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# Varieties of Sympathy for the “RAF” in Germany: When Terrorism Was Cool

Victoria A. Karker,  
*Lake Forest College*, [karkerva@lakeforest.edu](mailto:karkerva@lakeforest.edu)

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# Varieties of Sympathy for the “RAF” in Germany: When Terrorism Was Cool

**Abstract**

Terrorism has flooded the international stage with radical ideologies and spectacular explosions, kidnappings and assassinations. It has left fear, loathing and heaps of innocent bodies in its wake. But this was not always the case. There was, once upon a time, when terrorism was “cool!” Drawing from sociocultural and geopolitical events in post-war Germany, I examine how West German citizens in the 1970s were able to sympathize with a leftist terrorist organization known as the Red Army Faction. I aim to examine the sympathetic tendencies toward terrorist organizations in the 1970s by studying specific subgroups of the sympathetic German public in this era into: hyperactive, active, passive, hyper-passive, and the disassociators. The findings shed light on how sociocultural and geopolitical events, especially as reported by the media, influenced sympathetic audiences of this terrorist organization.

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**First Advisor**

Ahmad Sadri

**Second Advisor**

Richard Fisher

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Evan Oxman

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**Printed Name:** Victoria A. Karker,

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LAKE FOREST COLLEGE

Senior Thesis

VARIETIES OF SYMPATHY FOR THE “RAF” IN GERMANY:  
WHEN TERRORISM WAS COOL

by

Victoria A. Karker

April 25, 2018

The report of the investigation undertaken as a  
Senior Thesis, to carry two courses of credit in  
the Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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Michael T. Orr  
Krebs Provost and Dean of the Faculty

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Ahmad Sadri, Chairperson

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Richard Fisher

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Evan Oxman

## ABSTRACT

*Terrorism has flooded the international stage with radical ideologies and spectacular explosions, kidnappings and assassinations. It has left fear, loathing and heaps of innocent bodies in its wake. But this was not always the case. There was, once upon a time, when terrorism was “cool!” Drawing from sociocultural and geopolitical events in post-war Germany, I examine how West German citizens in the 1970s were able to sympathize with a leftist terrorist organization known as the Red Army Faction. I aim to examine the sympathetic tendencies toward terrorist organizations in the 1970s by studying specific subgroups of the sympathetic German public in this era into: hyperactive, active, passive, hyper-passive, and the disassociators. The findings shed light on how sociocultural and geopolitical events, especially as reported by the media, influenced sympathetic audiences of this terrorist organization.*

*Anfangen ist leicht, beharren eine Kunst*

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## INTRODUCTION

“*We’re not feeling edgy; the system is feeling nervous*”  
—from the Red Army Faction’s “Serve the People: The Urban Guerilla and Class Struggle”

Unsuccessful Marxist campaigns of terrorism flooded the international stage in the 1970s, laying claim to ending state oppression; they led to social and cultural changes still present in society today. Fresh out of the Second World War, the spread of leftist ideals were a part of everyday life in the Federal Republic (West Germany) in an effort to push as far away from their fascist past as possible. The appeal of communism derives from Karl Marx’s theory of revolution being the necessity of change in a state, but urban guerillas exaggerated the theory, forcing change upon individuals who were not ready for it. Marxism and anarchism were the trendy movements to support in the 1970s. The Red Army Faction (RAF) led this movement as the ‘chic’ revolutionaries fighting for an anti-fascist West Germany. In a *GEO Epoche* magazine issue covering the “Rote Armee Fraktion,” (Red Army Faction or RAF) the inside cover pictured RAF leader Ulrike Meinhof squatting fiercely with an automatic rifle with the quote, “Of course we say that the cops are pigs, we say the guy in the uniform is a pig, and not a human, so we have to deal with them. That means that we do not have to speak with him, and it is wrong to speak to these people at all, and of course you can shoot” (2015: 2)- providing an accurate description of the organization.

It was a split second decision for Ulrike Meinhof to follow Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin out the window at the German Central Institute for Social Issues in Berlin after their prison escape plan turned into chaos. Ulrike Meinhof’s choice to follow the other members of the crew on May 14, 1970 sparked the official formation of the “Rote Armee Fraktion”. Less than a month later, on June 5, 1970, an underground West German paper, *Agit883 (Magazine for Agitation and Social Practice)*, published an

article written by Ensslin calling upon those who have been exploited and marginalized to “Build Up the Red Army!,” thus declaring the official formation of the RAF. Soon after, members and new recruits fled to Jordan where they were trained with their fellow guerillas’, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The RAF’s reign of terror over West Germany lasted twenty-eight years, starting with bank robberies that escalated to kidnappings, bombings, and plane hijackings near the end of its existence. While several sociocultural and geopolitical factors in post-war Germany influenced the birth of the RAF, the organization would not have survived for so long if it did not have the support of sympathizers across West Germany.

The RAF’s legacy lives on through nicknames that vary from the Baader-Meinhof Gruppe and the Baader-Meinhof Gang plastered on t-shirts to stickers on street lamps in Germany today. First published in 1985, Stephan Aust’s *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex (The Baader-Meinhof Complex)*, shed light upon the organization by putting a human face on its main members and presenting them as victims of the Federal Republic of Germany – or even as martyrs for a cause soon to become irrelevant after the downfall of Communism and the reunification of the two Germanys. The 1960s and 1970s were a period of cultural, political, and social change. New values calling for social equality and acceptance of youth’s radical demands clashed with traditional values and sparked social movements that inspired change in society. Post-war Germany continued to weaken when the western allies chose to divide Germany, causing more trouble in the future. With a broken nation, West Germany became a breeding ground for social and political change, determined to avoid the horrors of the past. Thus, the RAF emerged from years of social and political dissent within leftist movements that sought to take their beliefs to an extreme and engage in violence for their attainment. The “Urban Guerilla” was adopted

from Ché Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare* (1961) as a tactic to fight the repressive West German regime, once a handful of protesters realized that organized protests were not drawing enough attention to the government. Dubbed the "Golden Age of Terrorism," (Bergen and Schuster 2015) several violent leftist movements acted upon the international stage, joining together to fight against state oppression. This thesis focuses on the particular case of RAF sympathizers, and how sociocultural and geopolitical factors contributed to the organization's positive reception by the citizens of West Germany. While the RAF's reign of terror lasted twenty-eight years, I focus on the First Generation, consisting of its main actors: Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader, and Gudrun Ensslin, who were the 'superstars' of the organization. From their own writings to secret interviews with *Der Spiegel*, their message became well known across the West German nation. The RAF's rationale through communiqués and letters to newspaper publications connected the average citizen with their cause.

This thesis has a multifarious approach. Each chapter provides historical, sociocultural and political facets that record the sympathy with extreme violent actions carried out by terrorist organizations, in the context of the RAF. The origin of sympathy is derived from German psychiatrist Edward Titchener's term 'Einfühlung', or 'feeling into'; the term has transformed into a philosophical and theoretical question that applies to the core understanding of human nature (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2008). My definition of sympathy, in relation to those who sympathize with acts of terrorism, derives from the French term *sympathisant*. Many years later, the German language adopted this term to identify leftist supporters of the violent acts of the RAF, whether it was individuals who wrote famous pieces of literature, participated in protests, or believed in the ideology. In the first chapter I start by outlining historical events that led up to the formation of the RAF, and how these events set the framework for sympathy to

RAF's cause. Using Pitor Sztompka's model for cultural trauma, the collective post-war cultural trauma experienced by West German citizens predisposes individuals to sympathize with actions, violent or non-violent, that would prevent West Germany's perceived propensity to slide back to its fascist past. The second chapter examines First Generation members of the RAF in relation to their connection with West German citizens. The appeal of the members, and their presence in the left scene before the formation of the RAF, set the stage of recognition in the media for West German citizens. This chapter also addresses the importance of communication with the citizens of West Germany, and the RAF's steady appearance in the media to advocate and provide a rationale for their cause. The third chapter outlines the five levels of a sympathetic audience that culminated from sociocultural and political factors that I mention in the previous chapters. Finally, I conclude with the fourth chapter that supports my theoretical claims for the five levels of sympathy with the case of the Red Army Faction.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Historical Factors that Led to Sympathetic Tendencies for Extreme Acts*

*“If you throw a stone, it’s a crime. If a thousand stones are thrown, that’s political. If you set fire to a car it’s a crime; if a hundred cars are set on fire that’s political”*

—Ulrike Meinhof<sup>1</sup>

The stage was being set for the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) in West Germany long before the core members of the organization, Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader, and Gudrun Ensslin, were approached by Horst Mahler to form the group. The Second World War divided Germany among the four powers, and its citizens were left to cope with their Nazi past. An ideological war between the democratic and communist powers not only produced a stark difference in the governance of the Eastern and Western blocs, but a physical wall that emerged in 1961 kept the Western citizens from entering the Eastern side of Berlin. Understanding the West German past prior to the terror attacks in the 1970s will provide a context through political and sociocultural factors that induced individuals to support the ideology of the RAF. This chapter outlines the global and domestic politics, economic changes, and sociocultural events that West Germans faced on a daily basis. This situation impacted their perception of the RAF’s war against the West German government. The historical events below are not just a testament to West Germans fighting for a stable democracy, but are quite possibly stepping-stones to acts of extreme violence. Thus the continuance of the extreme violence brought upon by the RAF through the period of a divided Germany could only have lasted due to the sympathy and support of the population.

After surrendering their arms in May 1945, Germany admitted defeat in the

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<sup>1</sup> Aust, Stefan. 2008. *The Baader Meinhof Complex*. London: The Bodley Head. p. 36.

Second World War. Less than three months later the Allies drafted the Four Power Agreement in the Potsdam Conference to divide Germany into four parts, where the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union aimed to take part in the rebuilding of Germany in hopes of preventing it from causing global unrest again. Soon after, the three Western Allies, the United States, Great Britain, and France, established the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the western bloc, and the Soviet Union established the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the eastern bloc. While the GDR was used as a tool to retain Soviet influence in Europe, the Western bloc immersed itself in liberal democratic values and a capitalist economic system. Germans in both the western and eastern zones had little choice but to conform to the swiftly changing climate (Hanshew 2012: 35). As Hanshew rightly puts it, the German citizens really did not have a choice of where they could go. The West German psyche was in utter disarray, with a blow to their national character from confronting their fascist past, repercussions of the Holocaust, a new divided Germany, and now their new seemingly democratic republic that was crucial for their survival.

The first democratic election in West Germany elected Konrad Adenauer in 1949, with a promising future for West Germany. ‘Chancellor democracy,’ then, fulfilled a need for firm and inspirational leadership since, although Germans had moved on from the Nazi period and had embraced democracy, the desire for strong government remained – not to mention residual sympathy with the achievements of Nazism (Thomas 2003: 25). Surveys carried out by OMGUS (Occupation Military Government, United States) from 1947 to 1950 found the majority of respondents described the best form of government for Germany to be a democracy, while only one percent stated that a communist government would be the best government for Germany. This reflects the initial or already existing fears of communism from the Cold War context (Merritt 1995: 93).

Further, Merritt writes about a concept of legitimized authority that bedeviled Germans during the Nazi era (and the Allied authorities afterward) and linked authority to obedience. He quotes a survey from March 1946 where two-fifths of the respondents agreed with the statement that “the individual should always obey the orders of the state without question” (Merritt 1995: 93). At the start of Adenauer’s first chancellery, the Allied forces initiated a denazification process to eliminate Nazism from politics, media, law, culture, and anything else that pointed back to Germany’s recent fascist past. Through his interviews with women’s first hand experiences during the denazification, Alf Lüdtke describes that, in, the Western zones, efforts toward denazification rapidly turned into an enormous bureaucratic machine that produced a lot of paperwork. Therefore it should be no surprise that its performance and its results confirmed self-pity and notions of “we the victims” among the majority of the German population (Lüdtke 1993: 549). The outcome of this failed process foreshadows the resentment by West German citizens toward the government for allowing former Nazi officers to hold office in the new democratic regime. As the economic miracle, *Wirtschaftswunder*, occurred in the 1950s disagreements amongst political officials fell into the shadow. Citizens were distracted by dazzling consumer products they were able to purchase, and began to pay less attention to daily politics. A prosperous economy paved the way for the West Germans to focus on individual gratification rather than collective well being. It became difficult to critique a government (occupied by former National Socialist officials thought it may have been) who brought jobs, food, and American goods to their homes. Prior to 1948, German citizens lived under price control and rations imposed by Hitler, who prioritized buying weapons for the war (Henderson 2008). Henry Wallich wrote about the struggle of West German citizens during this time:

Each day, and particularly on weekends, vast hordes of people trekked out to the country to barter food from the farmers. In dilapidated railway carriages from which everything pilferable had long disappeared, on the roofs and on the running boards, hungry people traveled sometimes hundreds of miles at snail's pace to where they hoped to find something to eat. They took their wares—personal effects, old clothes, sticks of furniture, whatever bombed-out remnants they had—and came back with grain or potatoes for a week or two (1955: 65).

Daily life in the beginning of West Germany was difficult, and adding in the factor of cultural trauma from the Second World War posed a threat to the already dampened German psyche. Citizens were forced to make ends meet, placing their hopes of a better future on the newly elected chancellor. Soon after, the combination of the Allied forces ending the price control in 1948 and the currency reform were the main catalysts of the West German economic miracle, and put the economy back to the forefront of the European market. Heller wrote that the economic reforms “quickly reestablished money as the preferred medium of exchange and monetary incentives as the prime mover of economic activity” (1949: 215). While the West Germans were experiencing the start of a productive capitalist economic system aided by the surplus of western goods, the East German economy remained stagnant with its citizens becoming envious of the selection of western goods that they did not have access to. The power of western consumerism grew in West Germany, and the desire for more western goods, predominately American goods, increased. Milena Veenis and Wiesen both state that the power of attraction of the American-inspired consumer world in postwar West Germany is generally analyzed in relation to “West Germans’ sense of ‘injured citizenship’,” with the “imagined community of the social market economy [defining] consumption as central to new, post-Hitler conception of citizenship” (2011: 489-524 and 2003: 151-79). The American consumer world, as represented at trade fairs and in advertisements “served as orchestrated moments of forgetting” (Campbell 1987: 80) the troubles of the Cold War and their government.



Around the same time, the early 1950s, social movements began advocating for women's rights in West Germany. While women's movements were not new in Germany, some dating back to voting rights pre-World War I and abortion rights during the Weimar and Nazi periods, the post- World War II movements emerged from the abundance of women outnumbering the men by seven million in 1946 (Kolinsky 1989: 25 and 79), due to many deaths in the war. Without a patriarch, women were forced to enter into the workforce. The unequal pay and lack of maternity leave compensation caused women to protest for equality. Ulrike Meinhof advocated for these rights in a *konkret* article, titled *Frauenkram*, covering the large income difference between men and women. She asked, "why despite enjoying the guarantee of equal rights in the Basic Law women still do not have emancipation" (Meinhof 1968). The question is addressed in Nick Thomas' research on protests and social movements in West Germany where the answer lay in traditional views on "femininity" and the role of women: a survey conducted in 1964 found that 75 percent of men and 72 percent of women believed women's place was in the home (Frevert 1989: 287 and Thomas 2003: 225). The movement transformed in the 1960s with the new sexual liberation movements that created conflict with the traditional values of women during the time.

As social transformation and economic prosperity shined light upon West Germany, East Germans were not privy to those experiences. On August 13, 1961 a wall was built by the East Germans to protect their communist values from their westernized neighbors. The *antifascist bulwark*, the antifascist protection wall, later called the Berlin Wall, stood as a centerpiece of Berlin until its fall in November 1989. Families and friends were torn apart, and left with no information as to when they would be able to see their loved ones again. Already experiencing the cultural trauma of confronting their Nazi past and cultural differences from living in a divided Germany, the physical appearance

of the wall provided a worse realization of a forever-divided Germany. The building of the Berlin Wall solidified the straining tensions between the western allies and the Soviet Union, and left the West German government to condemn any radical ideologies that threatened its new democratic system.

Returning to domestic politics, the second chancellor, Ludwig Erhard, sold his soul to the United States in 1963, and supported the U.S. goal of dominance in Vietnam. The continued support by the third chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger in 1966 caused many young West Germans to lose faith in the government, and to join together to protest against government policies. The early stages of the German Student Movement began as early as 1965 when students began to take action against the government with socialist ideologies as their guide. Five large protests occurred in 1965 regarding overcrowding of universities. In the course of twelve years, the number of students attending university doubled, from 123,154 in 1952 to 274,392 in 1964, and caused the universities via the government to refuse entry to qualified students (Statistisches Bundesamt Wiesbaden 1953, 1960, and 1969). While the government tried to keep up with the rising number of students by opening new universities, it was seemingly impossible. The students also addressed concerns about issues such as the *Wirtschaftswunder* success plateauing, poor parliamentary decisions such as the Emergency Legislation (*Notstandsgesetze*), reformation of the university curriculum and the access of students to it, West Germany's role of support in the Vietnam war, and even bias of the press, specifically speaking out against the popular, wide circulation *Bild Zeitung*. Protesters against the Vietnam War especially emphasized their dissent of American imperialism forced upon Vietnam, and parallels to American imperialism were made with the American government having a heavy hand in the West German government. Students joined protests all around the world fighting the struggle against imperialism. The Parliament's multiple attempts at

passing the Emergency Legislation contributed to many students joining the protests. If passed, the West German government would then have the ability to strip away the civil liberties given in their less than two decade old constitution or Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), and turn West Germany into a police state. The students then would have a sound argument for the West German state returning to its fascist past. While students were not the only citizens aware of these issues, there was a stark difference in how the two generations, those who lived during the Second World War and the post-war generation, reacted to these situations. Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorski emphasize that these differences of opinion in confronting the Nazi past led to the conflict in which “generational cleavages in the Federal Republic are more pronounced than in other comparable liberal democracies” (1993: 21-2). Their post-war surveys of the West German Left show that there is a contrast between the opinions of the older generation who lived through Nazism and those who came after. These studies reveal that the older generation diverted their guilt of the Nazi past while the younger generation’s protests were “a critique of the complacency and accommodation of the Bonn republic’s institutions and political cultures vis-à-vis the Nazi regime” and “the first time that massive protests erupted on German soil against Germany’s Nazi period” (Markovits and Gorski 1993: 21-2 and Thomas 2003: 26). The post-war, younger generation approached these issues differently by taking a moral stance. The University of Mannheim conducted a survey in 1968 asking if National Socialism was a good idea, but poorly executed. About 50 percent of the general public agreed with this statement while 91 percent of students disagreed (HIfS, Box #: Sammlung APO Press, File: Abendzeitung (April 24, 1968)). Afraid of the impending doom of the West German government, by turning back to their fascist past, students continued with protests, weekly flyers, and rallies, with prominent leaders of the protests speaking out against the actions of the government.

Organizations among university students were formed over the next five years, and rallies led by Rudi Dutschke speaking out against the government led to more supporters. The turning point of the protests occurred on June 2, 1967 when an unarmed student, Benno Ohnesorg, was shot and killed during a protest against the Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who was visiting West Germany. While there are brief accounts of the event, none of the accounts can cover the shooting in full detail. Students were against the Shah visiting West Germany because it painted a poor picture of the government supporting a corrupt dictator. This was emphasized in the infamous open letter to the Shah's wife, "Offener Brief an Farah Diba," written by Ulrike Meinhof, in *konkret* prior to the visit (1967: 21-2). The impending protest was rumored to be large, and the Federal Interior Ministry gave the Shah's visit the highest security rating and level (Security Level 1), meaning the police had to plan for a possible assassination attempt (Thomas 2003: 108). Preparing for the protest, the police were unaware of the number of individuals from the Iranian secret service organization, Savak, that were going to attend. The lack of communication between the two organizations added to the confusion of how to react if the protest turned violent. Protesters showed up that evening outside the *Deutsche Oper* awaiting the arrival of the Shah and his wife. Already throwing eggs, stink bombs, and shouting Nazi references (Thomas 2003: 110), the police chose to intervene out of fear of an attempt that could be made on the Shah's life. During the clearing, the students and police both turned to violence. An engineering student, Heinz-Deiter Kretzmer, gave an eyewitness account of the event:

Everything looked to me like chaos. I saw police officers climb over the barriers and noticed a violent hand-to-hand fight. I heard shouts of 'murderer' and also chants that I couldn't understand. I didn't hear any loudspeaker announcements... The officers who had invaded the crowd held their batons in raised hands... I also saw how the officers made use of their batons and noticed how numerous demonstrators were dragged over the southern side of Bismarck Strasse toward the Deutsche Oper, to the lines in the middle of the road, and

during the dragging they were beaten with truncheons by the police officers. In one case a police officer kicked a demonstrator who had broken free and fallen over (Thomas 2003: 111-12).

The evidence of police brutality amidst the students was undeniable. Officers would shout comments to the protesters, like “you filthy communists will be thrown back over the wall” (Thomas 2003: 112). Simultaneously, police officers like Karl-Heinz Kurras clutched their weapons in fear of the situation getting too out of hand. Soon after, Officer Kurras shot Benno Ohnesorg, as he claims by mistake, turning Ohnesorg into a martyr for the protest movement. This event inspired some of the more radical students to form the 2 June Movement, which carried out terrorist acts against the West German government and less than three years later led to the formation of the RAF.

In a period of less than twenty years, the new democratic government of West Germany was unable to keep up with the social demands of the post-war generation. The disproportionate reaction to protests and eventually to terrorism was the response of an immature democracy (Thomas 2003: 239), and an insecure government overlooking its Nazi past instead of confronting it. The various political and sociocultural events leading up to the formation of the RAF affected West Germany as a whole, and individuals were able to relate to many of the issues and fears critical of the puppet regime. Armed with a desire to cleanse the West German government of its supposed love affair with the western Allies and the Nazi past, a cult of followers started to buy into the idea of a better Germany.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### *Role of the Media in Public Perception*

“Publish this!”<sup>2</sup>

—Note enclosed in RAF texts sent to media outlets

In the first chapter, we discussed the impact of post-war historical developments on political and social change in the West German Republic. This chapter will attempt to connect these historical events to the members of the RAF. Taking a look at each of the core members of the RAF is crucial in understanding how and why citizens felt sympathy for the organization. Instead of looking at the mere facts of each case, the humanization of Ulrike Meinhoff, and to a lesser degree Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader and Holger Meins, gave citizens a chance to see them not only as extreme radicals but as more or less ordinary people worthy of human sympathy. The First Generation RAF members became frequent front-page headlines that transformed them into ‘terrorist superstars’ who were ‘fighting the good fight.’ Through Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin’s rationales, and Andreas Baader’s infamous struggle to keep his Ray Bans on while being dragged away by the police, the RAF became celebrities among West German media.

#### **The Dominant Role of Ulrike Meinhof in the RAF**

Running parallel to the humanization of the core members, the rhetoric of the organization, authored by Ulrike Meinhof, altered the course of sympathetic viewers toward the RAF. Instead of having a long history of violence, Meinhof (founder of the RAF) was a well-established journalist, dabbling in television and radio, and a figurehead of the German Left. Meinhof’s work spoke out for political and social reform toward marginalized demographic groups in West Germany. Through her columns and articles,

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<sup>2</sup> Original German: “Veröffentlicht das!” (GFA, Box #: 362, File: 3130 (pp. 26-32)).

she exposed the acts of the government and West German elite to bring justice to the citizens of West Germany.

Ulrike Meinhof was born on 1934 in a northern German town. Her mother raised Meinhof with her younger sister since their father died soon after their births. Her childhood consisted of a strong Protestant background with the Hessian Dissent, a group that opposed state interference with the church (Krebs 1988: 17). While her mother studied at the University of Jena, the children were cared for by extended family, and later by a new boarder, Renate Riemeck, who was taken in to share the expenses. After the Second World War, Meinhof's mother passed, and she was left in the care of Riemeck. The relationship between Meinhof and Riemeck changed from friendship to mentorship as Riemeck introduced her to literature, philosophy, politics, and endowed her with a sense of moral obligation to society. Further, in a letter to Meinhof, Riemeck saw herself as having a paternal role in Meinhof's life. She would sign letters to Meinhof as "your substitute father" (Röhl 2006: 164). Meinhof became a part of the inner Left when her career at *konkret* soared, with columns speaking out against the West German government during the time of the Student Movement in the 1960s. Her work critiqued the production and use of nuclear arms, the marginalization of minorities, West Germany's involvement in the Vietnam War, the West German Emergency Laws, and the government's affiliation with autocratic regimes. Meinhof's career as a journalist established her role in the media more than a decade before the formation of the RAF. Her influence over the Left established a base of connections that Meinhof later used during her time in the RAF. While Meinhof wrote many important pieces, one of her most defining works was published at the height of the Student Movement protests in a leaflet that motivated students to protest the arrival of the Shah of Iran and his wife.

Meinhof's "Open Letter to Farah Diba" contains a rebuke of the West German government for welcoming a leader of an authoritarian regime, and expresses solidarity with Iranian citizens "and any developing nations- and the anti-totalitarian and anti-capitalist sentiment underlying the anti-Shah protests" (Meinhof 2008: 39). On the evening of June 2, 1967, a "few thousand" (Meinhof 2008: 39) anti-Shah protesters gathered outside the *Deutsche Oper* in Berlin. This eventful protest, described in the first chapter, was the turning point of the radical left's transitioning to violent actions against the state. A month after the event, Meinhof produced a television feature describing in great detail the events that occurred during the June 2<sup>nd</sup> protest. She stated, "The protests against the chief of a police state [the Shah] unmask our state as a police state. Terror by police and the press reached its high point on June 2 in Berlin. We have come to understand that freedom in this state means the freedom of the police truncheon, and freedom of the press in the shadow of the Springer Corporation means the freedom to justify the truncheon" (Röhl 2006: 560 and Bauer 2008: 42).

While her career as a journalist bloomed, Meinhof's life at home began to fall apart. Her husband Klaus Rainer Röhl, editor-in-chief of *konkret*, chose not to follow Meinhof down the radicalizing path. The media soon after published articles demonizing Meinhof as an unfit mother for her two daughters and a bad wife. The SDS, *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (Socialist German Student Union-the student arm of the SPD, *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*- Social Democratic Party of Germany), continued to promote Meinhof through the Vietnam Congress that consisted of over "five thousand delegates of the New Left from around the world" (Meinhof 2008: 46) that spoke out against the Vietnam War, sharing the beliefs of the current protests occurring all over West Germany. Meinhof and *konkret*, though, had differing opinions than the rest of the West German media about the movement radicalizing, whereas



Meinhof and *konkret* celebrated this after the shooting of Rudi Dutschke, a prominent member in the German Left movement. Even left-leaning media such as *Der Spiegel* criticized the acts of protest as excessive and unnecessary. Meinhof's disappointment in the liberal media is articulated in her column entitled "Water Cannons: Against Women Too" (1968), singling out *Der Spiegel's* founder and editor-in-chief at the time, Rudolf Augstein, for his critiques of the movement. The themes of her columns remain consistent, arguing that there is no sense in criticizing protesters of the Vietnam War because they were protesting crimes against humanity. Her alliance with the moderate-radical left elevated once she went on an assignment to Frankfurt in October of 1968 to report "for *konkret* on the trial of Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader, Thorwald Proll, and Horst Söhnlein who were accused of arson in a department store" (Meinhof 2008: 50). In Meinhof's report, she criticized the group on the grounds that their act of arson was not enough to make a statement against the bourgeoisie, but "on the contrary, it maintains the system and is counter-revolutionary" (Koenen 2001: 129). Less than two years later, Meinhof conspired with the same individuals she had interviewed to break Baader out of prison and officially form the RAF. During this time, the public perception of Meinhof was becoming negative, as she left *konkret* in 1969. The liberal newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* published a letter of explanation by Meinhof for leaving *konkret* due to her fear of the magazine joining the rest of the liberal media in working towards "polishing the leftist image" (Röhl 1974: 272-73), and essentially selling out the ideology of true leftist revolutionaries. Although she accused the liberal media of not staying true to their beliefs, the leftist media continued to support her by publishing parts of communiqués and treatises throughout her time in the RAF. Even her former husband and editor-in-chief of the magazine, Röhl, continued to keep a positive image of Meinhof after she left *konkret*, and published a volume of her columns in 1972. Aust notes that "Although he

[Röhl] may have profited from the publication of the volume and gained publicity through Meinhof, he countered the image of her as the evil terrorist by portraying her instead as a serious journalist with a private life as a wife, mother, and [well liked in her community]” (2008: 54). Meinhof’s role in the RAF was crucial to legitimization of terrorism in West Germany, as she had a history of being a respected journalist – while the other members were viewed as pesky arsonists, or troubled youths, turning to violence as a justification of their ‘humanistic cause’. Her role as the lead communicator of the RAF’s violent acts spin the communist ideology into a compelling storyline that romanticizes their cause to the West German, and global, audience.

### **A Radical Lawyer, and his Glorified Arsonists**

Aside from Ulrike Meinhof, the rest of the RAF’s First Generation included Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader, Jan-Carl Raspe, Holger Meins, Astrid Proll, Ingrid Schubert, Thomas Weissbecker, Petra Schelm, Christa Eckes, Angela Luther, and the initial brains of the operation, Horst Mahler, a respected lawyer at the time. To be specific, the First Generation included the four founding members: Meinhof, Baader, Ensslin, and Mahler; members from other smaller West German terrorist organizations that later dissolved, such as June 2 or the Socialist Patients’ Collective (*Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv*, SPK), joined the organization prior to 1975. The post-1975 RAF produced different goals and motives that focused more on breaking the remainder of the members out of jail, and extracting financial support through its decreasing group of sympathizers. Though the Second and Third Generations kept Meinhof’s legacy alive, the members were less appealing to the West German public due to their lack of poise and true purpose. Most of the RAF’s support came because of members of the First Generation.

The primary reason to list the members of the First Generation is to highlight the

ratio of men to women in the organization at the time, 1:2 (rounded up). In 1970, the BKA (*Bundeskriminalamt*-Federal Criminal Police Office) produced a wanted poster for members suspected to be part of the RAF, which was spread all over West Germany. While their intention was to mark the young radicals as threats to the state, this being prior to their first large-scale attack, the wanted posters did quite the opposite. The poster, shown in Photograph 1, displays pictures of suspected members that humanized the members rather than vilifying them as a threat to the Federal Republic. A majority of the members shown were also women, and symbolized the strength of women being able to engage in these acts rather than in their traditional role as a woman in Germany. Older, more conservative citizens viewed this poster as an extension of the radicalized Student Movement where young West Germans were deviants of sexual exploration and enlightenment, and characterized the RAF members as promoting ideas that could alter the traditional German lifestyle. The wanted poster led to several different interpretations of the organization, but the message it sent resonated most with the younger generation. While the BKA's intentions were to blacken the RAF's cause, the organization gained more support, as the younger generation was able to connect to their message. The first hunt for the members succeeded when German citizens were "asked to participate not only in the hunt for members of the so-called 'Baader-Meinhof Gang', but also in the hunt for sympathizers and clandestine supporters" (Bauer 2008:71). Members were described as dressing and acting like ordinary citizens (Bauer 2008: 71). *Bild am Sonntag* stimulated reporting on the hunt for members of the organization in 1972 through headlines such as "Tender Nights in the Berber Tent" that described the organization's time in Jordan. This article portrayed Ensslin as an "ice cold seductress," and an article published in *Quick*, a lifestyle and news magazine, on June 28, 1972 portrayed Meinhof as a woman who desexualized herself to turn younger people to violence. This article was

paired with a photo of Meinhof surrounded by other women terrorists, and was titled “Ulrike Meinhof and her Savage Girls.” This article was the first to make a connection between the lifestyles of Meinhof and Ensslin, exposing them as spoiled girls from bourgeois homes and having the tendency to “act like men,” insinuating that the women had homosexual tendencies. *Bild Zeitung* took a similar stance, but chose to explain Meinhof’s descent into violence as resulting from being unsatisfied with motherhood and stating “She wasn’t able to experience the family as a community of love and emotional bonds” (June 9, 1972). *Bild Zeitung* continued to publish pictures of Meinhof and her children to remind readers that “Once this was Ulrike Meinhof” (June 6, 1972). The media’s real scandal was her dismissal of the traditional role, and not her violent actions. Although leftist publications like *konkret* would publish articles asking Meinhof to rethink her role in militant violence by claiming that “You are different, Ulrike, very different from what people see when confronted with your picture on the wanted poster or what they hear about you in the press, on radio, and television” (Röhl 1974: 305). Unfortunately, this message did not cloud the vicious portrayals of Meinhof and the women in the RAF to the citizens of West Germany. Meinhof was targeted the most compared to the other members due to her intelligence. The other members were portrayed as criminals who continued their work for an outrageous cause.

### **The Name Game**

The RAF laid claim to many names during their reign of terror over the Federal Republic. Frustrated with media reporting using nicknames such as the Baader-Meinhof Gruppe (Group) and Baader-Meinhof Bande (Gang), the names misinformed citizens about the organization’s message. The RAF claimed to be a faction because it is a formation of political dissenters. A faction is strong, and their creed of leaving no one behind was a crucial part of their leftist message. More of the liberal media referred to the

organization as the Baader-Meinhof Group, which led to a less negative outlook than the reference to ‘gang’ by conservative media to relate the organization to a bad group of people. Ulf Stuberger, the only journalist to attend every session of the trial, where the state aimed to charge Meinhof, Baader, Ensslin, and Meins for their deviant actions, wrote about the federal prosecutor passing on information to reporters that was more sympathetic to the State rather than being unbiased. He described meetings when the attorney general expressed his desire to report the organization as a gang rather than a group (Stuberger 2007: 43-44). Two years later, after the *Baader-Meinhof-Report* was published in 1972, the targeted use of language was confirmed that the State lacked a “coherent, political language for a rapid response” (Colvin 2009: 131).

### **Media Themes that Gained Support**

The most notable members of the First Generation, those who the media covered most, were Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Holger Meins. Aside from Meins, the other three members had previous run-ins with the media when it came to radical leftist acts. While Baader and Ensslin were always in the spotlight for their arson acts, Meins did not receive as much press until he was jailed at Stammheim during the hunger strikes. The organization’s *avant garde* strategy to motivate the masses through direct action was not as successful as their propaganda and media campaigns throughout the 1970s. Depicting themselves as revolutionaries sacrificing themselves for a less oppressed society against the evil ex-Nazi- occupied West German government, the RAF created self-representational themes deriving from the stereotypical good-versus-evil opposition in their treatises, published in several newspapers and pamphlets. This was meant to rationalize their violent acts. Themes such as bravery and sacrifice, loyalty and duty, betrayal and solidarity emanated from Meinhof’s work accusing the West German government of embodying the banality of the democratic future of West

Germany. A day before Meinhof was arrested in 1972 in Hamburg for acts of terror the RAF conducted, a package was sent containing her texts to the *Frankfurter Rundschau*. A note enclosed on the top demanding “Publish this!” represented the relationship between the organization and the media. Meinhof’s texts were written for different sets of audiences: the mainstream media, private recipients, and alternative publishers.

Meinhof’s “words were integral to the underground interplay between language, image, and physical violence: They established what would become the RAF brand and its sharp sense of audience recognition. They played a central role in the bombings of May 1972 and the mainstream appropriation of the radical rhetoric of war and they used ideology to perform distinctly non-ideological discourses” (Passmore 2011: 33).

Sympathy and support for the organization throughout the 1970s can be described as a rollercoaster. The rise and fall of sympathy for the RAF is characterized by four major themes in the media during the 1970s. First, the May Offensive was the first four bombings in Frankfurt, Augsburg, Hamburg, and Heidelberg (1972)- that were counted as political attacks since the locations were military, police, or the corrupt Springer publication enterprise sites. These attacks surprised West German citizens, and the RAF’s intention to gain support backfired, as citizens did not want to condone extreme radical methods. Second, the arrests by and brutality of the police in connection with the founding members of the RAF (1972 and earlier) caused the citizens to look at the members separately, rather than as a group. This humanized the members as individuals who wanted to further the leftist cause. The famous picture of Baader fixing his sunglasses while being dragged away by the police, shown in Photograph 2, became an iconic portrait of the organization that depicted them as ‘cool’ radicals. In addition, the hunger strikes and the trial at Stammheim gained more support for the RAF as the media published pictures of Meins and compared him to a Holocaust victim. Third, the German

Autumn (1977) witnessed a sharp decline of support for the organization due to the Second Generation's poor execution of a kidnapping, and hijacking a plane. The media then was able to portray the group as weak due to its core members being jailed. And fourth, the deaths of Meinhof, Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe at Stammheim (1976-77) due to not fully explained suicides that generated conspiracy theories and gained support for the organization by seeming to confirm the brutalities of the State.

### **The May Offensive**

The May Offensive began with Ensslin's idea to bomb the U.S. Army Corp headquarters in Frankfurt in May 1972. The next day two more bomb attacks were launched, the first at a police headquarters in Augsburg, and the second at a State Criminal Police Office in Munich. The third bombing was intended to be for Commando Manfred Grashof, but his wife started the car instead setting off the bomb. The fourth and final bombing was an example of how the RAF built relationships with other extremist organizations to further their cause by putting aside their ideological differences. This attack, initiated by Meinhof against the Springer (publisher of the virulently anti-RAF *Bild Zeitung*) building in Hamburg, was executed by the 2 June Movement, an anarchist West German terrorist organization that shared members with the RAF. Ensslin, Baader, and Meins were all part of the execution of the bombings, and Meinhof was part of this with her typewriter. These actions created a decrease of support for the RAF across the Federal Republic, as this was the organization's first act outside of their ideological ramblings.

At the end of May, the *Frankfurter Rundschau* published an RAF communiqué warning citizens to stay in their homes on June 2. This appeared to be a false text, and

sparked a new fight between the RAF and the media.<sup>3</sup> Authored by Meinhof, the RAF continued to stress their declarations as being “political content” (*politischer Inhalt*) rather than empty threats against the Federal Republic (GFA, Box #: 362, File: 3130 (pp. 245)). Their strategy transitioned to ‘propaganda of the deed’, where they first attacked, and then declared their rationale through a declaration. The mainstream media, however, focused on something else. Instead of publishing these declarations, the mainstream media focused on imagery and horrific pictures of the bombings. On May 13, 1972 the *Frankfurter Rundschau* published photographs of the destruction from the bombs with the headline, “Such attacks only in Vietnam until now” (“Solche Anschläge bisher nur in Vietnam”). Articles like this took away from the RAF’s own comparison of the Vietnam War and imperialist struggle, and turned the media’s rhetoric to viewing the Federal Republic as a warzone, similar to Vietnam. The RAF’s actions during the May Offensive, then, diminished sympathy as the media portrayed them as militants willing to blow up anything for their cause.

### **Police Brutality and the Hunger Strikes**

Soon after the May Offense, the core members of the RAF were arrested. Baader, Raspe, and Meins were arrested after they were seen near a garage where they stored their explosives on June 1, 1972. Ensslin was arrested while shopping for a sweater in Hamburg only a week later. Meinhof was arrested two weeks later when a connection she was staying with turned her in. Since the police did not have fingerprints to identify her, the prosecutor and judge agreed to have an x-ray of Meinhof’s head, so the clamp implanted in her brain from a previous surgery could be used to identify her. Meinhof

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<sup>3</sup> The *Frankfurter Rundschau* reported the possibility of this text being fake, but three days later it was reported on the front cover. “Unklarheit über neue Terror-Drohungen.” *Frankfurter Rundschau*. May 29, 1972.



was forcibly anaesthetized because she refused to be x-rayed (Aust 2008: 233), turning this into be the first of many acts the State chose to impose upon the members without their consent.

The incarcerated RAF members were dispersed across several prisons in the Federal Republic. Meinhof was sent to an isolation cell at Ossendorf prison in Cologne, where she lived “practically twenty-four hours a day in an unlivable environment” (Krebs 1988: 241), and stated, “gas; I tell you that my Auschwitz fantasies are coming to life” in a letter to Mahler (Peters 2004: 306). Other RAF prisoners conducted hunger strikes between May 1973 and February 1974 to show solidarity with their goal of ending solitary confinement, supervised visits, an end to censorship of the prisoners’ mail, and to all be moved into a common prison (Bauer 2008: 79). The prison responded with a court order to force feed the prisoners. In November 1974, Meins died due to the third hunger strike. Graphic pictures of Meins’ six foot, eighty-eight pound body and sunken eyes were released by the RAF’s lawyer, Groenewold (Terhoeven 2007: 392), to be the headlines of liberal newspapers such as *Die Zeit*, and a cover story of the hunger strikes appeared in *Der Spiegel* to question the treatment of prisoners in Stammheim. A widely circulated photograph shows Meins’ corpse dressed in a white silk gown, Photograph 4, with sunken eyes and cheeks. In the photograph, Meins “appears as a Christ-like figure, an ascetic who had given his life for the cause” (Meinhof 2008: 80). Meins’ starved corpse, pictured in Photographs 3 and 4, also drew parallels to victims of concentration camps, and with the cultural trauma of such events having occurred less than forty years earlier, Meins’ death increased sympathy for the RAF.

The Stammheim trial was the longest and most expensive trial in the history of the Federal Republic. Lasting 192 days, the trial ended with the alleged suicides of the

members (Passmore 2011: 83). Reports of the trial described it as a “catastrophe for the democratic state” (Wesel 2006: 1057) due to the new anti-terror laws passed that made it easier for the State to prosecute citizens involved in terrorist activities. The new legal construct of the “criminal association” (*kriminelle Vereinigung*, section 129 of the criminal code) stated that each member of the RAF was to be tried separately (Oesterle 2003: 125). This is meant that the RAF needed to alter their defense strategy. The RAF chose to not follow the initial goal of the trial- to prosecute the members for their violent actions- and used the trial as a platform to rationalize their actions with their ideology. They constructed their message in two ways: as a ‘political prisoner’ and as a ‘prisoner of war’ (POW). At the beginning, the trial was delayed because of several attempts by doctors to establish whether the prisoners were fit to stand trial due to their declining health from the hunger strikes. The fitness to stand trial (*Verhandlungsfähigkeit*) was discussed by Groenwold in interviews. It was described in an *info* from June 16, 1973 under the sub-headline “hunger strike,” that Meinhof “underwent detailed examinations of blood and urine. She was declared sick, which meant the trial was cancelled with no free time, or visits” (GFA, Box #: 362, File: 3168 (pp. 290)). Also, it is important to note that the trial would continue if the defendant refused the trial, but “if someone is sick and therefore cannot come, the court cannot proceed, if someone is sick for longer than 10 days, the trial would be temporarily shut down” (GFA, Box #: 362, File: 3166 (pp. 7-8)). The lawyers feared too that members would be declared mentally ill and ‘unfit’ for trial. The strategy of invoking the status of a political prisoner and prisoner of war turned into a human rights violation issue, demanding fair treatment by the Federal Republic. This too caused an increase in public sympathy for the RAF.

When Judge Prinzing appeared on a television interview claiming that the trial was a “normal criminal trial” (*normaler Straffall*) rather than a political trial (Aust 2008:

361), this furthered the RAF's representation of a conspiracy of the State trying to reduce their legitimacy as an organization (HIFS, Box #: U/025, File: 007 (1975-6)). The prisoners then turned to claiming that they were political prisoners, and their lawyers filed an application to the European Commission of Human Rights. The complaint was centered "around prison conditions and isolation suffered by 'political prisoners', the exclusion of defense counsel, as well as the assertion that through these conditions the 'authorities [had] created a class of political prisoners whose rights [were] reduced in comparison to the other prisoners" (1975: 59); and the commission was forced to rule whether the decisions of the Federal Republic violated articles 3, 6, 8, and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Passmore 2011: 96). During this time, the media published reports sympathetic to the organization. New protests regarding prisoners' rights occurred across the Federal Republic. The strategy of calling the members 'prisoners of war' was not as successful. First, the audience needed to understand and agree with the RAF's revolutionary goals. Then, the audience had to view the RAF prisoners as being held captive by the oppressive State. The historic imagery of a prisoner of war, though, did speak to the public, but not as well as the claims of being a 'political prisoner.'

### **Deaths at Stammheim**

The reported 'suicides' of Meinhof, Ensslin, Baader, and Raspe flooded the headlines with conspiracy theories and protests against the Federal Republic that increased sympathy for the organization for years to follow. In Dr. Meyer's report for the International Investigation Commission (IUK) in 1979 he states, "The lack of a suicide note is pivotal. In my opinion, it is definitive evidence against suicide and is contrary to every else we know about her [Meinhof]...For Ulrike Meinhof to commit suicide without leaving a suicide note is impossible" (2007: 34-5). Now known as the 'Stammheim

Myth', the suicides of Raspe, Baader, Ensslin, and Meinhof inspired many conspiracy theories, undermining the credibility of the Federal Republic. Below is a chart indicating aspects of the deaths due to conspiracies.

RAF Member	Date of Death	Cause of Death	Conspiracy
Holger Meins	November 9, 1974	Starvation	None- became a martyr for protests against harsh prison conditions.
Ulrike Meinhof	May 9, 1976	Suicide- Hanging	Body position showed difficulty in hanging by oneself. Dried semen found on body after examined, and concluded as being raped before death.
Andreas Baader	October 18, 1977	Suicide- Gunshot	Gunshots were sporadic, and ballistic expert claims that body had to be at a distance for the wounds inflicted- unless the gun had a silencer. A silencer was not found in the cell.
Gudrun Ensslin	October 18, 1977	Suicide-Hanging	Body position was similar to Meinhof's whereas one's own hanging could be questioned as not being able to do this by themselves.
Jan-Carl Raspe	October 18, 1977	Suicide- Gunshot	No gunpowder residue was found on Raspe, or in his cell.
Irmgard Möller	October 18, 1977	Suicide- Stabbing	No fingerprints were found on knife she was holding at her death, and it was as if someone wiped it clean.

Meinhof committed suicide over a year before the other members in 1976, after

she was declared unfit to stand trial. The RAF prisoners ostracized her, and refused to include her in their plans, while Ensslin took over her job as lead communicator. Ensslin, Baader, Möller, and Raspe were found in their cells on the morning of October 18, 1977, which implied acts of suicide. Later known as the 'Death Night', the prisoners were seen as martyrs for their cause, inspiring more sympathy for the new generations of the RAF. The mass exodus of the core members started a new era for protest and dissent against the Federal Republic, and left the RAF to feed off of the resentment citizens gained after the core members' deaths.

### **The German Autumn**

Starting in 1975, the RAF transitioned their mission to freeing the prisoners, and correlated their attacks with claims against a corrupt justice and prison system. Events of the German Autumn would not have occurred if the prisoners were not able to contact members of the organization outside of jail. Prisoners struggled with maintaining a revolutionary morale when judges censored books and mail sent to the prisoners. Klaus Croissant, one of the RAF's defense attorneys, described that subjects such as "the detonation of explosive devices, means of preventing such devices being de-activated, on recent police methods of hunting suspects, on new weapons, alarm systems, industrial security forces, miniaturized spying devices, the construction of police roadblocks" (Aust 2008: 265) were accumulated in their library to maintain a 'revolutionary consciousness.' Their ability to smuggle into prison this information demonstrated that "the fight can be continued from a prison cell, and that the terrorist organization can continue to function despite the authorities' efforts to break it" (Wright 1990: 147). Near the end of 1976, police recovered photographs of the inside of Stammheim and of the prisoners themselves in an apartment of the known sympathizer Elisabeth von Dyck. This provided evidence that items such as cameras, guns, and secret messages had the ability to be

smuggled in. Furthermore, the police used this evidence to infer that the weapons Ensslin, Baader, and Raspe used for their suicides were smuggled items from their lawyers.

Having this ability within the prison system “enabled the prisoners themselves to continue the operational planning, and for the outside leadership to include the prisoners in operational plans, even if none of these plans actually eventuated” (Wright 1990: 147).

The German Autumn began on July 30, 1977 with the attempted kidnapping and killing of the director of Dresdner Bank, Jürgen Ponto. The RAF’s terror lasted until October 18, 1977, and was their last major terrorist act. During this time the Chairman of the German Employer’s Federation, Hans Martin Schleyer, was kidnapped, and a Lufthansa flight, LH 181, was hijacked with 87 people. Its passengers were taken hostage and a demand was issued for the remaining RAF prisoners at Stammheim to be set free. The Second Generation’s plans were poorly executed, leaving the plane to be returned, and Schleyer was shot to avenge the deaths of Meinhof, Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe. Instead of the initial ploy to gain public support for the organization, the actions during the German Autumn caused the public to view the new generations as sporadic, immature radicals.

### **Terror Coming to an End**

In the first two years of their operation, the core members of the RAF were captured, and in less than seven years the core members were all dead. The RAF lasted twenty-eight years, but the mission and self-portrayal of the organization never was the same after 1977. The Second and Third Generation members were untrained Baader/Meinhof wannabes whose message failed to reach the West German public. Instead, they latched onto the support of the sympathizers from the deaths of the core members until their ideology became irrelevant. No other German terrorist organization could rival RAF during the 1970s. The media turned to mocking the Second and Third

Generations as kids and bank robbers, thus pushing them towards dissolving the organization as a whole in 1998.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Degrees of Sympathy toward Terrorist Organizations*

*“Though sympathy alone can't alter facts, it can help to make them more bearable.”*  
—Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

In her book *Terrorist Propaganda* (1990), Joanne Wright discusses how propaganda affects three different types of audiences “uncommitted,” “sympathetic,” and “active”. Wright’s categories provide a base for those who sympathize with terrorist actions in correlation to the organization’s propaganda. But there are other factors that increase sympathy for terrorist organizations. After laying out the conditions for sympathetic tendencies of the public in the first two chapters (namely, historical factors, personal recognition, and the role of the media), sympathetic tendencies toward terrorist organizations are multifaceted.

Instead of defining propaganda as “tools for creating public support in the pursuit of political ends” (Wright 1990: 73), we should also focus on terrorist propaganda as a means of targeting sociocultural and political factors. Scholars such as Wright tend to focus on one factor rather than approaching a case multifariously. Therefore, NATO’s definition of propaganda in its *Glossary of Terms for Military Use* is applied when discussing sympathetic origins and potentialities of sympathetic attitudes toward the terrorist organizations. NATO defines propaganda as “any information, ideas, doctrines or special appeals disseminated to influence opinion, emotions, attitudes or behavior of any specified group in order to benefit the sponsor either directly or indirectly” (1974: 2-176). This definition does not imply that terrorism has the ability to gain public support, but that the terror brought about by an organization influences an individuals’ thoughts, actions, and emotive behavior in society. The violence conducted by terrorist



organizations is key to separating such groups from simple social movements. Violence lays the groundwork for what they consider to be “true change.” This definition is distinguishable from communication and persuasion, whereas the goal of propaganda “is to satisfy or further the needs of the propagandist” (Wright 1990: 73). The propagandists though have to twist their message to fit the experiences of their audience. Turning to Jacques Ellul’s term, “pre-propaganda”, the historical turmoil of a German citizen, makes “him sensitive to some influence” (1969: 30), thus making the RAF’s claims more persuasive to the West German audience.

The organization’s strategy with print media in the Federal Republic was vital to its overall goal. Reading the news is a morning ritual for Germans. Taking part in reading news is “performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull” (Eisenstein 1968: 42), but this ritual is “being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others” (Anderson 1983: 35). Through their propaganda, the RAF was able to communicate with a common language that spoke to West German citizens’ leftist imagined communities that desired political and social change. Meinhof’s rhetoric skewed the reality of West German society to gain support for the RAF’s cause. The radicalized West German left “self-consciously defined themselves” (Anderson 1983: 46) by taking action against the Federal Republic, whether it was through physical or private dissent, and the RAF’s message resonated within a substantial part of West German consciousness.

I propose to organize the audiences of terrorist propaganda into the following five categories: hyperactive sympathizer, active sympathizer, passive sympathizer, hyper-passive sympathizer, and disassociators (i.e., those who actively disassociate from the ideology of a terrorist organization.) A hyperactive sympathizer is an individual, described by H.J. Horchem in *The Development of West German Terrorism. After 1969: An Overview*, as one who provides a constant supply of money, false identities, safe

houses, cars, and anything that would prevent capture of a member of the organization (1983: 13). The hyperactive sympathizer is also an individual who Stefan Aust describes as a “connection” (Aust 2008: 78), meaning as an individual who is willing to serve jail time for protecting a member of an organization. Several of these “connections” were from Meinhof’s previous contacts as a journalist at *konkret*. An active sympathizer supports the organization through advocacy or participating in protests. The active sympathizer does not cross the line of volunteering to help the organization but will hand out pamphlets or attend protests. The passive sympathizer is an individual who believes in the ideology of the organization but chooses to not support the organization in the public realm. A hyper-passive sympathizer is one who is aware of the organization’s ideology but does not support or disassociate from it. An individual who actively disassociates from the organization is the least willing to sympathize with the organization because the disassociator does not believe in the ideology of the organization.

West Germany’s media coverage of the RAF divided the public into these five categories, during the twenty-eight years during which the RAF existed that country. Hyperactive and active sympathizers go above and beyond to gain information about the RAF, and chose to physically involve themselves in the public sphere. On the other hand, passive and hyper-passive sympathizers formulated their opinions based on media reporting, and their level of sympathy fluctuated depending on the RAF’s current act of terror at the time. Citizens who disassociated from the organization exhibited no desire to support the radicalized leftist ideology, and viewed the RAF’s actions as silly and childish. A further explanation of the five categories is provided below, starting with the highest level of sympathy, hyperactive sympathizers, and concluding with the lowest level of sympathy, the disassociators.

## **Hyperactive Sympathizers**

In order to have a successful terrorist organization, members must have a solid base of supporters willing to do anything in their cause. A hyperactive sympathizer then is one who chooses to commit illegal acts to advance the goals of the organization. An individual who reaches this level of sympathy is most likely an individual who connects to the message of the organization, and judges that the outcome will justify the means of the organization. Although the individual does not partake in the extreme violent acts, a hyperactive sympathizer is a valuable asset in keeping the members safe and/or funded. Therefore the only outside individuals that active members of the organization come into contact with are the hyperactive sympathizers – of which the RAF had around 200 at the time (Bougereau 1981: 71).

A hyperactive sympathizer is a product of a variety of factors, including sharing the West German cultural trauma of the Nazi past and distaste for the new post-war governments. The RAF's message spoke the most to this audience, as the sympathizers actively looked for new propaganda from the organization. Hyperactive sympathizers also may know someone directly in the organization, and have a personal relationship with them. Meinhof had the strongest connections from her journalist past at the beginning of the RAF's formation, and used her knowledge of the radical left sympathizers to hide Baader and Ensslin after Baader was broken out of jail in 1970 (Passmore 2011: 34). Having an operating system is key for any terrorist organization, but there runs a fine line between the organization's message and its actions. The RAF produced a plethora of rationales for their actions, but support began to fall because its "actions did not produce the results its theory predicted" (Wright 1990: 144). Instead of tapping into the 'revolutionary consciousness' of West German citizens, the RAF's violent acts left this target audience critical of the organization. If the 'propaganda of the

deed' is not successful, support will be lost, and then sympathizers will refuse to rationalize the acts of the organization.

Hyperactive sympathy can increase with the intentional or unintentional projection of a terrorist organization by the media. Liberal media outlets such as *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, *konkret*, and the *Frankfurter Rundschau* reported differently than popular conservative media like the *Bild Zeitung*. While most newspapers reported the RAF's declarations verbatim, the declarations were presented in a negative light (Elter 2008: 123-125), and published after the bombings occurred. The RAF would produce constant rationales to assure sympathizers that they had no intention to harm the ordinary citizen. To maintain support, a terrorist organization must be conscious of their social image to keep a base of hyperactive supporters. This is confirmed when Horst Mahler, a lawyer connected to the formation of the RAF, stated "we were quite aware of the fact that if we wanted to fight with arms it would be necessary to kill... Of course, it was not 'the people', the little man who is innocent [of] any repression that we would kill. The main point of our struggle was to be some kind of sabotage and punishment of responsible personages for cruelties against the people" (Kellen 1979: 33).

Communication between the hyperactive sympathizers and the terrorist organization is vital to the success of the organization. When the RAF was portrayed as watered down criminals who had no intention to advance their political goal, their first act as an organization was to rob three banks. They struggled to communicate their view that their act was part of a larger plan: "Many people say that a bank robbery is not political. But, financing a political organization is a political question. This is how you solve the revolutionary organization's financial problem. It is right because the financial problem could not be solved in any other way. It is tactically right because it is a proletarian action. It is also strategically right because it serves the purpose of financing the

guerillas” (Wagenlehner 1978: 196). The three main components of maintaining hyperactive sympathizers, therefore, are 1- creating an ideology that relates to the citizens; 2- communicating to the citizens the organization’s actions, and 3- being conscious of how the media portrays the organization. If an organization is able to focus on these three components, a strong group of hyperactive sympathizers will be maintained.

### **Active Sympathizers**

An active sympathizer of a terrorist organization shares similar qualities of a hyperactive supporter, but does not have the face-to-face interaction with the organization. Active sympathizers attend rallies, protests, and hand out pamphlets in support of the organization or its ideology. While the hyperactive sympathizer is vital for the operations of the organization, the organization needs active sympathizers to keep the message alive. The organization can commit extreme acts, but the public show of support is crucial for popularizing the message.

The active sympathizer is like a hyperactive supporter, except that the active sympathizer may not want to be directly involved with the organization for fear of criminal charges. An active supporter receives direct propaganda from the organization, but also relies on the media for information. To instill the communication into its sympathizers, the RAF published their declarations – that later turned into an anthology entitled *Treatise on Method*, to be found in leftist bookshops (Passmore 2011: 43). Sympathizers were able to read in detail about their rationales rather than getting them from the negative statements in the newspapers.

### **Passive Sympathizers**

The organization’s ideological appeal to passive sympathizers is done by presenting the state as disadvantaging a particular group of individuals on a daily basis.

This creates the ability for citizens to “attack the credibility of the state and security forces” (Wright 1990: 79), and begins a process Tugwell describes as “guilt transfer”, whereby citizens blame the outcome of a terrorist act on the state (1976-7). The Federal Republic fell victim to the “guilt transfer” when citizens protested against the state for oppressive security measures, such as the Emergency Laws, to capture the RAF. In turn, the organization’s violent actions were seen a “reaction to the oppressive conditions within the state” (Wright 1990: 79).

Passive sympathizers still have the possibility of being persuaded to sympathize for the organization by the media’s portrayal of the organization. This was exemplified during the hunger strikes of the RAF members imprisoned in Stammheim, and the death of Meins in the winter of 1974. During the trial, pictures of Meins’ starved body was published on every newspaper’s front page, and leftist media analogized it to the treatment to the victims of the Holocaust. RAF lawyers turned this issue into a human rights question that increased support of the organization and began protests for prison reform during 1975. The picture of Meins was vital to show the audience the brutality of the State, and gained sympathy for the members by humanizing each starved member. Media stunts like the hunger strike are able to persuade the uninformed audience to sympathize for their cause.

The final strategy for gaining passive sympathy for the organization was by linking itself to a larger cause. This could be something that connected the mission of the organization to serving a greater humanitarian purpose, and rationalized their violence in a positive scope. Several radical left terrorist organizations in the 1970s, from Cuba to Germany, associated themselves with each other all over the world by advocating their support for a variety of causes. The RAF claimed in a statement to *Der Spiegel* that “it is silly to attribute to us the intent to be the sole actors of urban guerilla warfare, given the

contemporary state of several anti-imperialist battles in Asia, Latin America, Africa, in Vietnam, Chile, Uruguay, and in Argentina. There are also groups in Western Europe engaged in armed combat in Italy, in Portugal, and in England” (1975: 55-6). This statement was to “give the impression that the RAF was part of a global attack against imperialism and colonialism; that it was already part of a mass-movement which unreservedly supported its actions” (Wright 1990: 87). Linking their mission to other organizations with similar goals validated the RAF’s claims of oppression by the state, and this formulated a visual comparison that citizens could read about in the news.

For passive sympathizers, ideological and historically tied propaganda has a direct affect on their view of an organization. As they do not have a firm opinion of the organization, their minds are malleable, and left to be persuaded by media and propaganda to form an opinion.

### **Hyper-Passive Sympathizers**

A hyper-passive sympathizer may purchase leftist newspapers, and support the ideology. Hyper-passive sympathizers choose to not support the ideology in the public realm because they do not want to be characterized as a radical. It is vital for an organization to keep a good social image in the media to maintain their hyper-passive sympathizers. If the organization creates persuasive propaganda, the hyper-passive sympathizer can transition into a passive or even an active sympathizer.

Hyper-passive sympathy occurred throughout West Germany when Marxism was a popular form of thought, and taught at German universities. A hyper-passive sympathizer looks down upon the organization for their violent actions against the State. Heinrich Böll critiques the RAF for their actions after he received backlash from the West German government for his sympathetic novel, *The Lost Honor of Katharina Bloom*. Böll’s novel exposed the media’s methods of reporting through the story of

Katharina Bloom's ruined life. By mimicking *Bild Zeitung's* reporting, his sympathetic novel depicts the monstrosity of the media's twisting of words just to receive more readers in a capitalist society that valued revenue over the truth. Böll spoke out several times about the RAF by criticizing their work, and Meinhof responded with several remarks about how leftist intellectuals need to stop hiding away with their typewriters and join the fight. This pushed the RAF to the position that "The polarization is simply clear: Either anti-imperialist struggle, for the guerilla, internationalism or in the ass of the government, state security, Springer Press" (Bakker Schut 1987). Members of the RAF viewed sympathy and support of their organization as either 'for or against', and ignored the role of the hyper-passive sympathizers.

### **Disassociators**

These individuals would never be 'converted' to the cause of the organization. In the Federal Republic, the older generation and some post-World War II generations criticized the RAF and its followers. Individuals who actively disassociated from the organization believed in a traditional lifestyle, rejecting the freedoms of the 1960s and 1970s. Their views of communism were negative, and they feared the kind of ideology that was capable of turning West Germany into East Germany. The Federal Republic's new 'democratic' values had brought economic prosperity to West Germans, and stepping back from this was unimaginable. Two thematically similar 'good-versus-evil fights' were being fought at this time. The international realm was split between two ideologies during the Cold War: Communism and Capitalist democracy. If citizens in the Federal Republic did not support the new democratic values, they were labeled as radicals, leftist snobs and ultimately, pro-Communist. The RAF waged a new war that furthered the theme of good versus evil by portraying the Federal Republic as an oppressive state, and asserting that the only way to purify the State was to get rid of the



current government. Already suffering from enough change, it was plausible for older West Germans to reject the mission of the RAF. Besides, associating with the terrorist organization would paint a target on a citizen's back and individuals could be prosecuted for their support.

### **The Cool Terrorists**

The RAF presented as a 'chic' version of terrorism. Its members were seen as 'celebrity' terrorists. Their appearance in the media created a rollercoaster of support that influenced the organization's actions throughout the 1970s. A small percentage of those citizens chose to radicalize, and become sympathizers or hyperactive sympathizers to the RAF, while others continued to be passive sympathizers of their ideology. The generational differences in interpreting post-World War II events caused rifts in the dissent of the Federal Republic, both among dissenters who to varying degrees criticized the FRG and between dissenters and those who to varying degrees supported the ideology of post-war governments.

## CONCLUSION

*“Society cannot share a common communication system so long as it is split into warring factions”*

—Bertolt Brecht<sup>4</sup>

Social scientists have long maintained that crime serves several societal functions (Tunnell 1992: 296). In a classical Durkheimian sense, crime serves as a necessity that reinforces moral boundaries and socially acceptable behavior (Durkheim 1933). The RAF became a failed experiment after the death of their core members in 1977. Their organization’s disbanding is a failure of the organization, but their message continues to live on. Following the *Merriam Webster Dictionary’s* definition of success as “a favorable or desired outcome,” the RAF’s ideological and violent war against the Federal Republic prompted its citizens to critique the government and agitate for greater social change. Their violent acts led to the creation of laws to instill national security. A survey distributed by the Allensbach Institute in 1971, at the beginning of the RAF’s formation, found that twenty-five percent of Germans under the age of thirty sympathized with the RAF, and five percent of German citizens were willing to let an RAF member spend the night in their home (Koenen 2001: 392). With such a large support group, the RAF was able to force change across the Federal Republic. Although the organization’s support continued to rise and fall over the years, the RAF paved a path to a new era of politics and cultural freedom in the Federal Republic.

The organization’s message in relation to the media is vital for its survival. The organization is unable to gain sympathy and support for its cause unless its propaganda connects with its audience. While the media plays a crucial role in an organization’s

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<sup>4</sup> From Brecht’s play, "Kleines Organon für das Theater" (1949: 55).

success, organizations are also “dependent on many factors, such as moral disposition, peer pressure, life experiences, individual analysis, and educational levels” (Wright 1990: 102-3). These factors can originate in historical events or poor political decisions that, in the case of Germany, crippled its national consciousness, leaving it vulnerable to a subversive social discourse. In his article “The Political Socialization of West German Terrorists”, Klaus Wasmund asks “Is terrorism possible in a country where law and order and a marked sense of conformity and obedience were considered for a long time to be the highest values? Is terrorism, then, a paradox within German political culture?” (1986: 191-228). This thesis does not answer Wasmund’s question, but turns to the historical fact that there is no tradition of terrorism in Germany. The State overreacted to terrorism, thus creating an atmosphere for citizens to sympathize with the RAF. A student who joined the organization, Ulli Scholze, describes how easy it was for the group to recruit new members at that time: “A certain psychological disposition is a pre-condition of joining” (Aust 2008: 91). Further, he describes how “You have to be emotionally convinced that all attempts at reform simply stabilize the present system of society and consolidate capitalism. And the harmony of reason and emotions, which then exists, is the pre-condition of resolute action. Then the prosecuting authorities put pressure on you, and that confirms all you thought. And the sensational press reports and descriptions such as ‘Public Enemy Number 1’ from government sources create a feeling of success that gives you the strength to carry on” (Aust 2008: 91). Scholze’s observations about the organization represent the consciousness of many students, who were in support of the Student Movement, and then began to sympathize with the RAF.

## Historical Factors

Post-Nazi Germany was left in devastation after the Second World War. Life changing decisions about the State were made by other nations with little input from German citizens. The total collapse of Germany's market, starvation, defeat, and forced 'joint' leadership over an occupied and divided Germany led to its citizens experiencing trauma. In his article, "Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change," Pitor Sztompka discusses cultural trauma as a catalyst for an individual's desire for social and cultural change. In a Durkheimian sense trauma is a *social fact*, and hence a shared consciousness among individuals. Trauma then is, "a collective phenomenon, a condition experienced by a group, community, or society, as a result of disruptive events culturally interpreted as traumatizing" (Sztompka 2000: 458). Historical events laid out in the first chapter are interpreted as traumatizing events that leave some West German citizens prone to sympathize for individuals who 'fight' for a better State.

According to Sztompka, conditions for cultural trauma stem from a "disorganization, displacement, or incoherence in [a] culture" (2000: 453). "Cultural disorientation" then is the origin for cultural trauma, and it occurs when "some significant, sudden and unexpected episode of social change gives a blow to the very central assumptions of a culture, or more precisely is interpreted as fundamentally incongruent with the core values, bases of identity, foundations of collective pride, etc." (Sztompka 2000: 453). The initial 'blow' to the German psyche is the first occurrence of dissociation when Germany was defeated in the Second World War, and later split up by Russia, Great Britain, France, and the United States to ensure that something like World War II would never happen again. Their psyche was crushed, and Germans were forced to eliminate their past through denazification processes and other means to forget their Nazi past. This occurred again once East Germany built the wall surrounding West Berlin

to keep out capitalist ideas and values. Germans also shared collective memories of association with the Holocaust. The collective deeds violating accepted cultural principles (Roth 1995) brought feelings of shame and the pledge to never repeat their actions. Second, West Germans experienced a 'cultural clash' (Sztompka 2000: 454) when American products and lifestyles emerged in the 1950s that challenged traditional German lifestyles. Meinhof emphasized this during the Student Movement, when many saw the Federal Republic as just a puppet regime governed by the United States, which did not adhere to the desires of West German citizens. Third, cultural disorientation occurs with "sudden, unexpected and wide-ranging novelty of unaccustomed ways of life, emerging due to radically changed technological, economic, or political conditions" (Sztompka 2000: 454). Such cultural disorientation appears in the Federal Republic as generational conflicts in the 1960s and 1970s, with differing opinions on sexual lifestyles, careers, art, education, clothing, living situations and many other issues. The clash of traditional lifestyles with new lifestyles created more cultural disorientation. And fourth, cultural disorientation may occur "by a reinterpretation of the past" (Sztompka 2000: 455). The younger generation in West Germany spoke out against the older generation, holding them responsible for the lack of protest against the fascist regime. Instead of sharing what occurred during the National Socialist period, the older generation chose to not share their past with younger generations. This led the younger generation to interpret the events for themselves. Cultural disorientation does not necessarily turn into cultural trauma. Trauma occurs only when such events are "perceived and experienced" as unresolvable issues. The trauma perceived then "touches the core of collective order- the domain of main values, constitutive rules, central expectations" (Sztompka 2000: 457), causing the desire to not repeat the past to manifest itself in pathological ways.

Sztompka emphasizes that cultural trauma is "most threatening because like all

cultural phenomena it has the strongest inertia; it persists and lingers considerably longer than other kinds of trauma, sometimes over several generations, preserved in collective memory or hibernating in collective sub-consciousness, and occasionally gaining salience when conducive circumstances arise” (2000: 458). In the 1960s, the generational differences in opinions on education and social equality became an outcry for social justice in West Germany. Confronting the past to reform the State was an issue that the older generation chose not to address. Protests and grievances against the Federal Republic radicalized after the State ignored the outcries for change. The fear of the State falling back into fascism was a trauma that some citizens clearly anticipated. This fear in some cases translated into violent action, or its tacit support, among the youth. Formation of terrorist organizations was an extreme outcome of German cultural trauma, but its ideological basis was something that many Germans supported at the time.

### **The Importance of the Media and Public Perception**

Meinhof’s interpretation of Germany’s National Socialist past was an integral part of the RAF’s message in saving the nation from another fascist regime. Her rhetoric addressed the cultural trauma experienced by Germans, and spun their pain into the fear of repeating the past. The challenge, though, was to transform fear into action, specifically violent action against the State, to force change. In a typical revolutionary communistic way, the RAF resorted to extreme actions to force the enlightenment of citizens that would view the Federal Republic as a repressive regime. Chapter Two addresses the vital role of the media in the RAF’s success in spreading their message to West German citizens in key events such as the May Offensive, the hunger strikes, deaths of the core members, and the German Autumn. The relationship between the media and the RAF serves as a crucial part of the organization’s survival, as their message continued to be spread to active and passive sympathizers, discussed in the third chapter, during

their existence.

The May Offensive was the first true attack the RAF planned against the Federal Republic. Instead of gaining more support, the RAF lost sympathy once citizens were being killed. The media published pictures of the bombings with references to war destruction as a strategy to persuade the West German audience to view the organization as criminals rather than revolutionaries. Meinhof's rhetoric remained true to their goals, and provided transparent communication between the citizens and the organization. The hunger strikes and the brutality of the police sparked sympathy for the organization as photographs were being shared of the members in starvation. Meins' death inspired the organization to describe conditions as if they were in concentration camps, and presenting themselves as political prisoners of the State instead of terrorists inspired protests against the treatment of prisoners in the Federal Republic. Conspiracy theories Meinhof's death pointing towards the government being involved further show the lack of faith West German citizens had in their government to uphold the law. Less than a year later, the deaths of Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe sparked new protests and conspiracy theories about a corrupt government. Even after death, the core members were able to execute their strategy of forcing the hand of the state to expose what they saw as the government's subtle fascist tendencies. The German Autumn ended the steady stream of sympathy for the organization as the second and third generations of the terrorist organizations were perceived as reckless youths, and as lost without their core members. These events, and the perception of them published in the media, influenced West German citizens to sympathize with the organization in the 1970s.

The media's role in the rise and fall of sympathy for the organization was tested after the first terrorist-level attacks were executed in West Germany. Though the media did not favor radical left propaganda, the liberal media was not as harsh as the

conservative Springer press (*Bild Zeitung*) at the time. More liberal media chose to critique the organization while the conservative media chose to publish reports demonizing the members, and provided psychological explanations for their deviant activities to dissolve any sympathy citizens would feel for the organization. Ray Surette describes in his work, *Justice and the Media*, that reporters who characterize criminals and their actions as psychological rather than social in nature tend to increase fear in the public sphere (1984). *Bild Zeitung* practiced reporting strategies such as this, for instance in articles blaming Meinhof's earlier brain surgery for her radicalization and becoming an unfit mother. The media, in some sense, played God when choosing how to report events. Their agenda of crushing the public support for the organization partially reflected in reverse the RAF's propaganda to influence the public consciousness.

### **Romanticizing a 'Revolutionary' Cause**

As compelling as their message was at the time, the RAF retained an aura composed of revolutionary and spy-like lifestyles that appealed to younger Germans at the time. Uli Scholze describes how quick an individual can become a member of the organization, "You slip outside the law very fast, he said. First an interested party is asked to find an apartment, then he may help with a car theft, and it's not far from that to a bank raid" (Aust 2008: 91). Scholze's path to radicalization relates to the traits of a hyperactive supporter discussed in the third chapter. Few rose to this level of support, and while many West German citizens became hyper-passive and passive supporters of the organization's cause.

The RAF glamorized their revolutionary cause through Meinhof's writings, and public perception of the media. Their quest for a better West Germany was easy for citizens to romanticize, as their violence was targeted at a specific group of individuals, the Federal Republic, and provided a simple 'good versus evil' rhetoric for the citizens to



comprehend in the organization's propaganda. The romanticizing of the RAF during this time can also be described by Yaacov Trope's term "mental distancing" (Trope 2003: 403-421). Trope describes this phenomenon when individuals separate themselves from emotions, people, events, or concepts. Distancing can come naturally: as painful memories are pushed into the past, our emotions weaken and the perception of the events softens. Other times, individuals need to physically distance themselves to gain perspective on the event (Wakslak 2006: 641). Once individuals attain 'mental distancing', they are able to feel nostalgia and romanticize events by filtering the harsher details, and emphasizing the ones that are more desirable. Hyper-passive and passive sympathizers for a terrorist organization are able to provide a reasonable distance by not personally affiliating themselves with the organization. By supporting the ideology, these sympathizers romanticize the organization's cause through private support. In turn, the individuals choose to focus on the rationale for the attacks rather than the physical attacks themselves. These individuals are the silent killers of society, as they will not act against the organization to aid the State because "Criminals...do for us the forbidden, illegal things we *wish* to do" (Menninger 1966: 157).

### **Victims of the Federal Republic**

In 1977, the RAF's core members became martyrs for their cause, gaining sympathy for the organization. Criminal victimization theories such as "victim precipitation," where individuals judge the criminal's actions as a result of their past, (Wolfgang 1958) or "lifestyle-exposure," where individuals judge the criminal's actions as a result of what is occurring in contemporary society, (Hindelang 1978) appear to be a weaker explanation for the levels of sympathy for the RAF. The organization's lawyers focused their legal strategy on the RAF's cause rather than using their personal history as an explanation for their actions. The West German public responded to the media's

reporting on current actions of the RAF, rather than attacks on their personal lives. Citizens were able to ignore the victimization core members of the organization during their time at Stammheim. The press continued to publish headlines and photographs showing the harsh prison conditions imposed upon the organization that were mandated by the State. Their original message was so strong that it swept the RAF's violent actions under the rug while citizens focused on the Federal Republic's treatment of the imprisoned members. Claims of 'political prisoner' and 'prisoner of war' status struck a chord with the citizens, as they brought vivid memories of World War II and the Vietnam War. The connection between these meanings inspired protests and dissents against the Federal Republic for reform for prisoners. Instead of depicting themselves as terrorists, the RAF managed to present themselves as victims of an oppressive State.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union two years later, the 'communist ideal' became irrelevant to the West German public as the new Federal Republic expanded its capitalistic economy. The East's communistic model of governance had become irrelevant. The RAF became a symbol for the radical, leftist dallying with communism in the 1970s – although it continued to be trendy for younger anarchist teens for a while. The legacy of domestic terrorism during the 1970s produced a culture of criminal justice and security policies in West German society. The RAF's terrorism, bombing, kidnapping, robbing, and killing functioned as a new outlet for frustrations of a nation that had historically acted within the law. Bad cultural memories of the RAF are in Germany's not so distant past, but the uneven sympathy for the organization inspired some limited social and political reform.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

# Photograph 1

**Anarchistische Gewalttäter**  
**– Baader/Meinhof-Bande –**

Wegen Beteiligung an Morden, Sprengstoffverbrechen, Banküberfällen und anderen Straftaten werden steckbrieflich gesucht:

 Meinhof, Ulrike, 7. 10. 34 Oldenburg	 Baader, Andreas Bernd, 6. 8. 43 München	 Ensslin, Gudrun, 15. 8. 40 Bartholomäus	 Klein, Holger, 26. 10. 41 Hamburg	 Raspe, Jan-Carl, 24. 7. 44 Seefeld
 Schabert, Ina, 17. 5. 47 Frankfurt/M.	 Jäger, Klaus, 6. 9. 47 München	 Schmidt, Renate, 20. 11. 47 Amsterdam	 Brand, Bernd, 25. 2. 48 Berlin	 Sabers, Ralf, 27. 8. 48 Berlin
 Isenhardt, Ingrid, 13. 5. 47 Bayreuth	 Mohnhaupt, Brigitte, 24. 6. 49 Rheinberg	 Arlt, Axel, 15. 6. 35 Hannover	 Hammer, Katharina, 14. 12. 43 Dänzig	
 Kasper, Renate, 24. 8. 47 Oberberg	 Haas, Siegfried, 24. 1. 52 Selb/Bayern	 Brockmann, Heinz, 1. 3. 48 Götterub	 Fichtel, Albert, 18. 12. 44 Stuttgart	

Für Hinweise, die zur Ergreifung der Gesuchten führen, sind insgesamt **100 000 DM** Belohnung ausgesetzt, die nicht für Beamte bestimmt sind, zu deren Berufspflichten die Verfolgung strafbarer Handlungen gehört. Die Zuerkennung und die Verteilung erfolgen unter Ausschluß des Rechtsweges.

Mitteilungen, die auf Wunsch vertraulich behandelt werden, nehmen entgegen:

Bundeskriminalamt – Abteilung Sicherungsgruppe –  
53 Bonn-Bad Godesberg, Friedrich-Ebert-Straße 1 – Telefon: 02229 / 53001  
oder jede Polizeidienststelle

**Vorsicht! Diese Gewalttäter machen von der Schußwaffe rücksichtslos Gebrauch!**

Bundesarchiv, Plak 006-001-058  
Grafiker: o. Ang. 1 1870/1872 ca.

Source: German History Docs. “Images-Generational Rebellion.” Retrieved September 22, 2017 ([http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_image.cfm?image\\_id=2395](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2395)).

## Photograph 2



Source: Stern, Klaus. 2007. "Terrorist ohne Führerschein." *Der Spiegel*, October 18. Retrieved September 22, 2017 (<http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/raf-a-948479.html>).

### Photograph 3



Source: Alchetron. "Holger Meins". Retrieved September 22, 2017 (<https://alchetron.com/Holger-Meins>).

**Photograph 4**



Source: Alchetron. "Holger Meins". Retrieved September 22, 2017 (<https://alchetron.com/Holger-Meins>).

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Agit883

Bild

Bild am Sonntag

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Quick

Die Zeit

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