WEST GERMAN TERROR: THE LASTING LEGACY OF THE RED ARMY FACTION

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ABSTRACT

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In the 1970s, West Germany experienced a wave of terrorism that was like nothing known there previously. Most of the terror emerged from a small group that called itself the Rote Armee Fraktion, Red Army Faction (RAF). Though many guerrilla groupings formed in West Germany in the 1970s, the RAF was the most influential and had the most staying-power. The group, which officially disbanded in 1998, after five years of inactivity, could claim thirty-four deaths and numerous injuries. The death toll and the various kidnappings and robberies are only part of the RAF’s story. The group always remained numerically small, but their presence was felt throughout the Federal Republic, as wanted posters and continual public discourse contributed to a strong, almost tangible presence.

In this text, I explore the founding of the group in the greater West German context. The RAF members believed that they could dismantle the international systems of imperialism and capitalism, in order for a Marxist-Leninist revolution to take place. The group quickly moved from words to violence, and the young West German state was tested. The longevity of the group, in the minds of Germans, will be explored in this work. Dozens of literary works have been inspired by the RAF, and RAF-themed merchandise sells to this day. The group’s impact on popular culture will be considered after a socio-political and historical study of the group’s formation and actions.
Dedicated to my parents, Bob and Janice Stefanik, and to my brothers, Andrew and Nick Stefanik.
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INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s, West Germany experienced a wave of terrorism that was like nothing known there previously. Most of the terror emerged from a small group that called itself the *Rote Armee Fraktion*, Red Army Faction (RAF). Though many guerrilla groupings formed in West Germany in the 1970s, the RAF was the most influential and had the most staying-power. The group, which officially disbanded in 1998, after five years of inactivity, could claim thirty-four deaths and numerous injuries. The death toll and the various kidnappings and robberies are only part of the RAF’s story. The group always remained numerically small, but their presence was felt throughout the Federal Republic, as wanted posters and continual public discourse contributed to a strong, almost tangible presence. Author Heinrich Böll characterized the conflict between the RAF and the West German state as “a war of six against sixty million” (Aust, *Baader-Meinhof: The Inside Story of the RAF*, 148). In the group's manifesto, *The Urban Guerrilla Concept*, which emerged in April 1971, the high-profile nature of the group's activities was highlighted: “The claim that the huge manhunt for us that is currently being staged in the Federal Republic and West Berlin is also being directed at the entire socialist left, is a correct one,” (Red Army Faction, *The Urban Guerrilla Concept*, 13). To this day, the RAF remains a topic of considerable scrutiny in Germany. In order to understand the RAF, it is imperative to gain a sense of the West German state in the 1960s and 1970s.

The group's primary goal was to dismantle the international systems of imperialism and capitalism, which they deemed inherently flawed, in order for a Marxist-Leninist revolution to take place, guided by their leadership. They fervently believed that the world's problems stemmed from a shared power structure that privileged the political and business elite, and neglected the working masses. In particular, the so-called first generation of RAF terrorists felt
strongly that urban guerrilla tactics were necessary to battle the Gewalt der Herrschenden, the government of West Germany and the economic leaders within that system. In order to bring their goals into public view, as the RAF members expected a real Marxist peoples' revolution to occur, the RAF garnered an unprecedented amount of publicity with high-profile actions. Amongst the actions were arson, armed robbery, kidnapping and murder. The RAF was successful in achieving a media presence, especially in the pages of the Springer-owned Bild Zeitung. Two founding members, Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof, actually became stars in a new sector of pop culture. It may surprise some to realize that Meinhof was not actually a leader within the group, though the media called the RAF the Baader-Meinhof Gang after Baader's dramatic prison escape. This escape, details of which saturated German press, was also Meinhof's first real revolutionary act.

Even today in modern Germany, the RAF remains a relevant topic, particularly as the former RAF members plead for pardons and release from prison. Dozens of books, films, articles, exposes in magazines, art exhibitions and television specials have been inspired by the RAF, and the Internet is rife with RAF websites, many in support of the initial ideals and hopes that the RAF represented. Throughout this text I will strive to explain the unique fascination in Germany with this group and its members, evidenced further by numerous commemorative days and even the preservation of Meinhof's brain for experimentation, a fact which was only made public in 2002 (http://news.bbc.co.uk).

More concretely, I will undertake a socio-political and historical study of the RAF and left-wing German terrorism and thought in the 1960s and 1970s. This will include an analysis of the broader student movement and leftist circles in West Germany. I will examine the RAF’s beginnings and evolution through three generations of membership, focusing on high-profile actions and the
instrumental RAF members, with an emphasis on the group's founders. Next, an analysis of the portrayal of the RAF in West Germany as these events were unfolding will be presented, with a focus on Springer Publishing. Both the press and the West German government framed a public understanding of the group. This extensive contextual background will be followed by an analysis of the RAF in literature and the press, in particular Die Verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum, with an emphasis on author Heinrich Böll's unique experiences with the German press and the socio-political reality of the times. This final chapter also focuses on the popular culture influence of the Red Army Faction, which extends to merchandise sales and never-ending public debate.

I hope the reader finishes this text with a better understanding of West Germany's political climate in the 1960s and 1970s. The reader should gain insight into the actual organization of the RAF, and better understand why the group presented such a daunting challenge to the authorities in West Germany. To that end, I have relied heavily on Stefan Aust's meticulously researched book, Baader-Meinhof: The Inside Story of the RAF. Aust was acquainted with Ulrike Meinhof and was a friend of Klaus Rainer Röhl's, Meinhof's husband before she went underground. Additionally, Aust had a friendship with Horst Mahler, an attorney who joined the RAF. In 1970, when terrorism became a reality in West Germany, Aust worked in public television and “had to do a lot of documentarities, short and long and magazine-type stores, about what happened” (http://www.dw-world.de). When asked directly in a 2008 interview whether Aust was friends with RAF members, he responded by stating, “that would be a little too much. I was a very young journalist at that time. I started when I was just 20 or 21 and they were all a little bit older. So I knew them, I was rather close to them, we were not friends, and I was always a little bit younger than they were and I was not as radical as they had been.”

Aust was never involved in RAF operations or planning, but he did assist Röhl after Meinhof abandoned their twin daughters at a Palestinian camp. He went on to become the editor-in-chief of The Spiegel from 1994 through February 2008. His unique life experiences and years of journalistic work that covered the RAF has made him an expert on the group. For this text, I have supplemented
Aust's account with additional sources. Aust's unmatched experiences, and the potential drawbacks they pose at times, will be discussed as well. Finally, the reader should contemplate the lasting effect of the RAF in popular culture with the examples detailed in this work.
CHAPTER I. THE STUDENT MOVEMENT IN WEST GERMANY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RAF

“Every act of terror always has its background in a wider conflict, from which-and from which alone-it derives its power and the support of its clandestine and murderous groups” (Aust xii).

In the 1960s, students and young adults in West Germany grew more politically radical. This increasing radicalization took place in various industrialized countries, particularly in the United States and Europe, where visible protest movements emerged. The student radicalism in West Germany “had an added poignancy due to the legacy of National Socialism; the younger generation challenged the older generation to 'face up to the past' and pointed to many ex-Nazis that were in government and business” (Murphy, Introduction to 'The Urban Guerilla Concept,' 2). Many West Germans were displeased by the results of the election in 1966, when the Social Democrats (SPD) failed to get a majority and a Grand Coalition was formed with the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU). Future RAF leader Gudrun Ensslin was one of those displeased individuals, later saying, “we saw that the SPD leaders themselves were prisoners of the system, and had to take account of the economic and extra-parliamentary forces in the background” (Aust 17). Ensslin perceived the Grand Coalition as a betrayal. The hopes she had for radical political change evaporated, and she dropped her allegiance to the SPD, joining the German Socialist Student Union (SDS) instead. \(^1\) She was not the only left-leaning individual in West Germany disappointed with the election results, which was well-evidenced by the increase in membership to the SDS, and the formation (and growing popularity) of more commune-like and politically liberal organizations. The discontent prior to the election was palpable, and after the Grand Coalition was announced, that discontent was louder, more visible, and those upset were growing impatient.

As time passed, this impatience and growing discontent caused a gradual evolution of the

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\(^1\) SDS: The Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, Socialist German Student Union. Founded in 1946, the SDS was the leading organization within the Außerparlamentarische Opposition (APO) or Extraparliamentary Opposition, active after the Grand Coalition was formed.
student movement in West Germany. It was not only students who were upset with the political and social developments in the country, but students comprised the largest group of active demonstrators. Stefan Aust, who experienced this era firsthand and knew many RAF members personally, explained that, “indignation turned to protest, protest to resistance, resistance to violence and violence to outright terrorism” (Aust xiii). His assessment captures those times very well, and the reader should keep his description in mind as this text continues.

I called attention to Stefan Aust's unique experiences and qualifications in the introduction of this text. Precisely because of his personal relationships with Meinhof, her husband Röhl and RAF member Mahler, one may wonder if his book is influenced by these affiliations. On one hand, the answer is undoubtedly yes. Aust wrote for konkret and was a historical witness to the era of West German terror. Had he not chosen journalism as his profession, particularly left-wing journalism, he may never have been compelled to undertake the research that he ultimately devoted his life to. On the other hand, precisely because he was privy to information that others were not, he is qualified to author a book which is considered by most to be the definitive account of the RAF's actions. His personal relationships should be kept in mind, but they should not detract from his expertise. Aust was not considered a friend of the Red Army Faction. Though Aust does not make mention of it in his book, the RAF did target him for death because of his participation in retrieving Meinhof's twin daughters from a Palestinian camp after she left them there (Fisher, At Least They Weren't Nazis, www.washingtonpost.com).

Aust calls himself a 'participating observer' in the leftist movement, though he “never details his relationship with the gang members and gives only a few clues to his own take on the RAF's years of bank robberies, kidnappings, murders and bombings” (Fisher). The 2008 English edition of the book was a re-working of the German book, first published in 1985. Factual information was updated as new RAF news came to light. In Fisher's book review for The Washington Post, Aust is criticized for seeming to “buy into that sense of romance, especially in a riveting, hour-by-hour account of the RAF's...
most dramatic crimes...He acknowledges only briefly that what the gang really achieved was exactly what it claimed to oppose: a huge expansion of state power in the form of surveillance tactics, computerized policing, fortified courtrooms, high-security prisons and much tougher anti-terror laws” (Fisher). Despite Fischer's criticism, he concludes that the truth emerges regardless. If one would “strip away the soap opera and the high school intellectualism, what remains is a simple tale of thugs in love with violence” (Fisher).

Douglas Smith reviewed Aust's book for *The Seattle Times* in March 2009. He lauds Aust's work and concludes that Aust “has studied it more thoroughly than anyone else...Aust writes about his subject with admirable dispassion and clarity and in exacting detail, tracking the cat-and-mouse movements between the group and the German police and its political leaders not just over several years, but down to the hour” (Smith, *Baader-Meinhof: Bombing their way to utopia*, [http://seattletimes.com](http://seattletimes.com)). Smith offered criticism as well, and pointed out that Aust's focuses on the inner workings of the terrorist group more than the greater historical context in which these events took place. Aust's “approach leaves one wanting him to pull back from this narrow focus and situate his subject against a broader social-political background. Still, one could not ask for a better guide to this story, and baring some significant new revelations, *Baader-Meinhof* is certain the be the final word on the subject” (Smith).

*The Wall Street Journal* reviewer for Aust's 2008 book, David Gress, recognizes that the story of the RAF has been told before, “but there has never been an account as authoritative, or as gripping, as 'Baader-Meinhof,' which has the advantage of being related by a journalist who was once so close to the action that the gang targeted him for death” (Gress, *A Time of Terror*, [http://onlinewsj.com](http://onlinewsj.com)). The 'soap opera' narrative that Fisher disliked seems appreciated by Gress, but with a disclaimer: “Mr. Aust tells the Baader-Meinhof story with journalistic care but also with an acute sense of drama” (Gress). Certainly the format of the book, which begins chapters with exact dates and times, lends itself to this feeling of suspense and drama. Of course, the actions of the RAF were both suspenseful and dramatic,
and by providing the specific dates and times, Aust's book, more than any other about the RAF, facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the group's actions. Moreover, Gress concludes his review by calling Aust's book an “indispensable work” that is also timely, and it takes “a clear-eyed look at the inner workings of a group driven by violent fanaticism” (Gress). Aust's work does provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of how this terrorist group originated and operated, and is richer in detail than other volumes written in both English and German on the RAF. Willi Winkler's 2008 book, *Die Geschichte der RAF*, appears to be a close second in terms of rich detail, and he often cites information from Aust's German book, though sometimes with critical disclaimers. Winkler utilized hundreds of other sources that greatly enrich his work, and he delved into details that Aust did not. Winkler included more information, for example, about the RAF members who were not primary leaders. Therefore, I have included information from Winkler's book, as well as newspaper and journal articles, to present the reader with a cohesive story of the Red Army Faction.

**The Shah comes to Berlin**

On June 2, 1967, the West German government welcomed Shah Reza Pahlevi and his wife (the Shahbanou) to West Berlin. Protesters, comprised primarily but not solely of students, were ready for the visit. They viewed the Shah as a contributor to global imperialism, and a symbol of political corruption. He was the man responsible for issuing the decree that dismissed the democratically elected Iranian prime minister in 1953, which ushered in over two decades of dictator rule in Iran. Perhaps just as importantly, the Shah was guided by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States and the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) (http://www.guardian.co.uk). The events in Iran were a fine example, from the protesters' prospective, of a fundamentally flawed international system.

The West German government, however, already weary of the growing protests taking place with increasing frequency in their young country, was prepared. According to Aust, the government's “security precautions for the Shah's visit were reminiscent of the methods of a police state. Iranians
opposed to the Shah had been taken into preventive custody on no legal grounds whatsoever. The roads along which the imperial motorcade made its way through the Federal Republic were closed to ordinary traffic” (Aust 25). Pro-Shah Iranians living in Germany were allowed to greet the Shah and his wife, but only from a distance. The Iranians in Germany who were not vocal in their support of the Shah were, as Aust explains, forced into police custody without any kind of legal proceeding. Hundreds of protesters were assembled near the city hall, being held back by metal barriers.

The German police presence was massive, and agents of the Iranian Savak secret service, armed with wooden cudgels, were in abundance as well. Moments after the Shah arrived, a chant rose out the crowd of protesters, with the key word being “murderer.” A number of plastic bags filled with paint were thrown, though none came close to the Shah. These plastic bags of paint were provocation enough for the Savak secret service, and “they used their wooden cudgels indiscriminately and without restraint, hitting out at the demonstrators. Blood flowed; students fell to the ground. The German police watched impassively, making no move to halt the violence” (Aust 25). The German police eventually decided to act, but they did so in a manner that was clearly on the side of the Iranian Savak men who were injuring protesters. There are disputed accounts of the specifics, but it is indisputable that no arrests were made of the Iranians who had used force against the peaceful protesters.

The Shah and his wife continued to follow their diplomatic agenda for the evening, which included a visit to the Opera House to see The Magic Flute. Upon the couple's arrival to the Opera House, protesters, who were on the opposite side of the street, began chanting once again. Perhaps agitated by perceived unfair treatment at the hands of the Iranian forces and the German police, the demonstrators used their own tools: “Tomatoes, containers of paint and bags of flour burst on the roadway, nowhere near their imperial target. The Shah and Shahbanou reached the Opera House unscathed. Erich Duensing, the Berlin chief commissioner of police, and Hans-Ulrich Werner, his commander of the City Police, were able to go in and watch the performance themselves. They had done their job” (Aust 26). The protesters were ready to disperse and spend some time in nearby bars
before they would reassemble around 10:00pm to see the Shah once again.

Chaos erupted only moments later, when fourteen ambulances drove up and the police officers who were lined up in front of the protesters took out their truncheons. A number of “onlookers tried to get away over the barriers, but were driven back. Then the police attacked, wielding their truncheons without giving the usual warning first” (Aust 26). It was a scene of panic in front of the Opera House that evening. It was dark, loud and chaotic. People could hardly decipher the identities of the people next to them, unable to tell who was a police officer, in plainclothes or uniform? Who were agents of the Shah? One of the plainclothes German officers was Detective Sergeant Karl-Heinz Kurras. Along with a few other officers, Kurras attempted to apprehend a male who they thought was a ringleader of sorts, likely based on his appearance. The man was wearing sandals and had facial hair, and as stones were coming from different directions, the man resisted arrest and tried to get away. In this chaotic moment, a shot rang out in the darkness, and the supposed ringleader was dead. The instant it happened, another officer said to Kurras, “are you crazy, shooting around here?” to which Kurras responded that, “it just went off” (Aust 27). The dead man, Benno Ohnesorg, was twenty-six years old. He was a student of Romance languages and literature and was a member of the Protestant student community. That day, June 2, 1967, was the first time he participated in a demonstration. His death generated an immense outcry from the already frustrated groups of demonstrators. Gudrun Ensslin, later RAF member, wept the night of Ohnesorg's death, claiming, “this fascist state means to kill us all. We must organize resistance. Violence is the only way to answer violence. This is the Auschwitz generation, and there's no arguing with them” (Becker, Hitler's Children, 88). The death of Ohnesorg was a personal turning point for her, and it affected others who were already disenfranchised in a similar way. This focusing event is reminiscent of the 1970 Kent State shootings of the United States in terms of the public outcry and attention generated. New evidence regarding Ohnesorg's death came to light in May 2009. It was discovered that the officer responsible for his death, Kurras, was a double agent working for the East German Stasi. Seventeen volumes detailing Kurras' double identity were
discovered by researchers who oversee the Stasi archives (Moore, http://news.bbc.co.uk). In May 2009, Otto Schily was asked by *The Spiegel* if “important parts of West Germany's postwar history now have to be rewritten?” He responded strongly and stated:

“Ohnesorg's death was a turning point, a death that was the culmination of a brutal police attack that shocked a lot of people like myself. But you can't see it as an isolated event. The night before, there was a huge rally at the Free University in Berlin where the torture practices of the Iranian Shah's regime were reported -- and then the Shah came to Berlin the next day. After Ohnesorg's death, evidence went missing -- the magazine from Kurras' pistol was gone, and TV images were suddenly unavailable. Kurras is a very important figure for this time period, but one shouldn't lose sight of the bigger picture. Anyone who says we need to rewrite the whole history of the '68 movement over again is wrong” (Stark, www.spiegel.de).

The death of Ohnesorg is worthy of so much detail because it encapsulates the problems that had been simmering in the Federal Republic for some time. In addition, Ohnesorg's death served as a psychological turning point for many future RAF members, clearly in the case of Ensslin and arguably for Meinhof as well. Demonstrators were growing in numbers, and the demonstrations themselves had been increasing as well. It followed that the press coverage of these events increased, and the young government must have felt tested. The younger and the older generations did not quite understand each other. Men with facial hair or women who donned unconventional fashions were suspicious-looking to older and more traditional Germans. The younger Germans of the 1960s resented the former Nazis who remained in positions of prestige, particularly professors and politicians. In addition, the students of the 1960s knew that their parents had lived through Nazi rule.

Perhaps the most significant element of Ohnesorg's death was the sense of righteousness it
provided intellectually for those who were already disenchanted with West Germany's leadership and general day-to-day life. For those frustrated with the “fascist” direction of their country, Ohnesorg's death added fuel to an already glowing fire. Meinhof produced a television program about Ohnesorg's death and the events of June 2, in which she said, “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 mans 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.” (Bauer, Everybody Talks About the Weather... We Don't: The Writings of Ulrike Meinhof; 42)

The state was now a different kind of enemy, an enemy that had murdered a man who committed no crime. To call Ohnesorg a martyr of the movement would be true, on one hand, and false on the other. He himself had no intention of martyrdom, but for many grumbling voices of the various leftist circles, he did indeed become a symbolic martyr. His name could be heard in living rooms and dorms, as some began to speak grandly of true retaliation against the oppressive state. A growing sentiment was that protest wasn't changing anything; it was empty because it did not facilitate political or social change. Another palpable sentiment in left circles was bitterness toward the government and state as a whole. It would only be a matter of months before the group that came to be known as the RAF would begin violent activities in earnest.

**Arson in Frankfurt**

The future RAF members felt compelled to act in the months following Ohnesorg's death. Another group of young radical students had formed a group, Movement 2 June. This group was anarchistic, not Marxist like the RAF would soon claim to be, but with both groups, the enemies were essentially the same. For months, Baader and Ensslin spoke to others who shared their views, and finally a plan was hatched. After producing and distributing pamphlets that recommended arson as a valid means to make a point to the people and the state, a plan was put into action. On April 2, 1968,
Baader, Ensslin and two others, Thorwald Proll and Horst Söhnlein, were in Frankfurt. Their arson targets were two department stores, Kaufhof and Schneider. The plan was not sophisticated and the arsonists were not careful, which led to the arrests of all four within days. A phone call was made to the German Press Agency, and only two sentences were uttered: “Soon there'll be flames in the Schneider and the Kaufhof. It is a political act of revenge” (Becker 100). No one was hurt in either department store and the police quickly got all four suspects in custody.

Nine days later, the most prominent student voice of the German student movement, Rudi Dutschke, was shot three times. The shooter was Josef Bachmann, a twenty-four year old house-painter who had looked up Dutschke's address after reading an article in the right-wing Deutsche Nationalzeitung from a month earlier. The headline and first lines read; “Stop Dutschke now! Otherwise there will be civil war! The order of the day is: stop the radical left revolution now! If we don't, Germany will become a place of pilgrimage from malcontents from all over the world” (Becker 102). Since five photos of Dutschke accompanied the article, Bachmann recognized Dutschke on his bike on the night of April 11, 1968. The disgruntled Bachmann shot Dutschke at close range and then fled to an abandoned building on a nearby construction site. Dutschke survived, but just barely.

According to Aust, word of the attempt on Dutschke's life “had spread through Berlin like wildfire. Rudi Dutschke's shoes still lay inside a chalk circle in front of the SDS Centre” (Aust 34). This event sparked outrage, just as Ohnesorg's death had done less than a year earlier. Springer Publishing, the brand behind the Deutsche Nationalzeitung, would not go unpunished.

The trial of the four accused arsonists was held on October 13, 1968, and the press and public were enthralled. A journalist who was in attendance thought Ensslin was quite different than her fellow co-defendants: “Next to her sat three men as if they were incidental figures—her friend Baader, a sonny-boy who had come to read Marcuse by accident; Proll, playing the bourgeois scare in a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles; and finally Söhnlein, the supposed actor, acting being bored through the trial.” (Becker 104). Another journalist, Ulrike Meinhof, visited Gudrun Ensslin in the prison in order to
write an article for *konkret*. Meinhof wrote columns for the left-wing political and literary magazine *konkret* from 1959 through 1969, and she served as editor-in-chief from 1961 through 1964 (Bauer 29).

“At the height of its popularity in 1968 and 1969, *konkret* appeared weekly or biweekly and exceeded a circulation of 230,000” (Bauer 27). The publication facilitated debate and also assisted in bringing together the various voices of the left, including “students, intellectuals, and a broader public.” (Bauer 27). The magazine would undergo changes during Meinhof’s tenure, most notably in 1964, when *konkret* changed its look. Political and social analysis, along with literary commentary, remained the cornerstones of the publication, but “articles about sex, drugs, and rock and roll,” became part of *konkret* as well. Front covers sometimes featured a topless woman, and Bauer asserts that, “like no other magazine at the time, *konkret’s* mix of politics and sex had its pulse on the anti-bourgeois zeitgeist and the emerging sexual revolution”( Bauer 36). Despite these changes, Meinhof remained focused on culture and politics in a serious manner (Bauer 37).

When Meinhof met Ensslin, she “was deeply impressed by the Swabian pastor's daughter, who had so much in common with herself, her ways of thought, her own commitment. But Gudrun Ensslin had not just talked about it, she had done something” (Aust 39). The article Meinhof intended to write never came into being. In fact, she told the editorial staff at *konkret* that if what Ensslin had said to her was ever published, “they would never get out of prison at all” (Aust 39). Meeting Ensslin had a strong impact Meinhof, perhaps similar to the effect that Ohnesorg's death had on Ensslin.

The male defendants behaved outlandishly in court, making false statements to the judge and shouting things such as “Heil Ordnung!” in attempts to be disruptive. After some days of trial, Ensslin made a confession of sorts: “In agreement with Baader I declare: he and I did it in the Schneider. None of the others were in it, neither there nor in the Kaufhof. We did it out of protest against the indifference towards the war in Vietnam and also against the capitalist structure of society. It was a mistake and error. But I do not wish to discuss that with you. I will have to talk to others about that. You may make note that at the root of the deed is powerlessness. But frequently justice is on the side of
powerlessness.” Baader spoke next, “I admit that on April 2nd, shortly before closing time, I put a paper bag which contained a mechanism into an Old German wardrobe. It was intended to destroy the wardrobe, not more. We had no intention of endangering people or even causing a real fire...only monopoly capitalism and the insurances, which are suffocating in profits, were to be hit at” (Becker 105).

The co-defendants had even more to say, bringing up topics such as the Weimar Republic, German “Jew-murderers,” and the struggles of the workers of the world. Disruptive and loud antics continued in the courtroom up until the trial's end, when, before a packed room, the four were sentenced to three years imprisonment. Shortly after the sentencing, a television reporter spoke with Ensslin's mother and father. Her father provides meaningful insight to the greater generational divide in West Germany in the following exchange:

*Reporter:* “As Gudrun's father, you're one of that generation which she meant to admonish by her act. Can you see any grounds for it?”

*Mr. Ensslin:* “Well, I-like the whole Federal Republic-would object to any admonishments made in that way. However, what she wanted to say is this: a generation that has seen the building of concentration camps, the encouragement of anti-Semitism and the committing of genocide among and in the name of its own people must not allow any revival of such things, must not admit that hope of a new beginning, of reformation and rebirth can come to nothing. These young people who are not willing to go on swallowing frustration and be corrupted by it. It has astonished me to find that Gudrun, who has always thought in a very rational, intelligent way, has experienced what is almost a condition of euphoric self-realization, a really holy self-realization such as we find mentioned in connection with saints” (Aust 40).

Ensslin's father, a pastor, and naturally sympathetic to his own daughter, certainly had his own unique perspective about her actions. His use of the terms “euphoric self-realization” and “holy self-realization” can be explained in part by his vocation. These terms require further attention though,
because Gudrun Ensslin had the ability, more so than the other RAF founding members, to enthral others with her passion, and mentally move people beyond traditional moral boundaries; clear instances of right and wrong were not simple with Ensslin. The way she spoke about class struggle and marginalized people resonated with many she encountered, from professors who continued to support her throughout the arson trial to the respected journalist, Ulrike Meinhof.

After serving fourteen months of the sentences, the foursome were allowed out of jail on June 13, 1969, in order to wait for the outcome of an appeal in the coming November. Once November arrived, it was decided that they must return to jail. Söhnlein was the only one who complied, and the others went underground. Arrangements were easily made, and the three arrived at a safe house in Paris. The house belonged to Regis Debray, a French journalist and friend of Che Guevara's. Proll lost his gumption after a few days and turned himself in; he and Söhnlein would never again involve themselves with Baader and Ensslin (Vague, Televisionaries: Red Army Faction Story, 16). The two remained underground, with logistical help from many left-leaning people, including Astrid Proll, Thorwald Proll's sister.

They traveled to Italy before returning to Germany, and it was young attorney Horst Mahler who convinced the fugitives to come back to Germany. Mahler actually traveled to Italy to convince Baader and Ensslin to join the militant group being formed (Aust 52). The left was still vocal in West Germany, but the solidarity of the days after the Dutschke assassination attempt was long gone. “All kinds of left-wing circles, new parties and discussion groups were formed, and were soon occupied exclusively with themselves, seeing yesterday's comrades as a greater enemy than Springer or Strauss, against whom they had been previously united” (Aust 45). This shift within the broader student movement was also felt by Ulrike Meinhof, who was frustrated by the lack of unity and even more importantly, the lack of political or social change in the Federal Republic. Her feelings of disillusionment may explain her willingness to house both Baader and Ensslin when they showed up at her apartment upon their return from Italy. Meinhof had been endeared to and intrigued by Ensslin
during the arson trial, and according to Aust, Meinhof was jealous of the consistency in the arsonists' lives that was lacking in her own. The couple stayed with Meinhof and her twin daughters (who were seven at the time) for a few weeks, enjoying LSD and hours of conversation. Contrary to what many imagine, this was not a time of strategic planning. At this point, the three, along with occasional visitors, would entertain extremely vague notions of activities carried out by fringe groups, but their priorities were simply to find safe accommodations and adequate funding.

In the following months, Baader and Ensslin began to interact with more like-minded people, including Horst Mahler. The only true solidified plan was to secure arms, which proved more difficult than Baader and others had expected. It was during an attempt to illegally purchase firearms that Baader would be arrested once again. He was taken to Tegel prison to serve the rest of his arson sentence, and Ensslin's scheming began; Baader could not remain in prison.

Ensslin and Meinhof, in cooperation with Baader's lawyer, came up with a plan to free Baader from prison. Meinhof had already been visiting with Baader in prison for the purpose of interviews. Ensslin, who was wanted by the police at this time, had visited Baader three times in prison, disguising herself and using a false name (Winkler, *Die Geschichte der RAF*, 162). She must have felt empowered by her success in fooling prison authorities. It is unknown who it was, but early in the brain-storming phases, someone “had the idea of fixing things up so that he had to be taken out of the prison building: the only question was, how? Somebody else suggested that Ulrike Meinhof could make out she and Baader were planning a book, one which made it essential for Baader to be taken outside the jail” (Aust 58). This is precisely what took place. A letter arrived at the prison from a German publishing firm, which informed authorities that Baader and Meinhof were to work together on a book. During Meinhof's next prison visit, she requested that Baader be allowed to leave the prison with an escort in order to spend a few hours with academic literature on their book topic at the Dahlem Institute. The director of the prison, Glaubrecht, refused this request but relented after a convincing speech from Mahler.
The logistics, especially obtaining adequate firearms, stalled the plan somewhat, but Mahler was able to assist the women in procuring weapons just two days before the planned escape. On May 14, 1970, Baader escaped in a haze of tear gas and bullets. A librarian of the Institute and two guards were injured, and Ulrike Meinhof, along with three others, were wanted criminals. This watershed event formally created the RAF, and there was only more chaos to follow.

Names are important, and the Red Army Faction members certainly understood the power that words and naming could have. Nevertheless, the group didn't concern themselves with a name until after the media gave them one-The Baader-Meinhof Bande/Gruppe. This name appeared in German newspapers of varying repute after Baader's dramatic escape. Left-leaning German newspapers usually used the word Gruppe (Group) and right-leaning publications tended to use Bande (Gang). Once the group had time to settle underground after Baader's break-out, they decided to call their group the Rote Armee Faktion, the Red Army Faction, and this was codified in the group's manifesto written primarily by Meinhof (Baker 25). The important document detailed the ideological foundation of the group, claiming that the RAF members were engaged in an international anti-imperialistic struggle, with a focus on ending Vietnam War and capitalistic practices. The group's emblem, which is now notorious in Germany, consisted of a five-point red star with a submachine gun. The first use of this emblem appeared on the cover page of this manifesto.

Interestingly, the Kalashnikov was “the weapon of all the liberation movements in the world,” but the RAF used a German Heckler & Koch submachine gun (Aust 107). Aust considers this a mistake, writing “the revolutionaries had slipped up” (108). Mistake or not, the emblem design was not the issue of focus. After the first communiqué and the daredevil

![Image 2: RAF emblem.](image2.png)
breakout of Baader, the West German press took notice of the RAF.

The founding members decided on this name for two reasons. Firstly, the RAF members admired the Japanese Red Army, a left-wing paramilitary group. Secondly, the irony of using RAF amused the members, as RAF was the known abbreviation for the Royal Air Force, a primary contributor to the undeniably large NATO presence in West Germany.

The press selected Ulrike Meinhof and Andreas Baader as the namesakes for different reasons. Meinhof was well-known in West Germany, as both the editor-in-chief and contributor of konkret, a left-wing newspaper with respectable circulation, and as a radio and television presence, often thought of as the token female on talk shows. Though some may have perceived Meinhof's presence on political commentary shows as fulfilling an unwritten gender quota, she was articulate, well-educated and even provocative at times. Her academic achievements were laudable and she was also a mother and wife. At least to outsider admirers, she balanced career and family and represented a new kind of German woman.

Baader's name was used by the media so quickly because he was, after all, the man who escaped incarceration in the most dramatic fashion. His background was a sharp contrast to Meinhof’s. He grew up surrounded by females, as his father died on the Russian front in 1945. The females in his life doted on him and excused his flaws and brushes with the law. They coddled him and explained to others that, when in trouble, which happened frequently, he was always the victim of circumstances.
He switched schools frequently and never completed his *Abitur*. Many who knew Baader called him a bully, and claimed that he swaggered and liked to use his fists. By all accounts, Baader never needed to achieve any level of personal accountability or responsibility in childhood or young adulthood (Becker 90-94). Baader even feigned a battle with lung cancer as a young man, and informed anyone who listened that he was bravely dying. He forced coughing fits and spoke of other symptoms in hopes of garnering pity. He didn't get the attention or admiration he was hoping for with his invented cancer, and gave it up after a few weeks (91). While Meinhof was well-read, Baader lacked the motivation to read much of anything until he was incarcerated. Meinhof would speak passionately about the suffering in Vietnam and American imperialism, detailing perceived faults in the international system and beyond; Baader was more of a yes-man, swearing loudly to gain attention and mimicking the political sentiments of his better-informed girlfriend, RAF member Gudrun Ensslin.

Next to Ensslin, Baader likely felt more legitimate. Baader “liked being associated with her political theory and the respect with which, at first, they listened to her. He concealed his ignorance by saying little himself, except 'shit', so that he too could be taken for the intellectual that she was glad he was not. Yet just by being at her side he was transformed into that difficult intellectual thing, an idealist; and even grander, that ideological thing, a revolutionary” (94). Ensslin and Baader were a power couple amongst the group, though dissent from others regarding Baader/Ensslin tactical decisions was not uncommon.

Ohnesorg's death, the attempt at Dutschke's life, Baader's escape and the first official RAF communiqué all took place within nine days of each other; the First Generation of the RAF had much to arrange and plan. They were now underground, they were now all very wanted criminals in the Federal Republic, and they watched with mixed emotions as their pictures were featured prominently.

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2 Das Abitur is the diploma from German secondary school which qualifies a student for university admission.
on the news and on newspapers. The terror had just begun.
CHAPTER II. THE RAF TAKES ACTION: 1970-1975

*PLO training camp and increased action*

Thanks to press coverage and government statements, the RAF was a well-known and feared entity in West Germany by the spring of 1970. In June, Baader, Meinhof, Ensslin, Mahler and other RAF members traveled to Jordan in two separate groups, ten days apart, in order to undergo military training with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at an Al Fatah commando camp. The final destination for the German terrorists was Amman, and when they reached it, they “were welcomed by leaders of the Fatah organization” (Aust 66). Mahler, who came to Jordan with the first group, had become the unofficial leader of the RAF for the stretch of PLO training. Upon Baader's arrival, the two bumped heads over the direction of the group. Armed with his own remarkable stubbornness and a vocal girlfriend, Baader won the power struggle. The training camp was not successful, and the RAF members, Baader in particular, did not get along well with their hosts.

The Germans were selective in what kind of training they would participate in; they avoided the most physically challenging aspects of the training and preferred to shoot firearms in the desert. In fact, PLO trainers placed an ammunition ration on the Germans, which was not received well by Baader, who refused to participate. The PLO trainers recognized that the Germans were upsetting the Palestinians—nude sunbathing and refusal to participate, to name two examples—and after six weeks, it was over. During this training time, Meinhof was a target of Baader's insults, and he often referred to her as “bourgeois sow” (68). Mahler and Baader disagreed and argued frequently, but from a tactical standpoint for the RAF, something positive had been achieved at the PLO training camp: the RAF learned to skillfully operate various firearms and deal with grenades. The training camp was destroyed by bombs the month after the RAF was prematurely sent away from camp, though the RAF members may have never realized how lucky they were.

The active RAF members returned to Berlin to prepare for their underground struggle. Meinhof had numerous contacts with leftists and liberals from her journalism days, and this enabled the group to
get the materials they required. On September 29, 1970, the RAF collaborated with the 2 June Movement and robbed three banks in Berlin between 9:48am and 9:58 am. The robberies were a success in that a modest amount of money was gained and no one was arrested on the scenes. The luck would be fleeting for some RAF members. In early October, Mahler and four other RAF members were arrested after an informant called the State Security Department of the Berlin Police. The arrests took place in an apartment that the police thoroughly searched. The evidence collected by the police included recipes for making explosives, materials for the explosives, forgery equipment, pamphlets and the RAF's detailed expenditures (Aust 80-83). The RAF members who remained free did indeed discuss plans to free Mahler from prison; they even contemplated an unconventional idea that their personal car mechanic, Eric Grusdat, proposed two days after the arrests. Eric owned a garage and had been assisting the underground group with vehicle alterations that enabled the frequent car thefts. He wanted to build a mini-helicopter that would be used in an operation to save Mahler. Though he drew up diagrams and even began building the mini-helicopter, nothing came of this plan (84). The RAF members were occupied with other matters.

Karl-Heinz Ruhland was a co-worker of Eric Grusdat, and he joined the RAF around this time. He and Ulrike Meinhof traveled to Cologne, Oldenburg, Hanover and Oberhausen with the goal to steal cars and supplies for identification forgery. The RAF was “in urgent need of blank forms and official seals for the forging of passports and identification papers” (85). As Meinhof and Ruhland traveled, the RAF acquired additional members, including Jan-Carl Raspe and Marianne Herzog, a couple with whom Meinhof had been acquainted. Raspe and Herzog began participating in the RAF’s activities and their apartment was actively used as a safe house for the group. Other new members included Holger Meins, Beate Sturm, Petra Schelm and Ulrich Scholze. The newly enlarged group assembled to discuss future plans; Baader demanded action and suggested kidnapping newspaper publisher Axel Springer, an idea that was quickly dismissed. According to newer member Beate Sturm, it was “absurd to be

3 The four other members were Ingrid Schubert, Monika Berberich, Brigitte Asdonk and Irene Goergens.
talking, at this point, of such grandiose projects as kidnappings” (93). The meeting ultimately turned into a planning session for future bank robberies, and step one was procuring vehicles for that purpose.

On December 20, 1970, Ruhland was arrested after being pulled over by police in Oberhausen. He, along with Sturm and Jansen, were in the process of selecting cars to steal, but Sturm and Jansen were able to flee from police. With his arrest, Ruhland ended his time with the RAF (Winkler 154). The next day brought with it the arrests of Scholze and Jansen; it was another failed attempt to steal vehicles. Jansen struggled with the police and fired his gun wildly, which incited the police to fire back also, but Jansen surrendered before anyone was injured. Scholze was arrested quietly and freed the next day. He severed his ties to the RAF and moved back in with his mother (Aust 97). Shortly thereafter, Ulrike Meinhof and Astrid Proll confided in one another. Both women felt disconnected from the other RAF members. Proll remarked, “instead of supporting people when they need help, they slag you off worse than ever.” Meinhof added her own thoughts, clearly unhappy with the conditions at the time, “I'm fed up with this. All this hanging around, acting as look-out, checking out cars. I don't want to end up in jail for that kind of thing, not any more, not for such petty details” (97).

Despite dissatisfaction within the group, Baader and Ensslin were clearly the decision-makers of the RAF. In-fighting continued, particularly between Meinhof and Baader, with Ensslin attempting to play peacemaker at times. Baader's name-calling, swearing and shouting caused many of the RAF members to cringe, especially the women. It was all too much for Beate Sturm to handle, and she left the group after calling her parents in tears (100). She would not regret her decision as she followed the news in the following months.

In the spring of 1971, Horst Mahler went on trial in Berlin for charges related to the freeing of Baader. Goergens and Schubert, who were both arrested with him, were tried simultaneously. Mahler was represented by attorney Otto Schily, Ensslin's attorney also and future Minister of the Interior (1998-2005). Mahler was acquitted on the charges relating to Baader's escape. Goergens and Schubert were convicted of being accessories to the freeing of Baader and both were sentenced. Mahler was not
in the clear, however, and he was found guilty (at a second trial in early 1972) for his participation in bank robberies and for forming a criminal association, leading to a fourteen year sentence (156). In May of 1971, Astrid Proll was arrested after being recognized by a gas station employee in Hamburg (117). That July, Petra Schelm died after being shot by a police officer. She had fired shots at an officer after he shouted, “Stop girl-stay where you are! Don't be a fool, give yourself up” (118).

In July 1971, the Allensbacher Institute of Public Opinion published results of a poll entitled “The Baader-Meinhof Group: criminals or heroes?” There were one thousand respondents, and eighteen percent of them “thought that the group was still acting mainly from political conviction.” Thirty-one percent had no opinion regarding that question, and one in four West Germans under age thirty claimed to feeling “a certain sympathy for the Red Army Faction.” One in ten North Germans responded that they “would be ready to shelter wanted underground fighters overnight, and the average for the rest of West Germany was one in twenty (Aust 119). Perhaps the death of Petra Schelm softened public opinion to a degree, but even that recent event could not solely explain the poll results. The ideals on which the RAF was founded did appeal to a number of West Germans, even if they disapproved of the violent tactics the RAF employed.

October 22, 1971, ushered in a more violent era of the RAF. On this day in Hamburg, the first murder attributed to the RAF took place, and the victim was Sergeant Norbert Schmid. Two months later, police officer Herbert Schoner lost his life during an RAF bank robbery in Kaiserslautern. On May 11, 1972, a plan that originated with Gudrun Ensslin would come to fruition. Three pipe bombs detonated in the IG-Farben buildings in Frankfurt where the Fifth US Army Corps were stationed. Thirteen people were injured and one was killed, Lieutenant Colonel Paul A. Bloomquist (Winkler 206-207). The very next day, five police officers in Augsburg were injured as two RAF-made explosive devices went off in police headquarters. Merely two hours later, sixty cars were demolished and six stories of windows shattered and a Ford loaded with explosives blew up in the parking lot of the Munich Regional Criminal Investigation Office.
The next target was Federal Judge Buddenberg, and on May 16, 1972, a car bomb exploded in Karlsruhe as the Judge's wife started the car. Aust describes the event, “When she turned the ignition key she noticed a smell of burning. Then there was an explosion. Frau Buddenberg was covered with bits of car, ash, dust and dirt. She managed to crawl out into the road, calling for help. 'It's a Baader-Meinhof attack. Please tell my husband Judge Buddenberg” (Aust 161). Only four days later, three bombs would explode in Springer Publishing building in Hamburg. Phone calls were placed to warn the occupants of the building, but the calls were not taken seriously. Seventeen people were injured and there were no deaths. The '2 June Commando' took credit for this attack in a letter sent to multiple newspapers (162). However, the letters were typewritten on a machine later found by police in a Hamburg apartment, and the police believed that Ulrike Meinhof was at least the author of the letters (Winkler 207). Based on documents discovered later, it seems likely that the RAF orchestrated the Springer bombings, though non-members were the facilitators (483). It mattered little in the larger context. May of 1972 had been a violent month for West Germany, and on the 24th, this trend would continue.

The so-called “Mai-Offensive” (May bombings) had one final and deadly step. Two car bombs went off within fifteen seconds of each other outside of barracks and dining area of the European headquarters of the U.S. Army in Heidelberg. Three American soldiers died and five others were injured. Once again there was a letter claiming responsibility for the attack, and it seemed that Meinhof was behind this one, too, which read: “The people of the Federal Republic will not support the security forces in their hunt for the bombers, because they want nothing to do with the crimes of American imperialism and their condonation by the ruling class here; because they have not forgotten Auschwitz, Dresden and Hamburg; because they know that bomb attacks on the mass murderers of Vietnam are justified; because they have discovered that demonstrations and words are of no use against the imperialist criminals” (Aust 164).
Arrests and incarceration

The multiple attacks in May would provide the police and the BKA with evidence, and their own investigation tools were fortified by occasional tips from the public. One such tip from a local Frankfurt resident led the police to a garage, where evidence was piled carefully into containers for the BKA to analyze (165). The garage was under observation on the morning of June 1, 1972. Baader, Raspe and Meins were arrested after one hour of active resistance, which included gunfire and tear gas on the part of both sides. Despite being outnumbered nearly 150 to three, the RAF members were defiant up until Baader was shot in the thigh by an officer. Just after Baader was shot, Meins opted to surrender, and was ordered to strip to his underwear before he exited the garage. Television cameras rolled as the extremely lean and nearly naked Meins gave himself up to the police. As Aust points out, for RAF sympathizers, or those close to them, it was easy to be reminded of the pictures of concentration camp inmates. Aust argues that it was with this image that “the myth of the pitiless persecution of the RAF warriors had been born” (168).

Incarceration was the fate of Meinhof and Ensslin as well. Ensslin was arrested the day after Baader, followed by Meinhof’s arrest just eight days later on June 15, 1972. The confinement of the RAF leadership did not halt the overall productivity of the organization. In fact, over the course of the next few years, the RAF would become more organized than it had ever been. “It was from inside the prisons that this historical nucleus of the RAF (Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, Raspe, et al.) forged the RAF into a major terrorist organization that would threaten the security of the German state” (Pluchinsky, Germany’s Red Army Faction: An Obituary, 158). Membership grew and a second generation of RAF terrorists emerged, sharing headlines with the confined first generation of RAF terrorists.

At the end of 1972, RAF prisoners Baader, Meinhof and Astrid Proll appeared in court to give
information about conditions in prison. Baader complained about his life as an inmate, and stated that unless conditions changed, he would not eat. Thus began the first RAF prisoner hunger strike, which lasted two months. A group of RAF defense attorneys demonstrated in front of the Federal Supreme Court in February 1973 to bring attention to the isolation of their RAF clients (Aust 191). Without these defense attorneys, the prisoners would have had a more difficult time communicating with other prisoners and the outside world. Siegfried Haag, Otto Schily, Marielouise Becker and Kurt Groenewold were Baader's attorneys, and they, along with the other attorneys, acted as messengers for the confined first generation RAF members. Letters and packages from prisoner to prisoner and from eager revolutionaries to prisoners were delivered by these attorneys, and the prisoners themselves developed a rather sophisticated communications system. Ensslin reflected on the integral role the attorneys played in the group's communication, stating that, “the Red lawyers are indispensable for this; it can't be done if they don't collect and sort the information” (196).

Peter Jurgen Boock was one of those eager revolutionaries in contact with prisoner Baader, who conveyed to Boock and others that, “you can only define, perceive and change reality if you live below the surface, if you don't live on the surface—or at least only use it for cover, deceit, camouflage” (192). Boock and groups of other young people in various cities, were instructed by the prisoners to go underground and form small groups. “Different groups were formed that hardly knew of each other and whose only common denominator was their relationship with the prisoners” (192). This began the second generation of the RAF, one which would go down in history for brutal and memorable acts.

The prisoners became very efficient in maximizing their communications with another, and Ensslin and Baader were the leaders more clearly than anytime prior in the group's existence. Ensslin gave the prisoners nicknames from *Moby Dick* and managed what the group called the info-system. She called her cell the secretariat and Baader's was the cabin. She coordinated most of the communication, which consisted of ideological rants, vague plans for action, insults and name-calling. Ensslin and Baader decided what information would get passed on to the other prisoners (Winkler 225-228). They
occasionally embarrassed a fellow imprisoned RAF member by sharing what was intended as private
messages with everyone. Other times, Baader and Ensslin reprimanded RAF prisoners for behavior
they found questionable, and ensured that their critical words reached all group members. As the
months of 1973 progressed, Astrid Proll and Ulrike Meinhof were often targeted for ridicule by Ensslin
and Baader, through the Info-System. For example, during the RAF first hunger strike, Baader wrote
and sent the following about Astrid Proll, “We want Astrid to let us know if it's true that she was on
hunger strike only until she felt hungry. If she can't come up with any self-criticism over that, then we
feel she ought to be excluded from the info-system” (Aust 197). Ironically, it became obvious later to
guards that Baader regularly received food from his attorneys when they visited, and he ate in secret
while pledging his participation in hunger strikes (215).

Despite the negative interaction amongst some of the imprisoned RAF, the group was making
progress. Shockingly, the prisoners were allowed to receive and collect handbooks and instructional
guides on urban guerrilla warfare, and they amassed an expansive library. They had started an
underground struggle partially because they felt like victims of an oppressed state, now incarcerated,
“they regarded themselves as victims and compared themselves with the inmates of Nazi concentration
camps” (198). A second hunger strike began on May 8, 1973, that would last until June 29, during
which the prison authorities forcibly fed some of the participants, who this time numbered forty (199).

In late 1973, a group of RAF members started making plans to free their imprisoned comrades. These
members, referred to as 4.2, were arrested after the Counter-Intelligence Unit in Hamburg had observed
their activities for over a month (219). Their plans had clearly been thwarted, and evidence was quickly
gathered. The supplies that had been gathered were lost, and six more RAF members would pose for
mug shots.

The Stammheim Prison near Stuttgart was built between 1959 and 1963, officially housing a
prison population for the first time in 1964 (http://www.jva-stuttgart.de). Decision-makers opted to
specially build a high-security wing that contained cells and courtrooms for the RAF prisoners. On
April 28, 1974, Meinhof and Ensslin were transported to Stammheim accompanied by “a large police contingent....with a camera team ready to film the historic moment” (Aust 200). Baader, Meins and Raspe remained in three other prisons at this time, but the info-system enabled the group's communication, and the third hunger strike began. Trials were upcoming, and Baader wanted defendants to be unfit for proceedings, and he proposed “a disruption of the prison system.” Ensslin strengthened his stance in a letter sent to all RAF prisoners through the info-system, writing that “hunger strikes are a weapon only when it is clear they will go on until the collective demand has been met—even if it means illness and death” (202).

**Holger Meins and re-organization**

The official indictment of Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, Meins and Raspe took place on October 2, 1974. They stood accused of five murders and “about 1,000 witnesses and 70 experts” would be called upon to give evidence when the trial started in 1975. In November of 1974, Baader and Raspe were transported to Stammheim in the midst of the third hunger strike, and both were very thin. Baader, who took this hunger strike seriously, was forcibly fed upon his arrival. Holger Meins had virtually become a skeleton at this stage, weighing less than 100 pounds at six feet tall. When his health had clearly deteriorated and the guards grew worried, the timing was poor. The prison doctor was away for a long weekend, and no one informed any higher offices of Meins' condition. The guards sent for a doctor, but he arrived after Meins died on November 9, after almost two months of the hunger strike. The news of his death incited protest marchers in Frankfurt, Cologne, Hamburg, Berlin and Stuttgart. Graffiti sprung up throughout West Germany which read, 'Avenge Holger Meins' (209-211).

The death of Meins garnered considerable attention in the media and “at no time of the 'underground struggle' did the RAF have so magnetic a power of attraction as they did when imprisoned” (211). Perhaps it was the constant monitoring by guards while in prison, or the specially constructed cells and courtrooms that provided the prisoners with a political significance they had
never come near achieving previously. New groups, most of which were primed for action, were being formed, and it was the end of 1974 when the BKA estimated that there were 300 active RAF-involved individuals. The so-called sympathizers were an even larger group, numbering over 10,000 (212).

Ulrike Meinhof received a sentence of eight years for attempted murder on November 29, 1974. Both Ensslin and Baader grew increasingly hostile and insulting toward Meinhof, because was perceived as a weak link of the RAF chain. The core group continued to write and exploit the services of their attorneys. The third hunger strike that claimed Meins' life was called off in a declaration on February 2, 1975. The prisoners were afforded more luxuries once they began eating, often spending several hours daily with one another. Raspe cut out media coverage of the RAF from the four newspapers he was allowed to subscribe to while incarcerated (216). As a whole, the imprisoned group found ways to pass the time. They had televisions and radios, and Raspe built small stoves and other devices to heat food. They wore their own clothing and Raspe even requested special toothpaste, which he received.

The second generation RAF members were still focused on the isolation of the RAF prisoners, and the striking image of Meins' corpse likely remained present in their minds. Simultaneously, law enforcement and other officials in West Germany thought “there were only 'a few scattered remnants' left at large underground” (218). Various special investigative teams were dismantled with a sense that the worst over, though this sentiment was quickly proven false.

The prisoners were ready for action and there were groups on the outside willing to act. Nevertheless, the arrest of the 4.2 group had left the second generation of the RAF with few resources. Volker and Angelika Speitel, a married couple, were living underground. They would help re-establish the RAF's presence outside of prison, as they steadily rented apartments for illegal purposes and actively recruited members. Volker Spietel was impressed by the attacks on American military bases in Frankfurt and Heidelberg, and he and his wife began working in RAF attorney Klaus Croissant's office, managing to further refine the RAF's info-system. Regardless, both Spietels were disappointed
when they realized that there was very little left of the RAF structure, remarking that, “all that was left was some explosives and hand grenades, and a manuscript about forgery techniques, and money. The police had managed to mop up almost the whole of the RAF. Apart from our own group, consisting of five people at that point, the RAF didn't exist at the end of 1974, or it existed only in prison” (219). At the same time, members of the 2 June Movement were gearing up for a daring action that only the RAF would be poised to surpass.

*The Holger Meins Commando: Victory or death!*

The 2 June Movement kidnapped the Berlin CDU mayoral candidate, Peter Lorenz, on February 27, 1975. His primary campaign slogan, “More vigor brings more security” was mocked by many, as was a popular CDU advertisement which showed a picture of Lorenz with the headline “Berliners live dangerously” (220). Chancellor Helmut Schmidt even joked about the latter, stating that, “If Peter Lorenz is responsible for that nonsense, he obviously must feel scared in his bed at night” (221). After the abduction, which was carefully planned and well executed, Peter Lorenz spent six days in a cellar that was constructed to resemble a prison cell. He was constantly monitored as the group waited for their demands to be met. After they released a Polaroid photo of Lorenz, the group demanded that six prisoners be set free immediately. Every prisoner on the list, with the exception of Horst Mahler, was connected to the June 2 Movement. There was no mention of the true RAF leadership, apart from one apologetic line which read, “To our comrades in jail. We would like to get more of you out, but at our present strength we're not in a position to do that” (Becker 299). Politicians, including Chancellor Schmidt, met and debated the merits of complying with the group's demands. Ultimately, the demands were deemed reasonable by the assembled political elite, as no one on the list had been convicted of murder. Thirty years later, Chancellor Schmidt said, “they took for granted that the prisoners should be exchanged for the hostage Lorenz. I agreed to that myself, but next morning, I realized it was a mistake; it simply invited repetition of the same maneuver” (Aust 221). The terrorists demanded that
former mayor of West Berlin, Heinrich Albertz, travel with the prisoners on their flight to freedom, which landed in Yemen. Horst Mahler refused to go and instead remained incarcerated. The Lufthansa plane that carried the five June 2 Movement terrorists and Albertz out of Germany was broadcast on German television. The RAF prisoners, especially Ensslin, Baader and Meinhof, were transfixed to the television and newspapers as the events unfolded. At midnight on March 4, Lorenz was released with pocket change in order to make a phone call, physically unharmed (Becker 298).

On the day of Lorenz's abduction, hidden microphones were installed in the Stammheim jail. This took place without the expected set of supervisor approval or other protocol, a fact that would haunt decision-makers later. Months later, on April 25, 1975, the RAF members outside of prison would outdo the June 2 Movement with an action in Stockholm that would come to dominate press coverage. The self-described Holger Meins Commando consisted of six dedicated Second Generation RAF members: Hausner, Krabbe, Dellwo, Taufer, Rossner and Wessel. Heavily armed, the six terrorists took over the Germany Embassy in Stockholm. Many who were in the building managed to flee, but eleven hostages were taken to the third floor to be bound and gagged (Aust 224). The terrorists had a list of demands and demonstrated early into the seizing of the embassy that they were indeed serious. Swedish police were told to leave the scene, otherwise a hostage would be killed. The police did not leave, and a military attaché, Lieutenant-Colonel Baron Andrews von Mirbach walked on to the building's landing, where he was shot three times. A short time later, the RAF revealed their long-term demands: twenty-six prisoners in West Germany were to be set free, including Meinhof, Baader, Ensslin and Raspe.

Chancellor Schmidt declared to his staff that, “all my instincts tell me that we must not give in” (225). Swedish and German authorities telephoned often on that day, and the Swedish authorities passed the news of non-cooperation to the RAF terrorists, who were still holding hostages and threatening increased violence. The Swedish Minister of Justice urged the terrorists to set the hostages
free in exchange for diminished legal consequences and safe conduct, but he was refused each of the nine times he attempted to change their minds. One of the RAF members he spoke with repeated the phrase, “Victory or death!” and hung up the phone. Around 10:15pm, a hostage was ordered to walk to an open window of the building, where he was shot three times. Clearly dead and for all to witness, half of his body was slumped out the window. It was at this juncture that the Swedish police decided to assemble gas cartridges to shoot into the building.

Before these cartridges could be put to use, a series of explosions shook the building just before midnight. Debris were flung in every direction and the building caught fire quickly. The embassy siege concluded and three people lost their lives as a result; two hostages and one RAF terrorist, Ulrich Wessel. Another RAF member, Hausner, died from his injuries about two weeks later in Stammheim Prison. Additional surveillance microphones were clandestinely installed in Stammheim (227). Just months earlier, the various West German law enforcement agencies had believed the worst was over, but the Lorenz kidnapping and the events in Stockholm served as undeniable evidence to the contrary.

The trial begins: May 1975

The multi-purpose hall built at Stammheim specifically for the RAF prisoners cost 12 million Deutschmarks. The trial of Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof and Raspe began there on May 21, 1975, with spectators occupying every available seat. The RAF prisoners trusted four of the defense attorneys: Plottnitz, Riedel, Becker and Schily. To the chagrin of the accused, the court had mandated several court-appointed defense attorneys to participate in the proceedings as well. Weary before the trial even began, the court wanted no interruptions especially not that of a suddenly missing defense attorney. The extra attorneys were viewed by the court as a safeguard, but before the trial could even commence, Ulrike Meinhof made a statement against the additional set of attorneys. Eventually all of the accused vocalized their dismay with the unapproved defense attorneys, insisting that, “They've been forced on us—state-appointed defense lawyers in league with the prosecution, and we may assume that everything they say is angled against us (Aust 233). The attorney problems did not stop there; Baader did not have a defense attorney when the trial began.

His former attorneys, Croissant, Groenewold and Strobele, were prohibited from taking part in the trial shortly before the scheduled start date. Changes made by the Bundestag to the Code of Criminal Procedure were the cause. Baader argued with the presiding judge, Dr. Prinzing, and requested a delay in the trial so he could find a suitable defense attorney. In the conversation that followed this request, Baader alleged that the RAF prisoners and their attorneys had been covertly recorded in prison. Aust states that, “Baader's allegation that conversations between the defendants and their lawyers had been bugged only caused public head-shaking. The press could not imagine that authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany would use microphones and tape recorders to interfere with the sacrosanct confidential relationship between defendants and their lawyers. Andreas Baader's
comment was generally considered a manifestation of the paranoid delusions of the Baader-Meinhof group” (234). Very few people knew that Baader was actually onto something, but that information did not go public until 1977.

The first days of the trial did not go smoothly. The defendants refused to acknowledge the court-appointed attorneys, and Baader was still without legal representation. Prinzing, the presiding judge, attempted to question the defendants regarding personal information. What should have taken a number of minutes devolved into a shouting match in the courtroom; the defendants yelled at court officers and the court-appointed attorneys, the court-appointed attorneys and the RAF-approved defense attorneys shouted back and forth, and they all yelled in Prinzing's direction. The courtroom audience joined in and shouted as well, and court was adjourned by an exasperated Prinzing. All parties reconvened moments later, and chaos erupted once again. The defendants were led out of the courtroom and taken back to their cells (Winkler 229-332).

Dr. Prinzing, on the twenty-third day of court proceedings, was still unable to get personal information for the record from the defendants. The RAF-approved attorneys filed numerous motions and applications for the trial to be dismissed entirely. The impressively patient Prinzing gave up on making it through the personal information protocol and moved on the charges. Once again, chaos ensued. Baader's courtroom microphone was silenced as he explained that the actual terrorists of the world were not the Red Army Faction. As he explained what true terrorism was, he stated, “Israel's policy toward the Palestinian liberation movement, that is the precise definition of the USA's policy in Vietnam until its defeat. That is the precise definition of the policy of the Chilean junta, and that is the precise definition of the policy of the Federal Prosecutor's Office, its basic rule being as many dead fighters as possible, as many dead prisoners as possible, executions in the open street, shooting to kill, and so on” (Aust 239). By name, Baader accused one of the federal prosecutors of perpetuating state terrorism, and that is when his microphone was shut off by Prinzing's order. Baader sulked, but Meinhof was allowed to speak, providing her own definition of terrorism. In that context, she was also
questioned about the RAF's self-given label of urban guerrillas. Her response and the reaction to it led to the defendants' removal. Meinhof said, “The actions of urban guerrillas are never, never directed against the people. They are always directed against the imperialist machine. The urban guerrilla fights the terrorism of the state” (239). And they did fight the state; both the RAF defendants and their 'accepted' defense attorneys made the court languish for days to gain any piece of information or moment of cooperation. As the slow-moving legal proceedings and incarceration of the RAF leaders continued, the second generation RAF members were no longer pursuing the originally stated goals of the group. For all of the courtroom bravado regarding imperialists, Vietnam and fascism, the only tangible mission the RAF had at this point was to save their imprisoned comrades.

By the fortieth day of the trial, the subject of the defendants’ physical and mental well-being was frequently debated topics in court. To describe the legal proceedings to have gone at a snail's pace would be understating the almost complete lack of progress in that specially designed courtroom. On the fortieth day, September 30, 1975, a new law came into force; Paragraph 321 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. This law enabled the court to proceed with trial “in the absence of the defendants if they themselves were responsible for their unfitness in the opinion of the court” (247). Considering that nearly 1,000 witnesses and eighty experts were expected to testify, and the court had so far been unable to even finalize the personal information from the defendants, this law would allow the court to finally proceed with the trial. Before the witnesses testified, a portion of the trial that the defendants largely avoided, Ulrike Meinhof made another appeal to the judge to loosen the isolation of the RAF prisoners. This issue of prisoner isolation had been brought up on a number of occasions, but this time, Meinhof's words seemed to indicate that she was distanced from the group. She stated, “How can a prisoner kept in isolation show the authorities, always supposing he wanted to, that his conduct has changed? How? How can he do it in a situation from which every, absolutely every expression of life has already been cut out? The prisoner in isolation has only one possible way of showing that his conduct has changed, and that's betrayal. The prisoner kept in isolation has no other means of altering
his conduct. That means that in a situation when you’re in isolation, there are just two alternatives; either he dies, or you get him to talk. And that means confession and betrayal. That’s torture, that’s nothing less than torture by isolation, defined by the need to extort confessions, to intimidate the prisoner so as to penalize and confuse him” (250). In the Red Army Faction, doubt was generally considered betrayal, and the notion that Meinhof had even contemplated defection is worth noting.

The remaining months of 1975 continued as the court took testimony from witnesses. The defendants remained in their cells and continued using their efficient info-system to communicate, exchanging ideas and working on political texts. 1976 arrived, and while the trial crept steadily along, a conflict between Meinhof and Ensslin started to intensify in the cells of Stammheim. Baader and Raspe were drawn into the conflict, which could be described as a personality clash. Ensslin attacked the written and spoken words of Meinhof. Throughout the late winter and spring of 1976, he group rarely appeared together in court (251-255).

However, on May 4, all four defendants were present in the courtroom, in anticipation of the defense counsel moving that the following people be called to provide testimony: Richard M. Nixon, Former US Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt, Ludwig Erhard and a number of additional German politicians. Aust explains the strategy in concise fashion, “the idea of applying for these people to be called to give evidence was to show that the US government, by military intervention in Vietnam and Cambodia, had committed violations of international law, that West German soil had been among the places from which they operated, and that accordingly it might be a relevant legal issue to consider whether, on its own turn, the use of force against certain military establishments of the USA on West German territory, such as bomb attacks on US bases in Frankfurt and Heidelberg, was justified” (256). Defense attorney Schily and his colleagues drafted lengthy texts to support their claims, but Prinzing moved on quickly to the events surrounding the RAF attack on the Axel Springer building in Hamburg. Meinhof had drafted a letter claiming responsibility for that event in 1972, but she left the courtroom before the Springer issue was discussed. She stayed in her cell
during the testimony as her problems with Ensslin crystallized in the courtroom. Ensslin completely disassociated herself and the Red Army Faction from the Springer building attack, and stated in that regard that, “we knew nothing, with the principle of which we do not agree, and which we disowned while it was in progress” (257). Aust postulates that the RAF solidarity had ended at this point, and that Meinhof had likely contemplated disassociating herself from the group. His personal relationship with her former husband and with her may have led him to believe that, but Winkler has doubts. Winkler acknowledges that Meinhof had personal problems with Ensslin and Baader, but she nevertheless remained loyal to the group until her death, just four days later (Winkler, 264).

**Suicide is the last act of rebellion**

Ulrike Meinhof was found hanging in her cell the morning of May 9, 1976. She left no final letter, but had written, months earlier on the margin of a strategy paper that, “suicide is the last act of rebellion” (Aust 258). Many have speculated as to whether she meant to make a statement by choosing that day, as it was the thirty-first anniversary of the end of World War II and also Mother's Day.

Court reconvened two days later, and the RAF-approved attorneys claimed in court that because “the cause of Ulrike Meinhof's death is not clear,” the trial should not continue until an investigation was carried out (259). The three remaining RAF defendants were vocal, and they claimed repeatedly that Meinhof would not have committed suicide without telling them in advance. The now familiar pattern of shouting and silencing microphones continued, and after the defendants stormed out of the courtroom, Otto Schily gathered up his files and said, “The defense will not take part in the trial again until after the funeral of Ulrike Meinhof.” He and his colleagues left the courtroom (261-262).

Estimates vary when it comes to number of people who attended Meinhof's funeral on May 16. According to Aust, the figure is over 4,000 people, while other sources range from 5,000 to 8,000. Demonstrations took place in most large West German cities, and Meinhof's death was the top headline
in the country. These estimates may include those who demonstrated after her death, including Joschka Fischer. In fact, in Frankfurt, Fischer and thirteen other demonstrators were arrested for setting a police vehicle on fire, which caused serious injury to a police officer. Sixty percent of the officer's skin was burned, but Fischer and the others were set free with a warning (Winkler 265). At Meinhof's funeral, theologian Helmut Gollwitzer explained Meinhof with the following: “I see this woman whose life was hard, who made her life hard by allowing the misery of others to affect her so much, this woman with her hopes and endeavors and depressions, I see her now in the peace and of the love of God. Amidst all the killing and violent death in our world, human life, and finally she herself, were to be found along the way she chose to take” (Aust 263). Germans and those who took notice of Meinhof's death internationally tried to explain her decisions and her life through rounds of speculation. The fact remained, however, that she was dead and the trial needed to continue.

Shortly after Meinhof's death, the RAF prisoners at Stammheim were expecting additional prisoners to join their cell block. After Baader and Ensslin informed prison personnel that there would be hunger strikes if certain prisoners were moved in with them, it was settled that second generation RAF members Irmgard Moeller, Ingrid Schubert and Brigitte Mohnhaupt would be transferred without the threat of hunger strikes. With the distance of time, it does seem curious that prison authorities would transfer three RAF prisoners to Stammheim, where they were able to converse with Baader, Ensslin and Raspe on a daily basis (Aust 263). After all, Mohnhaupt would be eligible for release in the matter of months, a fact that would cause a great deal of head-scratching once she resumed her RAF revolutionary activities as a free woman.

*The second generation*

As the trial wore on, defense attorney Schily grew frustrated. His motions and requests, along with those of his colleagues, were denied repeatedly. Nevertheless, the trial continued, but the defendants were focused on the reorganization of the RAF. The Stammheim prisoners selected the
attorney Siegfried Haag, who went underground before the trial commenced. The RAF's second generation was meant to be active internationally. To that end, Haag trained with the 'outside operations' department of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) after Yasser Arafat informed him that the PLO was now a negotiating group, not one that aimed to carry out military operations (269-270). In Aden, South Yemen, Haag encountered the terrorists who had been released from prison after the kidnapping of Peter Lorenz. Haag stayed in South Yemen, and by traveling different routes and departing from West Germany on staggered dates, more second generation RAF members met him there. The eager terrorists were “welcomed like dignitaries on a state visit” (270). They had to give up their passports, and according to Aust, representatives of the East German Ministry of State Security were fully aware of the groups whereabouts. The East Germans were training the Yemeni secret service, though the terrorists only discovered that information years later. The second generation of the RAF, many of whom would go on to infamy in Germany, trained seriously, unlike their first generation counterparts years earlier. While at the training camp, the second generation outlined their goals; number one was the release of the Stammheim prisoners. Once again, they spaced apart their travels and returned to West Germany in groups (Aust 269-271).

Months later, on November 30, 1976, Haag was arrested in West Germany. Among other items, photos taken in Stammheim prison were discovered, which had ramifications for the next day of the trial, which commenced one week later. Defense lawyers were told by Prinzing that they were required to remove their shoes and unzip their pants before going into court, because RAF prisoner Ingrid Schubert admitted that visitors smuggled photographs and a camera in and out of Stammheim. The BKA responded by once again turning on the previously hidden microphones to record the conversations between the defense attorneys and the defendants (Winkler 276-278). One would imagine that if a camera could be smuggled in and out of Stammheim, other articles could be as well. Just as this problem was being debated, Otto Schily, who moved to have Prinzing ordered off the case on the basis of bias dozens of times previously, filed papers for removal once again. In January 1977,
the defense team's eighty-fifth filing to have the judge removed for bias was upheld. Prinzing was discharged from the Stammheim trial and associate judge, Dr. Foth, would preside. Prinzing had passed along court documents to other individuals through unofficial channels, including Judge Albrecht Mayer of the Federal Supreme Court's Third Criminal Division. This division was responsible for handling the complaints filed regarding the panel of judges at Stammheim and would also be the court for any appeals in the Stammheim trial. Ultimately, Prinzing had hoped to get an article published in the daily paper *The Welt*, which would have countered information published in *The Spiegel* that Prinzing did not appreciate. Otto Schily had evidence to prove the allegations but was dismissed. Kunzel, a court-appointed attorney for the defense, supported Schily and stated, “The reasons put forward in [Schily's] challenge should be aired, should be openly discussed. Otherwise this trial will bear a stain of which it can no longer be cleansed” (Aust 275). Prinzing actually telephoned Kunzel two days later, and he was operating in panic mode. The judge complained about the stress of the trial and admitted to feeling near his wit's end. Schily's name was mentioned, as was Ensslin's. Dr. Heldemann, another defense attorney, who was told by Kunzel about this phone call, issued the challenge that displaced Prinzing as presiding judge (Winkler 280).

Brigitte Mohnhaupt was released from Stammheim on February 8, 1977. She traveled to Amsterdam, where she met up with other RAF members in one of their apartments. She was, by all accounts, the leader, mostly because she had just left the presence of the still imprisoned terrorists. As the second generation made plans in Amsterdam, the Stammheim courtroom remained plagued by motion filings and questionable conduct. The tape recordings from Stammheim were made public by state officials. Two days earlier in court, Otto Schily had been mocked by Judge Foth for requesting an investigation into the matter of taped conversations. Once Schily's predictions about surveillance were shown to have validity, he said the following in court, “What is happening at this trial can only be called the systematic destruction of all constitutional guarantees. So far as that goes, the trial has its significance for the state of this republic, in that it serves as an example. The defense cannot in any
circumstances hold itself responsible for participating in this trial a moment longer, when it may perhaps seem to offer a kind of alibi by appearing” (Aust 282). Foth was not impressed, and Schily left the courtroom under protest. Moments later, Foth adjourned the trial.

Only years later was it made public that “secret services no one knew about and that had no official existence were also involved in the monitoring operations at the time” (282). Baden-Wurttemberg's Justice Minister Bender settled the matter, to the degree that the trial could continue, less than two weeks later. He defended the state's use of surveillance and described it “as a method of crime prevention of purely precautionary nature” (283). Court resumed and the RAF prisoners embarked on another hunger strike at the end of March 1977. This hunger strike would be the final one for Ensslin, Baader and Raspe.

Ten days into this hunger strike, on April 7, 1977, the 'Ulrike Meinhof Commando' of the second generation of the RAF carried out an organized plan of murder in Karlsruhe. The primary victim, who died on the scene, was Federal Prosecutor General Buback. He was considered to be the man responsible for facilitating the Stammheim trial, and the state afforded him multiple drivers and constant protective supervision. Two drivers were also killed, and it remains unclear to this day which RAF members fired the lethal shots. Sonnenberg, Folkerts, Klar and Beckers were all found guilty, though witness statements contradict that Klar and Folkerts were even in Karlsruhe on that day (Winkler 292). An article published in The Spiegel in 2007 led German officials to re-open the case, particularly because Klar's innocence in that act was gaining a measure of public support. Even Buback's son, Michael Buback, requested that President Kohler pardon Klar, because he believed that Klar was not involved in his father's murder (Staff, The Spiegel, http://www.spiegel.de). Klar did not receive his pardon, largely because he refused to admit remorse for his RAF participation.

Days after the murders, Brigitte Mohnhaupt wrote a letter on behalf of the RAF's Ulrike Meinhof Commando, which claimed responsibility. The contents of the letter shed light on the opinions of the RAF, still very clearly anti-state and now extremely angry with the legal system:
“In the context of the imperialist FRG’s anti-guerrilla counter-strategy, the courts are a weapon of war – used to persecute the guerrilla operating in illegality and to exterminate the Prisoners of War. Buback - who Schmidt called "an energetic combatant" for this State - understood the conflict with us as a war and engaged in it as such: 'I have lived through the war. This is a war with different means.'

What revolutionary war is - and this, cops like Buback will never understand - is the continuity, the solidarity and the love which is expressed in the actions of the guerrilla. We will prevent the murder of our fighters in West German prisons, which results from the fact that the Federal Prosecutors Office can’t stop the prisoners from struggling except by liquidating them. We will prevent the Federal Prosecutors Office and the State Security organs from retaliating against the imprisoned fighters for the actions of the guerrilla outside. We will prevent the Federal Prosecutors Office from using the prisoners' fourth collective hunger strike to murder Andreas, Gudrun, and Jan, which psychological warfare since Ulrike's death has been openly preparing for.

ORGANIZE ARMED RESISTANCE AND THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST FRONT IN EUROPE! CARRY OUT WAR IN THE METROPOLES IN THE RANKS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE!

Commando Ulrike Meinhof
Red Army Faction- April 7th, 1977”
(http://germanguerilla.com)

Despite her strong language, Mohnhaupt had confessed to Boock that while the prisoners were in poor condition psychologically and did legitimately fear for their lives, they did not believe that Ulrike Meinhof was a murder victim (Aust 276). The public generally believed that the RAF considered Meinhof’s death a murder, particularly since Schily used the term 'anonymous murder' in court (Winkler 262). The Buback assassination would become just one of many brutally violent acts in 1977. The Stammheim trial ended on April 18, all defendants sentenced to life imprisonment. Just days after the verdict, a six-week construction project was started on the seventh floor of the prison, where the RAF prisoners were kept. Laborers came from outside the prison, such as locksmiths, but many of the painters, for example, were Stammheim prisoners. The RAF prisoners, who had been kept secluded since their arrival at Stammheim, now witnessed heavy traffic. The Stuttgart Ministry of Justice was not aware of this, but later it would be cause for criticism (Aust 290).

The Federal Republic was still in shock over the calculated assassination of Buback when the next violent RAF action would take place, on July 30, 1977. Mohnhaupt, Klar and Susanne Albrecht
entered the villa of Jurgen Ponto, the head of the Dresdener Bank and therefore a symbol of capitalism. Albrecht was a family friend; her sister was Ponto's goddaughter. The Ponto family was only expecting Albrecht, but allowed the two well-dressed friends to come inside as well. The small talk commenced and Albrecht gave Mrs. Ponto roses and Mr. Ponto led Mohnhaupt and Klar to the terrace. Klar and Mohnhaupt pulled out their pistols and Mr. Ponto resisted; Klar shot first and only once, Mohnhaupt fired five times. The three RAF guerrillas fled the scene immediately, and Mr. Ponto died in the hospital within an hour's time. The RAF initially planned to kidnap Ponto, but Mohnhaupt and Klar were not prepared for his resistance (Winkler 293-294). This did not lessen the bravado in their letter claiming responsibility, which they sent out two weeks later: “...As for Ponto and the bullets that hit him in Oberursel, we will say that we didn't realize clearly enough how powerless such characters, who set off wars in the Third World and wipe out whole nations, are in the face of violence when it confronts them in their own homes” (Aust 294).

The Stammheim prisoners considered the failed Ponto kidnapping an example of amateurism, and they applied increasing pressure on the free RAF members to mastermind a plan that would free them from their cell walls (297). Less than one month later, on August 25, the second generation RAF terrorists set out to attack their next target; the Federal Prosecutor's Office building. The plan had been developed for months, and it was a departure from the RAF's usual tactics. For three months, Peter Boock built a rocket launcher that weighed about 150 kilos. It was constructed out of forty-two steel tubes approximately 60 centimeters long. Boock also made “homemade rocket-like missiles with four-section fin assemblies 15 centimeters in length...filled with explosive and contact fuses” (295). The increasingly impatient RAF prisoners would be disappointed with this action as well. Though Boock had tested the rocket weapon successfully just days earlier, it failed to work on August 25. Boock would later try to convince officials that he intentionally sabotaged the attack; he “could no longer see any connection between his earlier motives for joining the RAF....the operation would make him a multiple murderer” (297). These statements may have been made for the sake of self-preservation,
which is what the judges decided when Boock was before the court years later. The failed rocket launcher attack, coming just weeks after a failed kidnapping, disappointed and angered the imprisoned RAF members. They sent a letter out of the prison to the second generation, in which they “wondered whether the group could still call itself part of the RAF” (298). The prisoners desperately wanted to leave the confines of Stammheim. The letter struck fear into the most devout of the second generation, and they feared that inaction would lead to the suicide of the imprisoned. They started planning something that could not be called amateurism.

*Commando Siegfried Hausner: The climax of RAF terror*

The second generation leaders felt the pressure of the imprisoned first generation, and in this context, they began methodical plans for their next action. The intended target was Hanns Martin Schleyer, a man who symbolized the economy, capitalism and the system, as head of the Confederation of German Employers' Association (BDA) and the Federation of German Industries (BDI). As plans were made, it was determined quickly that some of Schleyer's companions, drivers and security, would likely lose their lives in this abduction. According to Boock, who would drive the kidnap car, “it was a totally unemotional debate. I never took part in such an unemotional, icy cold discussion in that we before” (302).

Stefan Wisniewski was named the leader of this operation, called Commando Siegfried Hausner, in honor of the RAF terrorist who died in the Stockholm embassy attack. The group planned efficiently; they observed traffic patterns near Schleyer's residence and drew maps. The West German government had already classified Schleyer as a security risk, and they advised him to reinforce locks, expand peepholes, “and install a police emergency call device with three trip buttons” (305). The careful planning of the second generation would pay off for the group on Monday, September 5, 1977. As Schleyer's convoy neared his residence, a RAF-drive car collided with the first car in the convoy. Instantly, RAF members jumped out and opened fire, which killed four men in Schleyer's group. The
RAF terrorists shot until their magazines were empty, some initially feared that Schleyer had been mistakenly killed or injured during the bullet storm. Schleyer was alive, however, and he was forced into the RAF's waiting Volkswagen minibus, where Sieglinde Hofmann (a trained nurse in pre-terrorist life) injected him with a short-term anesthetic (Winkler 312).

The young Federal Republic, which had been consistently tested by the RAF, had never witnessed such brutality. In a matter of two minutes, 130 bullets had been fired and four corpses were strewn on the street. Schleyer had been kidnapped and the authorities were not sure how to react. The Federal Minister of Justice, Hans-Jochen Vogel, made a statement approximately an hour after the gruesome events, in which he said that the bloody events of the early evening had awakened in him, “memories of the war, of death and the dead” (Winkler 313).

Back at the Stammheim prison, officials carried out thorough searches of the RAF prisoners' cells, though they found nothing of interest. Meanwhile, the Commando had moved Schleyer into his quarters, which were set up to resemble a state prison. Microphones were hidden under his mattress, the terrorists purchased baby food for Schleyer to eat, and they questioned him in rounds, very much playing the part of prison wardens. The RAF had even prepared a dungeon-like room, lined with plastic foam for sound-proofing. The only furniture was chair, and a chain was installed as well. Schleyer was shown the dungeon room on his first evening of captivity as a warning (Aust 313). Days later, the RAF sent letters to private citizens, who they also telephoned and instructed to look in their mailboxes. The first envelope included two photographs of Schleyer and a brief statement of RAF responsibility. The
demands of the kidnappers were also stipulated: “the release, in exchange, of the Red Army Faction prisoners Baader, Ensslin, Raspe, Becker, Hoppe, Dellwo, Krabbe, Rossner, Schubert and Moller, to go to a country of their choice.” Details were provided, indicating that the prisoners should be taken to the Frankfurt Airport and given 100,000 marks each. The letter went on, “we suppose that after demonstrating at the time of Stockholm how fast he comes to his decisions, Schmidt will bestir himself to make his attitude to this fat cat of the elite of international economics clear just as quickly (317).

Chancellor Schmidt and Helmut Kohl met that first evening of Schleyer's kidnapping and mutually agreed to avoid the exchange of prisoners. They determined that all RAF prisoners were to be completely isolated from one another and the outside world, including their attorneys (318). They (and prison officials) didn't realize that the imprisoned RAF members could continue communication regardless, as Raspe had modified their cell record players to make talking to one another quite easy (319). The largest investigation in the history of West Germany was underway, and the very structures of command the police forces usually followed was reorganized. Decisions were to be made by the BKA and the Federal Prosecutor's Office; local level law enforcement officers were required to consult with these offices instead of acting as they normally would. Within days, the BKA and the RAF's Commando began communicating by way of radio and recorded video and audio tapes. The BKA desired tangible proof that Schleyer was indeed alive, and they also hoped to glean information about the identities of the kidnappers (Winkler 315-316). The RAF demanded press time; they wanted their Schleyer videotapes and their political statements (and demands) broadcast across the Federal Republic. Having learned lessons from the Lorenz abduction, “the chancellor and his closest advisors were determined to prevent the kidnappers from communicating on equal terms with the government, in public and with state authority” (Aust 323). The German Press Council appealed to the media during the Schleyer kidnapping, and requested that the media exercise restraint; most media outlets complied.

The days of September continued with Schleyer in the control of the RAF. The back-and-forth
between the terrorist group and the BKA consisted primarily of RAF-issued ultimatums that were never met. Forced inside a large wicker basket on September 15, Schleyer and his kidnappers traveled to Holland; the RAF no longer felt secure in their Erftstadt apartment. Police in the area were suspicious and had been knocking on doors in the vicinity. Meanwhile, the BKA initiated contact with Denis Payot, a Swiss lawyer, and requested that he act as a mediator. The RAF and Payot telephoned a number of times, and ultimatums were still not met. Essentially, the government was maintaining hope that Schleyer and his captors would be found and the mediation continued. Under the direction of the RAF, prisoner Schleyer wrote letters to family and influential friends in the business world. Slowly but surely, the RAF captors, including Mohnhaupt and Wisniewski, traveled to Baghdad, where they met again with Wadi Haddad, nom de guerre Abu Hani (Aust 345). Hani was the leader of the 'outside operations; department of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) with whom the second generation had previously trained (269). Reinforcement RAF members kept watch over Schleyer and future plans were discussed in Baghdad and Holland.

The BKA became increasingly frustrated as the days wore on. The investigation had reached a scope previously unknown in the Federal Republic, to the extent that “everyone between the ages of twenty and thirty-five who traveled on the seventy trains a day running between Cologne and Paris was checked with particular care” (349). Post office employees were instructed to look for specific types of envelopes and the investigation continued around the clock. The BKA had no indication that Baghdad was a front for their search. However, Abu Hani offered the RAF members there two already-planned and ready to execute terror plots for their participation. The first involved a hostage-taking in the German embassy in Kuwait, which was rejected, “the experiences of Stockholm were still too fresh in their minds” (351). The second scenario proposed was that of a commercial airplane hi-jacking, to which the RAF group in Baghdad agreed.

_Landshut and Mogadishu_
Abu Hani summoned Mohnhaupt and Boock to Algiers, where the three were eventually joined by RAF member Rolf Clemens Wagner. Wagner was there to coordinate the kidnapping of Schleyer with the hijacking, and to convey messages between the two groups of RAF militants. Upon Mohnhaupt and Boock's return to Baghdad, they shared the details of the hijacking plan with the rest of their group. They began to fight at once, because, according to Boock, “a few people were brave enough to say: look, this kind of contradicts our own statement. But Brigitte Mohnhaupt got very heated and came up with the old killer argument again: 'So what do you want? Do you want to get them out or do you want them to die in jail? What do you think we ought to do? Show me an alternative!' Everyone fell silent, and the subject was closed” (352). The planning began in earnest for the groups of terrorists for the action they called 'Operation Kofre Kaddum' to be carried out by the Martyr Halimeh Commando (Winkler 332-333).

The terrorists planned and the imprisoned RAF members waited in their cells and followed the Schleyer kidnapping to the best of their ability. By early October, the prison doctor, Dr. Henck, was alarmed by the suicidal tendencies he noticed in Raspe, and the overall aloofness the RAF prisoners demonstrated. On October 6, Dr. Henck drafted a memo to the administrative prison staff, in which he wrote, “From the overall impression I received, we must assume that there is a genuine predisposition to suicide among the prisoners. I would like this to be noted, and I would like some suggestions as to how any possible suicides can be prevented” (Aust 361). The only outcome of the memo was the order that Dr. Henck visit Raspe on a daily basis.

Schleyer had been held captive for over a month when on October 8, a letter he wrote was delivered to Payot's Geneva office. The kidnapped business leader thanked his wife for her open letter to him that was published in The Bild am Sonntag the prior month. He assured her that he was doing as well as possible, but “the uncertainty is the worst thing to bear. In my first statement after the kidnapping, I said that the decision about my life was in the hands of the Federal Government, and I thereby accepted that decision. But it was decision I meant; I was not thinking of vegetating in constant
uncertainty, in which state I have now been for over a month” (365). He closed the letter with hopeful words and his wish to be reunited with his wife.

The next day, BKA officials were flown to Stammheim to converse with the RAF prisoners. The officials hoped to gain information pertaining to Schleyer's whereabouts, but were disappointed and surprised when conversations centered around the threat of suicide. There were discussions that involved the kidnapping and ways in which it could be resolved, but these were superficial conversations at best. The prisoners complained of their isolation, lack of food, and their likely state murders. When asked outright by BKA officials if Raspe was planning to kill himself, Raspe answered, “I don't know. There are other methods too, hunger and thirst strikes. Death's bound to follow after seven days on a thirst strike. No medical fiddling around can get over that” (368). The prison doctor became more vocal in those days, particularly October 10 and 11, as he believed that a collective suicide was feasible. The Ministry of Justice, upon reading an urgent letter from the prison governor, merely told prison officials to “do all that was warranted to prevent suicide.” This was deemed as being “not excessively helpful” by the governor (Winkler 339).

With Schleyer still being held in captivity and the imprisoned RAF openly threatening suicide, the officials of the Federal Republic had massive and very public burdens with which to contend. It was in this context that Mohnhaupt's collaborative effort hijacking would capture the attention of the world. On October 13, 1977, the passenger plane Landshut, flight LH181, departed from Palma de Mallorca for Frankfurt. Light refreshments were served and the flight's beginning was a smooth one. It suddenly became extremely loud and terrifying for the passengers and crew, as the terrorists herded first-class passengers and crew to the back of the aircraft. The four terrorists organized a seating assignments, and as a result, all young men were seated alone in window seats (Winkler 338-339). Two of the hijackers spoke to the terrified people on board, and in the words of flight attendant Gaby Dilmann, they were told,

“that this was a hijacking and we were to keep quiet, anyone who didn't keep quiet
would be shot. We'd be shot for talking, or lowering our hands, well, basically we'd be shot unless we just breathed very quietly and kept our hands up. We all did what they said, meek as little lambs. What else could we do? Act like heroes and get shot? What good would that do? And then we though, the RAF...because we knew there'd be huge difficulties, with the federal government guarding them like some kind of precious treasure in a high-security jail. And those were the people they wanted. But we knew at once it would be so difficult. We really thought, there are so many of us and so few of them, it had to happen that way, it was only logical, a law of humanity” (Aust 374).

While the huddled passengers and crew desperately tried to maintain a sense of calm, one of the hijackers used the aircraft radio to demand the release eleven RAF prisoners by the federal government. Chancellor Schmidt summarized the grave situation, “This affair now had an additional dimension. Up to this point the life of one human being, Dr. Schleyer, had been in great danger; now it was a case of over ninety human beings whose lives were in great danger. This was on a larger scale. And no one knew where the aircraft would be going” (375). The Landshut traveled over 6,000 miles with the terrorists at the helm. First the plane landed in Rome to refuel, where the Italian government was eager to have the massive problem off of their soil immediately. The leader of the hijackers called himself Captain Mahmud, and he spoke over the cockpit microphone before leaving Italy, stating, “The German airline's jet has been taken over. The group I represent demands the release of our comrades in German prisons. We are fighting against the imperialisit organizations of the world” (376). As the Italian officials sighed in relief, preparations for a refuel landing were underway in Cyprus at Larnaca Airport. At the very same time, Schleyer's kidnappers contacted the mediator, Payot, to inform him that the hijacked Lufthansa aircraft was completely under the control of the RAF. New demands were made; in addition to the RAF prisoners' release, two Palestinians in Turkish prisons were to be set free as well, and the kidnappers named a fifteen million dollar ransom (Winkler 340). Also at the very same time, the GSG 9, a special anti-terrorist unit of the West German Border Police, was discharged to undertake an operation to capture the hijacked plane and rescue the passengers. This highly-trained group of thirty men were airborne at 7:55pm on October 13.

The GSG 9 unit was not far away from the hijacked Lufthansa plane when Captain Schumann
informed the hijackers that they once again needed fuel. This time, the *Landshut* landed in Bahrain for fuel without incident. The passengers, especially the older ones, were, according to flight attendant Dillmann, close to death (Aust 380). The plane's cabin was incredibly hot, and the passengers were rightfully terrified. Diana Mull described the scene as the plane headed toward Dubai, “In the end I think the temperature was 60 degrees inside the plane. All you could do was stay in your seat and not move. And when someone ran along the plane it was very dramatic, the air swirled up, and we closed our eyes and tried not to breathe, until a moment had passed since that person went by and the air...the air settled again. It was worst of all when the air swirled up, it was almost past bearing” (381). Then two crew members had a conversation that was overheard by the now jovial terrorist 'Captain ' Mahmud. Coincidentally, it was the birthday of a crew member, and Mahmud established radio contact with the tower in Dubai; he ordered birthday cake, coffee and champagne (381-382). The *Landshut* safely came to a stop on a Dubai runway, where the airport's catering staff delivered the birthday cake and beverages. The airport tower would not accommodate the hijackers' request for fuel, however. After the pastel-frosted cake was eaten, Mahmud, who had been loud, forceful and violent from the first moment, showed an even darker side as he singled out the Jewish passengers. Enraged, he shouted, “I shall shoot these Jews tomorrow, they'll come to me voluntarily tomorrow. I shall stand them in the open doorway of the plane and shoot them, with a bullet in the head from behind. They'll fall out of the plane on their own accord” (382). Mahmud taunted the passengers by promising freedom in one moment, only to crush it the next (Winkler 343).

As the hijacked plane sat on the Dubai runway, as it would all day and night, letters from Schleyer's kidnappers were making their way to the press and Schleyer's son. Both documents were identical and reiterated the demands made over the phone to Payot. Government and law enforcement officials from a multitude of departments held special meetings, and the imprisoned RAF in Stammheim were more despondent than ever before. The GSG 9 unit was awaiting orders. As minutes and hours passed, it was evident that the RAF had forced the Federal Republic to face its greatest
Later that same evening, Payot received a videotape from Schleyer's kidnappers. The victim's statement ended with, “I have been in the hands of the terrorists for five and a half weeks now, just because I have supported the West German state and its free democracy for years, laying myself open to attack on its behalf. Sometimes the statements that are being made—by politicians, among others—seem to me like a mockery of those activities of mine” (Aust 384). Pressure was coming from the Landshut situation as well as Schleyer's. After a turbulent emergency landing in Aden, Yemen, Captain Schumann inspected the damage he feared the landing gear had suffered. Gone too long for terrorist Mahmud's liking, Schumann was not given an opportunity to explain his prolonged absence from the cockpit. Schumann was ordered to drop to his knees in the first class cabin, and as he attempted to explain his concerns with the aircraft, Mahmud struck him across the face and shot him. Schumann died instantly, and the already frightened passengers realized a new level of fear (390-393).

On October 17, now into the fifth day of the hijacking, the airplane was refueled at daybreak at Aden. “The hijackers had wiped away Schumann's blood with moistened cloths. They had scraped bits of his brain off the gangway carpet into a dustpan, which they threw out of the opened cockpit window before take-off” (394). This time, the Landshut would not be airborne for long; it landed in Mogadishu, Somalia, just two and half hours later. The hijackers, annoyed by the smell of Schumann's corpse in the humid cabin, pushed the body down an emergency chute, onto the runway. In the meantime, a second GSG unit had been deployed from Bonn to Somalia. After some 'cool' diplomatic conversations between the West German and the Somalian leaders, including a West German promise to reward “a large amount of aid for his country” if the Somalians would let the Germans handle the hostage hijacking situation, plans were being formulated (395). The hijackers, in coordination with the RAF Schleyer kidnappers, issued a 3:00pm deadline for the release of RAF prisoners. As the minutes and hours elapsed, West German Minister of State Wischnewski was negotiating with the Somali government, and the GSG 9 units were ready to move in. Simultaneously, Mahmud informed the
passengers that the West German government was going to enable their deaths through inaction (Winkler 341-342). Flight attendant Dillman requested the use of the on board microphone to communicate with the German envoy. It would be years before the recording would be discovered, and her summary paints a picture of desperation and terror on the aircraft:

“I want to say that we're going to die because the German government has failed us. And we are going to die. They've tied us up already. Theirs is what we'd call a suicide mission in Germany. They don't care about their own lives or the lives of any other human beings. The German government doesn't care about our lives at all either. We're going to die now. I've tried to bear it as well as possible, but the fear is just too much. All the same, we'd like you to know that the German government did nothing to save our lives. They could have done everything, everything. We just can't understand it” (Aust 400).

She had no way of knowing that West Germany's most well-trained units were on standby at the very moments in Mogadishu when the four hijackers fixed explosive to the cabin walls once again and poured all of the duty free alcohol over the tied-up passengers. The 3:00pm deadline had come and gone at this point, and the communications between the hijackers and various negotiating envoys were becoming increasingly strained. The deadline was extended to 3:30am Somali time after the hijackers were promised that the RAF prisoners would need at least seven hours to make the flight to Mogadishu. Mahmud believed that his mission was near its end when he said this to the passengers: “We're going to untie you now. Something's happened which might save us all. But it's not time to rejoice yet. In the last ten minutes, they promised me everything that I am asking for now for five days” (403). The hijackers began passing back luggage and purses to the now unbound passengers. At 2:03am Somali time, while Mahmud gave orders via radio, West German GSG 9 troops stormed on board the Landshut. The Germans opened fire against the hijackers, two of whom died instantly. Only one of the four terrorists survived the operation, which “was practically over after seven minutes, including evacuation of the plane,” according to Colonel Wegener (408). Gaby Dillmann was the only hostage injured, which occurred when one of Boock's plastic grenades detonated, but her injuries were not serious. The Federal Republic's hijacking nightmare was over. The RAF's international collaboration,
the event that would finally free their comrades in Stammheim, was a failure. The Federal Republic had triumphed.

**Schleyer and the Stammheim prisoners**

The Stammheim prisoners learned of the events in Mogadishu just after midnight on October 18, 1977. Sometime between 11:00pm the previous night and 7:41am that morning, Ensslin hung herself in her cell, Baader and Raspe shot themselves and Moller stabbed herself in the chest four times. Baader and Ensslin were both dead and Raspe died in the hospital the same morning. Moller survived after an operation, and would go on to tell officials that there was no suicide pact (410-412). Polaroid photos were taken and the bodies removed.

The core second generation RAF members, who were still in Baghdad, heard the news; the Landshut had been stormed by West German units, the hostages were freed, and three of the hijackers were dead. The Deutsche Welle broadcast was not over, as they heard about the deaths of the Stammheim prisoners. The group reacted “as if numbed,” and amidst the tears and anger toward the state, Brigitte Mohnhaupt shocked her comrades:

“I suppose you lot can only suppose that they were victims. You didn't know them. They're not victims and they never were. You don't get made a victim, you have to make yourself a victim. They were in charge of their situation right up to the last minute. So what does that mean? I'll tell you: it means they did it to themselves, not that it was done to them” (413).

After a stunned silence, some members protested. Mohnhaupt disregarded their opinions and said something next that kept them silent, “We're not arguing about that now. I'm not talking to you lot about it. It's none of your business. I can only tell you that's how it was. So stop seeing them as something they weren't” (413). The rattled group then decided the fate of Hanns Martin Schleyer.

On October 19, a French newspaper received a letter from Schleyer's kidnappers. The letter read:

“After 43 days, we have ended Hanns Martin Schleyer's miserable and corrupt
existence. Herr Schmidt, who from the start has been reckoning with Schleyer's death in his power calculations, can find him in a green Audi 100 with Bad Homburg number plates in the rue Charles Peguy in Nullhouse. His death is of no significance in our pain and rage at the slaughter of Mogadishu and Stammheim. The fascist drama staged by the imperialists to destroy the liberation movement does not surprise Andreas, Gudrun, Jan, Irmgard and ourselves. We will never forgive Schmidt and the imperialists who support him for the blood that has been shed. The fight has only just begun. Freedom through the armed anti-imperialist struggle” (418).

Schleyer's body was indeed found where the kidnappers described, and he was laid to rest on October 25, 1977. Somber and thankful words were spoken by Federal President Walter Scheel. He also added, “in the name of all German citizens I ask you, the family of Hanns Martin Schleyer, to forgive us” (419). Two days later, Baader, Ensslin and Raspe were buried in Stuttgart's Waldfriedhof. Demonstrators were present, and they held placards with words such as 'torture' and 'murder.' More than one thousand police officers were at the scene, armed with submachine guns.

Within two weeks of October 1977, the Landshut was hijacked, the hostages were freed, the three imprisoned RAF leaders committed suicide in Stammheim, Schleyer was killed, and all of the dead were buried. This German Autumn is remembered as a time when a group of political desperadoes took on the West German postwar state, and the state took a hard-line in response. Aust maintains that those in positions of power at that time have wondered since then, if they and the state collectively acted appropriately. Years after the German Autumn, Chancellor Schmidt said, “We found ourselves inextricably entangled in these horrifying evens. It is the kind of situation in which no decision is exclusively right. It's like something in Greek tragedy, where the characters are caught up in the tragedy and cannot free themselves of guilt” (419). 1977 had been a traumatic year for West Germany. The nightmare of violence came to an end for a time, but the events of 1968-1977 will always be recalled with strong opinions by most Germans. When the German Autumn came to its end, twenty-eight people had died during RAF actions, and seventeen of the self-proclaimed urban guerrillas lost their lives.

The RAF members left in late 1977 were divided. Many gave up on the group, after coming to
the conclusion that the original goals had been lost; it was a real case of mission drift. Others, such as Christian Klar and Birgitte Mohnhaupt, would continue (Winkler 348). In 1979, remaining RAF members detonated explosives in a tunnel as NATO General Alexander Haig drove to headquarters. Three men were injured in what the RAF designated as the Commando Andreas Baader. At the end of 1979, eight RAF members were assisted by the East Germany Stasi. The RAF contributed funding, which gave each leaving member 3,000 Deutschmarks. The Stasi assisted these defecting members, one of them Susanna Albrecht, in gaining new biographies and forged documents (Aust 433-434).

The Stasi remained in contact with the active RAF leaders, and even arranged for Christian Klar and six other members to participate in target shooting on military training areas. The first major action did not take place until September 15, 1981, when Klar and three RAF members, this time the Commando Gudrun Ensslin, targeted a US General near Heidelberg. There were minor injuries and no causalities. In May 1982, the RAF released their first strategy paper in ten years, *Guerrilla Warfare, Resistance, and an Anti-imperialist Front* (435). The paper included criticism of the *Landshut* hijacking and the RAF claimed that they emerged from the German Autumn “stronger than ever.” They planned to “open a new chapter in revolutionary strategy in the center of imperialism” (436). The self-proclaimed third generation of the RAF, led at first by Mohnhaupt and Klar, and then by Grams and Hogefeld, did continue the violence.

In 1985 and 1986, the RAF murdered seven people. Ernst Zimmermann, head of the Engines and Turbines Union, was killed by an RAF bomb in February 1985. In August, two men and one woman were killed by an RAF bomb attack at the US Air Force's base near Frankfurt. In July 1986, Siemens manager Kurt Beckurts and his driver Groppler were killed after the RAF planted a car bomb in Beckurts' vehicle. Months later, in October, Gerold von Braunmuhl, the leading Foreign Ministry official, was shot and killed in Bonn. The Commando Ingrid Schubert claimed responsibility. In November 1989, just three weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Deutsche Bank CEO Alred Herrhausen was murdered by the RAF. The 1991 murder of Detlev Karsten Rohwedder, head of
Treuhand⁴, remains an open case to this day, but most believe that it was an RAF operation (Winkler 523-527). In September 1992, there were forty RAF members in eighteen German prisons. Thirty-three of them remained loyal to the RAF at that time (Pluchinsky 143). Their loyalty, in terms of the group's longevity, would not matter.

In June 1993, German officials successfully infiltrated an informer into the RAF leadership. This led to the arrest of Hogefeld, and the deaths of one officer and of Wolfgang Grams (Aust 436). It took until April 20, 1998, for the Red Army Faction to formally disband by way of an eight-page communiqué, sent to a Reuter’s news agency office in Cologne. The document makes clear that the RAF members themselves recognized their failure, stating that, “the urban guerrilla in the form of the RAF is now history, the end of this project shows that we cannot succeed that way” (Aust 437). The era of violent RAF actions had come to a quiet end, but neither the state nor the people of Germany would be truly through with the Red Army Faction.

⁴ Treuhand was the agency charged with the privatization of state-owned assets in former East Germany
CHAPTER IV. THE RAF IN POPULAR CULTURE

The Red Army Faction has not committed a major action since 1993, and they formally disbanded through a communiqué in 1998. There have been no additional statements or known attempts to re-establish the group; only silence. Nevertheless, the RAF remains present in the minds of Germans especially. Amongst the newspaper and magazine articles, there are also films, documentaries, songs, fashions and millions of websites. In a 2007 article, Jamie Trnka called attention to the vast number of media-created commemorative dates that have been established. There were widely-advertised television series leading up to the twentieth anniversary of the German Autumn in 1997; followed closely in 1998 by the thirtieth anniversary of 1968; and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first generation RAF members' sentencing. Trnka describes “a flurry of academic conferences, publications, and popular press coverage,” in the context of those commemorative days (Trnka, The Struggle Is Over, the Wounds Are Open, 2).

Clearly RAF-themed coverage and projects remain both valid and popular. Alongside the conferences, films and publications, merchandise such as undergarments and condoms with the RAF emblem were sold in Germany (Gunther, Mythos Bundesrepublik, http://nzz.gbi.de). Is there something elusive and simply put, cool, which surrounds the RAF mythology? Back in 1970, the year of Baader's prison escape, Berlin arms dealer Günther Voigt, called on author Friedrich Dürrenmatt to hopefully befriend and impress him. Voigt claimed to Dürrenmatt that he assisted in Baader's escape operation. While one gun used during that prison breakout was traced back to Voigt, he was not a participant. He sought out the attention of a well-known author, in the hopes that he could impress him with a make-believe story (Murphy 11). Did he believe that RAF involvement made him a desirable friend amongst elite circles? Did Voigt believe that his feigned participation in a high-profile criminal action would advance his place on a social hierarchy? The RAF's founding text, The Urban Guerrilla Concept, would provide the answer:
“Many other comrades are spreading lies about us that we stayed overnight with then, or that they were involved in the organization of our trip to the Middle East, some think they have 'inside' contacts, they claim to have done things for us—even though they did nothing. A few comrades want to try and portray themselves as being 'in'. Just like Günther Voigt, who claimed to Dürenmatt that he was involved in the operation to free Baader” (Red Army Faction 11).

This chapter will focus on RAF-themed literature and film, as well as RAF discourse in the German media. Additionally, I will highlight the continued pop culture fascination with the RAF, providing examples from popular music, merchandise, and the RAF’s strong Internet presence. Over thirty years after the climax of RAF terror, the group remains news-worthy in Germany. I will strive to explain why the group continues to receive so much attention in pop-culture, and why the names Baader, Ensslin and Meinhof are still household names.

**Böll, Blum and Bild**

The unprecedented radicalization of the West German political sphere affected language as well. Language is, after all, a tool of media coverage, an instrument of political debate and the medium of literature. Author Heinrich Böll wrote about “the origins of violence and the violation of human rights through totalitarian methods and institutions” consistently throughout his career (Zipes, *The Political Dimensions of The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*, 77). The conditions in West Germany in the 1970s were conducive to public discourse regarding violence and state methods, as public fear was being fanned by the newspapers, magazines, radio and television constantly. The citizens of West Germany knew that authorities had mounted an unprecedented manhunt for the RAF terrorists. Zipes describes the winter of 1971, concluding that “the atmosphere in the Bundesrepublik became hysterical during the manhunt for the Baader-Meinhof Group” (75). An example illuminates the polarizing nature of RAF-related themes. A professor from Hannover, Peter Bruckner, was falsely accused of secretly harboring members of the RAF. He was the subject of incredible scrutiny in the media and was suspended from the university where he taught.

On December 23, 1971, the *Bild's* front-page headline read: “Baader-Meinhof Gang Strikes
Again. Bank Raid: Policeman Shot” (Aust 147). This headline appeared only one day after the bank robbery took place, before an investigation was even close to complete, demonstrating once again the Bild's overzealous reporting style. Aust describes a “precipitate haste with which the Baader-Meinhof Group was increasingly being held responsible for anything and everything,” and contends that the internal political climate would only intensify (147-148). It bears mentioning that despite the Bild's eagerness to accuse the RAF of the robbery before an investigation could be facilitated, the RAF members were indeed the culprits. Two weeks later, Böll published an article in the Spiegel that encouraged more thoughtful reflection regarding Ulrike Meinhof's situation and offered critique of the right-wing press. Böll criticized the Bild's use of language, labeling it as “Verhetzung, Lüge, Dreck,” (incitement, lies, garbage) (Böll, Will Ulrike Meinhof Gnade oder freies Geleit?, http://www.learn-line.nrw.de). He also used the term fascist to describe Bild's journalism.

The results were immediate and drastic, “not only was Böll subjected to a vicious defamatory campaign by the Springer Press, but he was privately harassed and his house was raided by the police” (Zipes, 77). Böll had been labeled as a sympathizer, “like many others who tried to preserve a sense of proportion amidst the generally rising hysteria” (Aust 148). The term Sympathisant (sympathizer) was coined by the right-wing press, with suggestions that “these intellectuals were as dangerous as the terrorists themselves” (Winkler 199). A whole culture of confrontation emerged in the Federal Republic. The left and right were polarized, just as the RAF and the state were polarized. One can deduce that conversations with strong opinions about RAF members, particularly Meinhof because she was a public figure prior to going underground, took place frequently. For the RAF members, a true “us versus them” mentality had developed, and for the millions of West Germans who watched events unfold in the 1970s, it is conceivable that this “us versus them” mentality also spilled over into the private sphere. With language as his tool and using the medium of literature, Böll responded in the best way he could have.

From 1972 until he published The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum in 1974, Böll was consistent
in defending the rights of political prisoners. He also voiced concern about the overzealous and inflammatory press in West Germany. Though Böll never explicitly said as much, it seems that he believed the press to be more dangerous than the RAF. He thoroughly criticized the right-wing press when given the opportunity to do so, but rarely did he denounce the goals of the RAF. While he never condoned the RAF's violent tactics, he also spoke out very little about their specific actions. It seems to this author that Böll deemed it a better use of his time, and his position as a well-known author, to condemn the practices of the journalistic right. It was indeed the press that reinforced panic and fear on a daily basis, and having been a target of the press himself, Böll was uniquely qualified to write a book that would address some of these complicated issues.

In his novel, *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum or: How Violence Develops and Where It Can Lead*, Böll told the story of a single woman, Katharina Blum, who made a decent living as a housekeeper. Her existence was a by-the-book one, and she was respected by those who knew her. She attended a party one evening and uncharacteristically fell for a man that night, and he spent the night in her apartment. The man was an alleged left-wing activist who was under police surveillance, and he slipped out of Katharina's apartment undetected in the morning. Katharina had never broken the law previously, and she helped her male companion escape from her apartment because she cared about him, but clearly not out of any political motivation. As she breakfasted, eight “heavily armed police officers broke into the apartment, storming it with the most intensive precautionary measures, searched it, but found no trace of the wanted Göttten, all they found being Katharina, 'looking extremely relaxed, almost happy,' standing at her kitchen counter drinking coffee from a large mug and taking a bite from a slice of white bread and butter and honey” (Böll, *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*, 18). From that moment forward, Katharina's life would no longer be quiet, comfortable or mundane. The police were insulting and she often rephrased their crude statements with words that she found more accurate and appropriate. The press turned Katharina's existence into a miserable one, as they persistently harassed not only her, but her mother, employers and various friends.
Böll began his novel with the following words: “The characters and action in this story are purely fictitious. Should the description of certain journalistic practices result in a resemblance to the practices of the Bild-Zeitung, such resemblance is neither intentional nor fortuitous, but unavoidable” (5). Just as Böll was a victim of the right-wing press, Katharina would deal with similar circumstances. The media campaign painted her as a terrorist, or at least an enabler of terrorist activities. As a result, her daily life became overwhelmingly hostile, as formerly friendly acquaintances and friends turned on her. As time passed and the press coverage and poor handling of Katharina by the police both continued, she grew increasingly misunderstood, embarrassed and helpless. Ultimately she lured the journalist who was most vicious toward her to her apartment, where she shot and killed him.

Böll succeeds in forcing the reader to think long and hard about multiple complicated issues in this novel, most notably the role of the press. In speaking about Böll's style, Zipes concludes: “His fictive narrative is a case study of violence, and the fiction is to shed more light on reality than the supposed non-fiction reports which are carried by the mass media. Both the narrative style and the subject matter form a counter model to the objective conditions of the Bundesrepublik reality (Zipes 78). The narrator in Böll 's novel goes to great lengths to assemble all of the facts (of Katharina's experience) from various reliable sources. His role is to provide the reader with a complete time-line in order to demonstrate how each single event led up to the violence at the story's end. The narrator must make an effort for open communication, which contains critique of Bild. The narrator is not the only one concerned with facts and reliability. Katharina is very cautious with language, as can be demonstrated in the following passage, after the first session of her police questioning:

The prolonged nature of the interrogation was explained by the fact that Katharina Blum was remarkably meticulous in checking the entire wording and in having every sentence read aloud to her as it was committed to the record. For example, the advances mentioned in the foregoing paragraph were first recorded as 'amorous,' the original wording being that 'the gentleman became amorous,' which Katharina Blum indignantly rejected. A regular argument as to definition ensued between her and the public prosecutors...(Böll 29-30).
Prior to this paragraph, Katharina recounted her life history for her interrogators, which made her private life suddenly very public. The stripping of her privacy robbed her of power; once the police and the media became involved in her life, she was hardly able to determine her actions and self-expression. This sudden removal of a private life led to Blum's uncharacteristically violent behavior. Katharina's maltreatment by the press and police, and the reader's knowledge of her past, allows for sympathy. Blum had committed no wrong-doing, and her individual stance for rational and humanitarian behavior becomes easy for the reader to support. There are no descriptions in the book, by the narrator or anyone else, of the socio-political reality of West Germany at the time. The novel is focused on this one story and the precise narration of it; it is not connected to the actual cases of widespread political controls used by the West German state. On one hand, that allows this story to resonate with a larger public. Katharina is not like Ulrike Meinhof or Gudrun Ensslin. On the other hand, if the socio-political context had been included, the reader would likely gain a sense of the power dynamics in West Germany. Katharina is more moral and admirable than she is political. Her character allows the reader to personalize and localize the larger historical formations, in a way that is accessible for a larger public. *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* illustrates how the process of labeling and stigmatizing causes someone to be excluded from community life, which in turn can induce a radicalization of the person excluded. Katharina was forced into the role of victim.

Katharina, who was not a revolutionary or even ideologically liberal, was the person who resisted the systems of the state and the audacity of the right-wing media. The highly feared RAF members were nothing like Katharina, who was content with her relatively mundane but satisfying existence. The RAF guerrillas wanted to completely overthrow the state through a Marxist revolution, and they had already killed and robbed.

The headlines found in the *Bild* were often very sensational and not always entirely accurate. Early in 1967, before terrorism was an everyday word in West Germany, the *Bild* ran a story with the following headline that ran half across the front page: “Bomb Attack On US Vice-President Planned in
Berlin” (Aust 21). The police arrested a group of young people based on the information. The apprehended students did not wait long to be released, however, as the police quickly discovered that the students' intentions: they wanted to throw custard pudding at Hubert Humphrey, and they had no bomb-making materials. Recall Rudi Dutschke, who was shot by a man carrying Springer Publishing newspaper clippings with him at the time of the shooting. The manner in which the Bild reported news tended to polarize discourse, not encourage healthy debate.

The RAF and the right-wing press fed off one another, creating a dynamic that the public could observe as much (or as little) as they cared to. The sensationalism that the Springer papers employed made it easy for influential liberal critics to target the publishing company. The zeal of the Springer Press provided intellectuals, or so-inclined readers, the ability to turn the RAF terrorists into martyrs for civil rights abuses. It was certainly easier to evoke feelings of sympathy toward the terrorists if it seemed as if they were getting unfair treatment in the press, and in prison. Add to this equation the increased armament of the West German state, which reacted to increased violence by improving their resources and abilities.

Moreover, the sheer volume of RAF-related stories led to a personalization the RAF members and turned them into household names; in that alone lies much power, because it led to an increased sense of importance within the group. It also made it so Ulrike, Andreas and Gudrun were instantly recognizable to Germans. It is fair to conclude that a great deal of the reporting was personality driven. The RAF members “regularly studied the reports of their activities in the press” (148). They knew that their names were being spoken across dinner tables and bars all over West Germany and it must have added to the excitement of life underground. Even when the content of news reporting was not entirely accurate, the public speculation in and of itself helped to facilitate the group's notoriety and spread their ideas. If their communiqués were published by a newspaper, their ideology was being circulated. In addition, it could be imagined that the dizzying amount of publicity made getting away with underground life exciting; for example, if Meinhof could grocery shop along with the general
population unrecognized, she must have experienced a sense of triumph for participating in such mundane activities in the midst of a police manhunt.

Margit Schiller provided a safe house for Meinhof, Baader, Ensslin and Raspe in 1971 and eventually joined the group for a time. She was one of the few RAF members who “gave serious thought to her time with the RAF: 'It was tough, remembering that’” (113). In her memoirs, Schiller recalls how the press, particularly Bild, described the female RAF members, “they are deranged Amazons, authoritarian, gun-toting, lesbian, tough, unfeeling, and enslaved to Andreas” (116).

Admittedly, the RAF provided the German media with a great deal of fodder. Regardless, intellectuals in West Germany, like Heinrich Böll, did not approve of the sensationalism that saturated the pages of Bild and other Springer-owned outlets. The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum promotes a logical, thoughtful manner of thinking about the conditions of the West German state, another film, Deutschland im Herbst (Germany in Autumn) would also encourage a re-articulation of left politics in the aftermath of terrorism.

*Deutschland im Herbst*

Nine directors of the New German Cinema decided in October 1977, just after Schleyer's murder, Mogadishu and the deaths at Stammheim, to produce a collective film that would provide commentary and also serve as historical record. The film, Deutschland im Herbst (Germany in Autumn) was “intended to document the immediate reactions to the events of fall 1977 and also to reflect the anxieties of that time in short fictional scenes” (Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film*, 25). The film was edited by Alexander Kluge and Beate Mainka-Jellinghouse, who managed to cut nine hours of footage into two. The directors involved were Heinrich Böll, Hans Peter Cloos, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Maxmiliane Mainka, Edgar Reitz, Katja Rupé, Volker Schlöndorff, Peter Schubert and Bernhard Sinkel (Goldsmith, *Montage, music and memory*, [http://www.kinoeye.org](http://www.kinoeye.org)). Deutschland im Herbst was made, “outside West Germany's dominant media
institutions” (Hoerschelmann, TITLE, 94). The producers and authors involved operated without outside censorship. Throughout the film, the viewer is reminded more of television programs, not traditional film. The mixed forms of footage, especially interviews and documentary shots, assist in facilitating that television experience.

For modern audiences in particular, the film's segmented nature may be problematic, especially if unfamiliar with events of 1977. Nevertheless, the film is framed by two scenes of mourning. The film opens with Hanns Martin Schleyer's state funeral, attended by German business and political leaders. Law enforcement officials dominate the scene, and they are closer to the camera than the burial site a majority of the time. As a eulogy is underway, the camera lens brings the viewer's attention to the flags of an Esso gas station, above the funeral proceedings. Hoerschelmann described the Esso flags as “linking big business with old and new politics in a state event that is symbolic of Germany as a whole” (Hoerschelmann 91). The old and new politics were represented by those in attendance, rather obviously, and also by the massive police presence.

The Esso flags were not the only symbols of big business during Schleyer's funeral. Daimler-Benz flags, adorned with black mourning bands, are the focus of the camera during Schleyer's burial. The climactic moment of Schleyer's memorial service is when Mozart's Requiem Mass begins to play. The iconic symbols of business and industry are shown the viewer with this music, enhancing the importance of the moment.

The police presence was perhaps the only commonality between Schleyer's state funeral and the funeral of the three RAF terrorists, shown in the final scene of the film. Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe were buried just two days after Schleyer. This segment of the film begins with soft organ music, a calm voice-over and photos of the deceased RAF members. The police force invades the entire frame, not taking care to respect the bereaved, as was the case at Schleyer's funeral. Some in attendance carry signs or placards, others raise their fists. While Schleyer's funeral had an aura of state control and planning, as well as pomp and circumstance, this funeral seems more like a willful gathering of people.
They arrived not in a motorcade, as was the case at Schleyer's services, but independently and via different methods of transportation. The faces at the RAF funeral look more affected and emotional than the ones just two days earlier.

A segment of the film contributed by Heinrich Böll and Volker Schlöndorff revolves around the cancellation of Sophocles' *Antigone* on television. The themes of *Antigone*, such as the denial of burial, rebellion and suicide coincide with the reality Gudrun Ensslin's sister was left to face in reality. She cared for the grave that her sister shares with two fellow RAF members. “The bitter satire makes clear that a television broadcast of *Antigone* would be too inflammatory in the political situation of Autumn 1977; a classical play about the themes of violence and resistance has become unpresentable” (Kaes 26).

**The Legend of Rita**

The Legend of Rita, or *Stille nach dem Schuss*, was released in 2000, and was directed by Volker Schlöndorff. He teamed up with Wolfgang Kohlhaase, who wrote the screenplay. The film chronicles the life of Rita Vogt, a West German terrorist. The group she belongs to is never named, but it is clearly based on the Red Army Faction. The terrorists travel in small groups, utter grandiose political visions about class struggle and poverty, and engage in bank robberies and murder. The opening scene instantly captivates the audience, as Rita and her terrorist comrades rob a bank with style and sarcasm, even donating some of the robbery funds to a homeless man afterward. Rita is actively redistributing her (group’s) newly acquired wealth, in the spirit of equality. The group consists of young idealists, and Rita’s boyfriend Andi is the leader. They eventually go underground after an unproductive and deadly stint in France, where Rita shoots and kills a police officer.

Ultimately the terrorists part ways, due to the complications of underground life. Some, including Rita’s boyfriend Andi, die while in police custody. Rita decides to accept the offer that the East German Stasi makes, and she is furnished with an entirely new identity and life in communist East
Germany. Most of her fellow terrorists scoff at the very notion of living in the GDR. Rita, however, relishes the opportunity to live in East Germany, dutifully going to work daily in a textile factory. She smiles more than her co-workers and donates more than all of them combined to so-called Third World causes when the collection containers are passed around over lunch. Ten RAF terrorists did indeed cooperate with the Stasi and “hid in the GDR with new identities” (William, *When West Meets East and Decides to Stay*, 127). Rita seems to flourish in the GDR, a West German who by choice (at least to an extent) migrated to the East. Her co-worker and best friend Tatjana, with whom there is some sexual tension at points in the film, was born and raised in the GDR. She drinks and smokes heavily and typically appears to be lethargic, whether she’s at work, in her apartment or elsewhere. Before she knows of Rita’s terrorist background, Tatjana cannot fathom a West German voluntarily moving to East Germany. Tatjana herself seems to feel trapped by the confines of the GDR, wishing to get somewhere else, anywhere else.

The opening bank robbery scene and Rita’s convincing enthusiasm are the most memorable aspects of this film. After Rita has worked at the factory for sometime, she and her co-workers attend a rather dowdy awards reception meant to recognize the efforts of the factory workers. There is live music and dancing, but most of Rita’s co-workers sit at their tables (or the bar) with little interest. Rita, on the other hand, claps enthusiastically for her co-workers when their names are called. Tatjana does not even pay attention to the ceremony, opting instead to drink and chain-smoke at the bar. After several drinks for Tatjana, and the ceremony’s conclusion, Tatjana does have a rare moment of happiness when she dances with the perpetually smiling Rita.

Despite Rita’s effervescent demeanor, the viewer never gets the opportunity to forget that she was a terrorist and that she is in hiding. The Stasi agent who first approaches Rita, Erwin Hull, maintains responsibility for her safety and whereabouts. In the DVD commentary, Schlöndorff calls Hull the secret hero of the story. Hull is not the typical Stasi of film. He cracks jokes, grills Bratwurst and opens beer bottles for the terrorists, and seems to take a genuine liking to Rita especially. There is a
sense of paternal care, and “the film offers a softer and more human side of the Stasi that few other representations show” (134). Just as Hull is likeable despite his Stasi affiliation, Rita is inherently likeable as well, though she is responsible for murder. William contends that “in providing this unusual humanization of the often demonized terror campaigns on both sides of the Wall, Schlöndorff attempts to show the ‘other side’ of each. A noteworthy side effect of these characterizations is the implicit commentary that East and West are perhaps not as far removed from one another as they are generally made out to be” (134).

As the film continues, Rita’s former terrorist life is uncovered by a co-worker. With Hull’s assistance, she will take on another new identity. Her enthusiasm has not wavered, and she makes another life for herself, establishing routine and finding love. In a memorable scene, Rita coincidentally encounters a fellow ex-terrorist, Frederike, who also went undercover in East Germany. Frederike is singing in a choir, and for just an instant, her face lights up when she sees her old friend, with whom she shares her secret past. In an unsatisfying moment of the film for me personally, the two women are afforded very little time to speak with another. The viewers learn that Frederike is married with a child, and just before the women must part, Rita wishes her well and comments that she’s pleased that Frederike is happy. Once again Frederike conveys great emotion with her eyes and facial expression, but similar to her earlier smile upon recognizing Rita, these emotions are also fleeting. Her eyes narrow, and she quietly says to Rita, “what makes you think that?” as she is ushered away by her husband. Frederike’s new life in the GDR, though the viewer only gets a glimpse, seems a stark contrast to Rita’s.

The Berlin Wall comes down and “Stasi agent Jull finds out that he had been duped as well, as the West German government had apparently known about the fugitives locations for some time. The plot of *Die Stille nach dem Schuss* can be described then as a double-agent story that works to destroy the ‘good vs. evil’ clichés that the film tries to debunk as a whole” (134-135). The film is not one that implores the viewer to decide which Germany is better than the other, but instead reinforces that
despite two distinct German cultures during 1949-1989, “there were and still are unbreakable bonds between them” (135). To that end, the German national anthem, the one kept by West German after World War II, loudly and discordantly plays in the final scene. Facing the prospect of a unified German and the loss of Rita’s GDR safe haven, she attempts to circumvent a border crossing and is shot and killed.

The film does not explicitly name the RAF or even devote much time to terrorist activities. The focus is Rita’s new existence in the GDR, and whether or not she can realize her utopian dream of socialism in practice. Neither West nor East Germany appears idyllic, as Richard Porton, quoted by William, concludes that “neither the discredited legacy of Stalinist East Germany nor the brash consumer capitalism of the West, and its often-hypocritical appeals to democratic values, emerge completely unscathed” (136). Rita does indeed thrive for a time, and one can wonder if she is simply relieved to still be alive, unlike many of her terrorist comrades.

**The RAF online, on stage and in music**

Even early in the group's existence, there seemed to be an awareness that they were somehow fashionable, exciting and 'in'. I add to the speculation surrounding the mythology of the RAF. Perhaps young Germans in the 1960s and 1970s felt guilty about the Germany's Nazi legacy. These young people learned about World War II in school. Learning about the Holocaust and the structure of the Nazi regime makes for difficult reading for anyone; imagine reading the recent history knowing that your own parents (and other relatives) lived through the era. The RAF may have offered them an attractive and very simple way to absolve themselves of that guilt, at least in their own minds. The RAF was not attractive to people in the sense they were able to recruit thousands, or even hundreds, to join their armed struggle. The RAF always consisted of small number of members, but because of the incessant media coverage and the dramatic nature of the group itself, along with their ideological zeal,
they were fascinating terrorists. Baader wore Ray-Ban sunglasses and was romantically involved with Ensslin, who was one of many young women in the group. In 2002, the phrase 'terror chic' became popular in Germany, after t-shirts with the slogan 'Prada Meinhof' were featured on Berlin catwalks (Oltermann, The well-read terror, http://www.guardian.com.uk). It surprised many, but perhaps they could have seen it coming.

Recalling the intense socio-political climate in the Federal Republic at the time of the RAF’s formation, it bears mentioning that the first generation of the RAF were involved, albeit to varying degrees, in literary and popular culture. Ulrike Meinhof was a recognizable media presence before she assisted with Baader's escape. Gudrun Ensslin was an excellent student who had worked with writers such as Max Brod, Erich Fried and Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Baader had been participating in 'action-theater' events. They had comfortable lives as far as their socio-economic statuses were concerned, but they opted for underground criminal lives when artistic expression no longer sufficed. This image, one of artistic, educated, and thoughtful terrorists does not mesh with the current terrorist imagery. Well-known terrorists in the 21st century, such as Osama bin Laden, bring very different images to mind; the RAF terrorists never hid in secluded caves, they took to hiding in France and Holland, enjoying designer clothing and other material luxuries they funded with their numerous bank robberies. These young Germans captured the public imagination from the very beginning, and that grasp has yet to subside.

This author believes that Ulrike Meinhof has an undeniable role in this RAF fascination. She was plagued by a sense of self-doubt; she
was a thinker turned doer, and that has intrigued the public and artists alike. The story of her life inspired Elfriede Jelinek's play *Ulrike Maria Stuart*. Author Günther Grass wrote one chapter of *My Century* from the perspective of the teacher whose call to the police led to Meinhof's arrest. Meinhof “rears her head as an Opelia-like mythical vision in Heiner Müller's 1977 play *Hamletmachine*” (Oltermann). The RAF and its founders were celebrity terrorists; Germans and people abroad knew their names. Their pop culture popularity stemmed from personality-driven coverage, made easier because Meinhof was already a public figure. In 1997, a Danish magazine called *Damernes Verden* included a lengthy fashion spread under the title 'the mother of the revolution' with a picture series about Meinhof's fashion. Models were captured on film in RAF-inspired fashions, recreating scenes such as writing a manifesto while drinking coffee at a trendy cafe. In the photos' captions, two of the models were called Andreas and Ulrike (Mohr, *Die Prada-Meinhof-Bande*, 202, [http://www.wissen.speigel.de](http://www.wissen.speigel.de)).

In 2008, Uli Edel (director) and Bernd Eichinger (producer), released the now Oscar-nominated *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex (The Baader-Meinhof Complex)*. The director-producer duo met in film school in Munich, just as the student movement was turning from peaceful to dangerous. In a 2008 interview with Eichinger, he said, “they wanted a worldwide communist revolution, and they wanted to be part of it, which sounds a little crazy, you know, they were from West Germany. They considered the state as armed, through the police and military, so we
will arm ourselves, and it's okay to shoot each other.” When asked if the film brought up issues that Germans wanted to forget, Eichinger stated that overall, they've had very positive reactions, and that “the movie brought a lot of lively inter-generational discussion to the forefront” (Heron, Bernd Eichinger on the Baader Meinhof Complex, http://www.filmdetail.com). One could argue that this high-profile film, and the subsequent media attention it has received, especially in Germany, exposes younger audiences to this turbulent chapter of West German history. Popular German actors portray the RAF terrorists, most notably Moritz Bleibtreu as Baader, potentially making it easier for younger audiences to relate to the RAF and what they symbolized.

**The Red Army Faction online**

As of this writing, when one uses the keywords 'Red Army Faction' to search www.Google.com, nearly 700,000 results are generated. Search for Ulrike Meinhof, and approximately 225,000 results are displayed. Search Germany's www.Google.de, for 'Rote Armee Fraktion' and nearly 4.5 million results can be found. Among these results are pages condemning the actions of the group, but there are also pages that glamorize the group and its members. A majority of the pages recount the story of the group, some more factually and unbiased than others. On Google.de, about 270,000 pages are displayed after using the keywords 'Rote Armee Faktion T-shirt.' The shirt sales are not restricted to the German-speaking world; they are sold online by various companies that are headquartered across the globe, shipping across the globe as well. Replica wanted posters, messenger bags with the RAF emblem, bumper stickers and other RAF-themed merchandise sell online on hundreds of websites.

On www.youtube.com, hundreds of results appear when one searches for clips about the group. Suggested searches such as “RAF fashion” are displayed, signifying that enough YouTube users worldwide have searched for clips pertaining to the style of the RAF members. German YouTube users have uploaded portions of modern and dated German news programs pertaining to the RAF. For doing
so, they are thanked in multiple languages by fellow YouTube users, who are eager to view RAF-related material from its home country. Active political arguments can be followed by reading users' comments displayed under the video clips; one could think that the RAF is still a functioning organization based on the passionate words that are exchanged.

Internet users may be familiar with www.UrbanDictionary.com, a searchable database of colloquial language, slang phrases and other terms. Here one finds an entry for the term 'Prada Meinhof,' which reads, “Descriptive of those participating in political causes or campaigns who see marches or demonstrations as an alternative fashion show themselves as the main model” (http://www.urbandictionary.com). Communiqués and other RAF documents can be easily downloaded into PDF files on numerous websites, for example at www.germanguarderilla.com.

**Terrorism meets music**

In both German and English, various recording artists have chosen the Red Army Faction as song material. British “sinister pop songwriter” Luke Haines' song, “Baader Meinhof” is the first track on his 1996 album by the same name, with titles such as “Meet Me at the Airport,” “…It's a Moral Issue” and “Mogadishu” (http://www.artistdirect.com). German punk band Wizo, which dissolved in 2005 after eighteen years, came out with two RAF-themed songs, first R.A.F., followed by Kopfschuß (shot to the head). Artists Brian Eno, Marianne Faithfull and Chumbawamba recorded RAF-inspired tracks as well. In 2001, the hugely popular German artist Jan Delay (with Absolute Beginner) came out with a song called Söhne Stammheims (Sons of Stammheim). The original lyrics were vetoed by the record company, but even the toned down version made for an amount of public outcry, so many years after the RAF had disbanded. An excerpt from Söhne Stammheims seems to wistfully recall the days when Germans followed Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin:

Endlich sind die Terroristen weg, 
und es herrscht Ordnung und Ruhe und Frieden, 
und das bisschen Gesindel, dass noch in den Knästen steckt,
tut sowieso kein Mensch interessieren!

Nun kämpfen die Menschen nur noch für Hunde und Benzin, folgen Jürgen und Zlatko, und nicht mehr Baader und Ensslin, die die Unheil und Armut und Krankheit verbreiten, für sie herrschen sonnige Zeiten, weil kein bisschen Sprengstoff sie daran hindert, ihre Geschäfte zu betreiben (http://www.lyricsmania.com).

My English translation:

Finally the terrorists are gone, and order, quiet and peace reign, and the riffraff that's still stuck in prison, doesn't interest anyone anyway.

Now people fight for dogs and fuel, following Jürgen and Zlatko5, and not Baader and Ensslin, for the ones who spread harm and poverty and disease, sunny times reign, because no explosives are preventing them, from conducting their business.

The group did not make a video for the song, but that didn't stop fans from creating their own videos online, many of which include actual footage of the Stammheim trials, for example. The very notion that the RAF terrorists are compared to Big Brother stars indicates an ease in which RAF themes cross over into creative and popular mediums.

*Mythos RAF-Zur Vorstellung des Terrors*

An article in the Zeit in July 2003 asked Germans the following question: “Is it permissible to have an exhibition about German terrorism (Jessen, Mythos RAF; http://www.zeit.de). Permissible or not, in 2003, Germans were discussing the merits of an RAF-themed art exhibition in Berlin. The exhibition, *Mythos RAF-Zur Vorstellung des Terrors* (Regarding Terror: the RAF Exhibition), was held at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, and was organized by Klaus Biesenbach, Ellen Blumenstein,

5 Jürgen and Zlatko were popular German reality show starts from Germany's first season of Big Brother.
and Felix Ensslin. The son Gudrun Ensslin abandoned when he was six years old was co-curator for the RAF exhibition. He grew up with foster parents and knows his mother best as a picture on a wanted poster (Furlong, 'Terror' art challenges Germans, http://news.bbc.co.uk). Felix Ensslin, despite mixed feelings, acknowledges that there is something iconic about the RAF images, explained partially because, "in the 1970s, when we were growing up and going through adolescence, there were only two TV channels and a few major newspapers. So those images of the RAF, the headlines, became part of our reference” (Furlong).

The Bild and a number of conservative politicians took aim at the exhibition, which led the museum to return public funding for the show, and funded it through auctions of donated artwork instead. Two of the most vocal politicians offered opinions, but came from the same political party. Gerhard Baum and his party leader, Guido Westerwelle, of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) were the two politicians engaged in a public debate over the merits of this exhibition. For his part, Baum thought the exhibition was important, and claimed that art enables people to get closer to Germany's terrorist history in a meaningful way. The photos, he argued, bring things to the surface that don't usually get said or written. Party leader Westerwelle commented on Braun's sentiments, and indicated decisively that Baum should remember that liberals condone the spread of terrorism. Westerwelle spoke of a false romanticization of the RAF through this exhibit (Baum, Die Wurzeln des Terrorismus, http://www.sudduetsche.de).

It bears mentioning that the exhibition offered the public no new images; everything there had already been seen. The polarizing power of the RAF was demonstrated by the West German decision-makers (by facilitating the largest manhunt in West Germany's history, for example) and the greater press coverage, no doubt leading to heated debates across German dinner tables and in schools. The wounds of the German Autumn and the RAF era in general remain open for many Germans. In December 2008, I asked my German host father, Reinhold, what he thought of the exhibition five years earlier. At age 58, he recalls the RAF era in great detail, and is generally interested in politics. He
explained to me that, regardless of what is being said about the RAF and by whom, the people who still vehemently condemn the group are the ones who did so as the RAF was active. The people who have an amount of respect for the ideals the RAF represented, but did not approve of the violent means, were the same people who were generally supportive in the 1970s. He does not think that the RAF polarization will ever fade.

As evidence of this continued RAF polarization, I offer an example from 2008. Four blocks of a downtown Berlin street were renamed Rudi-Dutschke-Straße, and the public debate was frenzied and ample. The idea to rename the blocks after student leader Dutschke came in 2004 and originated from the editorial offices of Die Tageszeitung (The Daily News) a left-wing daily newspaper. It was only after “fierce legal battles and a bitterly contested neighborhood referendum, which involved antagonists not entirely dissimilar to those of four decades earlier: Christian Democrats vigorously against, Greens and assorted lefties for” (Hockenos, 'Taz' Year Thirty, www.thenation.com). The sides remain the same, and even more interesting, perhaps, is that Rudi-Dutschke-Straße begins at the Tageszeitung's headquarters and ends at the Springer Publishing building. Fifty-seven percent of the residents of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg section of Berlin, where the street is located, voted to change the street name to honor Dutschke. Even after this clear electoral victory, the CDU circulated petitions in the hopes of garnering 500,000 signatures (Kruezberger wollen Rudi-Dutschke-Straße, www.focus.de). Their plan failed, and the celebrations were lively on April 30, 2008, when the street was officially renamed. In the course of my research, I found photos that Internet users posted from the day's events. The photos
capture a celebration, but one dotted with anti-Springer and anti-CDU placards. The crowds present spanned generations, as one could see older Germans and school-aged Germans present for the festivities.

A 2007 poll conducted by Stern magazine attempted to answer a complicated question about modern perceptions of RAF members. The magazine asked Germans if the RAF terrorists were fehlgeleitete Weltverbesserer oder brutale Kriminelle, misguided people who sought to improve the world or brutal criminals. Fifty-one percent of the respondents indicated that the RAF members were brutal criminals, thirty percent responded that they were misguided but well-intentioned, and nineteen percent responded that they were unsure (Ex-RAF-Terroristen waren 'brutale Kriminelle, www.stern.de).

**Bettina Röhl**

In May 1973, Ulrike Meinhof sent a letter to her daughters from Stammheim, which read: “Cross your fingers and hope we get somewhere with our hunger strike. There’s nothing else you can do yet, just cross your fingers. Write again. See you! Like to play football some time? I’d love to, naturally” (Aust 199). The twin daughters, who had been brought back to West Germany by Stefan Aust and their father, Klaus Rainer Röhl, after Meinhof abandoned them at a Palestinian orphan camp, have a difficult past with which to contend. One daughter, Bettina Röhl, has become a journalist, albeit a very different one than either of her parents. She is admittedly conservative, and she appears on German news and television programs frequently as a voice of the right, particularly around RAF commemorative days. She, too, has become a household name in Germany, further contributing to public interest in her infamous mother and the Red Army Faction.

The daughters of Meinhof were undoubtedly left with many questions about their mother. Bettina has made her quest for a better understanding public, most notably in 2002, when she launched a campaign to locate her mother’s secretly preserved brain. Meinhof’s brain had been preserved after
her state autopsy, but it was discovered in 2002 that two men, one a prosecutor and one a doctor, were collaborating in order to publish an article about the brain. No state officials have claimed knowledge about Meinhof’s brain or the research, and prosecutors in Stuttgart investigated the legality of the brain’s removal (Dead terrorist’s brain row, www.cnn.com). The basis of the article was a comparison of Meinhof’s brain to the brain of a teacher, who murdered his wife and seven children in 1913 (Boytes, Daughter defies State over Ulrike Meinhof’s brain, www.timesonline.uk). The teacher who murdered his family was known, just as Meinhof was, as being mild-mannered. The hope of the researchers was to find common abnormalities in both brains, which they claim to have done. As their research for the article was underway, information began to leak out, and that is when Bettina Röhl heard about it and took action.

Bettina made it clear that the brain’s hidden storage and subsequent testing was unacceptable. In the Magdeburger Volksstimme newspaper in 2002, Bettina wrote that “you can only say there has been a proper funeral if the brain is buried with the body. A dead terrorist has a right to be treated fairly and the right to a decent burial” (www.cnn.com). Bettina was able to piece together the time line of the brain’s movements, but only after several months and some investigative setbacks. In her summary of the events, the brain was examined in a clinic at Tübingen University under the direction of the aforementioned prosecutor and doctor. The doctor, Peiffer, reported to Bettina that he had discovered “neurological abnormalities in the area of the brain which deals with emotional response” (www.cnn.com). This had led some, including Röhl, to believe that a logical explanation exists for the dramatic changes Meinhof made in her life.

One can imagine the headlines and discussion in the German media throughout the Meinhof brain debacle. Bettina appeared on various German news programs, condemning her mother’s terrorist actions, but indicating that the research may explain why her mother abandoned her family and went underground. Röhl also did some of her own research, and she interviewed family members and former friends of her mother’s who knew her in the aftermath of her 1962 brain surgery to remove a tumor.
Meinhof’s five-hour surgery took place just days after the birth of her twins. Throughout the pregnancy, the expecting mother was plagued by intense headaches and impaired vision (Aust 22). The tumor that surgeons expected to find was not present, and instead, an enlarged blood vessel that could not be removed was identified as her problem. Meinhof remained in the hospital for three months after the operation before returning to her home, her new twin daughters and her writing at konkret (23). In writings on her personal website, Bettina seems convinced that the political left, specifically Joschka Fischer and Otto Schily, knew about the doctor’s findings, but chose to keep them hidden for their own political reason. She accuses them of preferring Meinhof to remain the same in the minds of Germans, a journalist whose desire for an improved society drove her to a drastic revolutionary lifestyle. Bettina contends that the doctor’s findings harm the validity of the RAF’s entire political foundation, because they indicate that abrupt change from mother to terrorist was the fault of her flawed brain (www.bettinaroehl.de).

Critical words from Bettina Röhl were also aimed at the 2008 film The Baader-Meinhof Complex. After viewing the film, she characterized it as “unabashed hero worship” (Paterson, Baader Meinhof film stirs controversy in Germany, www.telegraph.co.uk). Throughout her career as a journalist and author, Bettina has been consistently critical of her mother and the RAF. She published Making Communism Fun in 2006, in which she analyzed her parents’ konkret writings of the 1960s and 1970s. She is critical of both parents, but her mother receives the greater deal of attention. The book is a unique combination of family, journalistic and political history. After years of research, Bettina’s writing chronicles the East German government’s funding of the left-wing magazine that provided both of her parents with paychecks. According to Röhl, the GDR sent considerable sums of money per issue, and in an effort to conceal the GDR connection, konkret would include at least one anti-communist article per issue (Röhl, So macht Kommunismus Spass, 144-157). As I read Röhl’s one-of-a-kind book, I was struck by the sarcasm that she employed in her deconstruction of her mother’s political writings. For those interested in Meinhof’s political thinking and how it progressed from the mid-1960s until her
involvement with the RAF, this book is required reading.

**Astrid Proll in the spotlight**

Former RAF member Astrid Proll, who was known as the group's best 'under pressure' getaway driver for a time, is a media sensation in her own right. She is one of the few first generation RAF members still living and frequently grants interviews. Proll even published a coffee table book of RAF photos in 1998, an RAF family album of sorts. Released in German and English to critical acclaim, the book features photos of the RAF taken between 1967-1977. On the inside cover of the English edition, Proll writes that, “this book is an approach to my own history as well as the mythologized history of the RAF” (Proll, *Baader Meinhof: Pictures on the Run 67-77*). She fortifies the mythologized history of the RAF with her chosen photographs; a striking example is a photo of Baader with his Ray-Bans and cocky grin, looking more like a rock star than underground criminal.

*The Guardian* interviewed Proll in October of 2002, twenty-five years after Baader, Ensslin and Raspe were found dead in their Stammheim cells. The article as a whole is fascinating; Proll's reflections are insightful and illuminating. When asked for the *Guardian* interview about the RAF in general, she said, “The RAF wasn't healthy for anybody—neither the participants, nor their children, nor the State, but it happened and you have to deal with it. But you also have to remember that it was a group of no more than 30 people, yet it did something unheard of—it took up a concept and followed it through in a very German-determined way” (Connolly, *Astrid Proll's journey to Terror Chic*, www.guardian.co.uk). Perhaps more telling is her response when asked what the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Stammheim deaths meant to her, “I don't know, nothing. It's a media event, really. I at least want to get some money out of it, you know what I mean, and it'll help my profile. I earn my money from the RAF, so why not keep it up?” (Connolly). The irony is evident; Proll was once one of the most wanted terrorists in Europe as part of the anti-capitalistic RAF, yet she now makes her living through media appearances and book sales because of her participation in the RAF. Certainly the
commemorative days have assisted in Proll's media inquiries. In a 2002 *Spiegel* interview, Proll was asked about the nature of the RAF, she said, “I don't even know if the RAF was a political group. It was more like a self-pretentiousness of an entire generation” (Mohr).

The RAF is a large piece of the German postwar puzzle. For some, Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, Raspe, Meins and other deceased RAF members, will remain martyrs, or at least entrancing figures of German history. For others, the RAF was nothing more than a ruthless gang of selfish killers, victims of nothing who were treated better than they should have been. The truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. One person's accidental terrorist is another person's cold-blooded murderer. A new government in a new state, with its unique historical baggage, reacted the best way it knew how. The past obviously cannot be undone, but one must wonder how many more decades of young Germans will be fascinated by the actions of a long-gone terrorist group called the Red Army Faction.

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6 Mohr, "Ich weiß gar nicht, ob die RAF eine politische Gruppe war. Sie war eher so etwas wie die Selbstannahme einer ganzen Generation."
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