

Research Paper

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»A rampage spinning in circles around Capitalism«

On the reception of the RAF's *Concept of an Urban Guerrilla* in left-wing extremist newspapers in the early 1970s

Abstract: In 1972, the »Red Army Faction« (RAF) launched its »May Offensive«, a series of terrorist bombings marking the beginning of a decade of attacks that made the RAF post-war Germany's most notorious terrorist organization. One year prior, the group published *The Concept of Urban Guerilla*, which was both its first and foremost propaganda pamphlet and policy statement and a high-publicity proclamation of its motivations and future plans. This article examines to which extent West Berlin-based left-wing extremist journalism in the early 1970s responded to the agenda and world view the RAF expressed in this concept. For this purpose, I examined how three publications from the environment of the radical student and anarchist scene received the *Concept of Urban Guerilla*. My analysis shows that despite their ideological proximity to the RAF, their assessments of the group and its concept varied widely.^[1]

A small group of social revolutionary terrorists called the »Red Army Faction« (RAF) became indelibly impressed in Germany's collective memory when they kidnapped and murdered Hanns Martin Schleyer, President of the German employers' association, in what came to be known as the »German Autumn« of 1977. Since then, a veritable memorial industry has sprouted around the RAF, manifesting itself in the most diverse facets. The spectrum ranges from controversial exhibitions, biog-

1 This article is based on the author's 2019 M.A. thesis at the Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies at the University of Vienna.

raphies, and artistic film, stage, and musical adaptations to numerous romanticizations, trivializations, and popularizations²⁾ and journalistic self-reflections on how the media has been handling the phenomenon of terrorism. The eager attention that is still devoted to the subject to this day is also a testament to the RAF's skillful propaganda, which continues to reverberate beyond its acts of violence well into our present day. After making national headlines and coming into the public spotlight with a spectacular coordinated armed (and violent) stunt to break Andreas Baader out of custody in May 1970, the group circulated an initial statement on its feat via *Agit 883*, a prominent paper of the anti-authoritarian and radical left scene. This was followed a year later by a multi-page manifesto, presenting the group's ideas and future plans in a brochure: *The Concept of Urban Guerrilla*. Far-left magazines printed the piece in its entirety or in excerpts.

Despite some glorifications and overly nostalgic retrospection, the image of the RAF generally remains understandably negative, given the atrocities it committed. But what was the situation during the group's founding phase, when it was still considered both a fruit and a part of a lively culture of dispute and protest in the late 1960s? How did contemporaries from the 1968 movement receive the ideas in the *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* – ideas that mostly emanated from socio-critical analyses and ideological discussions of precisely these countercultural currents? The media echo to and journalistic treatment of the RAF manifesto provides some answers.

The established mass media do not yield much insight here. It is no news that the traditional media of those days – which critics, slightly disdainfully, dubbed the »bourgeois press« – was skeptical or even dismissive of the ideas and demands of the 1968 movement. The feeling was mutual. Publications that defined themselves as part of the protest culture and positioned themselves as an alternative to the established, mainstream press are more revealing. Because of their political orientation, the mouthpieces of a mostly self-proclaimed counter-public, such as student newspapers, alternative news agencies, counterculture newspapers, or the publications of left-wing socialist splinter groups, which ideologically identified with the cause, were prepared to subject the RAF and its concept to a – more or less critical – examination.

The fact that at the time, a considerable number of college students, who were to shape German media, culture, and academic life for decades to come, earned

2) Examples are the »Prada Meinhof« line by fashion label »Elternhaus« (a pun playing with the phonetic similarity of the iconic fashion label »Prada« and the last name »Baader«). The names of RAF founding members Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof were usually mentioned on the same breath and, in combination, almost synonymous with the RAF); a catering service called »Red Gourmet Faction« specializing in punk and rock concerts, or song titles such as Jan Delay's 2001 song *Die Söhne Stammheims* (2001) (a pun on another popular band of the early 2000s, Die Söhne Mannheims, and the notorious Stuttgart prison Stammheim, where several RAF members were interned and later committed suicide); and the 2001 song »R.A.F.« by WIZO.

their first journalistic spurs at such publications, lends them a certain relevance as places of political and journalistic socialization even today.³¹ The alternative media of the late 1960s and early 1970s are an interesting object of study also because they were the first German-language products of a modern counter-public at the intersection of journalism and politics, politicization of journalism, and political propaganda. This opens up possibilities for comparing them with the contents, style, and objectives of the various publications and online media portals of our present day, which also claim to be alternative (cf. Hooffacker 2020).

Methodology

I analyzed three selected journals from the left-wing socialist student milieu of West Berlin using the content structuring method (Mayring, 2015): *Agit 883*, *FIZZ*, and *Hochschulkampf* (also known as *HSK*). All three were regularly published during the RAF's consolidation phase in the early 1970s. They all appeared in West Berlin because the Freie Universität (FU) Berlin was a pivotal hub in the emergence and development of the student protest movement in the 1960s (cf. Peters 1991: 41), in which founding members of the RAF were also involved.

From the late 1960s, *Agit 883* established itself as a recognized medium of the Berlin countercultural scene, which prompted the RAF to use it for the publication of its »founding manifesto« (Building the Red Army). *Agit 883* was the first medium to publish an RAF text. I selected *FIZZ* for my study because it was founded by former members of *Agit 883*. I included *Hochschulkampf* (*HSK*) to represent publications that operated in the environment of the numerous Maoist-Leninist micro-parties and student groups that mushroomed in the early 1970s following the major protests. Moreover, the medium also briefly cooperated with *Agit 883* in the latter's waning phase (cf. Andresen/Mohr/Rübner 2007: 25).

My investigation covers the period from 11 May 1971 to 3 March 1972, focusing on a few copies of each of the publications. With the exception of *Agit 883*, the publications only appeared within this time window, anyway. The *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* was published on 11 May 1971 and printed by *Agit 883* in its issue 80. One year later, on 3 March 1972, the last issue of *HSK* was published. *Agit 883* and *FIZZ* ceased their publishing activity shortly before. I examined a total of 29 issues.

For structuring purposes, I will isolate certain themes from the *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* and revisit them in varying degrees of depth: criticism of the

31 For example, renowned political scientist, historian, and journalist Götz Aly, who was co-editor of the publication *Hochschulkampf*.

German left, individuals driving the revolution, democratic deficits of the Federal Republic of Germany, media landscape of the Federal Republic of Germany, attitude towards use of violence, primacy of practice, avant-gardist claim, and questions of legality/illegality. Based on these topic areas, I will analyze the articles from these three papers that specifically address RAF concepts. I will paraphrase, summarize, and filter the statements and comments I have thus identified in terms of how the editors assess and evaluate them.

Historical Context: SDS, APO, and student protest

The RAF emerged in the context of a cultural revolutionary opposition that had been forming in the Federal Republic of Germany from 1960 onwards. A nationwide student movement crystallized as its driving force, starting from the Western half of Berlin, which had been divided since 1961. According to Butz Peters (1991), there were three reasons why the territorially isolated West Berlin, of all places, became the center of the student movement:

- Firstly, the FU Berlin with its Otto Suhr Institute was the largest institution for political science education in the Federal Republic of Germany, and thus a breeding ground and crystallization point for a wide variety of political theory concepts.
- Secondly, the population of West Berlin was exempt from military service, which resulted in an increased influx of young students from all over West Germany.
- The third cause may have been the special atmosphere of those days, reflecting the city's insular character as a Western outpost amidst the socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR), a frontline of the Cold War, and before long, a catalyst for a lively counterculture.

Founded in 1946 as the student representative body of the German Socialist Democratic Party SPD, the Socialist German Students Association (SDS) took the lead in organizing early rallies and demonstrations. After internal quarrels led to a break with the SPD in 1961, the SDS, now independent of the political party, became intensively involved in the slowly emerging student protest movement (cf. Peters 1991: 42).

While posterity particularly remembers the stunning rallies on the political grievances of the day (protests against the Vietnam War or state visits by US Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey or the Shah of Persia) (cf. Juchler 2006: 214), the actual cause of the resistance was to protect the students' self-interests. Pent-up resentment about worsening rigidities in the university system found expression in slogans such as the »stench of a thousand years« that had collected under the professors' gowns (cf. Straßner 2008: 212).

In December of 1966, under Chancellor Kiesinger, the first grand coalition in German post-war history formed between the big center-right and center-left parties CDU and SPD. Large parts of a politically left-leaning student body starkly rejected this government and the significant involvement of their ideological arch-enemy CDU. Libertarian party FDP, which remained in the opposition, was unable to mount any meaningful resistance to this grand coalition and was left marginalized. Demands for new initiatives arose, culminating in a loose union of student groups, high-schoolers, apprentices, young workers, trade unionists, artists, and intellectuals. According to organizers, their intention was to form the »true opposition« outside of the federal parliament. It was the birth of the »extra-parliamentary opposition«, or APO.

Subsequently, much of the protest movement became increasingly radicalized. While paying lip service to democracy, purporting to rescue it from the supposed stranglehold of an oppressive social order, the ultimate objective of this movement was to replace representative democracy by a plebiscitary soviet republic, which means it featured partially anti-parliamentary traits (cf. Schneider 1969: 72).

Until 1965, its activities mainly consisted of spontaneous rallies and a romanticized fraternization with the anti-colonial movements of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It then became a tightly organized fundamental opposition that supported militant actionism, also aggressively challenging social institutions such as the mass media.

Mass media as a manipulation machine

In the 1960s, past experiences with National Socialism and the ubiquity of commercial advertising provided fertile ground for media criticism. The theories of the Frankfurt School around Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas proved to be particularly influential. Their reflections were eagerly received by the student body, informing their judgment of the German media system. As early as the 1940s, Horkheimer had formulated the idea that an authoritarian state system can almost completely dispense with repression if it succeeds in permanently manipulating the consciousness of the population (cf. Kraushaar 2006b: 1081). This hypothesis was later supplemented by the concept of the culture industry, which the social elites abuse as a tool to exercise and consolidate power.

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The press has a key role to play in this. Although the concept concedes that the media may have a role as a socio-political corrective with emancipatory power, it is concentrated in the hands of just a few owners and its contents are mere distractions, preventing the media from effectively fulfilling its actual duties (cf. Elter 2008: 103). Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1974) criticized radio and television for their failure to leverage their communicative potential in journalistic practice despite all the attention they command on a technical-functional level. Journalism is not concerned with independent or critical production of content, but contents itself with functioning as a mediator and thus helps cement existing power relations (cf. Enzensberger 1974: 106ff).

Jürgen Habermas's habilitation thesis »Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit« (Structural Change of the Public Sphere) was very well received in 1962 and beyond. He defines the public sphere as a space that is central to any democracy and essential to exercise vigilant control of power and the state. But because the principle of publicity does not apply to state administration, that state is beyond criticism. It can make its decisions in seclusion at the administrative level and enforce them against the interests of the citizens. Habermas believes that the press cannot compensate for this deficit of publicity since their critical function is hamstrung by their dependence on economic interests (cf. Kraushaar 2006b: 1081ff).

These considerations were crucial in the students' judgment of the media. A notion took hold that the population had a genuine, quasi innate political interest, which was, however, fragile and had to be actively protected from influence by external powers (cf. Kraushaar 2006b: 1081ff).

The press did its share to deepen the students' dislike of the established media with its often biased reporting on the student movement. The Springer Group's mass-circulation newspapers were subjected to the harshest criticism. The student movement made the group a larger-than-life bogeyman, accusing it of deliberately manipulating public opinion in favor of the powers that be (cf. Straßner 2008: 212). The fact that the group's own publications also represented the personal views of their owner Axel Springer⁴), which starkly contrasted with the goals of the SDS and the APO, made the opposition even fiercer. »Expropriate

4 Strict anti-Communism, no recognition of the GDR, a pro-Israel and pro-US stance, defense of Capitalism in the vein of German social market economy.

Springer!« became the rallying cry of an APO campaign (cf. Elter 2008: 105).

Ulrike Meinhof, journalist and later founding member of the RAF, justified the demand for such an expropriation in 1967 in the magazine konkret:

»Because any attempt to re-democratize this country, to re-establish popular rule, to educate citizens capable of judgment must fail because of Springer, now that Springer is as big and strong as it is.« (Meinhof 1967: 2, quoted after Kraushaar 2006b: 1086)

Alternative media and their production

Negative experiences with the German tabloid press led to a strong desire for a media counter-public and alternative media production. Alternative media were seen as a necessary addition to the established media landscape. Their intention was not to compete directly for market share, but to contribute constructively to public discourse. Through critical media observation and by addressing neglected social problem areas, they were to create additional opportunities for information and give the audience a chance to broaden their own horizons. The idea was to offer a medium by the people for the people, comprehensively presenting their lives as they really were. Readers were also to be shown possible courses of action, which is why these media aimed to use clear and comprehensible language, with limited success. It was not required to write from a certain political or ideological vantage point, but it was factually the case if the publications identified with a given social movement (cf. Wimmer 2007: 159f.).

The publications that sprung from the student milieu and rallied around the splinter groups that emerged from the SDS and the APO in the early 1970s also featured certain organizational characteristics. While traditional editorial offices were still dominated by the classical top-down hierarchy and division of labor, the alternative press was all about editorial collectives and self-administration. Any constraints that might hamper editorial work were avoided as much as possible. It was not uncommon for editors to work across departments. Funding was geared towards economic independence and usually stemmed from a combination of sales proceeds, private donations, membership fees generated by non-profit booster associations, and revenue from ads that catered to the target audience. Despite street and subscription sales, the papers were usually non-profits (cf. Wimmer 2007: 212).

This alternative spirit also found expression in the papers' designs. Cheap materials, owed to self-imposed financial restraint, became an identity-forming factor that suggested independence and credibility while also exuding a certain scruffy charm. Extensive reporting was encouraged by refraining from strict

rules, deadlines, language guides, and character limits. Artistic experimentation, playful use of design elements, and chaotic layout were further hallmarks of these semi-professional and alternative newspaper projects. They were sometimes used deliberately to set a visual counterpoint to the established media. Sometimes, alternative publications even set trends for the journalistic mainstream over time.

Building a Red Army: *The Concept of Urban Guerrilla*

The manifesto, printed as a pamphlet in Amsterdam in April 1971, and the founding document »Building the Red Army«, printed shortly after the Baader jailbreak in mid-1970 (cf. Kraushaar 2006a: 1191), spell out the organization's ideological framework. They combine elements of a strategy paper, a pamphlet, a propaganda paper, and an attempt at a social analysis. The content, created collaboratively in internal group discussions (cf. Peters 1991: 128), provides a glimpse into the mental worlds of the first RAF generation around Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Ulrike Meinhof. Their primary aim was to make a plausible cause for future acts of violence and to justify them in advance, to explain motives, and to solicit the approval or support of potential sympathizers from the scene. The public was to be convinced of the integrity and necessity of the cause. It was in these writings that they used the name »Red Army Faction« for the first time. It also featured a first draft of their distinctive logo with the star, the letters R. A. F. and the stylized machine gun.⁵

In a short announcement, also published in *Agit 883* on the occasion of the Baader jailbreak, the group presented itself as part of a righteous social movement fighting American Imperialism worldwide. Because the US, they argued, was

»the enemy of South America, the enemy of the Japanese and Vietnamese people, the enemy of all the Blacks of the USA, the enemy of the workers of Berlin [...].« (RAF Kollektiv 1970: 2).

Berlin was declared an »outpost of American Imperialism« (ibid.). The struggle needed to be armed, they argued, because it was the only way to effectively counter a repressive state apparatus. Passive resistance was pointless due to the nature of the opponent. After all, they argued:

5 *The Concept of Urban Guerrilla* was not the last of these programmatic writings. However, follow-up publications were either controversial within the RAF or mere (more or less extensive) updates to incorporate contemporary events. They were also written under the impression of the first terrorist acts and never attained the same importance or garnered the same level of interest as the first concept (cf. Peters 1991: 128).

»Gandhi and Martin Luther King are dead. Their murderers' bullets [...] ended the dream of non-violence. If you don't fight back, you die. Those who don't die are buried alive [...].« (ibid.)

Violence was repurposed as a legitimate means of resistance and the creation of an illegal underground fighting force was justified as an act of self-defense.

Even though they loved to deride the social-democratic establishment and left-wing intellectuals, unflatteringly calling them »intellectual blabbermouths, chickenshits«, and »know-it-alls« (RAF 1997a: 24), and showed overt contempt for academic-theoretical discourse, they just as profusely quoted theorists like Marx and Lenin as well as left-wing socialist writers, from Regis Debray to Mao Tse Tung – yet only to substantiate and justify their own views on militant action.

The RAF considered themselves the heirs of the Russian October Revolution, an avant-garde elite, and the spearhead of revolution in Germany. At the same time, they felt they were part of an international Communist liberation movement that, due to its dualistic worldview, drew a sharp line between itself and its declared enemies: Imperialism or Capitalism and its willing henchmen in the Federal Republic of Germany. Based on the primacy of practice, the revolution was finally to be set in motion through violent action. For those who knew how to read between the lines, it became clear that the plan was to provoke the state into excessive retaliation, thus exposing it as a fascist regime disguised as a democratic farce:

»[...] that the revolution will not be a walk in the park. That those pigs will escalate their means as far as they can, of course, but no further. We are building the Red Army in order to be able to push these conflicts to the extreme.« (RAF 1997a: 25)

It goes on to say:

»Taking conflicts to the extreme means: That they can't do what they want anymore, they have to do what we want.« (RAF 1997a: 26)

The Springer Group, journalism, and developments in the West German press landscape also received a very harsh treatment:

»The journalistic category is called: Sales. News as a commodity, information as consumption. What is not consumable disgusts them. The reader-newspaper bond of high-ad publications, television's ifas scoring system, all this does not allow for any contradictions to arise between the medium itself and the public, at least no antagonistic ones, none with consequences.

Whoever wants to stay in the market has to keep in line with the most powerful opinion leader in the market; i.e. the dependence on the Springer group is growing in pace with the Springer group itself, which has started to buy up the local press as well. The urban guerrillas have nothing but hostility to expect from this public.« (RAF 1997b: 43).

Elsewhere, it drily states:

»It is obvious that almost everything the newspapers write about us – and how they write about us – is a lie.« (RAF 1997b: 28)

The publications: *Agit 883*, *FIZZ*, and *Hochschulkampf (HSK)*

The newspaper *Agit 883* originated from a student »Committee for Public Relations«, which had been founded at the FU Berlin in June 1967. Its stated mission was to »raise a critical awareness in a broader public and supporting approaches to independent thinking« (Schneider/Taube/Strunk 1967: 3). »The newspaper's purpose is to be a counterweight to manipulated opinion.« (ibid) Its first official issue did not appear until 13 February 1969. »Agit« is an abbreviation of the term agitation, »883« are the first digits of the telephone number of the private apartment where its editorial office was first located (cf. Andresen/Mohr/Rübner 2007: 29). Self-published by the »editorial collective 883«, the paper was conceived as a combination of political discussion forum and commercial advertising paper. It was quickly able to position itself as a popular medium with the APO scene and the student movement. It was first published weekly, later bi-weekly.

In terms of content, the paper covered the full spectrum of political issues that dominated contemporary counterculture debates.⁶¹ The authors of the articles remained anonymous, and the language was mostly insolent. Several police investigations and criminal proceedings were brought against the paper for insult, blasphemy, use of prohibited symbols, and public incitement to or condonement of criminal offences. Numerous editions were confiscated (cf. Anders 2007: 241). Due to perpetual feuds with the judiciary and conflicts within the editorial collective, the paper appeared only irregularly from 1971 onwards. The last issue, number 88, was published on 16 February 1972.

6 Reports on litigation against activists, solidarity with prisoners, controversial legislative initiatives, fascism analysis, workers' rights, discourse on sexuality, media bashing, and commentary on guerrilla movements in Latin America, Palestine, and Vietnam.

FIZZ was founded following ideological battles within *Agit 883*. These disputes ignited over the possibilities and prospects of militancy and armed struggle, whereupon the more militant part of the staff left the editorial office and launched its own independent journal, *FIZZ*, in April 1971 (cf. Schmidt 2007: 117).

It was self-published by an editorial collective. Whereas the imprint of *Agit 883* listed several employees in the period after its founding and later, as legally mandated, a responsible editor, the imprint of *FIZZ* was deliberately satirical. M.(ax) Ernst and A.(lbrecht) Dürer were listed as lead editors for »Graphics and Design«. Anarchist Erich Mühsam, who was murdered by the National Socialists, was listed as editor of the Arts Section. The leader of the Bavarian Conservative Party F.(ranz)-J.(osef) S.(trauß) was listed as editor of »Economy and Finance«, and SPD parliamentary party leader H.(erbert) Wehner was listed as editor for a fictitious section on »Sports and Porn«.

The content focused on excerpts from classic texts by well-known theorists of anarchism, reports from the Berlin drug scene, same-sex emancipation, as well as rock and pop music. Most issues don't state a publication date. Only issues 7, 8, and 9 list the months August, October, and November of 1971 on their title pages.

Ideologically, the magazine was close to the organization »Black Cells«, which was dedicated to propagating militant counter-violence and repeatedly organized riots and clashes with the police (cf. Andresen/Mohr/Rübner 2007: 27). The name *FIZZ* was meant to evoke the sound of a burning fuse or a bomb just before it explodes (cf. Bartsch 1973: 188). The magazine also included instructions on how to build incendiary devices. Almost all editions were therefore confiscated by the courts. Originally planned as a biweekly periodical, only ten issues were printed until production ceased in 1972.

The first issue of the magazine *Hochschulkampf*, subtitled *Kampfblatt des Initiativkomitees der Roten Zellen in Westberlin* (Fight Paper of the Initiative Committee of West Berlin's Red Cells), was self-published starting on 1 February 1971. It was a joint creation of said initiative committee at the FU Berlin. According to its own information, the editorial collective was made up of seven members who were appointed by the committee, to which they answered and by whom they could be dismissed at any time. Apart from a managing director listed in the imprint and the holder of the bank account for subscription payments, the authors remained anonymous. The magazine sympathized with the party-like group »Proletarian Left / Party Initiative« (PL/PI) which emerged from electrical workers' project groups (cf. Andresen/Mohr/Rübner 2007: 25). Topics routinely revolved around the French and Italian left, enthusiastic commentaries on the Chinese People's Republic and North Korea, and insider reports on industrial disputes in Germany. 24 issues were published until its discontinuation in March 1972 (de facto, there were only 18 due to double issues).

Findings

A total of seven articles deal directly with the reception of the RAF's agenda. *FIZZ* published the most articles on this topic, namely four, followed by HSK with two, and *Agit 883* with only one article.

Agit 883 shares the RAF's criticism of theorizing intellectuals and the fragmentation of the political left into competing micro-groups. Social-democratic and Bolshevik organizations, who, according to the paper, were more interested in inflating their own organization than in working for social change, were ridiculed as poor copies of the Capitalist organizational structures they were supposed to tear down. In essence, they were little more than a collection of bickering sectarians, exposing themselves as »mere advertising agencies vying over who has the right line« (*Agit 883* 1971: 8).

However, the RAF itself was also seen as a radical cult and thus part of the problem. *Agit 883* did not buy the RAF's insistent references to the primacy of practice; they rather considered them an undisciplined bunch of dogmatic »Super-Leninists« (*Agit 883* 1971: 8), distinguished from other radical splinter groups only by the guns they carried. They were Leninists who emphatically claimed to be unburdened by theory, yet who still fabricated a shaky concept with out-of-context and truncated quotations from Communist theorists, using them as a handbook to implement an allegedly righteous practice. But this had nothing to do with the in-depth analysis of contemporary social developments stipulated by *Agit 883*, which the RAF utterly failed to understand. They criticized the group for merely »cobbling together their concept from superficial reflections on our times« (*Agit 883* 1971: 8).

Agit 883 had an ambivalent relationship to violence. It never distanced itself from it. It felt that physical violence might potentially have a positive propagandistic effect. A comment on »survival actions« (*Agit 883* 1971: 8) on the part of the RAF also suggests that the use of violence against the state might be considered self-defense and therefore excusable. Nevertheless, it did criticize the RAF for overly »romanticizing« the use of violence and the class struggle (*Agit 883* 1971: 9) and trying to force rapid change with ill-considered actions. This way, *Agit 883* argued, theory degenerated from the primacy of practice to a simple justification strategy brought forward by

»LENINISTS GONE WILD, who found it too tedious and cumbersome to build up a party and therefore preferred to GO AHEAD AND RAISE HELL«
(*Agit 883* 1971: 8; emphasis original).

FIZZ, on the other hand, usually toed the line with the RAF and came to its defense. Its only objection to the *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* specifically was that

its tone was not combative enough. They also deplored its lack of socio-economic analysis (cf. FIZZ 1971b: 4), which they provided themselves to remedy this flaw. From today's perspective, some of their points seem very familiar. Their views on democracy, parliamentarism, and the rule of law sound a lot like the debates that are being held on the fringes of the political left or right even today – and in some cases even further inside the political spectrum than that. Complaints that our modern constitutional state is allegedly morphing into an interventionist regime that increasingly interferes with its citizens' everyday lives, harassing them with red tape and paternalistic prohibitions, and whose administrative apparatus eludes parliamentary supervision (cf. FIZZ 1971c :3), could stem straight from a present-day discourse.

For FIZZ, the majority of the German left, along with its fetish for theory, had already consigned itself to the »landfill of history« by hastily distancing itself from the RAF (FIZZ 1971b: 4). In general, they considered it one of the RAF's greatest mistakes to have hoped for any understanding from the German left in the first place. While FIZZ conceded that the RAF was indeed Leninist, it argued that it was a meaningless platitude given their practical activism. All organizations that criticized the RAF were labeled either »cowardly reformists« or »bourgeois counter-revolutionaries« (FIZZ 1971b:3)

»THOSE WHO DON'T STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE PIGS ARE SIDING WITH THE PIGS« (FIZZ 1971b: 3); emphasis original),

Their views on the mainstream press and the need for a revolutionary vanguard are identical to those of the RAF. As long as violence or criminal activity appeared to serve the revolution, FIZZ exhibited little qualms about using it, which is hardly surprising in a paper that published instructions on how to build fire-bombs. Bank robberies were labelled »expropriation operations« (FIZZ 1972: 7) and thus ideologically and morally justified. RAF members were hailed as heroes whose willingness to make sacrifices put them above judgement and whose mercy towards »little cops«, as long as they did not stand in the way of »necessary action«, was portrayed as magnanimity (see FIZZ 1972: 7). Given this kind of attitude, their phony regard for harmless security guards and street cops who were just insignificant accessories and should not be »shot out of their boots« (ibid.), seems like a forced attempt to assuage their own conscience and not scare away less extreme-minded sympathizers.

Hochschulkampf (HSK) also heaped criticism on the German left and the party-like successor organizations of the student movement. It is the only one of the three publications that mentions the KPD/AO (Communist Party of Germany/Structural Organization) and the PL/PI (Proletarian Left/Party Initiative) organ-

izations by name, criticizing their attitudes towards the RAF. Their emphasis on these two organizations was due to the fact that the *HSK* maintained an ideologically close relationship with the PL/PI, which was a rival to the KPD/AO.

HSK also asserted that there was a need to support revolutionary efforts. Therefore, it recognized the RAF's concepts as an important contribution in the debate on revolutionary violence. They were seen as a serious attempt to determine how weak revolutionary forces could initiate mass uprisings. While the paper did put the RAF squarely in the camp of the anarchists, whose ambitions were doomed to fail without an overall Communist strategy and accompanying political measures, it did accept the RAF's self-image as a guerrilla force and attempted a theoretical discussion of military guerrilla warfare and whether it was suitable for West German conditions (cf. *HSK* 1971: 10).

HSK came to the conclusion that social conditions were rather unfavorable for the success of this strategy, because the Federal Republic did not suffer from sufficient mass impoverishment at a Latin American scale to catalyze a general readiness for revolution (cf. *HSK* 1971: 11). What they overlooked was that the RAF obviously knew that, too (cf. RAF 1997: 31). They also found it problematic that sabotage in urban areas also impacted that very part of the population on whose support the perpetrators depended for the lasting success of their revolution. The *HSK* thus deemed the concept of an urban guerrilla in a strictly military sense unsuitable (cf. *HSK* 1971: 12).

To *HSK*, the RAF's assumption that exemplary actions by a small vanguard (avant-garde) would create a revolutionary consciousness among the masses was a revival of the 19th century Russian anarchist idea of »propaganda of the deed« (*HSK* 1971: 10), motivating the masses not with wordy propaganda, but by exemplary practice. *HSK's* problem with this propaganda of the deed was that it apparently replaced the political program because the RAF's writings said nothing about its actual political goals (cf. *HSK* 1971: 10). *HSK's* analysis further found that the RAF's intended actions were so de-politicized because they were designed to anticipate the end point of the revolution. Their

»Storming of the Capitalist power centers is thus more like a rampage, spinning in circles around Capitalism« (*HSK* 1971: 10).«

Any propagandistic effect, they argued, would be lost by precipitated, politically unstrategic action, by a failure to consider social needs, by making violence the centerpoint of revolutionary activity, leaving nothing but sectarian terrorism. Therefore, the primacy of politics should continue to prevail over the practice of armed violence.

In all its level-headed considerations, *HSK* never condemns such violence.

Conclusions

Despite their ideological parallels, *Agit 883*, *FIZZ*, and *Hochschulkampf* varied widely in their assessments of the RAF, from positive approval on the part of *FIZZ* to curious, yet skeptical interest on the part of *HSK*, to scornful derision as a bunch of wannabe revolutionaries by *Agit 883*. For *FIZZ*, the RAF was a heroic guerrilla force in the finest tradition of Latin American freedom fighters. *HSK* also took the RAF seriously and attempted an earnest analysis of the applicability of a guerrilla strategy to the Federal Republic of Germany – coming to the conclusion that the RAF was a band of impatient and disoriented anarchists. To *Agit 883*, on the other hand, the notion that the members of the RAF were true anarchists was a downright ridiculous idea. It considered the RAF a lot of immature dogmatists who, flapping their gums and flaunting their activism, wanted to gloss over the fact that they were too lazy to start a real party and to actually study theory.

The three journals agree that armed struggle must necessarily be anchored in a sound analysis of the social conditions and the needs of the proletariat as well as be integrated into a comprehensive mass movement. However, *FIZZ* was the only paper to share the RAF's assumption that armed resistance groups were the true core of the class struggle. For *HSK* and *Agit 883*, it could be no more than a supplement. *HSK* is the only medium that once used the term »terrorism« in a tendentially negative sense in its critical discussion of the RAF, although without going into any further detail.

Some importance is also attributed to the concept of »solidarity« in the critical treatment of the RAF. *Agit 883* criticizes an erosion of solidary discourse, which is increasingly difficult to conduct because of the numerous political factions, emphasizing the necessity of solidarity-based criticism of the RAF. *FIZZ* also writes that the best way to deal with the RAF is solidary criticism of it. One might say that a line was drawn that even the harshest critics of the RAF dared not cross. It was okay to put the RAF under heavy argumentative pressure, but it was clear that the group's right to exist or its goals per se were not to be questioned. At the same time, this overemphasis on solidarity signals that any interference from outsiders – unsolidary, destructive criticism – was not going to be tolerated.

Sometimes one newspaper would pick up and question an opinion on the RAF expressed by another paper. For example, *Agit 883* stated on a side note that *FIZZ*, a fallout product of the anti-authoritarian movement, only wanted to cover up its own problems with its verbally radical approval of the RAF (cf. *Agit 883* 1971: 8). *FIZZ* retaliated by making fun of *Agit 883*'s designation of the RAF as »Leninist«, which *FIZZ* considered a meaningless empty phrase (cf. *FIZZ* 1972: 6).

In conclusion, it should be pointed out once again that at the time the *Concept of Urban Guerrilla* appeared, the RAF had already attained dubious fame by crim-

inal actions, but had not yet embarked on its career as a feared terrorist group. The assessments of the three papers thus fall into a transitional phase between »barely still theorizing« and »not quite yet practicing«, during which the RAF could still be discussed with the benefit of ignorance whether they would ever go through with their grand announcements of armed struggle.

For the short period from May 1970 (Baader jailbreak) to May 1972 (beginning of the bombing offensive), the RAF was, in the eyes of both its sympathizers and its critics, only one of many violent groups of young idealists who had emerged in the heated atmosphere of the 1968 movement, each with their own ideas about the right path to world revolution. The same fragmentation and dissension of ideas that reigned among all these groups was also reflected – »in all solidarity« – in the various judgments made about the RAF.

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