the RAF's analysis and could be expected to express political solidarity, particularly for the idea that the captured combatants were political prisoners who had acted in the context of an international anti-imperialist movement.

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4 Dellwo, 95.

5 Ibid., 93-94.

6 Komitees gegen Folter, 97.

7 Dellwo, 94.

8 Komitees gegen Folter, 97-98.

The Lawyers

Hans-Christian Ströbele had helped to found the West Berlin Socialist Lawyers Collective along with Horst Mahler in 1968.[1] He was an SPD member in the early seventies, and, in 1978, would be a founding member of the Alternative List, a forerunner to the left wing of the Green Party, in which he would also be active as an elected member of the *Bundestag* from 1985 to 1987 and again from 1992 on.

Klaus Croissant was a member of the Stuttgart Socialist Lawyers Collective; he had been under surveillance by the state from at least May 1972, suspected of having himself located safehouses for the RAF.[2] Over the years, he became one of the prisoners' most ardent and notorious advocates—disgusted at what he saw of West German "justice," he would eventually begin working with the East German *Stasi* in the 1980s. He would unsuccessfully run for mayor of Berlin-Kreuzberg on the Alternative List ticket, before joining the *Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus* (Party of Democratic Socialism)—the successor to East Germany's SED—in 1990.

Lawyers Klaus Croissant, Otto Schily, and Hans-Christian Ströbele at a press conference in 1974.

[1] Aust, 66.

[2] Aust, 207; Becker, 306.

Otto Schily was a committed civil libertarian, deeply concerned about the rule of law. He had befriended Rudi Dutschke while studying in West Berlin, and had been active in circles around the SDS.[3] Probably the only one of the lawyers to take pride in referring to himself as "bourgeois," Schily would join Ströbele in the Green Party in the 1980s, before crossing over to the Social Democrats in 1989. In 1998, years after he had left our story, Schily was appointed Minister of the Interior, the former civil libertarian now in charge of domestic repression. As such, he was personally responsible for the highly repressive "anti-terrorist" legislation that was passed in the FRG in the wake of September 11, 2001.[4] The legislation earned him a "Big Brother Award", a negative prize presented to those who excel in rolling back civil liberties.

Siegfried Haag was a court-appointed attorney. While he had not been prominent in the APO or the political left previously, he was so moved by the prisoners' plight that he would eventually make their struggle his own.

Kurt Groenewold, the son of a wealthy property owner, had previously represented Ulrike Meinhof in her divorce from Klaus Rainer Röhl in 1968. He was active in the Hamburg Socialist Lawyers Collective, defending cultural radicals like the composers Ernst Schnabel and Hans-Werner Henze for their oratorio to Che Guevara, *Floß der Medusa*. He also defended the poet Erich Fried, who was accused of slandering the West Berlin police when he described the shooting of Georg von Rauch as a "preventive murder" in a letter to *Spiegel*.[5] In recent years, Groenwold has written extensively about the legal and civil rights ramifications of the state's response to the armed movements in West Germany in the 70s and 80s.

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[3] Hockenos, 119.

[4] Ibid., 290.

[5] "Kurt Groenewold," http://www.literaturhaus.at/autoren/F/fried/gesellschaft/mitglieder/groenewold/.

While the Committees welcomed support from many intellectuals and celebrities who still rejected the prisoners' politics, by and large militants were expected to toe the RAF line. While some involved did have their own quiet reservations in this regard, it is equally clear that many others were sincerely won over to the guerilla's politics. The state certainly contributed to this process, as activists would find themselves the object of police surveillance, raids, and even in some cases criminal charges, simply for disseminating information about the conditions in West German prisons.[1]

In subsequent years, the underground would include several veterans of this prisoners' support scene, and even some from their legal team, a fact which the state would exploit time and again to attack the RAF's lawyers. While most of the legal support team never did join the guerilla despite their increasing horror at the Kafkaesque trials and inhumane prison conditions, it is clear in retrospect that work in the Committees did constitute a rite of passage into the RAF for an astonishing number of future guerillas.

It is, of course, equally true that the overwhelming majority of those who were active in this scene never joined the guerilla, and while they remained operational, the Committees Against Torture always limited themselves to nonviolent forms of protest and popular education.

Before long, they got their first opportunity for such public activity: on May 8, 1973—the anniversary of the defeat of the Third Reich—sixty prisoners throughout the Federal Republic began a second hunger strike. The Committees stepped up their activities, organizing for lawyers to engage in a solidarity hunger strike and holding a demonstration outside the Federal Court in Karlsruhe.[2]

The Committees' most significant event occurred on May 11, when they held a teach-in where several high-profile supporters spoke out against isolation torture. Heinz Brandt, an official from the IG Metall

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1 In 1975, for instance, two activists received respective sentences of six and nine months in prison under §129, simply for handing out pamphlets with information about isolation conditions. The Supreme Court's decision made clear the object of such prosecutions: "The accused did not limit themselves to speaking to individuals in private, but by means of the leaflets sought to make contact with large numbers of people, and principally with young people, who are easily influenced in this way... Nor should the possibility of imitation by potential criminals be ignored. Whether the sentence on the accused will remain largely unknown is not important; what is important is the effect it will inevitably have on people who do know of it." (Cobler, 114-115)

2 Komitees gegen Folter, 86-87.

trade union, described the isolation conditions that the prisoners were subjected to as even worse than what he had suffered during four years in a Nazi concentration camp:

> *As crass and paradoxical as it may sound, my experiences with strict, radical isolation were worse than my time… in a Nazi concentration camp… [I]n the camp, I still had the bases for human life, namely, communication with my fellow inmates… We were able in the camps to see, not only outrageously fascistic and sadistic mistreatment, but also the possibilities of resistance and collective life among the prisoners, and, with this, for the fulfillment of the fundamental need of a human being: social existence.*[3]

Dutch psychologist Dr. Sjef Teuns described isolation and sensory deprivation as programmed torture. Dr. Christian Sigrist, who had worked alongside anticolonial freedom fighters in Africa, described the West German torture system as part of the worldwide counterstrategy against anti-imperialist combatants.

This last point was certainly as important to the prisoners as the former two. The RAF viewed human rights campaigns as being worse than useless; indeed, they viewed such humanitarianism as an attack on their fundamental principles. When Red Aid had put out leaflets accusing the state of denying the prisoners' basic human rights, Baader had angrily objected that, "Because our comrades are half-dead they can't think we're anything else ourselves. They're twisting the thing the same way the pigs twist it worldwide: Violence is taboo…"[4]

Similarly, Baader would later find it necessary to criticize defense attorney Otto Schily in this regard:

> *We certainly can't agree with the argument regarding torture as it is developed by Schily in his petition […] In reacting to revolutionary politics, the state does not know what to do except torture, and in doing so it exposes itself as an imperialist state. The indignation of degenerate bourgeois antifascism only masks this. The latter is already so weak, corrupted by social democracy, and locked in revisionism, that it can no longer express itself in a meaningful way.*[5]

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3 Varon, 218.

4 Aust, 242.

5 Andreas Baader Regarding Torture, reprinted in this volume on pages 319-323.

On May 24, 1973, fourteen days into the second hunger strike, the prison authorities began withholding water from Baader, despite a court decision two days earlier forbidding such tactics, as even short term water deprivation under a doctor's supervision can seriously damage one's health.[1] Indeed, after several days without water and in critical condition—suffering kidney pains, a sore throat, and difficulty seeing—Baader was forced to end his hunger strike. Apparently pleased with their success, the authorities targeted Bernhard Braun next, attempting to have him placed in the so-called "dry cell," but his lawyer managed to intervene and have this blocked.[2]

The hunger strike continued until June 29, when the District Court in Karlsruhe ordered the release from isolation of two prisoners.[3] (Although accounts are vague on this point, there is some indication that the two were former SPK members Carmen Roll and Siegfried Hausner.)[4]

Yet, soon after these two prisoners had their conditions relaxed for health reasons, another RAF prisoner was effectively sentenced to death by medical neglect.

Katharina Hammerschmidt had fled to France in 1971, but when the May Offensive had ended in a wave of arrests, she had turned herself in, returning to face the relatively minor charges relating to her having located safehouses for the guerilla. Despite the fact that she had surrendered voluntarily, she was remanded to the West Berlin Women's Prison while awaiting her trial.

In August 1973, Hammerschmidt underwent a routine medical exam, which included some x-rays. These revealed an abnormal growth in her chest, but the prison doctors took no steps to evaluate whether this was benign or malignant. In fact, they did not even inform her of the results.[5]

In September, Hammerschmidt began to complain of intense pain in her chest and throat. She had difficulty breathing and it hurt to swallow, yet the prison doctors simply told her that if the symptoms continued, more x-rays would be taken in another three months.

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1 Klaus Croissant, "La justice et la torture par l'isolement," in Croissant, 120-121.

2 Ibid., 120.

3 Rote Armee Fraktion, 181.

4 Hausner had been arrested in 1972 for building bombs and sentenced to three years in a youth facility; he was released from prison in 1974, at which point he made contact with other former SPK members and returned to the underground with the RAF.

5 "Des medecins portent plainte," in Croissant, 104-107.

Press Release from Baader's Lawyers

Even though Baader was doing well, at noon on May 22, 1973, the prison doctor, Dr. Degenhardt from Kassel, came to his cell with a squad of ten guards in order to force him to swallow a solution through a tube as thick as of one's thumb. Three times Baader requested a spoon so that he could take the solution on his own. Despite this fact, the doctor ordered the guards to hold him down. Pinching his nose, he then forced the tube into his mouth, down his throat and into his digestive tract. Baader vomited and almost suffocated. The tube opened up his throat and his digestive tract and he vomited blood. After this torture Dr. Degenhardt gave him three intravenous injections and he then lost consciousness for eight hours.

On the morning of May 22, Baader had been visited by one of his lawyers, Koch, from the Frankfurt Legal Collective. The lawyer was able to see that Baader's state of health was relatively good. When he came back that afternoon to continue his visit, a guard told Koch that the doctor had instructed that Baader should remain in bed. It was not possible for him to visit with his lawyer. The lawyer asked to see the warden Metz, but this was refused.

As attorneys of Andreas Baader we note: Andreas Baader is not only subjected to psychological torture in the Ziegenhain prison (Hessen), but he is also being tortured physically by methods which are carbon copies of those practiced in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, and Brazil. Force-feeding, when the prisoner has agreed to feed himself, is a form of torture.

We demand that Dr. Degenhardt and his helpers be punished.

Andreas Baader's lawyers
Golzem, von Plonitz, Riedel and Koch
May 23 1973

Klaus Croissant, "La justice et la torture par l'isolement," in Croissant, 119.

In October, the pain was so great that Hammerschmidt could not sleep; she was told by medical staff that her throat hurt from "too much yelling." As her condition deteriorated to the point that her tumors became visible to the naked eye, the doctors simply prescribed water pills.[1]

In November, her lawyers finally won a court judgment forcing the prison authorities to allow her to be seen by an independent physician. This specialist immediately issued a letter indicating that Hammerschmidt needed follow-up tests as soon as possible. These were not carried out, and she was returned to prison.

Two weeks later, on the night of November 28/29, Hammerschmidt almost suffocated from difficulty breathing. She was brought directly to a hospital, where it was found she had a cancerous tumor as large as a child's head in her chest. It was determined that the tumor was inoperable, although it was also stated that this might not have been the case just weeks earlier.[2]

An independent physician would later remark that the fact that Hammerschmidt had cancer should have been obvious from the x-rays taken in August, and yet six different prison doctors were all seemingly unable to notice that anything was wrong. Or perhaps they simply did not want to: in a public accusation signed by 131 doctors, it was suggested that she was denied necessary medical care because this would have required an end to the isolation conditions that she, like all other RAF prisoners, was being subjected to at the time.

Katharina Hammerschmidt

It was January 1974 before the court adjourned her trial, ruling that she was too sick and needed to be released to a clinic for treatment. If anything could have been done, it was now too late: Katharina Hammerschmidt struggled on for the next year and a half, finally succumbing to her illness on June 29, 1975—three years to the day after she had turned herself in.

Many observers considered Hammerschmidt's death to be a case of "judicial murder." Independent physicians who examined her upon her

1 Soligruppe Christian S., "Der Spiegel, 1975, BAADER/MEINHOF Müdes Auge," http://www36.websamba.com/Soligruppe/data/spiegel1975.htm; "Les democraties face à la violence" *la Lanterne Noire* 5 (December 1975).

2 Viktor Kleinkrieg, "Les combattantes anti-impérialistes face à la torture," in Croissant, 47.

release declared that the prison doctors' findings had been "medically incomprehensible," evidence of "incredible medical shortcomings."[3] A court would eventually award her family the measly sum of 5,000 DM, admitting that the prison administration bore some responsibility for her death.[4]

The RAF and its supporters would lay Katharina Hammerschmidt's death at the door of the West German prison authorities. Yet, by the time she had died, hers was not the first such case of "judicial murder."

On September 13, 1974, forty prisoners led by the RAF had begun their third collective hunger strike against prison conditions.[5] The Committees Against Torture sprang into action, and Amnesty International had its Hamburg offices occupied in an attempt to pressure the liberal organization to take a stand in support of the prisoners. (Notably, several of those involved in this occupation would join the guerilla within a few years.)[6]

Not only had the previous hunger strikes failed to achieve integration of all RAF prisoners into the general population, in situations where they had been able to have contact with social prisoners, the latter often found themselves harassed or transferred. The prisoners had come to the conclusion that the demand for integration, while it had undeniable appeal given the high esteem in which the New Left held marginalized groups like social prisoners, was simply not going to work. As a result, integration

3 Ibid.

4 Peters Butz, *RAF Terrorismus in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1991), 454, quoted in "Katharina Hammerschmidt," http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katharina_Hammerschmidt.

5 Apart from the declaration included in this section on pages 274-78, Ulrike Meinhof used the occasion of her testimony in court to announce the strike. See Ulrike Meinhof Regarding the Liberation of Andreas Baader, page 370.

6 For instance: Susanne Albrecht, Karl-Heinz Dellwo, Lutz Taufer, Günter Sonnenberg, Christian Klar, and Knut Folkerts. (Becker, 340-341)

was dropped, and the struggle was now defined as one against isolation and for the association of political prisoners with each other.

As Karl-Heinz Dellwo, who was active in the Committees Against Torture at the time, explains:

> *Up until then the hunger strikes were carried out with the goal of achieving "equality" with the other prisoners. I had long been critical of this. I thought it absolutely could not work. Either one would be placed somewhere where the prisoners changed every day, or with prisoners with whom one could not, for various reasons, talk. I was pleased when the RAF prisoners changed their line and chose the demand for association. That created some conflicts on the outside, for instance with the Frankfurt Committee,[1] which had a social revolutionary line: they were of the opinion that all prisoners were frustrated social rebels. I seriously doubted that.*[2]

This new demand for association became a rallying point for the prisoners and their supporters for the next two decades. Years later, 2nd of June Movement prisoner Till Meyer, writing from the dead wing, would express the goal this way:

> *Our demand—association of all prisoners—is the opposite of what the pigs offer us. Association means, above all, survival, collective political imprisonment, political identity, self-organization—while the dead wing means annihilation.*[3]

In practical terms, association meant bringing together political prisoners in groups large enough to be socially viable, fifteen being the minimum number normally suggested. Political prisoners in some other European countries, such as Italy and Northern Ireland, had already won such conditions for themselves, and so it was hoped that this might prove a realistic goal.

As a brief aside, it should be noted that this reorientation, along with the third hunger strike, provided the occasion for a very public split amongst the prisoners, as Horst Mahler not only refused to participate,

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1 Throughout the 1970s, Frankfurt was the bastion of the *spontis*, who would have been critical of such a separation from social prisoners.

2 Karl-Heinz Dellwo, *Das Projektil sind wir* (Hamburg: Nautilus, 2007), 98-99.

3 Bewegung 2. Juni (2nd of June Movement), *Der Blues: Gesammelte Texte der Bewgung 2. Juni, Vol. 2,* 684.

Rote Hilfe e.v. poster demanding freedom for Horst Mahler

but also took the opportunity to publicly repudiate armed struggle and break with the RAF. It has been suggested that one reason for this was his refusal to abandon the demand for integration, though clearly he had had other disagreements with the rest of the guerilla for some time now.[4]

In point of fact, Mahler had joined Red Aid e.v., the network that had been set up by the KPD/AO in 1970. He would explain that this was intended as an attempt to "close ranks and organize a criticism of the RAF's sectarian line in the spirit of solidarity."[5] Mahler's move into orthodox Maoism would win him some support: that October, Red Aid e.v. organized a demonstration, during which, according to the *Verfassungsschutz*, 5,000 people rallied to demand his freedom.[6] Nevertheless, it failed to do any good in court, where Mahler was now facing his third RAF-related trial, the second time he would face charges relating to Baader's 1970 jailbreak. Despite his break with the guerilla, he would eventually be sentenced to fourteen years in prison; Ulrike Meinhof, who also stood accused in these proceedings, would receive an eight-year sentence, while Hans-Jürgen Bäcker, who had testified against the guerilla, would be acquitted.[7]

The other prisoners considered Mahler's public split to be serious enough to warrant a public reply, and on September 27 Monika Berberich delivered a statement at the Mahler-Meinhof-Bäcker trial

4 Otto Billig, "The Lawyer Terrorist and his Comrades," *Political Psychology* 6, no. 1 (March 1985): 35.

5 Rote Hilfe e.v. "Zwischen RAF-Solidarität und „linker Caritas" - Teil 1 / 1 / 2007 / Die Rote Hilfe Zeitung / Publikationen / Rote Hilfe e.V. - Rote Hilfe e.V.," http://www.rote-hilfe.de/publikationen/die_rote_hilfe_zeitung/2007/1/zwischen_raf_solidaritaet_und_linker_caritas_teil_1.

6 Ibid.

7 *European Stars and Stripes,* "Meinhof: Female German Guerrilla Leader gets 8-year term for role in murder plot," November 30, 1974.

Horst Mahler After the RAF

Horst Mahler left the RAF for the KPD (previously the KPD/AO) in 1974, but remained a Maoist for only a few years: in 1977 he publicly announced that he was now "internally freed from the dogmatic revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism."[1] As a repentant guerilla, he was supported on humanitarian grounds by *Jusos* chairman Gerhard Schröder, who began acting as his lawyer in 1978.

With time off for good behavior, Mahler was released from prison in 1980, at which point his only real political activity was to cooperate with government propaganda programs and appear before young people to condemn political violence.[2]

In the 1990s, however, a new Horst Mahler emerged as the former guerilla-lawyer publicly repositioned himself on the far right of the German political spectrum. Mahler had crossed the Rubicon, and has since earned international renown as a "third position" fascist, and legal defender of Holocaust Deniers and neo-nazis, racists whose opinions the former communist now shares.

His expulsion in 1974 does not stop journalists from routinely describing Mahler as a founding member of the RAF, implying a connection between his previous views and those he holds today. Indeed, Mahler the neo-nazi has attempted to exploit this smear himself, arguing dishonestly that were Meinhof alive today, she, too, would have crossed over to the neofascist camp.

While several leading lights from the sixties APO generation have indeed moved to the far right, these represent only a small minority. In the case of the RAF itself, despite its degeneration and decline in the late eighties and early nineties,[3] Mahler is the only former member to have followed this sad trajectory.

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[1] German Law Journal, "Federal Constitutional Court Issues Temporary Injunction in the NPD Party Ban Case," *German Law Journal* [online] 2, no. 13, (August 1, 2001).

[2] United Press International, "Parting shots," *European Stars and Stripes*, October 4, 1980.

[3] As will be detailed in our second volume, *The Red Army Faction, a Documentary History, Volume II: Dancing with Imperialism: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*.

formally expelling her former comrade, accusing him of being a "filthy, bourgeois chauvinist" who had attempted to "transfer his ruling class arrogance… into the proletarian movement."[1]

This split, and tensions around the new demand for association, may explain the RAF's "Provisional Program of Struggle for the Political Rights of Imprisoned Workers," which was also released that September. An attempt to explain how the struggle against isolation could relate to a wider radical prisoners' movement, the Provisional Program left the door open to the possibility of struggle alongside other prisoners. While this strategy seems to have borne no fruit, it may have assuaged the dissatisfaction felt by some of those who were unhappy at the new orientation away from integration.

"Solidarity with the RAF Comrades' Hunger Strike": poster for a public meeting organized by the sponti left, with Rudi Dutschke, Johannes Agnoli, and Peter Brückner. September 1974.

Despite this rocky beginning, the RAF's third hunger strike was a momentous event, rallying support in a way no previous hunger strike had and serving as a major radicalizing experience for various tendencies of the left.

At first, however, little attention was paid to the striking prisoners, especially in the media, which barely mentioned the strike. The main solidarity activity remained public outreach. Students at the West Berlin Technical University staged a solidarity hunger strike,[2] and supporters in that city occupied a Lutheran Church demanding an end to isolation, extermination imprisonment, and "clean torture"—they were greeted with support by the Church's superintendent and several clergymen.[3]

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1 The Expulsion of Horst Mahler, see pages 288-91.

2 Peter Jochen Winters, "Unklarheit über die Rolle der verhafteten Pfarrersfrau," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* November 23, 1974.

3 Peter Jochen Winters, "Die Verquickung in Machenschaften der Meinhof-Bande began mit einer Kirschenbetzung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* Nov. 25, 1974.

Notable among the prisoners' Lutheran supporters were Undine Zühlke, a clergyman's wife, and Vicar Cornelius Burghardt. Both Zühlke and Burghardt organized a public assembly at their church on November 4, where they spoke alongside a number of the prisoners' lawyers, and where resolutions were passed against isolation torture. Burghardt also publicly admitted having sheltered Meinhof in 1971, explaining that he did so in "the Christian tradition."[1] (Zühlke and Burghardt were soon sentenced under §129—he for sheltering Meinhof and she for smuggling a letter out from Meinhof in early November.[2] Later that month, the Lutheran Church Council attempted to clamp down on radical church members, issuing a "Statement Against Terrorism" and calling on unnamed clergymen to "reorient themselves" accordingly.[3])

At the same time, another noteworthy source of support was the KPD/ML, which had successfully taken over the main Red Aid network in April of that year. The KPD/ML remained hostile to the RAF's politics, especially to what it viewed as their soft line on the East German and Soviet revisionists. Yet, on the basis of opposing state repression, it and the Red Aid network would provide substantial support, issuing leaflets and organizing demonstrations throughout the hunger strike.

During the strike's first month, two prisoners—Ronald Augustin and Ali Jansen—were both deprived of water for days at a time.[4] Jansen had been sentenced in 1973 to ten years in prison on two counts of attempted murder for having shot at cops when they caught him and other RAF members stealing a car in 1970. Augustin was a graphic artist from Amsterdam, who had joined the RAF after meeting members in that city in 1971; he was arrested on July 24, 1973, attempting to enter the FRG, and charged under §129, as well as for resisting arrest and possession of false documents.[5]

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1 Winters "Unklarheit über die Rolle der verhafteten Pfarrersfrau."

2 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Verdacht der Unterstützung von Terroristen beunruhigt die Berliner evangelische Kirche," November 12, 1974. The letter in question, likely about prison conditions, was in fact never delivered—losing her nerve, Zühlke destroyed it rather than pass it on to Burghardt. This did nothing to help her following the Drenkmann action, when police accused her of acting as a courier of a letter which allegedly had to do with his killing, and she was unable to produce said letter to prove that it was about nothing of the sort.

3 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Erklärung der Kirche gegen Terorismus," November 29, 1974.

4 Komitees gegen Folter, 28, 30.

5 He was sentenced to six years, and received another six months "coercive detention" for refusing to testify in the Stammheim trial. He was finally released

While these two applications of the "dry cell" alarmed the prisoners and their supporters, the strike did not falter, and, in the end, this tactic was not repeated.[6] Rather, the state sought to keep things defused; as part of this strategy, in early October, the president of the Federal Supreme Court, Theodor Prinzing, ruled in favor of force-feeding Holger Meins, Jan-Carl Raspe, and Andreas Baader. The purview of this ruling was soon extended to the other prisoners.

Force-feeding has been used since at least the early twentieth century by governments and penal authorities wishing to break hunger strikes: not only does this countermeasure seem to diminish what is at stake, as it suggests hunger strikers may no longer die from their protests, but the entire ordeal is designed to be excruciatingly painful, in large part to discourage strikers from continuing. Holger Meins described the procedure:

> *A red stomach pipe (not a tube) is used, about the thickness of a middle finger… The slightest irritation when the pipe is introduced causes gagging and nausea and the cramping of the chest and stomach muscles, setting off a chain reaction of extremely intense convulsions throughout the body, causing one to buck against the pipe…*

He concluded that, "The pipe is, regardless of circumstances, torture."[7]

Adelheid Schulz, a RAF member imprisoned in the 1980s, described the effects of force-feeding as hours of nausea, a racing heartbeat, pain, and effects similar to fever—"At times one experiences hot flashes; then one is freezing cold."[8]

In the words of Margrit Schiller: "I was force-fed every day for a month. Each time was like a rape. Each time, I felt totally humiliated and destroyed."[9]

The prisoners insisted that force-feeding was never meant for any purpose other than torture. Events soon convinced many that they were right.

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and extradited back to Holland in 1980.

6 It is possible that this reticence to use water deprivation was at least partly due to the RAF prisoners' threat to escalate to a thirst strike if such measures were adopted. See Ulrike Meinhof Regarding the Liberation of Andreas Baader, cf 370.

7 Holger Meins' Report on Force-Feeding, see pages 392-95.

8 *Von der Zwangernährung zur "Koma-Losung,"* West Germany, Sept. 1985, 25.

9 *Baader Meinhof: In Love With Terror.*

On Saturday, November 9, Holger Meins died of starvation in Wittlich prison. Supporters and lawyers had already argued that this prison lacked the facilities for force-feeding to be of any medical benefit, yet the Bonn Security Group—the section of the BKA charged with protecting political figures (much like the American secret service) and also combating enemies of the state[1]—had blocked Meins from being transferred anywhere else.

For the last two weeks of his life, Meins only received between 400 and 800 calories daily, and in the last four days of his life, never more than 400 calories a day.[2]

Meins was never hospitalized, despite a court decision ordering such a transfer, and the prison doctor had gone on vacation without leaving any replacement at his post.[3] Scandalously, before Dr. Hutter left, he sought assurances that he would not be disciplined should Meins die.

Siegfried Haag, one of the RAF's court appointed attorneys, was with Meins just before he died. The prisoner had to be brought in on a

Over six feet tall, by the time he died
Holger Meins weighed less than one hundred pounds.

1 Cobler, 52. Many aspects of isolation were "suggested" to prison administrators by the Bonn Security Group. See, for instance, Aust, 245-246.

2 Pieter Bakker Schut, *Stammheim* (Kiel: Neuer Malik Verlag, 1986), 119.

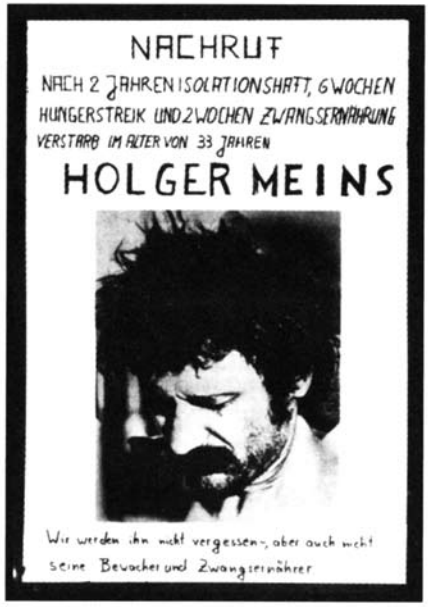
3 Aust, 265.

stretcher as he could no longer walk. The visit lasted two hours, Haag explained, "because I realized this was his last conversation, and he knew it too."[4]

The lawyer, who would himself be moved to join the guerilla, later recalled that, "I shall never be able to forget this experience all my life. I was so intensely involved [with his situation] at the time and I felt that as a lawyer I could not defend him the way he needed to be defended… [nor] do anything to prevent [his] death."[5]

Over six feet tall, Meins weighed less than 100 pounds at the time of his death: for the RAF and their supporters, this was quite simply a murder in the context of a state security war against the prisoners. Indeed, long before the hunger strike, Meins himself had written in his will, "If I should die in prison, it was murder. Whatever the pigs say… Don't believe the murderers' lies."[6]

As word spread that a prisoner had died, hundreds of people took to the streets of West Berlin, engaging in clashes which sent five cops to the



Obituary: After 2 years of isolation, 6 weeks of hunger strike and 2 weeks of force-feeding, he died at the age of 33—we will not forget him nor will we forget his guards and force-feeders.

4 Ibid., 264.
5 Varon, 231.
6 Aust, 265.

hospital.[1] Stefan Wisniewski, who would be moved by Meins' death to eventually join the RAF, remembers the day well:

> *Everything was about the hunger strike. We had mobilized everyone from Amnesty International to Father Albertz, everyone it seemed possible to mobilize. I was standing on a table in the youth center—there was no podium—and was giving a speech.*
>
> *Suddenly someone came in and said, "Holger is dead." Tears welled up in my eyes—and I was not the only one. Some people who had been critical of the RAF up to that point immediately began to assemble molotov cocktails and head to the Ku'damm.*[2]

The next day, November 10, the 2nd of June Movement carried out its own action in solidarity with the prisoners, attempting to kidnap Günter von Drenkmann, the president of the West Berlin Supreme Court. When the judge resisted, he was shot dead.

As the 2JM explained in its communiqué for this action:

> *When the prisoners' hunger strike began, we said: if the system's extermination strategy takes the life of another revolutionary, we will hold the system responsible and they will pay with their lives.*[3]

In the already tense context of Meins' death, this action raised the struggle to a whole new level. Electrifying the radical left, it also outraged all those who identified with the state.

Security was immediately stepped up for prosecutors and judges throughout the country.[4] The CDU mayor announced a demonstration against "Terror and Violence,"[5] while the federal government offered a 50,000 DM reward for the killers.[6] Meanwhile, Beate Sturm was trotted

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1 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Beshuldigungen nach dem Tod von Holger Meins," November 10, 1974.

2 Stefan Wisniewski, *We were so terribly consistent… A Conversation About the History of the Red Army Faction* (Montreal: Kersplebedeb, 2008), 7-8.

3 in bewegung bleiben "Wer Gewalt sät,"
http://www.bewegung.in/mate_saehen.html.

4 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Verstärkte Sicherheitsmaßnahmen im gesamtem Bundesgebeit," November 12, 1974.

5 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Berliner CDU ruft zu einer Demonstration," November 16, 1974.

6 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Empörung nach den tödlichen Schüsssen von Berlin," November 12, 1974.

out to the media, whom she obligingly told about how Meins "had political ideas, but behind them lay the problems he had. He always wanted to be an authority figure. He was fascinated by Baader's authority, but also intimidated by it—that's why he always tagged along." All of this led one major newspaper to opine that the fallen guerilla "perhaps did not only die as a result of his own irrationality, but as a result of manipulation by his associates as well."[7]

After having pointedly ignored the strike in the period prior to November 9, the media now engaged in disinformation like this in an attempt to undercut the widespread sympathy that this death had garnered the prisoners. For instance, it was claimed that Meins was offered contact with other prisoners, but declined, as he "did not feel he was a criminal."[8] While this claim was ludicrous considering that the demand of both the previous hunger strikes had been precisely such integration, it can also be viewed as a clever attempt to exploit divisions within the left regarding the strategies of association versus equality with social prisoners.

Meanwhile, there was an explosion of actions and demonstrations in support of the prisoners. A bomb went off (harmlessly) outside the Hamburg residence of another judge, Geert Ziegler,[9] and there were eight firebombings in the university town of Göttingen.[10] Within days, protests had spread to cities across the Federal Republic. In Frankfurt and Mannheim, courthouse windows were smashed, while the KPD/ML handed out fliers stating what everyone felt: "Holger Meins Murdered."[11] In West Berlin, a November 11 Red Aid demonstration was banned by city authorities, which did not deter roughly one thousand people from taking to the streets, demanding that those responsible for Meins' death be punished and that all political prisoners be freed, while fight-

7 Jürgen Busch, "Die letzte Waffe des Anarchisten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* November 11, 1974.

8 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Die Vollzuganstalt Wittlich," Nov. 10, 1974.

9 Deutsche Presse Agentur, "Wieder Anschlag auf einen Richter," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* November 21, 1974.

10 *Time Magazine* [online], "Guerrillas on Trial," December 9, 1974.

11 United Press International, "Gunmen kill German judge," *Hagerstown Morning Herald,* November 11, 1974. The article in question refers simply to the "Communist Party." However, it was almost certainly not the conservative DKP, but the KPD/ML, which had earned itself the distinction of being the only K-group to organize support of the hunger strike.

ing with stones and bottles against the cops' clubs and teargas. Thirty-two people were arrested.[1]

As giant pictures of an emaciated Meins were carried through the cities of the FRG, more than one observer was reminded of the victims of the concentration camps.[2] To some on the radical left, this was yet more evidence of the "fascist drift," of the real and not rhetorical "extermination" that more and more people saw the prisoners facing.

On November 13, there was an historic meeting at Frankfurt University, where several thousand people gathered in solidarity with the hunger strike. A leaflet supporting the RAF was distributed, signed by a number of *sponti* organizations—*Revolutionärer Kampf* (Revolutionary Struggle), the *Häuserrat* (Housing Coucil), and the *Sozialistische Hochschulinitiative* (Socialist Student Initiative)—as well as Red Aid and the Committees Against Torture, expressing unambiguous solidarity not only with the RAF, but also with the killing of Drenkmann:

> *The Red Army Faction was a political group committed to struggling against oppression and exploitation, guns in hand. At a time when millions of people in Vietnam, South America and South Africa struggle against large landowners, factory owners, and their armies, they decided to call to account the ruling class in the FRG and to integrate themselves into this struggle against imperialism…*
>
> *A successor organization to the RAF understood the death of Holger Meins as a signal. They took control of their sorrow and their hatred and shot the President of the Berlin Supreme Court, Drenkmann. No threat of torture and imprisonment could deter them.*[3]

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1 Ibid.; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "Zweihundert Studenten der Freien Universität im Hungerstriek Demonstrationen und Krawalle in Berlin," November 13, 1974.

2 Salvator Scalzo, Steffi de Jong, and Joost van den Akker, *Terror, Myth and Victims: The Historical Interpretation of the Brigate Rosse and the Rote Armee Fraktion,* October 26, 2007, 18.

3 Jürgen Busch, "Viele Gruppen—viele führende Leute" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 14, 1974. One can see from this declaration how it was assumed by not only journalists, but also by the revolutionary left, that the RAF had been finished off by the arrests in 72. Even those "in the know" were unclear about the relationship between the 2nd of June Movement and the RAF itself.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who had yet to leave his street fighting days behind him and was at the time one of the leading members of the *sponti* organization Revolutionary Struggle, had this to say about the Drenkmann killing:

> *Whether it was tactically correct is open to discussion. In any event, we'll discuss it. We'll make our newspapers and magazines available to the Berlin comrades if they want to use them to explain the reasoning behind their actions. We will not distance ourselves from them.*

"Danny the Red" went on to argue that the shooting had not split the left, but that it put the ruling class on notice that even in Germany there were groups prepared to take up arms.[4] (Heinrich Böll, on the other hand, accused Cohn-Bendit of speaking irresponsibly, stating for himself that, "I hold the basic concept of the Red Army Faction to be nonsense.")[5]

While not many took as strong a position as those in Frankfurt, the rapid escalation also pushed liberal organizations to speak out. The PEN Centre held a forum regarding the use of torture by police and prison officials, and Amnesty International demanded an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Meins' death, torture in the prisons and the conditions in which the RAF prisoners were being held.[6] At the same time, prominent writers, including *Gruppe 47* authors Ernst Bloch, Erich Fried, and Martin Walser, signed a statement protesting prison conditions.[7]

Five thousand people attended Meins' funeral in Mannheim a week later, including Rudi Dutschke. The former APO leader, standing over the grave as Meins' casket was lowered, famously gave the clenched fist salute, crying, "Holger, the fight goes on!"

The state, meanwhile, was busy trying to keep up with events. Almost immediately following Drenkmann's killing, the eleven *Länder* Interior Ministers were summoned to Bonn for an emergency meeting to discuss ways to contain the growing rebellion.[8] On November 13, Federal Minister of Justice Hans-Jochen Vogel (SPD) announced that charges

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4 Ibid.

5 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Todesfälle eingeplant?" November 14, 1974.

6 Busch, "Die letzte Waffe des Anarchisten."

7 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Beshuldigungen nach dem Tod von Holger Meins."

8 Associated Press, "Bonn fears more violence," *Syracuse Post-Standard,* November 12, 1974.

were being brought against seventeen people, and thirty-five were being held in remand while investigations were conducted. Ominously, he also noted that seven lawyers would be investigated for supporting a criminal organization,[1] and in short order, charges were laid against attorneys Croissant, Schily, Groenewold, and Haag for statements they had made describing Meins' death as a premeditated murder.[2]

But the real crackdown had yet to come.

On November 26, the state moved into action, police and border guard units setting up checkpoints and carrying out predawn raids across the country.[3] Dozens of left-wing publishers, bookstores, law firms, and activists' homes were searched. Many victims were not even seriously suspected of any ties to the guerilla. Frankfurt police, for example, admitted that their targets "included general problem houses, where the occupants were organizing rent strikes or stirring up other sorts of trouble."[4] All in all, roughly forty people were arrested,[5] several eventually facing charges of supporting a "criminal organization" under §129.[6]

Despite their efforts, dubbed *Aktion Winterreise* ("Operation Winter Trip"), the police failed to apprehend a single guerilla fighter. Nevertheless, the raids gave the new Minister of the Interior, Werner Maihofer,[7] the opportunity to shock the public with claims that police had uncovered radio transmitters, explosives, chemicals, narcotics, weapons, and ammunition, not to mention plans for kidnappings and jailbreaks.[8]

The real targets of this crackdown were in fact the sympathizers and supporters: the goal of Winter Trip was to break the back of the growing

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1 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* "Maihofer: 'Brutale Strategie' der Baader-Meinhof-Bande," November 14, 1974.

2 *European Stars and Stripes,* "German terrorist is hospitalized," November 14, 1974.

3 Associated Press, "West German police round up anarchist groups," *Greeley Tribune,* November 27, 1974.

4 Cobler, 141.

5 Associated Press, "West German police round up anarchist groups."

6 The frustrating fact of the matter is that no two sources seem to agree on either the exact number of arrests, the nature of all the charges, or the numbers actually prosecuted.

7 In a cabinet shuffle after Helmut Schmidt replaced Willy Brandt as Chancellor earlier that year, Werner Maihofer replaced Hans-Dietrich Genscher as Minister of the Interior. (Genscher became Minister of Foreign Affairs.)

8 "Meinhof," *European Stars and Stripes,* November 30, 1974.

movement while preparing public opinion for a new round of repressive legislation. As defense attorney Klaus Croissant wrote soon after:

> *In the Attorney General's own words, the action was aimed at what they call "the sympathizers": that means the prisoners' family members, the lawyers, the members of Red Aid, the writers who have publicly taken a stand against isolation torture, brainwashing and detention-extermination.*
>
> *By means of this police action, public opinion was prepared so as to allow special legislation to be passed in fifteen days, just before Christmas.*[9]

Most importantly in regards to the RAF's legal team, the defense attorneys were now accused of organizing an illegal communication network to transmit messages between prisoners, as well as between prisoners and "active commandos" on the outside. The state supplemented evidence from Winter Trip with a series of cell raids, the contents of letters and documents seized being manipulated in the media to present the image of a far-reaching "terrorist conspiracy."

Croissant was not alone in his belief that the real goal of this crackdown was to deprive the remaining four alleged ringleaders (Holger Meins now being dead) of any effective defense as their trial approached. This was a matter of some importance, for while the accused did not deny responsibility for the RAF's attacks, their lawyers had marshaled compelling evidence that the isolation conditions in which they were held had rendered them unfit to stand trial. As SPD deputy Fritz-Joachim Gnädinger would later tell the *Bundestag*:

> *It is clear to anyone in the know that without the changes in procedure already agreed the trial of the Baader-Meinhof terrorists in Stammheim would have got into even greater difficulties. It might even have had to be abandoned. Only a change in the law made last year… made the continuation of the trial possible. I therefore ask all the critics to consider for a moment what disastrous consequences for our citizens' sense of law and order would have resulted if the trial in Stammheim had had to be abandoned without a verdict.*[10]

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9 Klaus Croissant, "Le procès de Stuttgart," in Croissant, 16-17.
10 Cobler, 206.

Indeed, these Winter Trip raids prepared the public for a barrage of new laws, "refinements" to existing legislation, and restrictions on defense attorneys. Through these, the state largely achieved a condition in which the upcoming trial in Stammheim prison could proceed with the prisoners ill- or undefended, often even without their personal participation.

There was one final, and controversial, effect that Winter Trip had on the radical left: soon afterwards several key activists left the Committees Against Torture.[1] While this could be interpreted as a retreat, the truth of the matter was more complex: many of those who had banded together to provide legal support now thought better of that strategy.

With some prompting from the prisoners, they had decided to go underground, to take up arms themselves, and to renew the RAF.

1 The Committees themselves disbanded over the next year and a half.