

ENGLISH: THE PHANTOM OF TERRORISM

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WHO HIDES BEHIND THE LABEL "RED ARMY FACTION"?

Since more than twenty years the Federal Republic of Germany has gradually developed from a constitutional state to a security state. Fundamental rights of the accused and the defense have been massively restricted, people intimidated and harassed merely for having made use of their civil liberties, secret services and police have set up a system of surveillance and control barely limited by legal barriers. Undercover agents snoop on harmless citizens and carry out terrorist crimes with the consent of government. Innocent persons disappear behind prison bars for years. All these developments are publicly justified by the need to combat terrorism, and in particular, the "Red Army Faction" (RAF) initiated by the Baader-Meinhof group in the late 60ies.

Yet, not one of the perpetrators numerous attacks and murders imputed to the "RAF" since 1981 has been identified, let be arrested or put to trial. The impressive arsenal of anti-terrorist laws, the legal, technical and financial rearmament of criminal investigation authorities, secret services and police has proven totally ineffective in tracking the terrorists, but they are posing a growing threat to constitutional democracy in the EC's most powerful member state.

Who stands behind the mysterious crimes carried out under the mysterious label "RAF"? Is it really an ultra-leftist revolutionary group?

In a recently published book the three German authors and TV-journalists Gerhard Wisnewski, Wolfgang Landgraeber and Ekkehard Sieker, make a clean sweep of the longstanding and systematic attempts by the German security apparatus to hold the spectre of the "RAF" alive.

The authors are convincing when revealing the blatant inefficiency of official investigations, bizarre flaws of the vast security structures set up for the protection of prominent victims and systematic deception of the public by government bodies and media trying to keep the "RAF"-phantom alive. The book becomes more speculative, when trying to find an answer to the crucial question of "cui bono?" (in whom's interest?). Yet, it is a must for any one trying to understand the effect of terrorism on Western states.

Three "generations" of one

and the same terrorist organisation?

The book essentially focuses on the so called "third generation" of the "RAF". The authors make out fundamental differences in the behaviour and the political background of this last generation as compared with its predecessors. While the "first generation", the so called Baader-Meinhof-group, was to some extent rooted in the radical German protest movement of the 60ies, already the "second generation" operating in the late 70ies and early 80ies rapidly became politically isolated. As for the "third generation", they are quite generally viewed as professional provocateurs by the German left as a whole.

Indeed, the opposition movement in Germany has changed since the 60ies marked by a leftist culture of universalist and intellectual criticism of capitalism and US-imperialism and some readiness to sympathise with "revolutionary" violence.

Since the beginning of the 80ies, the German left concentrated on basically non-violent "single-issue" movements such as those against the building of a new runway at the Frankfurt airport, the stationing of Pershing II-missiles on German soil, nuclear power plants, the Gulf war, or the dismantling of Eastern German economy after the unification. All these movements were fairly non-ideological, aiming rather at wide support among average people than at proung insurrection. This was no longer a promising political recruiting field for the "revolutionary" violence of the "RAF".

The authors note a further difference between the various generations of the "RAF". From its very beginning, the "first generation" (Baader-Meinhof) was thoroughly infiltrated by undercover agents, its members permanently observed, hunted and tracked. A massive wave of arrests launched just three weeks after the first bomb attack of the group put an end to its activity. The self-taught "guerilla-fighters" had no chance even against the comparatively modest legal and police apparatus of the 60ies and early 70ies.

The same is true with regard to the "second generation", with one troubling difference however. Two of its leading figures, Christian Klar and Adelheid Schultz, twice miraculously escaped arrest (1977, 1978) in spite of uninterrupted close observation by intelligence. A frustrated Horst Herold, then head of the BKA (Federal office of criminal investigation) later made the following cryptical but noteworthy comment: "In this case one has allowed - and this with the participation of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and Minister Baum -to withhold from the police the terrorists Klar and Schulz, whom the Verfassungsschutz [the FRG's internal secret service] of Hamburg had clearly tracked (...).After that, the secret service and the politicians make business with such things... all this is just intolerable."

Christian Klar was finally arrested in 1982. The event marked the end of the "second generation". Most of the remaining members of the group gave up terrorist activities and found sanctuary in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), where they returned to normal civilian life until their arrest in 1990, after the downfall of the Honecker-regime. Only a small group of seven alleged members of the "second generation" seemed to have literally vanished from the ground. None of them was ever seen or heard of again.

No "Stasi-RAF connection"

In a particular chapter, the authors convincingly refute allegations widely spread by Western media of a "RAF-Stasi (GDR-secret service) connection" responsible for the terrorist attacks of the "third generation". They even assert that the GDR's decision to grant sanctuary to defecting "RAF"-Guerillas was secretly negotiated between high-ranking politicians of the West German government and the central committee of the GDR's ruling communist party. At that time, the authors say, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was eager to get rid of the politically sensitive issue of terrorism.

When asked about such a secret agreement, the BKA sent the following statement to the authors: "There are no findings in hand of the BKA defeating arrangements between FRG and GDR politicians pertaining to "RAF" defectors in the GDR." The authors also bring evidence that the BKA knew that RAF-defectors were living in the GDR as early as 1985 and quote a pro memoria of the Interior Ministry of the FRG from 1991, according to which "there is no sufficient evidence for a collaboration between the [GDR] Ministry for State Security and the "RAF" ". All this did not prevent German mass media from further cultivating the legend of the "RAF-killers" trained and controlled by the "diabolic" Stasi.

"We bomb, hence we exist!":
the faceless professionals of the "third generation"

1985 marked the beginning of a new macabre wave of particularly spectacular and cold-blooded murders and bomb attacks against some of the most high ranking and best protected personalities of the country, among whom Ernst Zimmermann, head of the German armement corporation MTU (1985), Karl Heinz Beckurts (member of the board of Siemens (1986), Alfred Herrhausen, speaker of the board of Deutsche Bank (1989) and Detlev Karsten Rohwedder, chief of the "Treuhand-Anstalt", the public trust-company in charge of privatisation, respectively liquidation of the former East German public sector(1991).

The common characteristic of all these murders: They are carried out by professionals who often appear to have detailed

insider knowledge not only of the localities and the victims' habits, but also of the loopholes in the security disposals.

As the authors' thorough investigations and detailed reconstructions, in particular of the Herrhausen and Rohwedder cases, show, they prepare their deeds with uncanny sureness, sometimes during months, and right under the nose of some of Europe's best equipped and trained anti-terrorist forces (the German MEK and SEK police units). They almost demonstratively leave traces on the places of their crimes - letters of confession with the "RAF"'s insignia, star and mp, a fieldglass, neatly assembled cartridge cases, detonators -, but these traces neither ever lead to a perpetrator, nor do they establish the authenticity of the messages of confession apparently linking the "RAF" to the crimes.

None of the "vanished" members of the "second generation" can be linked to the crimes. While Andreas Baader and his friends always tried to ideologically justify their deeds and left no doubt about the authenticity of their letters of confession, e.g. by applying finger print stamps, the alleged "third generation" is a pure phantom, a terror squad without members. As opposed to the preceding RAF-generations there are no traces of any logistical structures and preparations necessary for carrying out attacks of such a scale: no apartments serving as hiding places, no weapon or ammunition stocks, no bank robberies...nothing.

The total failure of Germany's internal security apparatus

In 1989 the then chief of the BKA, Kurt Rebmann dryly admits that there is no factual evidence linking the "RAF" to any of the murders occurred since 1985.

Nonetheless, the existence of a leftist terror group by the name of "RAF" springing from the original Baader-Meinhof group is never questioned. The legend of the leftist killers of the "third generation" is, in contrary, systematically cultivated by government agencies and the press.

Based on a troubling number of well researched cases the authors claim that the BKA and other judicial and governmental bodies do not hesitate to use means ranging from interference in legal procedures, biased expertises to outright blackmailing of witnesses and fake "terror attacks" carried out by... the state's anti-terrorist units in cooperation with the internal secret service - all this in order to "prove" the existence of the "third generation" of left wing terrorists.

The "letters of confession"

The BKA has spent a lot of time and money in deceiving the public on the alleged authenticity of letters of confession and other messages regarding the murders.

But based on the findings of some of Germany's most respected experts of crime technology, graphology and linguistics, the authors come to the conclusion, that the BKA's assertions regarding the authenticity of the texts concerned are unscientific and biased. In a rare access of honesty the BKA itself admitted that the thermoprinter used for the letter of self-accusation in the Herrhausen case lacks any particular characteristics permitting its identification. Regularly confronted with such lack of usefull evidence, a regrettable consequence of modern printing technology, the BKA developed "TEXTOR", a computerised text matching program. By screen-matching all existing texts imputed to the RAF it was hoped to detect the "individual" stile (orthographic, grammatical, linguistic particularities) of a whole group. Writings of a number of individuals suspected to be sympathisers of the RAF were screened for ressemblances with the computerised "RAF-stile". One suspect, Andreas S. was held on remand for two and a half years, because of his habit to write the German abbreviation z.B. [in English: i.e.] with small letters, a current mistake in alleged RAF texts. The TEXTOR-expert's credibility only broke down, when critical colleagues discovered the criminal z.b.in one of his own writings. The court later found that many of the alleged letters of confession had simply been copied and compounded from old pressarticles and leaflets from various sources. This was, for the time being, the end of TEXTOR and the legend of an anonymous terror squad's "personal handwriting".

Since then, only one thing is beyond doubt: anybody could easily have fabricated the written confessions and "RAF" insignia.

The "repenter" Siegfried Nonne

The case of Siegfried Nonne is one of the spectacular attempts of German state bodies to forge evidence in view of their ever more obvious lack of success in tracking the terrorists.

In January 1992 the BKA organised a press conference with a scoop: A repenter turned statewitness had admitted that he had prepared the murder of Alfred Herrhausen together with two of the vanished members of the "RAF"'s second generation. A link between the crimes of the 80ies and known members of the "RAF" finally seemed established.

The "repenter", Siegfried Nonne, was a 35 year old drug addict with a long psychiatric record and the Verfassungsschutz (VS) later admitted that he had been an under cover agent in the early 80ies. But this did not prevent the media from warming up the old "RAF" legend and once again speculating on Stasi involvment.

But in June 1992, Nonne, appearing in a TV-program, testified to the authors, that since November 1990 he had been bribed and blackmailed with threats to his life into his "confession" by high officials of the VS (the stunning story is told in detail in a long chapter of the book).

The "Celle hole"

In 1978 a bomb explosion tore a hole in the in the prison of Celle, a town in Nieder-Sachsen. The attack was immediately presented as a terrorist attack aiming at the liberation of "RAF"-convicts detained in the prison. As a result, the prisoners rights were massively restricted and the bombing served as a justification for more pro-active policing.

The truth about the bombing came to light eight years later, in 1986. It had been planned and carried out by the VS in cooperation with GSG-9, a German anti-terrorist unit created with the support of the British SAS.

None of the high officials involved was ever sanctioned. In contrary: The then chief of the VS of Nieder-Sachsen was named vice-president of the federal VS and Gerhard Boeden, then vice-president of the BKA, is now head of the federal VS.

As JÃ¼rgen Trittin, now a minister in the Land of Niedersachsen remarked, one "does not any longer know which attacks must be answered for by the state and which by the terrorists."

The book contains further troubling evidence for state involvment in terrorist crimes, as for instance the case of a VS-undercover agent, Peter Schmäcker, mysteriously murdered in a Berlin park in 1974. The case was finally dropped in 1990, after years of prison on remand for the official suspects, when the murder weapon was found in a cellar of the Berlin VS.

Cui bono?

Authorities periodically come out with the assertion that "RAF"-detainees command the terror squads from inside their high security prison cells. This is a good pretext for further restricting the rights of the detainees and their lawyers, each time a new attack has occurs, and for gradually extending police observation and infiltration to ever larger groups of persons suspected to form the "social environment" of the terrorists, but even the president of the German association of penitentiary directors insists that there is not the slightest evidence for any functioning command structure among the "RAF" detainees.

The political effect of the "third generation's" attacks is clear: The head of Deutsche Bank, Herrhausen, is murdered at a time of growing criticism of the role of the banking world in the impoverishment of developing countries, a machine gun attack against the American embassy in Bonn is carried out at the height of non-violent mass protests in Germany against the USA's role in the Gulfwar, Mr. Rohwedder, the chief of the "Treuhand" is shot dead only weeks before a planned mass rally of union members in Berlin against the brutal dismantling of East German economy by the "Treuhand". In all cases the effect is the same: The "acts of solidarity" of the "RAF" with popular mass movements deprives the latter in of their credibility and leads to the criminalisation of legitimate political opposition.

In several chapters the authors investigate the backgrounds and roles of some of the prominent victims. Alfred Herrhausen, for instance, is presented as the man who attempted to make the Deutsche Bank a "global player" in direct rivalry with mostly American financial institutes and as a strong advocate of cancelling the debts of Third World countries. Both policies are resented as a threat by US bankers. As for Rohwedder, the chief of the "Treuhand", he was facing growing criticism from neo-liberal financial circles in and outside Germany for placing social considerations before ever to hasty privatisations leading to mass unemployment. After Herrhausen's death, Deutsche Bank gives up its ambitions as a "global player", the new chief of the "Treuhand" proceeds with the ruthless liquidation of East German enterprises.

In other words, the acts of the "third generation" inflict heavy damage to precisely the aims they pretend to serve: Improved conditions for the "RAF"-detainees, the preservation of civil liberties, peace in the Gulf region, Third World solidarity, employment in East Germany...

But then, if the terror attacks are not in the interest of popular opposition, in whom do they serve? Why were economical and politic leaders of Germany's economy killed and by whom?

"RAF" in Germany, Brigaterosse
in Italy, "17 November" in Greece: A secret service plot?

In spite of years of terrorist hunt carried out by an ever more sophisticated security apparatus, nothing is known about the true authors of the attacks of the last decade and, as the magazine of the Germany's largest workers union, IG Metall, puts it: "Nobody has publicly raised the question, if really all traces are being investigated or perhaps only the obviously wrong ones, if we are really dealing with a totally unknown "RAF"-generation or perhaps rather with a quite known one, made up of international intelligence circles, if actually Zimmermann, Beckurts, Herrhausen and Rohwedder did not have enemies outside the left, for instance inside the system of big money at home and abroad."

To investigate these "other traces" is precisely what the authors undertake in large parts of their book. Their findings are contained in interesting chapters on the policies and methods of secret services as the CIA, stunning cases of collusion between "anti-terror" units, secret services on the one hand, and the "RAF's" brother groups, the Red Brigades in Italy and the "movement of the 17th November" in Greece, counter-insurgency operations and secret combat structures as the NATO's "Gladio". All this is based on extensive and meticulous investigation.

Yet, the book can but fall short from producing evidence for what appears to be a strong suspicion of the authors, that the murders of Zimmermann, Rohwedder and Herrhausen, just as those of John F. Kennedy, Enrico Mattei and Olof Palme were planned and carried out with strong involvement of Western secret service networks.

The rare reviews of the book in the German press have derisively focused on this "plot theory" of the authors, thus escaping the more thornful task of commenting the authors' really crucial and well-established findings regarding the notorious inefficiency and sometimes criminal behaviour of the German security apparatus and their bitter remarks on the setting up of a control state.

"Yet, the authors bitterly note, in the presence of medicine which obviously does not have any effect, the only thing that comes in their [politicians and security experts] minds is to prescribe more of it."

"The intimidation of the population with "criminal investigations", the maintenance of a gigantic security and legal apparatus and, finally, the unrestricted spying on critical citizens,

with an unidentified terror squad named "RAF" as a pretext, are proceedings the citizens of this country should never accept."

Nicholas Busch

Das RAF-Phantom - Wozu Politik und Wirtschaft Terroristen brauchen, by Gerhard Wisnewski, Wolfgang Landgraeber, Ekkehard Sieker, December 1992, publisher: Knauer, Munich (ISBN3-426-80010-1), 464 p., in German.