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**COUNTER-CULTURES IN GERMANY  
AND CENTRAL EUROPE**

FROM *STURM UND DRANG*  
TO BAADER-MEINHOF

STEVE GILES & MAIKE OERGEL  
(EDS)



PETER LANG

Oxford • Bern • Berlin • Bruxelles • Frankfurt am Main • New York • Wien

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## **Contents**

Acknowledgements	9
STEVE GILES	
Introduction: Culture as Counter-Culture	11
GUSTAV FRANK	
<i>Sturm und Drang</i> : Towards a New Logic of Passion and the Logic of German Counter-Cultures	25
NICHOLAS SAUL AND SUSAN TEBBUTT	
Gypsies, Utopias and Counter-Cultures in Modern German Cultural History	43
MAIKE OERGEL	
Revolutionaries, Traditionalists, Terrorists? The <i>Burschenschaft</i> and the German Counter-Cultural Tradition	61
CARL WEBER	
Performing Counter-Culture in the <i>Vorstadt</i> : Nestroy's Theatre in Times of Reaction and Revolt	87
MALCOLM HUMBLE	
<i>Das Reich der Erfüllung</i> : A Theme in Wilhelmine Counter-Culture	105
DAVID MIDDLEY	
'Los von Berlin!' Anti-Urbanism as Counter-Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Germany	121
MARGARETE KOHLENBACH	
Walter Benjamin, Gustav Wyneken and the <i>Jugendkulturbewegung</i>	137

6	<i>Contents</i>
COLIN RIORDAN	
The Green Alternative in Germany 1900–1930	155
SABINE EGGER	
The Roots of the East German 'Green' Movement in the 1950s	171
STEFAN BUSCH	
Bluthochzeit mit Mutter Erde: Repression und Regression in der Blut-und-Boden-Literatur	193
STEVE GILES	
Limits of the Visible: Kracauer's Photographic Dystopia	213
JEROME CARROLL	
The Art of the Imperceptible: A Discussion of the Aesthetics of Wolfgang Welsch	241
CARMEL FINNAN	
The Challenges of Zürich's Autonomous Youth Movement	259
MATTHIAS UECKER	
Aufrufe, Bekenntnisse, Analysen: Zur Politisierung der westdeutschen Literatur in den sechziger Jahren	273
INGO CORNILS	
Writing the Revolution: the Literary Representation of the German Student Movement as Counter-Culture	295
JAMIE TRNKA	
The West German Red Army Faction and its Appropriation of Latin American Urban Guerilla Struggles	315
GERRIT-JAN BERENDSE	
Aesthetics of (Self-)Destruction: Melville's <i>Moby Dick</i> , Brecht's <i>The Measures Taken</i> and the Red Army Faction	333

<i>Contents</i>	7
UWE SCHÜTTE	
'Heilige, die im Dunkel leuchten': Der Mythos der RAF im Spiegel der Literatur nachgeborener Autoren	353
MORAY MCGOWAN	
Ulrike Meinhof im Deutschen Drama der Neunziger Jahre: Drei Beispiele	373
Notes on Contributors	395

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JAMIE TRNKA

## The West German Red Army Faction and its Appropriation of Latin American Urban Guerilla Struggles

The West German Red Army Faction emerged in the context of international protest movements around 1968. While its members were critical of the West German student movements, they shared with them a common concern for the revolutionary texts and struggles of the day, drawing heavily in their own theoretical production on texts by the Black Panthers, Mao Zedong, and Latin American urban guerilla groups. Their reliance on and citation of texts that lie – at least superficially – outside of the West German context raises important theoretical questions for students of political theory and cultural studies alike, touching on ideologies of physicality, practices of communication in political movements, and violence and the discursive articulation of violence around other(ed) political subjects. By tracing a theoretical shift around the '68 movement from a political concern for Third World liberation struggles to the radical identifications with the Third World performed by the RAF and other armed groups in the seventies, it is possible to identify what Arlene Teraoka has described as the Third World of German cultural fantasies: 'not a geographical space or political reality, but a self-referential German discourse in which "Third World" conceits are the stuff of which post-war leftist identities are made' (Adelson, 608). Teraoka argues convincingly for the need to investigate *how* and *why* particular discourses on the Third World are employed, 'the imaginative uses they serve, the cultural and political needs they meet' (Teraoka, 5). The elaborate process through which Latin America and other parts of the Third World are discursively made should be understood in the context of discussions of the role of the (German) intellectual in post-war political-cultural processes more generally,

and in this respect it is useful to situate the RAF within larger intellectual debates of the time which attempt to locate an 'emancipatory German (and European) self' (Adelson, 608) in the imagined space of the Third World.

The development of this discursive making in the context of the protest movements around 1968 in West Germany proceeds first through the articulation of analogy between the political situation in Third World countries and in the Federal Republic, and then on to more affective identifications with Third World struggles and revolutionary leaders. In what follows, I will trace this shift from articulation to analogy to identification and appropriation of Third World liberation struggles with an emphasis on Latin America through specific examples taken from the later years of the student popular movement, early armed groups such as the Tupamaros West Berlin, and, finally, the Red Army Faction.

In his historical account of student protest movements in the US and West Germany, Ingo Juchler has already pointed to the relative lack of attention on the part of historians to the reception of Third World liberation texts in the student popular movements in West Germany – especially texts produced in Latin America and in the Black Power Movement in the US (Juchler, 19). This failure to attend to theoretical production from the Third World within what is already a relatively small body of literature on these movements is, on the one hand, unsurprising: it may be read as symptomatic of larger, institutional failures to incorporate Third World discourses into our analyses of history, culture, and politics. On the other hand, it is indeed surprising insofar as the movements begin and end with reference to the Third World in so many ways: the December 1964 anti-Tschombé demonstration in Berlin is widely considered to be the first large-scale event of the movement. (Tschombé became a particularly controversial figure around 1961, as a suspect in the murder of opposition leader Patrice Lumumba of the *Movement National Congolais* and first Prime Minister of the Independent Republic of Congo.) The dissolution of the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (and with it the movement leadership) in 1970 was, at least in part, prompted by a series of intense internal debates sparked by differing levels of identification with Third World struggles and

models for social change, as evidenced by protocols of SDS delegate conferences as early as 1967 (see Juchler, 242–8).

The shift from student popular to urban guerrilla movements hinges on the mobilization of radical sectors of the movement around identifications with the Third World.<sup>1</sup> Different sets of identifications are deployed to different ends within what is too often treated as a more or less monolithic student protest movement that moves seamlessly into violent terrorism, masking the tensions within and between the movement and the various armed groups active in West Germany around this time. In the context of this series of developments, I will argue that the failure of the RAF and other urban guerrilla groups to engage with the full complexity of their identifications with Latin American groups is not an isolated phenomenon so much as it is an extreme case. The consequences of this failure are substantial: material, political struggles in the Third World are subordinated to the discursive construction of a Third World space of resistance in which the German revolutionary subject is central to the struggle's successful resolution. While such identifications with can be traced throughout the Third World Movement in Germany, from the 1950s concern with the Korean war and Algeria at least through the 1980s solidarity with Nicaragua and El Salvador;<sup>2</sup> what emerges as distinct in the case of West German urban guerrilla groups is a radical *physical* identification in struggle that supersedes moral or political identifications. This ideology of physicality shaped rhetorical and communicative strategies, and privileged an analysis of the social-symbolic dimensions of material violence over the implications of violence as such.

From the beginning of the West German student movement, Latin America played a particularly important role in theoretical and symbolic terms. The significance of the Cuban revolution and of US

1 The concern for specifically Latin American figures and organizations in this mobilization is by no means self-evident: much research has yet to be done as to why Latin America figures so prominently in the radical student movement and in the Third World Movement in Germany more generally. Unfortunately, I am not able to address the widespread East German concern with Latin America here.

2 For a general history of the Third World Movement in West Germany, see Balsen and Rössel.

foreign policy toward Cuba for the formation of a student New Left can hardly be overstated, particularly given the tendency to focus on protests against US activity in Vietnam to the exclusion of other international catalysts in the movement. Assigned utopian status in segments of the student movement, Cuba served as a space for the imagination of radical social change, shifting the focus of revolutionary activity to the creation of *subjective* conditions for revolution and the creation of Che's 'new man' as revolutionary agent. As Juchler puts it:

[D]ie junge Revolution in dem Drittenweltland Kuba [dient] den westlichen Studenten wie intellektuellen dazu, ihre eigenen gesellschaftspolitischen Vorstellungen und Wünsche auf das fremde, von der eigenen Lebens- und Erfahrungswelt weit entfernte Land zu projizieren (Juchler 46; see also 203, 205).<sup>3</sup>

The rejection of the dominant social orders in both the socialist East and capitalist West in favor of the Cuban model and a Third World, anti-imperialist perspective shaped much of the theoretical and practical development that was to follow (see Juchler, 79).

Even those committees established in solidarity with groups outside Latin America remained connected to it in key ways. Press statements released at the SDS-organized Vietnam conference in Frankfurt in May 1966 suggested that Vietnam could serve as an example for Latin American and other Third World struggles. Many of West Germany's Black Panther solidarity committees also actively discussed Latin American texts and politics, influenced by the Panthers' own strong connections to Cuba. As a focal point of internationalism and host to a series of significant international cultural and political events, Cuba was an important locus of the West German Left's interest in Latin America.<sup>4</sup> With German translations

3 Susan Buck-Morss' recent work interrogating the relationship of the Haitian revolution and Hegel's philosophy does well to point out how long a trend such selective dis- and relocations of Latin American experiences and ideas may in fact be in German intellectual history.

4 The most notable of these were the 1968 Havana Cultural Conference, the 1966 Tricontinental Conference (organized in the interest of providing a forum in which to address some of the common concerns of leaders from Africa, Asia, and Latin America), and the Latin American Solidarity Organization (OLAS) conference. The 1967 OLAS conference motto was adopted by the SDS-

of Che Guevara's writings, reception of his work and interest in Cuba increased still further in SDS and other leftist circles.<sup>5</sup> Following the death of student protester Benno Ohnesorg in June 1967, the increasingly radical anti-authoritarian segment of the SDS looked to Guevara's texts with the intention of putting his ideas into practice in West Germany. The organizational model in question, Guevara and Debray's focus strategy, advocated the development of small, revolutionary cells in the rural areas of 'underdeveloped' countries in the Americas. These cells would be capable of defeating institutional military forces with the support of the people. Further, the cells would develop revolutionary agents and cultivate the subjective conditions for revolution as catalysts in the revolutionary struggle and, later, in the formation of the new society.<sup>6</sup> It was the Brazilian leader Carlos Marighella's adaptation of the focus strategy to the urban centers of Latin America that later served as a model for West German armed groups.<sup>7</sup>

organized International Vietnam Conference of the following year: 'Die Pflicht jedes Revolutionärs ist es, die Revolution zu machen.' As Juchler points out, the alliance of international movements represented at the Tricontinental conference and in particular the OLAS strengthened still further the already 'im Verlauf des Jahres 1967 verstärkt vollzogene Identifikation mit den Kämpfen der Befreiungsbewegungen in der Dritten Welt'. In particular, 'die proklamierte "Allianz" der Guerrillabewegungen Lateinamerikas und der durch [Stokely] Carmichael vertretenen militanten Afro-Amerikaner auf der OLAS-Konferenz, erweckte bei den radikalisierten Studenten den Eindruck einer sich formierenden "neuer Internationale" der Dritten Welt' (Juchler, 392).

5 In August 1966 it was the SDS publication *Fazi!* that first published German translations of Che's 'Socialism and the New Man in Cuba' and 'Guerrilla Warfare: A Method'.

6 See Debray. The educative/formative work of the cells was theorized in detail by Guevara in a number of different texts, most importantly 'Socialism and the New Man in Cuba', which seeks to counter the notion that socialism destroys the individual in favor of the social by outlining the actualization of individual potential in service of society. Following Guevara's death in Bolivia in October 1967 during an attempt to put the rural guerrilla strategy into practice, Carlos Marighella developed the urban guerrilla strategy, adapting the organizational principles of Guevara and Debray to the urban centers of Latin America and, in 1968, launching an urban guerrilla organization in Brazil.

7 Dutschke and Krahl pick up this language explicitly as early as 1967. One example: 'Die "Propaganda der Schüsse" (Che) in der "Dritten Welt" muß durch die "Propaganda der Tat" in den Metropolen vervollständigt werden, welche eine Urbanisierung ruraler Guerilla-Tätigkeit geschichtlich möglich

Increasingly, movement leaders like Rudi Dutschke emphasized the importance of 'sinliche Erfahrung'<sup>8</sup> of revolutionary agitation in the metropolies. This experience was contrasted to what they regarded as theoretical socialisms without significant practical elements. The concept of armed propaganda – so central to Latin American models – provided one possible means of such an active, sensual experience of revolutionary activity, and was discussed at length within the SDS. The shift from a theoretical linking of the Third World and the metropolies in political and economic terms to an identification with the Third World and Third World figures themselves proceeds through this perceived need for 'sensual experience' and fetishization of physical bodies engaged in struggle.

Terms of embodiment are prominent in attempts to relate struggles in Latin America to the experiences of students in the West. Student leader Hans-Jürgen Krahl's position provides a concise example: 'Der Kampf der Guerilleros dort lehrt die revoltierenden Studenten hier eine politische Moral der Kompromißlosigkeit, deren Verkörperung nicht zuletzt Che Guevara darstellte', (Krahl, in Juchler, 273). Embodied political ideals serve as a vehicle for the simplification of theoretical models advanced within the movement even as they complicate the question of identification; the difference is that of positioning oneself in solidarity with urban guerrillas and the insistence on *being* urban guerrilla leaders, aspiring to re-center the revolutionary struggle in the metropolies. This desire to identify with oppressed groups is in keeping with larger post-war German discourses explored in the work of critics like Sieg, Teraoka, and Zanpou. Cultural memories of fascism worked in tandem with an increasing sense of internationalism to move the student-popular movement to question West German complicity in oppression of Other peoples in an attempt to repudiate their own sense of guilt and

macht. Der städtische Guerrillero ist der Organisator schlechthiniger Irregularität als Dekonstruktion des Systems der repressiven Institutionen' (cited in Juchler, 242).

8 This phrase occurs in Dutschke and Krahl's 1967 'Organisationsreferat' (see Juchler, 242). Contacts were made with Latin American student groups, and some German students in fact traveled to Latin America to participate in revolutionary cells (see Juchler, 247, no 383).

shame through forms of active resistance against contemporary social problems and to position themselves as oppressed.<sup>9</sup>

After 1969, the tendency to form urban guerrilla groups based on the Latin American model became more pronounced in West Germany, particularly within the anti-authoritarian faction of the SDS. A more serious attempt to form urban guerrilla groups and to generate armed propaganda was consistent not only with shifting identifications with Latin America and Latin American guerrilla leaders, but also with a strong concern for the dissemination of alternative information and the media critique that had shaped the student popular movement from its inception, culminating in the 1968 anti-Springer campaign.

The critique of popular media is significant for opposition movements not least because media concentration limits the vocabulary available for the discussion, description, and dissemination of social movements and their ideals. (The RAF and other armed groups also had a well-developed media critique, expressed in many of their communiqués and position papers.) In light of the concentration of popular communicative structures in a conservative media network, the development of alternative modes of communication itself became a site of contestation. In this context, I read the move in West Germany first to mobilize around and later to identify with 'foreign' struggles not just as symptomatic of the internationalism and anti-imperialist agenda of the '68 movements more generally, but as an attempt to recuperate a vocabulary of resistance from different social and political struggles located in some way outside (or 'untainted' by) the German tradition. Privileging this communicative element enables us to trace a parallel shift within the student movement from the use of political analogy to Latin American urban guerrilla struggles and a preference for more 'traditional' communication in the form of public speeches, leaflets, protests, and happenings, to an identification with the Third World and adoption of extreme forms of highly mediated material communication, particularly the armed propaganda of the terrorist act, modeled on the urban guerrilla concept. The communicative-critical element of the

9 The relation of the 1968 movement to fascism has been explored in a number of popular and academic accounts. For a particularly interesting example, see With.



terrorist act is central: the disruption of public spectacle by means of political violence is not aimed exclusively at the object of a particular attack, but at the people watching.<sup>10</sup>

The relation of communication to the body in extreme, material communication suggests a series of questions about the invocation of Latin American revolutionary figures by armed groups. The alienation of many leftist groups from more 'traditional' forms of communication with the increasingly sensationalistic media coverage of the movement and subculture scene, as well as the increasing police violence toward demonstrators, is key to the radicalization of identifications with the Third World in West Germany of the late sixties. Ralf Reinders, a member of the *Unschweifende Haschrebellen* and later *Bewegung 2. Juni*, reflects that the experience of police violence solidified identifications with victims of violence in the Third World and the Black Power movement in the US: 'Da haben die Leute begriffen, was Rassismus ist, als sie selbst was auf den Kopf bekamen. Vom Gefühl her begriffen: Du kriegst was auf den Kopf, weil du anders aussiehst. Vollkommen egal, was du machst' (Fritsch and Reinders, 17). This physical element of identification – 'wir kriegen alle was auf den Kopf' – in tandem with already pronounced conceptual identifications – Che as embodiment of a revolutionary struggle that is also *our* struggle – culminated in the mobilization of urban guerrilla groups in West Germany around Latin American figures not exactly as embodied difference, but as a kind of 'embodied sameness': different from all that is unjust in Germany past and present, the same as the struggling West German guerrillas. What remained of difference was to be overcome precisely through physical participation in armed struggle: 'Der Kampf selbst proletarisiert die Kämpfer' was a common thread in written statements of West German armed groups, most likely picking up on the elaboration of proletarianization in Guevara's writings.

To what extent did armed groups attempt to use the bodies of Latin American 'heroes' like Che in place of other possible

expressions of the critical concepts they wished to articulate? Is the recourse to the corporeal, to the embodiment of particular experiences another attempt among so many in their written and enacted propaganda texts to exceed the theory of the theory-practice dialectic? How is Che's body, the bodies produced in the creation of the 'new man', the bodies implicated in the creation of one, two, many Vietnams played out in the very physical communication of ideas through terrorist propaganda and its logic of the disruption of public spectacle? The privileging of bodies engaged in struggle enabled the completion of a radical identification with Latin America and the inauguration of the urban guerrilla in West Germany; arguably, laying claim to the experience of Latin American guerrillas and invoking the Panther slogan 'trust your experience' involved claiming the lived experiences of others uncritically *as* their own and inadvertently performing the isolation and cooptation of resistance movements against which the groups claimed to fight.

The recourse to the Third World as the site of the sensual/corporeal, as the object of analysis of first world language and theory, but never itself the site of theoretical production, is problematic to say the least, obscuring real Third World agency and reproducing the terms of colonialist scholarship critiqued by postcolonial theorists.<sup>11</sup> The theorization of urban guerrilla struggle, the social and political analysis that underlies it in Latin America, is largely obscured in the process of the West German appropriation of these organizational structures and experiences, as is apparent in the case of the Tupamaros West Berlin.

The Tupamaros West Berlin took their name from the Uruguayan guerrilla group MLN-Tupamaros, themselves named for the historical indigenous resistance leader Tupac Amaru. The first and best-known act of the Tupamaros West Berlin was a failed bombing of a Jewish community house in 1969 on the thirty-first anniversary of the *Reichskristallnacht*, accompanied by a communiqué titled 'Schalom und Napalm' in which the group condemned West German philo-Semitism as preventing serious critique of Israeli aggression against Palestine, and suggested that reparations paid by Germany to the Israeli government served only to support the military conflict in

10 For example, the bombing of a department store in protest against 'consumer terror' does not have as its aim the destruction of consumer goods, but the disruption of normative patterns of consumption, socio-economic transactions, and those publicly enacted social relations that take place in a department store on a day-to-day basis.

11 For a particularly detailed example, see Mignolo.

the Middle East. The group concluded that a true anti-fascism could only consist in solidarity with Palestine: 'Unsere Solidarität wird sich nicht mehr mit verbal-abstrakten Aufklärungsmethoden a là Vietnam zufriedengeben, sondern die enge Verflechtung des zionistischen Israel mit der faschistischen BRD durch konkrete Aktionen schonungslos bekämpfen' (reprinted in Baumann, 77). Not surprisingly, the attack met with strong criticism from across the political spectrum. The group wished to move away from what they designate as the verbal/abstract, to the concrete/active. They assert their 'wahren Antifaschismus' as 'Tupamaros' intervening physically in the political context of Germany to effect change in the *Middle East* conflict. This confused overlaying of diverse international situations and ideological affiliations expressed in 'Schalom und Napalm' is common among the early armed groups that emerged out of the Berlin subculture. The practical intervention of the group is predicated on both an active identification with the Tupamaros as well as a political analogy to the Middle East: their disidentification with 'fascist Germans' proceeds through their self-positioning in opposition to legacies of imperialism and fascism as Tupamaros. In their violent intervention into the Middle East conflict, they suggest that the Tupamaros West Berlin are to Germany what Palestinian terrorists are to Israel, and their position as Tupamaros is reinforced by their physical participation in armed struggle, as already suggested above.

Interestingly, it was over a year after this event that the Tupamaros West Berlin achieved the height of their publicity, launching the first of many public debates on the role of the press in covering terrorist activities. *Monitor*, a WDR television program, broadcast what was supposedly an interview with a core member of the Tupamaros West Berlin, who claimed responsibility for the failed bombing in addition to several bank robberies. The press condemned *Monitor*,<sup>12</sup> and commentary on the Tupamaros West Berlin was confined for the most part to moments of pseudo-righteous concern for the 'authentic' Tupamaros in Uruguay, apparently launched more in the interest of obscuring the agenda – however problematic – of the West Berlin underground than in any genuine solidarity with their

12 The *Münchener Merkur* went so far as to describe the broadcast as an 'anarchistischer Mummenschanz auf deutschen Bildschirmen' (Kersten).

Latin American namesakes. Introduced by such dramatic lines as: 'Tupamaros – das sind in Lateinamerika Rebellen gegen das Regime der Diktatoren und die Unterdrückung durch die Besitzenden. Tupamaros – das sind in der Bundesrepublik gewalttätige Wirkköpfe' ('Tupamaros'), the public response to the group failed to engage with the situations in either Uruguay or the Federal Republic. As it would happen, the *Monitor* Tupamaro was a fake, but after a week of editorializing, only a handful of papers even bothered to devote significant space to the discovery.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, the RAF identifies itself as participating within an urban guerrilla struggle from its inception, but does not rely on such direct appropriations as the Tupamaros West Berlin/Munich, whose very names perform an identificatory appropriation and calls for recognition *as* other.<sup>14</sup> This difference is key to the wider public understanding of the relationship of West German urban guerrillas to the Third World, particularly since the RAF – and this can be argued in terms of sheer volume of media coverage and state response, as well as of various attempts retrospectively to represent and negotiate the experience of the RAF of the 1970s – has had a more lasting and profound impact on (West) German culture and politics than have other armed groups. In its invocation of the theoretical production and historical experience of Third World liberation struggles, the RAF

13 The discovery was first publicized by the *Berliner Extrablatt*, an extra-parliamentary oppositional paper. For the popular media, the Tupamaros remained nothing more than 'criminals,' 'psychopaths,' whose 'political perversion' had no place in public discourse.

14 Organizationally, the RAF's more traditional Leninist model with a conspiratorial underground diverged significantly from Marghella's model, and they tended to isolate themselves from other radical groups rather than moving fluidly in and out of the underground as did the Tupamaros West Berlin or even the *Bewegung 2. Juni*, both of which had a much more direct connection to Latin America at least in terms of their organizational structures. On this organizational difference, see Juchler, 376. Stefan Wisniewski, a former RAF member, reflects: 'Ein Konsens gab es innerhalb der Bewegung, dem, was von 68 übriggeblieben war: daß eine Revolution, soweit sie hier stattfinden kann, einen antimperialistischen Charakter haben muß. Daß sie auch hier nur eine Chance hat zu bestehen, wenn sie die Bewegungen in der Dritten Welt berücksichtigt. Ohne Vietnam, ohne die Entwicklung in der Dritten Welt, wäre die RAF nicht geworden, was sie dann geworden ist. Unsere Hoffnungssträger waren die Tupamaros und die Black Panther' (Wisniewski, 21).

stylized the Third World as a space of revolutionary violence. In addition to identifying itself with these struggles in a more general sense, the group invoked specific historical examples of Third World struggles in the written elaboration of its positions, often de-contextualizing and isolating these examples from their origins in the material realities of Third World countries and peoples, and used them to their own immediate ends to discuss the possibility of revolution and the constitution of the revolutionary subject in the context of the metropolises.

While acknowledging the practical and theoretical origins of the urban guerrilla concept in Latin America, the RAF insisted that it could be applied to revolutionary activity in the metropolises with the same effect: 'Das Konzept Stadtguerilla stammt aus Lateinamerika. Es ist dort, was es auch hier nur sein kann: die revolutionäre Interventionsmethode von insgesamt schwachen revolutionären Kräften' (RAF, 'Konzept Stadtguerilla', 41). The RAF not only equates the revolutionary potential of the Third World and West Germany, but, in so doing, assumes that the material manifestations of social contradictions, which lead ultimately to the development of revolutionary consciousness, are equally felt in the first and Third Worlds. By rooting the plausibility of armed struggle in West Germany in an internationalist conceptualization of revolutionary struggle in general, the RAF likewise underestimates the investment of citizens of the metropolises in maintaining systems designed to uphold social privilege in the global order, even as what the RAF identifies as the domestic Third World suffers under and resists social oppression in the domestic context. Citing the work of the Italian communist group *Il Manifesto*,<sup>15</sup> the RAF maintained that imperialism could not be overthrown without revolution in the West; only through unified international struggle could the force of imperialism be fragmented and, in this fragmented state, destroyed (RAF, 'Konzept', 33-4). In this manner, the RAF re-located the revolutionary subject to the metropolises and minimized practical differences between urban guerrilla initiatives in the first and Third Worlds.

15 *Il Manifesto* was an Italian Leftist group that was shut out of the Italian Communist Party in 1969. The RAF drew extensively on their 200 Theses, published in 1971.

Against this background of theoretical appropriation, the RAF failed to sustain positive aspects of their anti-imperialist critique or to see themselves implicated in the social relationships which enable the (re)production of imperialism. Yet even as many of the First Generation RAF's theoretical and practical interventions were rooted in particular forms of appropriation of the Third World, I believe that it is likewise important to point out that many aspects of their critique undertake the important work of illustrating the relationship of West Germany to larger global processes. In particular, the group criticized West Germany's support of US foreign military interventions and West German firms' lucrative military production.<sup>16</sup> Highly critical of the situation of the working poor in general, they drew attention as well to the poor working conditions for foreign workers in Germany, and criticized the *Ausländergesetz* as enabling ghettoization and surveillance of foreign workers (RAF, 'Dem Volk', 127-31). By focusing their attentions on a more sustained analysis of these and other groups, which they identified as marginalized in the domestic context, and on the concrete connections thereof to Third World struggles, the group might have been more successful in conveying to a broader public its critique of political and economic systems globally; the insistence on a radical identification with the Third World detracted from this project as it were, and contributed to their own marginalization from the West German public.

Already in its first written statement – published, significantly, with the Black Panther symbol – the RAF distances itself from the West German Left, arguing that the only groups to whom they were accountable were those already marginalized in West Germany who – according to the RAF – gain nothing from the exploitation of the Third World and have no reason to identify themselves with the hegemonic classes: 'Die können das kapieren, daß das, was hier jetzt losgeht, in Vietnam, Palästina, Guatemala, in Oakland und Watts, in Kuba und China, in Angola und New York schon losgegangen ist' (RAF, 'Rote Armee aufbauen', 26). The unproblematic analogy with such diverse political struggles is a typical gesture in the RAF's written statements. Rhetorically, the group accomplishes a dramatic,

16 This critique of domestic policies and structures is particularly strong in 'Dem Volk dienen'.

internationalist framing of their own practical interventions through its recourse to this kind of listing; the weight of repetition and example in its texts creates an imposing effect. While it could be argued that the function of political propaganda is not carefully to explicate a political program so much as to provoke an affective response and mobilize broad social groups, my point here is that the unquestioned discursive insertion of armed struggle in West Germany into the context of struggles internationally, as if its valence were identical, distracts from their very real critiques of West German complicity in upholding systems of oppression domestically and internationally.

This makes all the more striking the fact that the first full-length position paper written by the RAF, 'Konzept Stadtguerilla', begins with a critique of the appropriation of Third World liberation struggles by the extra-parliamentary opposition in general and the student movement in particular. They explain: 'Gewiss war das Pathos tibetrieben, mit dem sich die Studenten, die ihrer psychischen Verelendung in den Wissenschaftsfabriken bewußt geworden waren, mit den ausgebeuteten Völkern Lateinamerikas, Afrikas und Asiens identifizierten' (RAF, 'Konzept', 34). Further, the RAF identifies simplifications of conflicts within the Third World and in the international context as ignorant and counterproductive for the revolutionary project (RAF, 'Konzept', 34).<sup>17</sup> Given the RAF's own rhetorical (if not more broadly theoretical) simplifications of precisely such conflicts, this critique functions not just as critique, but as a means of discursively positioning themselves outside of a by then waning and splintered movement and claiming to be part of a more 'authentic', physical struggle. Theirs was not simply 'psychische Verelendung' and theoretical identification, but physical engagement in the guerrilla struggle; the suggestion is that they no longer need to identify with an outside struggle, because they have themselves assumed the struggle, are themselves embodiments of the 'politische Moral der Kompromißlosigkeit' (Krahl, cited in Juchler, 242) that the movement had so long attributed to figures like Che. In this way, an

RAF practice built on theoretical identifications moves discursively to suggest that it *exceeds* those identifications.

'Konzept Stadtguerilla' explicitly cites the Latin American urban guerrilla as its precedent:

Das Große Geschrei, das über uns angestimmt worden ist, verdanken wir mehr den lateinamerikanischen Genossen-aufgrund des klaren Trennungsstrichs zwischen sich und dem Feind, den sie schon gezogen haben, so daß die Herrschenden hier uns wegen des Verdachts von ein Paar Banküberfällen so 'energisch entgegneten', als gäbe es schon was aufzubauen wir angefangen haben: die Stadtguerilla der Roten Armee-Fraktion. (RAF, 'Konzept', 44)

Their later position paper 'Dem Volk dienen' rejects criticisms that urban guerrilla formations have no place in the metropolises, writing: 'Das Argument, die Bundesrepublik sei nicht Lateinamerika, verschleierte die hiesigen Verhältnisse mehr, als daß es sie aufdeckt' (RAF, 'Dem Volk', 128). Elsewhere they explain: 'BZ – Mai 1970: "Berlin ist nicht Südamerika." Berlin ist ein Vorposten des amerikanischen Imperialismus. Unser Feind und der Feind Südamerikas.'<sup>18</sup> The *Bild Zeitung* headline to which the RAF responds here recalls the kind of rhetoric employed earlier in the wake of the *Monitor* scandal; the RAF response operates around a more subtle structure of political analogy to Latin America, recognizing and rejecting media efforts to dismiss their message as purely affective identification. The question of Berlin in particular proves interesting in light of its symbolic and geopolitical significance: one need only recall Khrushchev's statement to the US following their invasion of Cuba that 'if you take Cuba, we'll take Berlin' (Fritsch and Reinders, 157). One might also suggest that certain Latin American figures in fact invited precisely this form of political analogy: Guevara rhetorically valorized struggle in the metropolises, stating that the struggle of students there – in 'the belly of the beast' – was the most important struggle of all.

By inserting themselves into the narrative of Third World resistance, the RAF and other urban guerrilla groups participated in broader West German moves to construct an emancipatory German

17 One example of this simplification given by the RAF was the comparison of mass distribution of *Bild Zeitung* to bombings in Vietnam. (RAF, 'Konzept', 34.)

18 'Die Rote Armee aufbauen!' *Agit* 883, 2. Curiously, this passage does not appear in the anthologized version of the text.

subject, relying heavily on cultural fantasies of the Third World as a site of hope and resistance.<sup>19</sup> Tracing the shifting identifications with and appropriations of Latin American and other Third World liberation struggles that emerged in West Germany in the early years of the student popular movement, and which seem to reach their climax in the recourse to extreme, physical communication through armed propaganda, can help us to complicate existing understandings of protest around 1968 and thereafter. Underservedly popular accounts of terrorism like Jillian Becker's *Hitler's Children*, which privilege more strictly generational models of conflict, cannot adequately account for explicitly Latin American models of struggle and resistance. Further, re-centering the importance of Third World theoretical production is key to countering notions of the Third World as the site of the physical, the object of Western theoretical analyses rather than a space of active production and innovation in its own right. The failure seriously to interrogate the role of opposition movements' reception of Third World texts and experiences limits our understanding of the role such appropriations played in counter-cultural formations of the day, from the Berlin subculture scene out of which many armed groups emerged, to later attempts to envision alternative social orders. Wolfgang Pohrt has argued that the process through which terrorist groups come to reflect images projected on them by state and media agents is in fact a reflection of the social constitution of the society in which a given group is active (9–10). What the experiences of the RAF and other radical groups can tell us

19 What stands out perhaps more than anything else in the RAF's invocations of the Third World is a sense of urgency that is much more pronounced than that expressed in their analysis of West German examples. The firm conviction that a turn away from urban guerrilla struggle 'wäre der Selbstmord aus Angst vor dem Tode', and the recurrence of phrases such as 'Es bleibt uns nur noch wenig Zeit!' and 'Einen anderen Weg gibt es nicht' (the latter is a Che Guevara slogan) clearly reflect what Karl Heinz Roth has identified as an eschatological mood in the RAF's textual production, which both emerged out of and contributed to the broader social mood of the time. Roth has noted that in this sense the accessibility of RAF concepts was located not strictly in their written formulations of revolutionary theory, but in their practical deployment of those concepts. Referring to the appeal of the 'moral integrity' of the RAF as a group that practiced the struggle it advocated, he explains that their insistence upon victory or death was in fact particularly salient for marginalized groups in West Germany. (See Roth, 191–3.)

about the social constitution of West Germany is, in this sense, a much more far-reaching question than popular representations of the period would suggest.

For the RAF, the Third World was recognized as a space of active theoretical production and innovation in its own right, but this recognition was incomplete and ultimately undermined by the identificatory politics of the RAF as guerrillas. This is important not only to understanding the RAF, but implicates the West German New Left more broadly as paradoxically participating in the limiting epistemologies they are at such pains to critique. Engaging seriously with the challenges posed by armed groups in West Germany in order better to understand their political motivations, we might hope to sharpen our own, working toward a politics not of identity or authenticity but of social location. Such a politics would leave space open for the self-definition of Third World and other oppositional movements without precluding the informed articulation of interests and ideals in alliances and coalitions among various social and political groups in both the Third and First Worlds.

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Aesthetics of (Self-)Destruction:  
Melville's *Moby Dick*,  
Brecht's *The Measures Taken*  
and the Red Army Faction \*

What place had literature in the world of left-wing terrorism, the most radical West German counter-culture in the 1970s? And who was afraid of literature? Certainly, the German government was, since officials were convinced that the terrorists were capable of transforming the contents of books into lethal weapons. The concern that aesthetic radicalism transported by fictional narratives could be directly translated into violent events seems to be based on an irrational concept of primeval fear. Nevertheless, this concept has been taken very seriously, and became a legal issue as early as 1967 when the infamous leaflet 'Burn Warehouse Burn' by the Berlin-based 'Kommune 1' was taken to court. Most of the testimonies in favour of the accused emphasised the satirical subtext of the printed matter, and argued the pamphlet is a piece of art, i.e. a product of surrealism. Yet, the state considered its contents an act of terrorism.<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, some academics tackled the complex matter of the relationship between terror and the arts from a different perspective, and recycled the idea that fiction must have had a negative effect on Germany's young people, since the writings of so-called sympathisers undoubtedly nurtured new waves of counter-cultural upheaval.<sup>2</sup> The

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1 On the legal dispute regarding the link between the fun-guerrilla of the 'Kommune 1' and political violence, see Briegleb (62–71), Koenen (154–61), and Kraushaar (66–70).

2 Two examples of this condemnation effort are Holthusen and Ulsamer.