

# Consumption and Violence

## Radical Protest in Cold-War West Germany



Alexander Sedlmaier

## Consumption and Violence

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## *Radical Protest in Cold-War West Germany*

ALEXANDER SEDLMAIER

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# Introduction

This book addresses the political dimension of consumption and violence in postwar West Germany and historically pinpoints criticism of “regimes of provision,” a key analytical term that will be defined subsequently. The focus is on political articulations among the Left between the late 1950s and the unification of Germany in 1990, and these articulations are related to social practices of radical and militant protest. The analysis draws on sources by people who, in theory and practice, criticised their contemporary “regimes of provision” and sought to develop alternative semantics of consumption. This includes philosophers working on a critical theory of affluent society, inhabitants of communes or squats, and political activists involved in protest campaigns on a wide array of issues from public transport fare increases to the institutions of global governance as well as prominent militants commonly labelled as terrorists. The book is thus not about the average consumer or about those who chose the label of consumer to organise themselves but about discourses, ideas, and practices of consumption, about their impact and implementation in left-wing political protest, and about the ensuing confrontations with the state authorities seeking to uphold not only law and order but also the realities and ideals of existing “regimes of provision,” especially in the context of the Cold War system confrontation. The following chapters provide ample evidence of how those involved in discourses over “regimes of provision” and militant protest transferred their perceptions of complex economic developments into emotive and confrontational acts of political communication. It makes sense to ask where narratives were constituted that not only made political violence possible but also made it appear advisable. Drawing on extensive archival material on new social movements and militant groups—so far never analysed with respect to issues of consumption—it will become clear that post-World War II debates about consumption were historically interlinked with discourse on the state’s monopoly on violence, terrorism, war, revolution, and genocide.

It is therefore necessary to ask more fundamental questions about the con-



nections between consumption, on the one hand, and conflict, destruction, and violence, on the other. The etymology of the word *to consume* suggests an intrinsic connection. The transitive verb combines “senses relating to physical destruction” (such as “to burn with fire” or “to kill or destroy”) and “senses relating to the use or exploitation of resources” (such as “to eat or drink,” “to use up” a commodity or resource; “to purchase or use” goods or services; “to spend” money or “to squander” goods).<sup>1</sup> Although in the German language the sense relating to physical destruction has been largely obsolete since the nineteenth century,<sup>2</sup> it is easy to see that this semantic field can turn into a battle-field when social and political meanings of the concept are contested.

### Consumption in a Field of Tension

The construction of a modern consumer economy is commonly seen as an integral part of the Bonn Republic’s successful modernisation process. A recent study of “the consumer” in postwar West German history offers a four-phase periodisation of this process characterised by specific images of the consumer. For the present enquiry, the latter two periods are of special interest. Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, consumption was no longer predominantly regarded as an agent of social levelling, as had been the case in the previous period, but emerged as a means of constructing new social distinctions. Critics spread the idea of the strong manipulative powers of advertisement. This was followed by a period of “postmodern consumers” between the mid-1970s and 1989 when older models, including the manipulation thesis, were qualified and responsibility for the consequences of consumption was shifted onto the consumers, who were increasingly characterised as self-determined, critical, and free.<sup>3</sup> Such an approach to the West German development can be embedded in larger narratives of American-inspired consumer societies driving a process of democratisation via the dismantling of hierarchies and class differences in lifestyles. Most studies dedicated to this interpretation highlight the contrasts between postwar affluent societies and the misery and destruction of the age of the world wars, but their analysis usually does not go significantly beyond the early 1970s.<sup>4</sup>

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1. “consume, v.1,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://0-www.oed.com.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/view/Entry/39973> (accessed 12 July 2012).

2. Schrage, *Verfügbarkeit der Dinge*, 50.

3. Gasteiger, *Konsument*, 11.

4. See Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*; Maase, *Grenzenloses Vergnügen*.

The late 1960s, and especially the early 1970s were a period when the immense economic optimism of the postwar boom period began to show cracks. Strong social contrasts reappeared, and they ultimately proved the beginning of what Eric Hobsbawm called “the crisis decades.”<sup>5</sup> The early 1970s constituted a veritable turning point in West German history, with growing unemployment and the crisis of the welfare state reintroducing social hierarchies and undermining the integrating effects of the earlier expansion of consumer markets.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, contemporaries displayed a tendency to downplay the extent of the crisis against the backdrop of the collective memory of an infinitely more terrible crisis: the violence and destruction of war. Victoria de Grazia insightfully addresses the specific historical relativity of European perceptions of what she calls the American “Market Empire”: “Born as an alternative to European militarism, it progressed as a model of governing the good life in a century beset by successive decades of total war, fratricidal civil conflict, nuclear holocaust, and genocidal murder.” Its “winning weapons came from the arsenal of a super-rich consumer culture,” which obscured the fact that “the Market Empire advanced rapidly in times of war and that its many military victories—and occasional defeats—were always accompanied by significant breakthroughs to the benefit of its consumer industries and values.”<sup>7</sup> The underlying soft-power strategy required the constant radiation of images of affluence and magnetism and highlighted the long-standing ideological competition over the superior way of providing for the needs of the people. A diffuse transatlantic Cold War consumption debate provided the ground for a far-reaching and lasting link between issues of consumption and scenarios of violent conflict. Discourse on consumption was inherently connected with East-West tensions and the nuclear arms race. The so-called Kitchen Debate between American vice president Richard Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev at the American exhibition in Moscow in 1959 is the most prominent example of this amalgamation: a remarkable blend of discussion on colour television, the Captive Nations Resolution, rockets, washing machines, gadgets, the good life, and army bases in foreign lands.<sup>8</sup>

Austrian American psychologist and marketing expert Ernest Dichter emphasised in 1960 that the most important weapon in the Western camp’s “arse-

5. See Fourastié, *Trentes glorieuses*; Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 403–4.

6. See Haupt, “Konsument,” 310–11.

7. Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 8–9.

8. Cf. Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front*, 158–60; Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 454–56; Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 151–214.

nal” was desire and thus consumption. This contained the key to more successful Cold War weapons that had the power to transcend material objects: “We are fighting a sham battle with rockets and hydrogen bombs while underneath the real struggle, the silent war, is for the possession of men’s minds.”<sup>9</sup> In a German context, such ideas smacked of propaganda and violent abuse, as Aldous Huxley had already observed in 1958: “Twenty years before Madison Avenue embarked upon ‘Motivational Research,’ Hitler was systematically exploring and exploiting the secret fears and hopes, the cravings, anxieties and frustrations of the German masses. It is by manipulating ‘hidden forces’ that the advertising experts induce us to buy their wares—a toothpaste, a brand of cigarettes, a political candidate. And it is by appealing to the same hidden forces . . . that Hitler induced the German masses to buy themselves a Fuehrer, an insane philosophy and the Second World War.”<sup>10</sup> Huxley acknowledged that he was inspired by Vance Packard’s *Hidden Persuaders*. While Packard did not mention Hitler, his exploration of consumer motivational research triggered a wave of critical attitudes towards advertisement.<sup>11</sup> Since the late 1950s, critical accounts of the “affluent society” and its social manipulations by American scholars—next to Packard John Kenneth Galbraith<sup>12</sup> and David Riesman<sup>13</sup>—became best sellers in West Germany. Market researchers and critics shared the assumption that the consumer was manipulable. The most influential critical account of advanced industrial society and a key text for the developments analysed in this book—Herbert Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*—also originated in the Cold War intellectual debate over well-being. Marcuse’s original draft for a study on mentality change in industrial societies included both the capitalist West and the Soviet Union. He shifted focus in favour of a study solely of the Soviet Union commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation. He continued to work with the Rockefeller Foundation, and *One-Dimensional Man* became in many ways a counterpart to *Soviet Marxism*.<sup>14</sup>

More broadly, there was a tendency to introduce the vocabulary of vio-

9. Dichter, *Strategy of Desire*, 16, 20, 26. See also Gasteiger, *Konsument*, 86–88.

10. Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited*.

11. Packard, *Hidden Persuaders* (German ed., *Die geheimen Verführer: Der Griff nach dem Unbewussten in jedermann*, trans. Hermann Kusterer [Düsseldorf: Econ-Verlag, 1958]). See also Horowitz, *Anxieties of Affluence*, 101–28; Gasteiger, *Konsument*, 104–10.

12. Galbraith, *Affluent Society* (German ed., *Gesellschaft im Überfluß*, trans. Rudolf Mühlflenzi [Munich, 1959]).

13. Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, *Lonely Crowd* (German ed., *Die einsame Masse: Eine Untersuchung der Wandlungen des amerikanischen Charakters*, trans. Renate Rausch [Darmstadt, 1956]).

14. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*; Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*; Tim B. Müller, *Krieger und Gelehrte*, 418, 421, 447–48, 537–38.

lence into the discourse on consumption. In a much-discussed 1957 book, Viennese writer Karl Bednarik reported from the “war zone of the consumer front,” where the “man of the masses struggled for survival.”<sup>15</sup> *Der Spiegel* thought that “Dichter’s laboratory of soul manipulation prepared the most serious assassination attempt on the Western idea of man.”<sup>16</sup> An advertisement lobbyist even identified Packard’s *Hidden Persuaders* as a “nuclear bomb against advertisement.”<sup>17</sup> Philosopher Günther Anders decried the “soft terrorism” of conformist popular entertainment.<sup>18</sup> Prominent sociologist Helmut Schelsky referred to road traffic as “the carnage of guerrilla warfare.”<sup>19</sup> In 1977, a study of 330 textbooks found that advertisement was depicted as militant using expressions such as *Werbefeldzug* (advertising campaign), *Werbeschlacht* (advertising battle), *Werbegeschosse* (advertisement shells), *Marken-Offensive* (brand campaign), *Überraschungsangriffe* (surprise attacks), *Massenbombardement* (massed bombardment), and *Dauerfeuer* (sustained fire). The survey also concluded that more than 70 percent of schoolbooks depicted advertisement as manipulative.<sup>20</sup> Beginning in the late 1960s, many West German leftists came to see a repressive totality rooted in diffuse *Konsumterror*. This curious compound literally means “consumption terror,” but it also refers to pressure to buy. In response to critical attitudes, the advertising industry, substantially supported by the Axel Springer publishing house, resorted to a veritable image campaign in the 1970s.<sup>21</sup>

In Cold War Germany, ideas about consumption and ideas about political conflict and crises were deeply intertwined, starting with the currency reform in 1948, which triggered the Berlin Blockade and the airlift food relief by the Western Allies when Germans saw military planes dropping food packages rather than bombs. The 17 June uprising in East Germany was preceded by the authorities’ promise to abolish food rationing by 1953. In this context, commodities and food packages again emerged as weapons of American psychological warfare. Ultimately, the products of the cultural industries became

15. Bednarik, *An der Konsumfront*. Jürgen Habermas wrote a critical review of Bednarik’s book: see Habermas, “Konsumkritik.”

16. “Motiv-Forschung: Die Einflüsterer,” *Der Spiegel* 32 (7 August 1957): 42.

17. Franz Ulrich Gass, “Werbung für die Werbung—aber wie?,” *absatzwirtschaft* 1 (1964): 58, quoted in Gasteiger, *Konsument*, 114.

18. Günther Anders, “Der sanfte Terror: Theorie des Konformismus,” *Merkur* 18.1 (1964): 209–24.

19. Schelsky quoted in “‘Ans Steuer lass’ ich keinen anderen,” *Der Spiegel* 53 (27 December 1971): 36.

20. Winfried Böttcher, *Werbung im Schulbuch: Eine Schulbuchanalyse für Grundstufe und Sekundarstufen* (Bonn, 1977), 122, quoted in Gasteiger, *Konsument*, 177–78.

21. See *ibid.*, 189.

more important than food. Up to around 1955, East and West German officials still shared a certain consensus in their culturally conservative, sceptical attitudes towards the products of American mass culture. In the West, this attitude was increasingly superseded by the fervid forging of consumption into an effective Cold War weapon accompanied by an ostentatious depoliticisation of consumption in the realm of rhetoric. East German officials counted seven million West Berlin visits per year and increasingly viewed Western consumer culture as threatening to the socialist youth and—not entirely without reason—to be the work of American agents.<sup>22</sup> West Berlin was carefully built up both as an indicator of West Germany's successful "economic miracle" and as a real and metaphorical showcase in the Cold War competition. Khrushchev's November 1958 Berlin ultimatum was announced against the backdrop of a larger programme of surpassing the West in per capita consumption of food and other commodities until 1961. The well-being of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was central to the Soviet Union's competitive Cold War strategy. Anastas Mikoyan, first deputy chair of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, assured his East German counterparts in 1961 that their country was the place where the socialist system had to prove itself "right and superior."<sup>23</sup> With an eye to economic aid from the Soviet Union, Ulbricht explained to Khrushchev in January 1961 that "the economic competition between the socialist camp and the capitalist states" remained the central issue. Adenauer was leading the battle against the GDR "mainly with economic weapons." The East German leader made it unequivocally clear that the GDR was increasingly falling behind its high-powered West German competitors. Domestic considerations had already moved the East German leadership to allocate more resources to consumption than was economically justifiable.<sup>24</sup> What Ulbricht did not stress to his Moscow allies was the fact that the East German government's second wave of enforced collectivisations had decreased productivity. This contributed to a worsening food situation and thus to ever more people taking flight to the West. The Berlin Wall was erected when the magnetism of West Germany's elaborately staged "economic miracle" had forced the East's competitive programme onto the defensive.

Relying on heavy subsidies and tax incentives, a retail boom became a tangible reality in West Berlin despite the Wall and the industrial drain it triggered. The governments of both East and West Berlin as well as of the United

22. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 54–55.

23. Bruno Leuscher quoted in Wettig, *Khrushchows Berlin-Krise*, 120.

24. Ulbricht to Khrushchev, 18–19 January 1961, paraphrased and quoted in *ibid.*

States and Soviet Union continued to use images of affluence and prosperity to bolster their political legitimacy. Large department stores played a significant role in these endeavours.<sup>25</sup> In the summer of 1963, Egon Bahr outlined the famous concept “change through rapprochement” that described West Germany’s relationship with its eastern rival and became very influential in the Brandt government’s subsequent *Ostpolitik*. Bahr explicitly introduced the aim of a “broader spectrum of consumer goods in the East,” fostering rising demand among the population, as one of the central planks of this ingenious competitive strategy. Commodity flow across the not-so-impermeable Iron Curtain was never completely hindered. The Berlin Wall was a violent but porous separation of two regimes of provision. Ultimately, more intensely articulated consumer demand among populations in the entire Soviet sphere of influence played a definite role in its demise.

This brief sketch of historical developments highlights how entangled the themes of consumption and violence had become in the lives of Germans during the Cold War. In the following chapters, divided Germany appears as a central battleground of system confrontation against the backdrop of affluence where rival economic systems clashed and competing ideologies confronted each other, reflecting various dimensions of political and social division. The West German experience emerges as in some ways distinctive (as a consequence of the two German states competing against a peculiar historical backdrop) but also as in some ways typical of affluent societies subject to broader developments. Crucially, the intense competition to outdo each other also meant that in terms of consumerism, Soviet communism increasingly ceased to constitute a fundamental alternative. Both sides came to share the ideal of ostentative nonpolitical affluence, as Khrushchev famously remarked at the Kitchen Debate: “When we catch you up, in passing you by, we will wave to you.”<sup>26</sup> When it became clear that Khrushchev had bitten off more than he could chew and that the USSR and its allies had increasingly fallen behind but nevertheless managed to uphold the brittle equilibrium between economic and nuclear competition, it exacerbated the impression that the Eastern bloc “was becoming irrelevant as offering an alternative vision of collective well-being.”<sup>27</sup> The vacuum that this development left in the political imagination of the German Left, coupled with the continued amalgamation of issues of consumption

25. Sedlmaier, “Berlin als doppeltes Schaufenster.”

26. Khrushchev-Nixon debate, 24 July 1959, <http://www3.sympatico.ca/robsab/debate.html> (accessed 11 July 2012).

27. Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 456.

with political and violent conflict in the Cold War context, forms a crucial precondition for the emergence of the radical attitudes towards issues of consumption that are analysed in this book.

Against the backdrop of Nazi boycotts of shops owned by Jews during the 1930s,<sup>28</sup> the boycott as a form of protest was largely dormant in West Germany during the 1950s. When it increasingly appeared after the erection of the Berlin Wall, it was mostly directed against East Germany and occasionally used against the cultural products of individuals associated with the Nazi past. This constellation led to two boycotts that triggered landmark cases of constitutional law: the director of the Hamburg government's press office called for a boycott of Veit Harlan's first post-World War II film, which occupied the courts throughout the 1950s and became known as the Lüth case; the Springer company's boycott against a communist weekly for printing the East German television programme similarly occupied the courts throughout the 1960s and became known as the Blinkfüer case. Both cases went all the way up to the Federal Constitutional Court, which determined that boycotts were protected under the basic right of freedom of expression but only to the point that the economic pressure exerted did not stifle the targeted party's freedom of expression. This formulation subsequently proved important when the new social movements embraced boycott, coupled with direct action, in the late 1960s in the context of protests against public transport fare increases and the Springer press. A variety of boycott campaigns directed against specific companies and also against entire countries only emerged from 1973–74 onwards. Analysing such campaigns and their roots requires identifying a suitable methodological approach.

## Method

Recent historiography has begun to look more closely at the political implications of consumption where practical everyday issues gave rise to broader considerations and abstract theories; as Martin Dauntun and Matthew Hilton put it, "The specificity of commodity purchasing often crystallizes other general political concerns."<sup>29</sup> Economic citizenship based on the model of a rationally

28. On antisemitic boycotts during the 1920s and 1930s, see Hannah Ahlheim, "*Deutsche, kauft nicht bei Juden!*": Antisemitismus und politischer Boykott in Deutschland 1924 bis 1935 (Göttingen, 2011); Avraham Barkai, *Vom Boykott zur "Entjudung": Der wirtschaftliche Existenzkampf der Juden im Dritten Reich, 1933–1943* (Frankfurt, 1988).

29. Martin Dauntun and Matthew Hilton, "Material Politics: An Introduction," in *Politics of*

consuming individual has become an essential element of the modern liberal state.<sup>30</sup> Detlef Siegfried has demonstrated how consumption and politics did by no means exclude each other in the West German youth culture of the 1960s. On the contrary, the differentiation and pluralisation of consumption and lifestyle options were closely linked with the articulation of critical and political concerns.<sup>31</sup> For the more recent period, interdisciplinary work has examined boycotts, ad busting, and political consumerism.<sup>32</sup>

Matthew Hilton's *Prosperity for All* shows that the organisations of consumers and their diverse networks are central agents of global civil society and "the institutional expression of a grassroots social movement," which he grants the capacity to integrate the political spectrum across ideological divides in favour of one-issue campaigns.<sup>33</sup> He points out that consumer movements, especially in the developing world during the 1970s and 1980s, used "consumption as the entry point to criticize the whole society," taking account of "the concerns of those seemingly excluded from consumer society."<sup>34</sup> While his account of the international networks of consumer movements is indeed a valuable addition to scholarship, Hilton's restriction of the new social movements to just the 1960s induces him to deemphasise the role of other social movements that were not explicitly organised around consumption during the 1970s and 1980s and their legacy for more recent global protest movements. He repeatedly dismisses any theoretical position that mounts a more radical critique of consumer society as reducing consumers "to a homogenous number of self-gratifying mall dwellers awaiting the zombified numbness of their own inevi-

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*Consumption*, ed. Daunt and Hilton, 2. See also Carole Shammas, "Standard of Living, Consumption, and Political Economy over the Past 500 Years," in *Oxford Handbook*, ed. Trentmann, 211–28; Lawrence B. Glickman, "Consumer Activism, Consumer Regimes, and the Consumer Movement: Rethinking the History of Consumer Politics in the United States," in *Oxford Handbook*, ed. Trentmann, 399–417; Frank Trentmann, "The Politics of Everyday Life," in *Oxford Handbook*, ed. Trentmann, 521–50; Trentmann and Just, *Food and Conflict*; Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*; Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand*; Berghoff, *Konsumpolitik*; Geyer, "Teuerungsprotest, Konsumentenpolitik, und soziale Gerechtigkeit."

30. See Brückweh, *Voice of the Citizen Consumer*; Soper and Trentmann, *Citizenship and Consumption*; Bevir and Trentmann, *Governance, Consumers, and Citizens*; Pence, "Shopping for an 'Economic Miracle'"; Wildt, "Konsumbürger"; Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*.

31. Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side*. See also Schildt and Siegfried, *Between Marx and Coca-Cola*.

32. Heath and Potter, *Rebel Sell*; Micheletti, *Political Virtue and Shopping*; Micheletti, Føllesdal, and Stolle, *Politics, Products, and Markets*.

33. Hilton, *Prosperity for All*, 1, 11. See also Matthew Hilton, "Consumer Activism: Rights or Duties?," in *Voice of the Citizen Consumer*, ed. Brückweh, 99–116.

34. Hilton, *Prosperity for All*, 86.



table consumption.”<sup>35</sup> He diagnoses an “oppositional logic of little relevance to liberal capitalist democracy” and, without any empirical research on the topic, associates radical social movements with anti-Americanism and anti-Western sentiments. He even claims that “the problems arising from too little” have “been excluded from the discussion of consumer society” as a consequence of the “moralistic critique of consumption,” which allegedly ignored the “demands of consumers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.” As a result, he presents the comparative testing movement and the consumer cooperative movement as the true origins of an integrative perspective that addresses both problems of too little and of too much. With all due respect to the valuable work done by the groups analysed by Hilton, it seems equally problematic to overlook the impact that more radical positions towards issues of consumption have had on the emergence of global protest networks. A more impartial perspective will discover that radicals did not simply embrace the reductive positions against which Hilton polemicalises but—rather like the organised consumers—wrestled with the ambivalences and contradictions arising from concrete problems of provision, which led to a keen awareness of the dilemmas of those excluded from the blessings of affluence both in developing countries and among the marginalised in highly industrialised societies. The ideological front is regrettable since Hilton’s consumer activists in developing countries and his critique of “an impoverished notion of choice” do point the way to conflicts over public goods—such as the supply of water, electricity, education, or transport—raising questions concerning the “systems of provision that enable the consumer to have access to key goods and services.”<sup>36</sup>

What is needed is a method that allows for an empirical study of the moral, social, and political conflicts arising from systems of provision. Such a method can hardly succeed without addressing the relations of power and violence that provide the background for any system of provision. However, the dimension of political violence has not featured prominently in the literature on the politics of consumption despite the fact that commodity purchasing has also crystallised discourses on violence. To grasp the connection between consumers and the power relations that define the conditions and meanings of consumption, the following analysis will utilise the concept of “regimes of provision.” It is a further development of the system-of-provision perspective employed by social scientists to highlight the vertical connection between consumption and production. In analogy to Ben Fine’s definition of

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35. Ibid., 243.

36. Ibid., 250, 252–54.

a “system of provision,”<sup>37</sup> a *regime of provision* defined as the network of activities that attaches consumption to the power relations that make it possible and at the same time hinders other forms of consumption and production. What a society deems consumable under what circumstances and for whom is a result of social and political contests and struggles that invoke visions or images of past, future, and ideal regimes of provision. Contentious claims to the fruits of production have been central to such debates. Political violence—proactive and reactive—often accompanied and influenced these processes of definition. The term *regime of provision* thus seeks to examine the arguments of those who embraced militant action as a response to either the inability of “the system” to ensure collective well-being or to the violence inherent in regimes of provision. Moreover, it makes visible a distinct set of imperatives upholding a cluster of systems of provision in a zone of influence of a political power and the resistance they trigger. Resistance may be successful in partly realising alternative regimes of provision. This means that there is a plurality of regimes of provision and that competing regimes of provision may overlap and become tangled. Depending on perspective, a regime of provision can be either specific (for example, housing or media provision in a specific area) or broad and general (pertaining to entire nations or even the global economy).

The term *regime of consumption*,<sup>38</sup> aimed at similar connections, has been altered to avoid inclusion of the word *consumption* because ways of consumption are never fully determined since consumers always enjoy a certain degree of creativity and freedom in how they act—for example, whether to read a tabloid newspaper, to fold it into paper airplanes, or to use it as toilet paper—while what is contested is the regime of provision that sets the parameters and conditions under which goods or services are placed at the disposal of the consumers. The “regime of provision” perspective also supersedes that associated with the common German term *Konsumkritik* (literally, criticism of consumption). This term rather misleadingly suggests a critique of consumption as such—a fundamental category of human existence—while in reality, critiques were always directed against concrete manifestations of certain regimes of provision.

In common parlance, the term *Konsum* acquired the sense of consumer

37. Fine, *World of Consumption*, 79.

38. The term is used but not stringently defined in Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 5. See also Confini and Koshar, “Régimes of Consumer Culture”; Hazel Kyrk, *A Theory of Consumption* (Boston, 1923), 41. Kyrk introduces American consumer society as “a régime of individualism in consumption.”

society, defined as a concrete historical period characterised by a vastly increased significance of the realm of consumption compared to previous epochs. This meant that production and earning lost significance relative to consumption and spending, but—contrary to what is sometimes suggested—it by no means followed that work and industrial production ceased to be central categories of human experience. Such shifts in socioeconomic semantics led critics to see the rhetoric of consumption as an ideological tool that the ruling classes employed to control society. Critical perspectives on consumer society are often vehemently embraced or rejected, but as a historical phenomenon, they remain thoroughly understudied.<sup>39</sup> They were prominent in Germany, but radical positions were also embraced by French and Italian thinkers such as Pier Paolo Pasolini and Henri Lefebvre; the latter has a chapter, “Terrorism and Everyday Life.”<sup>40</sup> In postwar West Germany, consumer critique was usually associated with the Frankfurt School and was thus embedded in a more fundamental critique of domination in the context of “late capitalism.”

In recent research on the history of consumption, it has become fashionable to flatly dismiss the classical positions of consumer critique, arguing that these accounts were elitist, normative, and totalising, depicting consumers as too passive while simplifying their motives.<sup>41</sup> This viewpoint is frequently based on a decontextualising interpretation of isolated quotations. In a recent essay on political legitimisations of consumption, Claudius Torp goes so far as to claim that the tradition of *Konsumkritik*—which he equally associates with conservative thinkers such as Hans Freyer and Arnold Gehlen and with the neo-Marxist Left from Horkheimer to Habermas—was responsible for a belated moralisation of consumption. He even claims that the “protest forms of the 68ers” led to arson and hunger strikes as a consequence of a “fundamental opposition to consumption.” Similar to Hilton’s reasoning, this allows for a wholesale exclusion of the New Left—trapped “in the dead end of radical refusal”—from the moralisation of consumption.<sup>42</sup> It remains to be seen whether this

39. A few pioneering works include Alexander Sedlmaier, “Konsumkritik und politische Gewalt in der linksalternativen Szene der siebziger Jahre,” in *Das alternative Milieu*, ed. Reichardt and Siegfried, 194–204; Uta G. Poiger, “Imperialism and Consumption: Two Tropes in West German Radicalism,” in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola*, ed. Schildt and Siegfried, 161–72; Horowitz, *Anxieties of Affluence*; Briesen, *Warenhaus, Massenkonsum, und Sozialmoral*. See also Bevir and Trentmann, *Critiques of Capital*. Relatively thin on critical attitudes towards issues of consumption is Michael Wildt, “‘Wohlstand für alle’: Das Spannungsfeld von Konsum und Politik in der Bundesrepublik,” in *Konsumgesellschaft in Deutschland*, ed. Haupt and Torp, 312–13.

40. Cf. Lefebvre, *Vie quotidienne*; *Das Alltagsleben in der modernen Welt*, trans. Annegret Domasy [Frankfurt, 1972]; Pasolini, *Freibeuterschriften*.

41. E.g. Hecken, *Versagen der Intellektuellen*.

42. Torp, *Wachstum, Sicherheit, Moral*, 122–23.

far-reaching claim for the exclusion of the New Left from its very own project—the creation of international solidarity—can be supported empirically.

Juliet Schor has shown that the “critique of consumer critique” often fails to go into sufficient depth because the questions asked and the methods employed by critical intellectuals such as Veblen, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Galbraith are not obsolete just because they are no longer shared by the academic mainstream, especially concerning their political implications. She points out that an integrated perspective on the spheres of consumption and production as pioneered by these thinkers has been largely abandoned by a depoliticising mode of scholarly enquiry that treats the dimension of consumption as if it were sufficient in itself to access the entire spectrum of social relations.<sup>43</sup> In a similar vein, Andreas Wirsching reflects on the limits of the current scholarly paradigm concerning the consumer society, pointing out that because of its utilitarian focus on “the crude sum total of accrued enjoyment,” it “is less interested in the frustration of those who lack the means to attain . . . distinction, or the freedoms that are denied to them.” Teleological accounts that hail the “victorious progression” of Western consumer society run the danger of neglecting social inequality.<sup>44</sup> Wirsching’s uneasiness fails to take into account recent authors who have gone in this direction—for example, Matthew Hilton and Avner Offer<sup>45</sup>—but he is right in pointing out that a methodological approach that addresses the history of consumption as part of a more comprehensive social theory still needs to be developed.

Drawing on Niklas Luhmann, sociologist Dominik Schrage proposes to introduce a “generalising definition of the relationship between the economic system and the consumer by means of the concept of structural coupling.”<sup>46</sup> This also seeks to overcome the perspective of Frankfurt School *Konsumkritik* because of its normative assumptions concerning the manipulative powers of the economic system over the consumer. However, Schrage’s solution seems to be throwing out the baby with the bathwater: while Luhmann demonstrates how large social systems like the political system, the legal system, and the economic system are structurally coupled, Schrage collapses this complexity into what appears to be a preestablished harmony between just the economic system and the consumer on an equal footing. Even if the problematic assumption is granted that consumption or the consumers constitute a system in Luh-

43. Schor, “In Defense of Consumer Critique.”

44. Wirsching, “From Work to Consumption,” 24–26. See also Sedlmaier, “Consumerism—cui bono?”

45. Offer, *Challenge of Affluence*.

46. Schrage, *Verfügbarkeit der Dinge*, 260–62.

mann's sense, this assumption ignores the asymmetry of power between consumers, who are individualised and difficult to organise politically, and the vast organisational networks and legal structures that constitute the framework for the functioning of the economic system. Schrage's perspective is different. He assumes an all-embracing power of mass consumption permeating all forms of human interaction. While this undoubtedly holds true for many aspects of the highly industrialised societies of the second half of the twentieth century, Schrage's generalising and depoliticising perspective on consumption does not leave much room for the politics of regimes of provision, for the contingent decisions that societies make—decisions that do not concern some illusionary withdrawal from consumption as such but rather concern what and how they produce and consume.

Classical social history has dealt with consumption under conditions of scarcity and with the dimension of violence in subsistence protests. However, this approach is usually applied only up to the mid-nineteenth century. For subsequent periods, most researchers assume a rationalisation of consumption and consumerism that resulted in civil and peaceful processes of commercial and political negotiation superseding more violent forms of intercourse.<sup>47</sup> The newer research paradigm of the history of consumption, conversely, has tended to focus on the implications of abundance, where episodes of violence seem like relics of a bygone age no longer relevant to modern civil society. Undermining such a perspective are frequent pictures of burnt-out cars, looted display windows, and young people throwing stones in different cities of industrially advanced societies. Collective violence, especially looting, is obviously not “a remnant of the past but part and parcel of life in contemporary societies . . . intricately tied to the very ways in which class . . . and ethnic inequities are structured and reproduced.”<sup>48</sup> An integrative approach that would show how scarcity and abundance as well as peaceful and violent conflict complemented each other and developed in parallel throughout the twentieth century is still in its infancy.

By going beyond the traditions of generalising critiques or affirmations of consumption, the present approach looks at the intellectual, social, and political history of regimes of provision. It avoids reducing the phenomenon to violent anticonsumerism, which is only one possible relationship in the discursive field between consumption and violence. Addressing the destructive potential

47. For a critical overview, see Gailus, *Contentious Food Politics*, 36–43. Assuming a rationalization of consumption during the second half of the nineteenth century are Nonn, *Verbraucherprotest und Parteiensystem*; Blessing, “Konsumentenprotest und Arbeitskampf.”

48. Auyero, *Routine Politics and Violence*, 10.

inherent in certain patterns of consumption is another. The question of cause and effect between regimes of provision and the accompanying debates, critiques, and attacks is assessed at different stages. In many respects, critiques of regimes of provision were inversions of contemporary ideological positions that claimed beneficial consequences of consumerism, self-interest, and market settings. *Doux commerce* arguments attributed to particular historical or idealised regimes of provision invited criticism. Historically, critiques of capitalism have focused on aspects of production as well as consumption. The “regime of provision” perspective allows the integration of both angles. Regimes of provision could appear as sources of (1) disenchantment and a perception of inauthenticity of things and ways of life; (2) oppression that impairs freedom, autonomy, and creativity, subjects people to the rules of the market anonymously, arbitrarily fixes prices, and/or decides which goods and services are commodified; (3) poverty and inequality or social exclusion; or (4) opportunism and egoism, fostering individual interest that corrupts social cohesion and mutual solidarity, especially between rich and poor.<sup>49</sup> An important dimension of regimes of provision and their critiques is that of gender equality. While gender is not a principal category in the present approach, due attention will be given to feminist impulses. This aspect became more prominent with the underresearched emergence of militant feminism in the 1980s, when solidarity campaigns with female labourers in the developing world were among the first to revive radical traditions of labour dispute in a global dimension. Finally, critiques of regimes of provision could vary in scope from the desire of excluded groups to merely participate in a successful regime of provision without wanting to overthrow its fundamental principles to violent resistance to the commodification of ever more aspects of human life.

While recent research on consumption has acknowledged its political dimension largely without the aspect of violence, new research on violence has not exactly focused on the dimension of consumption. The decision to analyse militant forms of protest against regimes of provision leads to the question of a definition of political violence. Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth suggest succinctly and convincingly that political violence should connote “all forms of violence enacted pursuant to aims of decisive socio-political control or change.” Their inclusion of state-sponsored violence is sensible. However, this approach comes with a number of normative qualifications: “the regular functions of the police and justice systems and the intelligence services” are included only insofar as “they contributed to squeezing out the possibility of

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49. This typology is a further development of one by Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit*, 37.

transformative, anti-systemic violence,” and organized labour violence is excluded altogether because it generally aimed “at reform within the accepted context of the socio-political system.”<sup>50</sup> While this might be helpful on the macro level of analysing political violence for entire centuries and continents, it does raise questions about the limits of the regular and the accepted and runs the danger of putting the focus only on large-scale and exceptional events of violence, such as international terrorism.

At a more quotidian level, Donatella Della Porta looks at political violence within social movements. She emphasises its relative illegitimacy when addressing political violence “as a particular repertoire of collective action that involved physical force, considered at that time as illegitimate in the dominant culture.”<sup>51</sup> This seems problematic since it immediately relegates the use of force by the authorities under the state’s monopoly of violence into a different, nonpolitical realm. Moreover, by assuming a fixed sense of legitimacy within a dominant culture, it does not do sufficient justice to the communicative interaction within society over what can be considered legitimate because both the authorities and their challengers in political and social movements have to discursively legitimise and communicate the acts of violence to which they resort. The monopoly on violence structures the political space and, via the legal system of property ownership, the regimes of provision. As a result of a negotiating process about its application, the scope of political debate and/or action—that is, the limits of the political space—can be either restricted or extended.<sup>52</sup> However, on the level of different forms of violence—for it seems unproductive to speculate about violence as such—Della Porta’s definition is helpful because it includes violence against objects, such as attacks on property, rioting, or disorder leading to damage to property.<sup>53</sup> A definition restricting political violence to violence against persons would hardly do justice to the theme of this book. It would, as is frequently the case in the literature on terrorism, divorce political violence from its origins in social and political struggles over material realities.

This aspect can be framed effectively by drawing on David Apter, for whom the “key to political violence is its legitimacy.” He hypothesises that social movements develop power if they draw “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu)

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50. Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth, introduction to *Political Violence*, ed. Bloxham and Gerwarth, 2.

51. Della Porta, *Social Movements*, 3–4.

52. This is indebted to the approach that conceptualises “The Political as Communicative Space” pioneered at the University of Bielefeld. Cf. Neithard Bulst, Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, “Einleitung,” in *Gewalt im politischen Raum*, ed. Bulst, Gilcher-Holtey, and Haupt, 8–10.

53. Della Porta, *Social Movements*, 3–4.

from their interpretation of disjunctive events.<sup>54</sup> Assuming political violence to be a ubiquitous phenomenon that aims at a power shift (or at preserving a status quo) and in doing so requires legitimisation, it appears that the legitimisation and delegitimisation of violence can in turn hardly do without reference to supraindividual units. An essential factor for the emergence of political violence is the transformation, mediated by political entrepreneurs, of such narratives into discourses—reconstructions of reality in their own right—that have gained a certain degree of acceptance. Apter is not alone in highlighting the idea that “violence cannot be understood without the discourses that accompany, limit, and expand it.”<sup>55</sup> Political violence thus becomes a way of challenging hegemonic discourse,<sup>56</sup> because discourses on legitimacy and legality are entangled, as the works of Freia Anders have shown for the conflicts between autonomists and state authorities during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>57</sup> According to Apter, political violence is not random but occurs in pursuit of a “designated and reordering purpose”—for example, justice and equality. Consequently, “boundary smashing goes together with boundary resetting.”<sup>58</sup> If such an “inversion of meaning” is sought, political violence constitutes an inversionary discourse bent on symbolic capital rather than a mere exchange of power over economic capital by armed force, although in reality, movements combine both elements in changing combination ratios.<sup>59</sup> This should not be misunderstood as a mere apology for acts of political violence but rather as a pointer to the complexity and moral ambiguity of political violence, which can be a rational phenomenon. Confrontation can thus function as a mobilisation resource. Moreover, Apter reminds us that reallocations of wealth, visions of human betterment, and political violence have been inseparable from the evolution of democracy. The English, American, and French Revolutions were all marked by political violence and its discourses—by translations of violent events into social text—not least concerning clashing regimes of provision.<sup>60</sup>

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54. David E. Apter, “Symbolic Capital and Political Violence: A Discourse Approach” (unpublished conference paper, Legitimationen politischer Gewalt, Universität Bielefeld, October 2009), 38; David E. Apter, “Political Violence in Analytical Perspective,” in *Legitimation of Violence*, ed. Apter, 5–15. The focus on *legitimation* is conscious (i.e., the action or process of legitimising rather than the more static *legitimisation*).

55. Bulst, Gilcher-Holtey, and Haupt, “Einleitung,” 11.

56. Apter, “Political Violence,” 8.

57. Freia Anders, “Die Zeitschrift *radikal* und das Strafrecht,” in *Herausforderungen des staatlichen Gewaltmonopols*, ed. Anders and Gilcher-Holtey, 221–59; Freia Anders, “Die ‘Gewaltfrage’ an der Startbahn West,” in *Gewalt im politischen Raum*, ed. Bulst, Gilcher-Holtey, and Haupt, 260–88; Sedlmaier and Anders, “Limits of the Legitimate.”

58. Apter, “Political Violence,” 5.

59. *Ibid.*, 15.

60. *Ibid.*, 2–22.



In a global perspective, Apter's approach helps to understand political violence as a crucial interface between political and economic development: "Modern developmentalism is based on the premise of unlimited growth, the universalization of the market, and more and more effective access to and participation in economic, social and political institutions." If one assumes political development to be partly violence-driven—by wars, by the exercise of the domestic monopoly of power, and by challenges to the latter, which trigger reform—the systems of politics and economics seem "mutually linked within a double market."<sup>61</sup> Critics and challengers of regimes of provision are entrepreneurs on this double market.

An approach inspired by Apter's theory of inversionary discourse is in no position to claim, like E. P. Thompson, that protest action was based on a broad "popular consensus as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices."<sup>62</sup> Quite the contrary, what was considered legitimate in conflicts over regimes of provision during the second half of the twentieth century was very much in flux and was hotly contested by a multitude of actors drawing on a plurality of intellectual traditions. Rather than backward-looking, moral economies were utopian in their efforts to systematically reorganise the economic system in accordance with moral or political convictions that rejected the free-market ethos of capitalist economies. What remains of value in Thompson's analysis of eighteenth-century crowd action is the focus on the notion of legitimation and the insight that his angry consumers had a far more complex motivation than just hunger or riotousness. Also transferable is Thompson's observation that a moral economy, while not political in the sense of advanced forms of organisation, "nevertheless . . . cannot be described as unpolitical either since it supposed . . . passionately held notions of the common weal."<sup>63</sup> Late-twentieth-century conflicts over moral economies gained their explosiveness by virtue of their position at the margins of the political, where questions of the limits of the legitimate and the definition of the political were negotiated. This also applied to the authorities, who similarly legitimised their repression with implicit or explicit recourse to ideologies of political economy.<sup>64</sup>

Javier Auyero's scholarship on more recent phenomena of collective violence has demonstrated that looting is not best described as anarchic outbursts

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61. Ibid., 22.

62. Thompson, "Moral Economy," 79. See also Trentmann, "Before 'Fair Trade'"; Gailus, *Contentious Food Politics*, 7; Bouton, *Flour War*.

63. Thompson, "Moral Economy," 79.

64. Cf. *ibid.*, 129.

as a consequence of its relational underpinnings and the selectivity of looters' actions: usually, though not always, the people carrying out riots or lootings are connected through social ties and selectively target particular kinds of stores. This can even amount to "coordinated destruction"—that is, an entire programme of targeted damage to objects.<sup>65</sup> Actors using the "threat of disruption" can thus gain considerable political leverage.<sup>66</sup>

Violence is itself a type of communication; more importantly, however, political violence is both the result and starting point of political communication. In the case of postwar Germany, initially the only "specialists in violence"<sup>67</sup> in this interaction were law enforcement officers who confronted student protesters and artistic or intellectual critics who consciously overstepped the established conventions and rules of political communication focusing on quotidian manifestations of violence. The idea of a challenge to established authorities via civil disobedience and performative rule breaking—as expressed in Rudi Dutschke's vision of a "countermilieu"—lay at the heart of the political strategies practiced by the "1968" movement and its successors in alternative, feminist, and environmentalist movements. Eventually, the field of participants in this interaction diversified with militant groups such as the Red Army Faction (RAF), Movement 2 June, the Revolutionary Cells, and later autonomist activists seeking to combine the role of political entrepreneurs with that of specialists in violence.

It is important to focus on two interrelated types of political discourse: the reciprocal exchange between challengers and forces of order, and the internal communication in both camps—for example, when security measures and their justifications became detached from the reality of threats emanating from protest movements, or when the critical thinking harboured by the latter collapsed into hollow enemy images and self-referential worldviews. However, historians cannot label the objects of enquiry with such categories from the outset. The pondering and weighing of the interaction—or lack thereof—between competing regimes of provision must result from empirical analysis. This study is therefore primarily concerned with describing and explaining the genesis and the political consequences of theoretical frameworks and social practices that brought the realms of violence and consumption into contact. Using Quentin Skinner's vocabulary, the task is to recover illocutionary acts: "We need to situate the texts [or other performative acts] we study within such intellectual contexts and frameworks of discourse as enable us to recognize

65. Auyero, *Routine Politics and Violence*, 15, 28. Cf. Tilly, *Politics of Collective Violence*, 14.

66. Auyero, *Routine Politics and Violence*, 157.

67. Cf. Tilly, *Politics of Collective Violence*, 34–41.

what their authors were *doing* in writing [or performing] them.”<sup>68</sup> According to Skinner, such a method based on extensive research will show that ideas were intertwined with claims for power. Texts (and other performative acts) position themselves in relation to their contemporary discourses and the status quo they seek to change: “We need to understand why a certain proposition has been put forward if we wish to understand the proposition itself.”<sup>69</sup>

As Max Weber pointed out, political or other value judgments on the part of the author will inevitably contribute to the complex genesis of any conceptual approach.<sup>70</sup> However, the outright application or imposition of value judgments on the material is hardly beneficial to the gaining of knowledge. This is also true for widely shared value judgments that dominate mainstream approaches to contemporary history, which often originate in contemporary discourse. While the remainder of this book explores the economic and political thought of radical leftists in considerable detail and with a certain degree of empathy—the English word derives from the German *Einfühlungsvermögen*—the idea is not to prove that they were right but instead to show that their thinking and acting were meticulously embedded in intellectual traditions, social structures, and political power relations and that they eventually influenced further developments, often indirectly and against their original motivations. Such an analysis transcends existing perceptions or categorisations of their activities and thereby adds to our knowledge of the period. The gains from this endeavour should be accessible to all readers irrespective of their political values or convictions.

Consequently, the economic and political thought of the individuals and groups analysed cannot function as an analytical tool. The conceptual framework invoked here—that is, the decision to ask for connections between the realms of consumption and violence and the idea of capturing those connections under the concept of “regimes of provision”—has been developed independently through reflection on the existing historiography and theoretical literature on the history of consumption and the history of political violence. It should be applicable to other scenarios of violence in the sphere of consumption, such as Nazi violence against shops owned by Jews, the Canadian potlatch ban, or the Bonfires of the Vanities in the course of Girolamo Savonarola’s campaign for reform.

68. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vii.

69. *Ibid.*, 115.

70. Max Weber, “Kritische Studien auf dem Gebiet der kulturwissenschaftlichen Logik,” in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann, 6th ed. (Tübingen, 1985), 252–53.

## Aims and Structure

The central hypothesis of this volume is that even in an age of affluence, militant protest and political violence can essentially be traced back to competing concepts of moral economy. The book addresses three guiding research questions: (1) How did regimes of provision and political protest interrelate? (2) How, when, and why did militant forms of protest against regimes of provision emerge? (3) In what ways were intellectual critique, militant practice, economic interest, and the use of the governmental monopoly of violence interlocked in such developments? Notions of social solidarity and equality were often core values in radical critiques and protests, and they were easily entrapped in escalations of violence and counterviolence. We need to reconstruct the role of narratives of social protest and revolutionary politics adopted and adapted by protesters, by the intellectual commentators who offered themselves as their spokespersons—or as their critics—and by the government institutions they confronted. Political talk thus serves “as a window into people’s moral universes.”<sup>71</sup>

The volume covers the time period from the late 1950s to the late 1980s in an integrated manner, an approach taken by very few previous studies of protest politics and the Left. The book is organized into seven chapters, all of which treat two themes in conjunction: instances where commodities were symbolically destroyed by acts of political violence, and political thought reflecting the symbolic and manifest violence emanating from regimes of provision. The chapters are arranged to optimally explore these thematic considerations, while chronological considerations are subordinate but still influence the internal composition of the chapters. Chapters 1–3 depart from an examination of a relatively well-known April 1968 incident of department store arson in Frankfurt but go much further than the existing literature in contextualizing and explaining this and similar events, expanding the topic of consumption and violence up to the 1980s.

Chapter 1 focuses on the prehistory of the Frankfurt firebombings in the protest praxis of the famous Kommune I and its provocative leaflets satirizing public responses to a Brussels fire disaster. Due attention is given to forerunners—in particular, to the artist groups Spur and Subversive Aktion, which played a central role in establishing the commercial sphere as a prime focus of protest beginning in the early 1960s. In the second half of the decade, political happenings at department stores were a well-established form of student pro-

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71. Auyero, *Routine Politics and Violence*, 29.

test. The chapter ends with the highly publicized trial of the Frankfurt arsonists and how they evaded the sentence, which eventually resulted in the creation of the RAF.

Before pursuing this development further, chapter 2 traces contemporary theoretical understandings of regimes of provision, drawing on a close reading of pertinent sources in the intellectual history of consumption-related protest, especially the work of Herbert Marcuse as it developed over several decades. Departing from a Freudian perspective on needs, Marcuse's subsequent differentiation of true and false needs and his theory of repressive tolerance offered sufficient points of contact with other thinkers who analysed material progress critically and influenced the protest movement. An analysis of a theory paper by members of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS), "Warenhausaktionen" (Department Store Campaigns), broaches the issue of how these sources came to be reflected in the cognitive orientation of the activists analysed in the other chapters. A radical interpretation of Marx's realm of freedom inspired many critics of capitalist regimes of provision. An analysis of Marcuse's *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972) highlights a remarkable radicalisation of his critique that needs to be understood in the context of his exchange with rebellious students.

Chapter 3 then resumes the narrative of militant acts against representations of consumer society with the Tupamaros West-Berlin and their 1969 arson attacks. The radical alternative milieu's widespread indulgence in drugs and theft was a crucial backdrop for this development, as was the relatively conciliatory approach vis-à-vis the protest movement adopted by the coalition government of Social Democrats and Free Democrats, which, in the eyes of the radicals, threatened to stifle the movement's revolutionary impetus. The latter attitude increasingly manifested itself in the "politics of broken glass." The chapter then embarks on a systematic analysis of the statements and writings of the RAF, which emerged from this context. In its desperate quest for a revolutionary subject, the RAF sought to address those excluded from consumer society. Existing research more or less ignores this central aspect of social-revolutionary militancy. Drawing on Ulrike Meinhof's theoretical writings, the chapter demonstrates how a notion of "consumer terror" had already been present in her journalistic work. However, she eventually undertook a significant departure from the student movement's broader theories of manipulation and depoliticisation in favour of an emphasis on various forms of illegal disobedience as a process of moral emancipation, especially in a draft for a major strategy paper, "Die Massen und der Konsum" (The Masses and Consumption), which was not made available to the public after the authorities confis-

cated it from her cell. Consumer politics emerges as a central plank in the cognitive orientation of the first generation of the RAF. After Meinhof's death, this focus receded, but Movement 2 June, a related but independent group, continued a militant focus on consumer society. This tradition eventually was revived, with different means, by the autonomist groups of the 1980s.

Chapters 4–6 then analyse the complex nature of debates and conflicts over specific public commodities (public transport, media, and housing). Although these chapters occasionally come back to the famous activists of *Kommune I* and the RAF, they address critiques of regimes of provision that were rooted in much wider social movements. This approach not only provides an essential backdrop for a better understanding of the famous militants but goes beyond them in terms of primary source basis, analytical depth, and chronological scope. These chapters show that violence entered protest scenarios very quickly and largely independent of the famous provocateurs, simultaneously calling the protests' legitimacy into question and challenging the measures to which the authorities resorted. This development initiated far-reaching legal debates leading to a differentiation of the concept of violence in criminal law as well as to discussions regarding the relationship between basic rights and the state's monopoly on violence.

The politics of public transport fares between the mid-1960s and the early 1980s serve as the central issue of chapter 4. An analysis of the so-called Laeple case—named after a rather moderate student functionary—demonstrates the crucial role of legal discourse in the genesis of political violence. This particular kind of protest, which peaked in the Red Spot Campaign in Hanover in 1969, has never been investigated in depth. It emerges as a remarkably widespread and vibrant area of everyday protest that was eventually radicalized by groups such as the Frankfurt Spontis—including Joschka Fischer and Daniel Cohn-Bendit—and the Revolutionäre Zellen (Revolutionary Cells).

Chapter 5 examines the anti-Springer campaign, which focused on a specific critique of a regime of provision: an alleged manipulative monopoly on information. Emerging from the SDS campaign against one of Europe's largest publishing houses, the protests initially leaned on intellectual impulses, such as Jörg Huffschmid's Habermasian critique of press concentration, while some activists resorted to the direct action of broken glass. The protests culminated after the near-fatal shooting of Rudi Dutschke in April 1968, when activists engaged in large-scale protest rallies and blockades against Springer. The activists' attempt to differentiate between violence against things and violence against people was quickly overtaken by the intensification of political antagonism in the aftermath of the riots. The dimension of consumption has not fea-

tured prominently in existing accounts of the anti-Springer campaign. Moreover, most treatments hardly go beyond Easter 1968. This volume, in contrast, analyses both the long-term repercussions of the legal interpretation of violence during blockades, which necessitated a reformulation of the notion of violence, and the revival of the campaign in the context of the peace movement of the early 1980s. Rather remarkably, Springer had embraced politically motivated boycotts in the media sector long before the extraparliamentary opposition seized the method and militants targeted the press baron.

Political violence arising from conflict over the public commodities of housing and urban space is the subject of chapter 6, which focuses on the Frankfurt and West Berlin squatters' movements. A challenging search for alternative lifestyles, concepts of well-being, and regimes of provision constantly faced the threat of being criminalised and the possibility of violent escalations. The chapter examines the case of the Weisbecker-Haus, named after a member of Movement 2 June shot by police. However, squatting was ultimately a socio-economic phenomenon. In many respects, squatters were alternative consumers who attempted to give voice to the economic, social, and cultural interests of consumers of housing space and urban infrastructure and to lend them political weight vis-à-vis the seemingly purely economic concerns of commercial entrepreneurs and their destructive powers.

The final chapter adds the global dimension and takes the narrative up to the late 1980s by examining political campaigns that sought to establish solidarity between consumers in highly industrialised countries and producers in developing countries. Various campaigns against international regimes of provision are treated: against the apartheid regime in South Africa; in support of the Palestinians' anti-Zionist struggle; against multinational companies such as Nestlé and various coffee roasters; and supporting female low-wage workers for the textile manufacturer Adler in South Korea. These protests reached their peak during the 1988 meeting of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in West Berlin. Complementing the treatment of the autonomists and the RAF's campaigns against global governance, the chapter presents an unprecedented analysis of the theoretical writings of the Revolutionary Cells and their feminist branch, Rote Zora, which explicitly sought to operate in the grey zone between the social movements, consumer solidarity, and militant action.

## CHAPTER I

# Department Stores: Political Protest in the Commercial Sphere

“Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production.”

—Adam Smith (1776)<sup>1</sup>

The imaginative superelevation that Western-style consumption received in the context of the Cold War competition developed internal tensions and cracks as a result of one of its main driving forces: diversification. Youth movements played a crucial role in the emergence of alternatives that challenged the bipolar structure of Cold War consumption debates. The economy and the market reacted to the rebellious attitudes of young people, took them up according to their logic of commercialisation, and consequently helped their expression. This mechanism has been acknowledged as a factor causing the *Halbstarkenkrawalle* (yob riots) of the late 1950s.<sup>2</sup> These disturbances and protests often crystallised around places or events of cultural consumption, such as cinemas or concert venues, and built on the appearance of nonconformist behaviour in the public sphere of shopping streets and market squares.

At the time, however, a critical attitude towards consumer society was still the domain of worried parents and educators. Emerging from a sceptical interpretation of commercialisation and its effects on the coming generation, they prescribed social commitment, critical thinking, and politicisation as antidotes. The public debate on youth was dominated by the idea of the manipulative powers of advertisement. This pedagogical variant of the West German Cold War mentality tended to merge three symptoms of the decline of modernity into “massification”: National Socialism, communism, and consumer society.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776; Chicago, 1976), 2:179.

2. Lindner, *Jugendprotest*, 45. See also Grotum, *Halbstarken*.

3. Detlef Siegfried, “Vom Teenager zur Pop-Revolution: Politisierungstendenzen in der west-



Ultimately, the metamorphosis of this critical outlook into the identification of consumer society with imperialism and repression that gained currency amid the student revolts of the second half of the 1960s became an important turning point in the political history of the late twentieth century.

Marxists conventionally scorned political activity in the “sphere of reproduction” as a backwater of revolutionary activity. Nonetheless, political activity resulted from perceptions of change in the structures of the working world and from frustrated efforts to gain influence in the classical sphere of production. Beginning in the late 1960s, attempts to integrate both spheres with innovative means of protest flourished. In November 1970, Frankfurt activists began concentrating on the Opel plant at Rüsselsheim, seeking to rekindle the major strikes that had occurred at the Turin FIAT works in the autumn of 1969 and at the Paris Renault factory in May 1968. During this rather unsuccessful episode of factory agitation, the focus of the radical rebellion went far beyond strictly production-related issues. The entire mode of an “alienated” everyday life marked by deformed need satisfaction was attacked.<sup>4</sup> Factory activists reproduced Adam Smith’s famous insight in their own way. An entry in a political “factory journal” by Reimut Reiche highlighted crucial differences in lifestyle that separated the activists from their desired clientele: “It is somehow preposterous to fulminate against all this work while most people have the motivation to work more without discussing the entire consumption shit that is so adequate to capital[ism]. Those who absolutely want a colour TV, a new car, or a bedroom will hardly be against overtime.”<sup>5</sup> Reiche, who had been federal chair of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS) in 1966–67, also expressed the considerable distance he felt from the lifestyles and consumer habits of the people he sought to agitate: “I really would have ended up at a psychiatric hospital if, on top of it, I had to share their way of life after working hours, at their pubs or at home, and had to feed off the grub that they feed off!”<sup>6</sup>

The Dutch Provos had been pioneers of political campaigns with a focus on consumption. Seeing themselves as spearheads of a new society, they declared, “Our targets are consumer society and governmental order. We aim for

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deutschen Jugendkultur 1959 bis 1968,” in *Dynamische Zeiten*, ed. Schildt, Siegfried, and Lamers, 584–92.

4. For brief accounts of the Frankfurt *Spontis*’ experiences at Opel, see Kraushaar, “Frankfurter Sponti-Szene,” 108–10; Koenen, *Das Rote Jahrzehnt*, 319–26.

5. Reimut Reiche, *Was heißt: Proletarischer Lebenszusammenhang?* (Frankfurt, 1971), in *Frankfurter Schule*, ed. Kraushaar, 2:736–39. See also Christian Schmidt, “Wir sind die Wahnsinnigen,” 45–46.

6. Quoted *ibid.*, 43.

the unlimited autonomy of the individual. We are anarchists.”<sup>7</sup> In 1968, a statement by the Provos was printed in a West Berlin underground almanac: “We live in a tasteless uniform society. . . . Our behaviour and consumption are dictated or forced upon us by capitalist or communist Big Bosses. But the Provos . . . want to be the creative leisure activists of tomorrow. Get rid of Philips, Seven up, Lexington, DAF, Persil, Prodent. The Provotariat abhors the enslaved consumer.”<sup>8</sup> This focus on provoking violent responses from authorities using nonviolent bait, seeking to improve public transport, critiquing real estate speculation via squatting, and challenging newspaper coverage of protest events anticipated crucial aspects of the subsequent entanglement of critiques of regimes of provision and discourses on violence.

In a broader sense, the countless activists and protesters who responded to the structural transformations in production and distribution and to corresponding changes in social stratification affecting highly developed societies mark a turning point in a longer development: rapid economic growth since the mid-nineteenth century had at least theoretically furnished the means to solve the social question and to provide well-being for all. This highlighted the question of whether certain types of property and authority created injustices that prevented a more appropriate distribution and use of society’s riches, especially when this perspective was extended to questions of global distribution. Understanding the profound changes that took place in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, requires examining the contradictions and drawbacks brought about by the culmination of growth. Critical intellectuals, laid-off workers, and members of disadvantaged minorities questioned politicians’ promises of ubiquitous affluence and developed a consciousness of the discomforts of consumer society. The new material blessings came at a price. Increased levels of consumption and participation in consumer markets and the modest but comfortable property of the wage earners of postwar Western societies often went hand in hand with changes in the workplace requiring rather uncomfortable processes of adjustment, loss of autonomy, or destruction of established social structures. Despite the flood of consumer goods, the social distribution of property did not necessarily continue to widen; wealth and influence became concentrated among those dominating oligopolistic market structures.

This chapter does not provide an exhaustive history of the drawbacks of consumer society in the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, it puts the focus on members of left-wing alternative milieus who discovered the realm of consumption

7. Hollstein, *Gegengesellschaft*, 70.

8. “Aufruf an das international Provotariat,” in Dürschlag and Sander, *Oberbaum Linckek*. See also Kießling, *Postindustrielle Konsumgesellschaft*, 134.

as an object for social and political critique and as a spatial sphere for campaigns. The semipublic sphere of retail came to epitomise the capitalist system and eventually emerged as a target of militant protest, which culminated in incendiary attacks on department stores in the late 1960s. However, the significance of the department store as a target of militant protest cannot be understood without appreciating how avant-garde subculture came to wrestle with consumer society in the preceding decade. The subsequent focus on communards and department store arsonists shows that they were integral to the merging of discourses on consumption and violence as well as that they were by no means the only ones embedding critiques of regimes of provision in their political thought and activism. This discussion establishes a foundation from which to explore the simultaneous development of philosophical critiques of regimes of provision, the further militarization of the campaign against consumer society, and, in the second part of this book, much broader political campaigns, such as those against fare increases and Springer's tabloid journalism, that were closely linked with the highly publicised performative protest analysed in this chapter.

### Spur and Subversive Aktion

The artist groups Spur and Subversive Aktion played a central role in establishing the commercial sphere as a prime focus of protest. Key members—such as future communist Dieter Kunzelmann and future student leader Rudi Dutschke—had personal experience with relative poverty. A photo of Dutschke's student digs shortly after the erection of the Berlin Wall, when he had settled in West Berlin, shows only the most Spartan furnishings. His financial situation remained precarious throughout his life.<sup>9</sup> Kunzelmann came from a well-to-do bourgeois background but practiced abstention from the blessings of affluence when spending some time as a clochard in Paris in 1959. He subsequently conceived of himself as a bohemian in the Schwabing quarter of Munich, where he was influenced by situationism, continuing surrealist traditions and urging the realisation of communism by revolutionising everyday life. In this context, the working class appeared to be in the bondage of consumption and embourgeoisement.<sup>10</sup>

9. Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 24, 77.

10. See Kunzelmann, *Leisten sie keinen Widerstand!*, 18–33; Reimann, *Dieter Kunzelmann*, 43–48. For Dutschke's ideas on embourgeoisement, see Dutschke, *Jeder hat sein Leben ganz zu leben*, 11.

By 1961, a critique of consumer society clashed with the authority of the state. In their attempts to unmask the unholy role of consumption, the avant-garde collaboration Gruppe Spur—until February 1962 part of the Situationist International—became subject to judicial prosecution. Heimrad Prehm, Helmut Sturm, Hans Peter Zimmer, and Dieter Kunzelmann were accused of distributing blasphemy via their journal, which frequently included religious symbols in rather uninhibited social criticism. They were initially sentenced to five months in prison, but a higher court reduced the sentence to probation. Kunzelmann had referred to the realm of commerce when, for example, advertising that everyone who needed a myth would be sent a Virgin Mother to satisfy their sexual needs in exchange for “cash on delivery.” In the same contribution, he declared that “nonrevolutionaries were fed by the noncreativity of huge culture department stores; . . . the dragon of civilisation is vomiting seas of well-wrapped goods onto . . . the manipulated consumer,” thereby turning “revolutionary ideas into common coffeehouse babble.”<sup>11</sup> A manifesto was sent to the governments involved in the Geneva Disarmament Conference suggesting that “a public atomic bomb potlatch” be turned against the “cultural industry.”<sup>12</sup>

After the group’s expulsion from the Situationist International, there was a brief sequel with the first and only issue of *Der deutsche Gedanke* (The German Thought). The journal printed a German translation of an article from *Internationale Situationniste* that argued that whenever old forms of opposition had been absorbed into the existing order, an irreducible dissatisfaction kept undermining affluent society like Marx’s “old mole.” This perspective sought to identify riots as indicators of dissatisfaction with consumer society. The unnamed author diagnosed a “first wave of vandalism against the *machines of consumption*” and likened it to Luddite machine breaking. Evidence for this argument was taken from contemporary protest events from France and Italy. In February 1961, Naples tram drivers had gone on strike. Angry workers who had no transportation home started to riot, and the protest escalated into fierce skirmishes with police and army units. Trams and buses were set alight, and shop windows and neon signs stoned. The situationist interpretation took such signs as consumer society’s “most symbolic and most fragile points,” and the

11. Dieter Kunzelmann, “Kanon der Revolution” (1961), in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 45–46. See Gruppe Spur, *SPUR-Buch*; Goeschel, *Anschläge und Richtlinien*, 8–26; Dreßen, Kunzelmann, and Siepmann, *Nilpferd des höllischen Urwalds*; Danzker and Dornacher, *Gruppe SPUR*.

12. Christofer Baldeney, Rodolphe Gasché, Dieter Kunzelmann, and Hans Peter Zimmer, “Ritus contra Depravation,” in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 54–55.

rioting was seen to “extend to the whole consumer society.” The fact that Lorraine miners had destroyed some twenty-one cars during an August 1961 strike tempted the author to ask hopefully, “Who can fail to see in this action . . . a gesture of self-defence against the central object of consumer alienation?” The task was to revisit the history of anarchism and utopian socialism to establish the decisive “lifestyle criterion” that would save oppositional groups from degenerating into “dull propaganda societies.”<sup>13</sup>

The Munich artist group Subversive Aktion built on these foundations and sought to make anonymous power structures visible in artistic happenings. They declared in one of their first programmatic statements that the historical project of reducing working hours had led to the impoverishment of everyday life: “It stabilises the acceptance of partial fulfilment. Through the creation of organised leisure people, the chance to even guess true need is completely deadened.” This statement referred to Guy Debord’s notion of a “colonisation of social life,” which played a central role in his main work, *La Société du spectacle* (1967).<sup>14</sup> The mechanism of display (that is, media and advertisement) created illusions that misled people about the fact that they consumed only “a secondary imitation of real events.”<sup>15</sup> Subversives Dieter Kunzelmann, Rodolphe Gasché, and Christopher Baldeney explicitly acknowledged Adorno and Marcuse as their intellectual inspirations. Most significant was probably the latter’s *Eros and Civilization*, which influenced the following sentences: “Contemporary society and its pressure to consume deprive man of the possibility to realise life in its exceptionality. . . . The creation of artificial needs and their satisfaction make true participation impossible.”<sup>16</sup> The alternative was, “All products must be freely available to the individual.”<sup>17</sup> This was a provocative communist ideal of consumption according to one’s needs.

Satirical critiques of existing regimes of provision became very important for the group’s subsequent statements. Members were keenly aware of the danger that avant-garde art would be absorbed by the “commodity character” of

13. “Les mauvais jours finiront,” *Internationale Situationniste* 7 (April 1962), German translation in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 48–53. See “Troops Battle Mob in Naples: 68 Hurt in Transit Strike Riot,” *New York Times*, 9 February 1961, 1, 14.

14. “Abrechnung” (December 1962), in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 76; Debord, *Société du spectacle*. On Subversive Aktion, see also Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side*, 477–83.

15. “Abrechnung” (December 1962), in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 80.

16. “Parallelen” (December 1962), in *ibid.*, 86. See Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 100 (first German ed., *Eros und Kultur: Ein philosophischer Beitrag zu Sigmund Freud*, trans. Marianne von Eckardt-Jaffe [Stuttgart, 1957]).

17. “Unverbindliche Richtlinien” (December 1962), in *Nilpferd des höllischen Urwalds*, ed. Dreßen, Kunzelmann, and Siepmann, 156.

industrialised societies: “The Parnassus of the arts is the showcase of the department store.”<sup>18</sup> The group members contemplated various ways to disrupt the 1964 *documenta* at Kassel, where their former associates from Spur were exhibiting. A brainstorming session produced a list of thirty situationist provocations, including the distribution of forged admission tickets; letters to the editors of newspapers highlighting positions that saw art as a commodity or as absorbing utopian and revolutionary impulses; and design parodies of advertisements for breweries.<sup>19</sup> In their artistic focus on the workings of affluent society, Subversive Aktion increasingly added the dimension of violence. The term *terror* found its way into Subversive Aktion pamphlets in December 1963, when “Repressive Aktion” addressed “the terror of industrial society.” The activists identified the creed that “anyone who does not work shall not eat” as the backbone of this terror.<sup>20</sup> The conditioning of a right to exist on the economic use of commodified labour pervaded the fabric of everyday life, reducing “man to just work and consumption.”<sup>21</sup> When transposing these ideas of a complete economisation of human life to contemporary society, the immediate target was advertisement. Consumerism (*Konsumdenken*) as a quasi-religion had completely annihilated (*ausgemerzt*) any consciousness of a nonmonetary distribution of goods.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, the focus rested on luxury needs by introducing a critique of tourism under the label “Costa-Brava-Komplex,” a critique of the marketing of intellectual needs and production, and a critique of the repression of sexuality. When John F. Kennedy was assassinated, a Subversive Aktion flyer declared that the death of the American president would be followed by “an even more total identification with the apparatus: I will work even more and consume even more assiduously.”<sup>23</sup>

In January 1964, Kunzelmann anticipated later developments and put the emphasis on the legal court as a public stage: “We will provoke monster trials to publicise all our ideas. We will . . . raid a department store, take all goods and distribute them in the street.”<sup>24</sup> The revolutionary impetus toward “total subversion” was tied up with expectations of a quasi-totalitarian future of consumerism: “We are awaiting . . . legal pressure to consume, . . . manipulation . . . dur-

18. “Unverbindliche Richtlinien 2” (December 1963), in *ibid.*

19. “Liste von Einfällen für eine Aktion der Subversiven Aktion auf der Kasseler Documenta,” in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 130–32.

20. “Repressive Aktion” (December 1963), in *ibid.*, 102.

21. *Ibid.*, 107.

22. *Ibid.*, 102.

23. “Auch Du hast Kennedy erschossen!” (December 1963), in *ibid.*, 127.

24. Dieter Kunzelmann to Frank Böckelmann, 4 January 1964, in *ibid.*, 129.

ing the 16 hours of 'leisure time,' and the . . . liquidation of the private sphere."<sup>25</sup> However, a revolutionary class appeared to be a mere chimaera: while the social legislation of the nineteenth century had eliminated the revolutionary impetus of the classical workers' movement, the analogous mechanism of the twentieth century seemed to be "reservations of the pleasure principle." Drawing on Marcuse's Marxist interpretation of psychoanalysis, the subversives suspected that the reasons for the failures of past revolutions lay in psychological mechanisms.<sup>26</sup>

The Munich section of Subversive Aktion subscribed to a rather generalising philosophy of the commodity: *all* commodities were abstract, exchangeable, and products of alienation; *everything* had been reduced to exchange value, commodity, or capital; and this had led to the supreme rule of the achievement principle (*Leistungsprinzip*). There was no attempt whatsoever to differentiate between what might be desirable commodification or consumption and specific regimes of provision that invited criticism. Curiously, the subversives seem to have taken the penetrating power of advertisement as proof of the "rudiments" of real needs.<sup>27</sup> The revolutionary subject was thus the recipient of advertisement—that is, potentially *everyone*. One wonders whether this meant that the revolution had to be fought via advertisements.

Subversive Aktion delivered its somewhat exaggerated Marcusean message at the May 1964 meeting of the Union of German Advertising Managers and Consultants, showering the delegates with flyers that depicted advertisers as "preachers of oppression" who stuffed people with products so that they were no longer conscious of their true needs. By making "consumption and work identical," advertising veiled "the possibility of a world without work" and enthroned "the lie 'consumo, ergo sum.'"<sup>28</sup> The agitators were interrogated by the Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) but were found not guilty in court.<sup>29</sup>

Bernd Rabehl, another member of Subversive Aktion who later became famous in the SDS, went a step further in amalgamating notions of the continuity between colonialism, National Socialism, and West German consumer society. In an article published in the first issue of Subversive Aktion's journal,

25. "Konklusionen" (early April 1964), in *ibid.*, 133.

26. *Ibid.*, 134. See also Marcuse, "Idee des Fortschritts," 435.

27. Frank Böckelmann to Streffen Schulze, 17 August 1964, in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 164, 166.

28. "Aufruf an die Seelenmasseure" (May 1964), in *ibid.*, 147.

29. Cf. *ibid.*, 146; *Nilpferd des höllischen Urwalds*, ed. Dressen, Kunzelmann, and Siepmann, 161; Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 23.

*Anschlag*, in August 1964, Rabehl maintained that Cold War imperialism had found a substitute for direct expansion: "It now finds its profit in the planned consumer." Rabehl drew almost a caricature of the "manipulated, senseless human being who has to follow exactly the commands of industry." Drilled by advertisement, consumers worked to satisfy their addiction: "This consumer behaviour is the new ideology of society."<sup>30</sup> Consumer society even appeared as a new form of *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community), with "assiduous work and diligent consuming" superseding "blood and soil": "Today it is no longer the same race that is supposed to perform the proud bond with the powerful, but the same consumer ideal."<sup>31</sup> Rabehl criticised the Social Democrats' attempts to "sell politics as a commodity" and their ceasing to be an oppositional party. His rather crude and hermetic attempt to navigate German history between Helmut Schelsky's "levelled middle-class society" and Marcusean manipulation culminated in the coining of the drastic term *Konsumfaschismus*.<sup>32</sup> The old theory of "social fascism"—a political creed originating in the late 1920s arguing that social democracy, with its corporatist economic model, was a variant of fascism—had acquired a new interpretation.

Kunzelmann contributed an article to the same issue of *Anschlag* that focused on the commodification of sexuality: "Sexuality in a consumer society is doubly degenerate: its repression is to the benefit of society in such a way that sublimated libido becomes labour power for production, and all consumer goods are symbolically charged with sexuality," so that what is beyond price—"lived life"—is exchanged for commodities. Contemporary society's apparent permissiveness only veiled the mechanism of reified sexuality. The argument was again rather rigorous: the freedom of consumer society was "the total suppression of everything human"; all sexuality was experienced as "economic exchange"; and work and consumption were just vicarious satisfaction (*Ersatzbefriedigung*). The strategy of allowing sexuality to become a consumer good and thus controlling it seemed even more efficient than the continued suppression that the East German rulers were pursuing.<sup>33</sup> The same author discovered hitchhiking as a social form that still resisted total commodification—a reminder of the possibility of a different life beyond work and consumption. Kunzelmann castigated the authorities' campaigns against hitchhiking, which sought to criminalise the hitchhiker:

30. Bernd Rabehl, "Sozialimperialismus und Sozialdemokratie," in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 175.

31. *Ibid.*, 176.

32. *Ibid.*, 178. "Consumer society as perfectly internalised Fascist order" had already featured briefly in "Parallelen" (December 1963), in *ibid.*, 110.

33. Dieter Kunzelmann, "Busenfrei als Symptom der Unfreiheit," in *ibid.*, 185–86.



“Nothing is allowed to be free of charge!” Historically, he put this practice in line with the suppression of vagabonds, highwaymen, tramps, and Gypsies; he mentioned concentration camps in this context.<sup>34</sup>

At a September 1964 meeting, Kunzelmann, Dutschke, and their comrades agreed on a programme that would address all areas of society to abolish “the regime of the achievement principle [*Leistungsprinzip*], which is particularly manifest in the ‘contaminated psyche’ of people living in a consumer society.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, they decided to take this programme into the SDS, which they joined. They picked the eightieth German Catholic Convention in Stuttgart to transmit their subversive messages. Kunzelmann suggested a faked announcement that a service would take place at a department store.<sup>36</sup> Another scenario that was contemplated had the agitators mounting a huge Mercedes star on an altar.<sup>37</sup> A flyer that was distributed declared, “Since the true gods of this society are commodity and consumption, the Good Lord of the old days—if he wants to survive and prevent schizophrenia among the believers—has to arrange himself with the fetishes and become a sublime fetish of performance [*Leistungsfetisch*]. He does survive: as the absolute boom which blesses production and protects its managed sheep from demonic communism.” Four activists were arrested on “suspicion of blasphemy” when they were caught gluing posters on church doors and windows.<sup>38</sup>

The second issue of *Anschlag*, with a Marcuse quote about the possibility of liberation for its motto, shows that Subversive Aktion was attempting a substantial analysis of consumer society. Frank Böckelmann dedicated a long article to the phenomenon of youth riots. It departs from the basic assumption that “youth is a commodity” and that impressionable and developing young adults were ideally suited to adapt to the accelerated cycle of production and consumption. However, this exposed position also predestined youth to be sensitive indicators of the discomforts of “saturated society.” Turning against the conventional interpretation that sees surfeit at the root of youthful rebellion, Böckelmann argued that frustration resulted from the denial of self-realisation: “We do not have too much. We have nothing.” In the youth riots that kept occurring throughout the developed world, he saw damage to property but no “senseless rage.” The almost ritual course of such events betrayed a search for meaning. As was the case during the Schwabing riots, violence erupted only

34. Dieter Kunzelmann, “Tramper aller Länder . . .,” in *ibid.*, 189–90.

35. “Hamburger Protokoll vom 26.–30.9.1964,” in *ibid.*, 225.

36. Dieter Kunzelmann to Frank Böckelmann, 22 August 1964, in *ibid.*, 211.

37. Dieter Kunzelmann to Frank Böckelmann, 27 August 1964, in *ibid.*, 212.

38. “Botschaft an die Lämmer des Herrn zum Katholikentag” (September 1964), in *ibid.*, 213.

when police intervened.<sup>39</sup> These riots, which took place in Munich's bohemian quarter in June 1962, were the immediate backdrop for such reflections. Major disturbances were triggered by a group of street musicians playing at a late hour. After police tried to arrest the musicians, the situation escalated into four days of street fighting involving up to forty thousand protesters. Nearly two hundred "troublemakers" were arrested, among them nineteen-year-old Andreas Baader. Sixty-eight were sentenced to either fines or short prison sentences, while the one hundred forty complaints against police officers resulted in a single conviction.<sup>40</sup> However, Böckelmann's perspective was broader. He thought that the destructiveness of American gangs was also "a reflection of the economic and political terror of the world powers." Quoting sociologist Ludwig von Friedeburg, Böckelmann saw theft among youth as "an illegal answer to pressure to consume." It all boiled down to disenchantment with the lack of happiness behind the plethora of goods and social institutions that society offered young people. The riots sprang from a desire for "spontaneous community" that turned the street into a place of immediate and boundless communication that did not fit with the socioeconomic role that "the system" attributed to youth. Manipulation via propaganda, fabrication of opinion, and advertisement worked only when "facing standardised objects . . . brought down to a common reified denominator." The subversive activist revelled in the memory of the Schwabinger Krawalle, which seemed to have escaped this trap: "The flooding of the streets with people . . . , the irrational breakthrough from prescribed leisure behaviour . . . created in all parties involved a strange and defiant feeling of somehow being in the right."<sup>41</sup>

At Christmas 1964, Subversive Aktion involved customers in Munich department stores in provocative discussions and distributed leaflets in which customers could read, "And 'love' gave birth to products, packaged them in false dreams, and put them in shop windows so that people could no longer see their real wishes."<sup>42</sup> At the group's April 1965 meeting, a formidable catalogue of questions focused on the analysis of consumer society: "Which modified psychological functions does consumption gain in an age in which it is the primary influence on life? In which form and intensity is the . . . compulsion to consume reflected in the individual? . . . What is the meaning of 'luxury' and 'convenience'? . . . What will supersede the ideology of the 'struggle for exis-

39. Frank Böckelmann, "Jugendkrawalle in der saturierten Gesellschaft," in *ibid.*, 239–42.

40. See Fürmetz, "*Schwabinger Krawalle*."

41. Frank Böckelmann, "Jugendkrawalle in der saturierten Gesellschaft," in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 244–46.

42. "Weihnachtsevangeliem," in *ibid.*, 286.

tence,' which is losing its last objective foundations? What is the meaning of 'need,' 'affliction,' and 'destiny' in a time of a total ('false') conquest of nature? . . . Which social and psychological potentials of conflict exist in affluent/consumer society, and what mechanisms of absorbing them are available?" The ambitious idea was to investigate the changed relationship between production and consumption, the "dwindling of difference" between these two spheres, "and the reflection of this new relation in consciousness" for the periods of "feudalism and . . . early and late capitalism."<sup>43</sup> It is doubtful whether this sweeping analysis was ever realised, but the programme shows the centrality of the topic of affluence to the intellectual and political activities of Subversive Aktion. With the expulsion of Kunzelmann in April 1965, and with the dissociation of Dutschke and Rabehl from the Berlin branch a month later, the topic of consumption—and the group's dynamism—waned.<sup>44</sup> However, the three renegades took important impulses to their future activities in Berlin.

### Go-Ins at Department Stores

In 1966—similar to two years earlier in Munich—the Kurfürstendamm became the scene of "go-ins" in department stores on a pre-Christmas Saturday with extended opening hours. Participants in walking demonstrations on crowded shopping streets camouflaged anti-Vietnam War leaflets in gift-wrapped boxes.<sup>45</sup> This was in response to the authorities banning student demonstrations from the city centre. Eighty-six people, including Dutschke, were arrested. Police were so baffled by this innovative form of protest that they beat and arrested a number of ordinary Christmas shoppers. Members of Kommune I received a sentence of fifty deutsche marks or five days in prison for "obstructing very heavy pedestrian and motorised traffic."<sup>46</sup>

When Dutschke famously called for the creation of a "countermilieu" (*Gegenmilieu*) as a "germ of a new society" (in a text mainly on revolution in Latin America), the realm of consumption and more specifically department stores appeared as focal points of political agitation. The target group consisted of the employees whom Dutschke and his coauthors tried to subsume under the

43. Ibid., 334–35.

44. See *ibid.*, 300–301, 333–34.

45. See Wolfgang Ruppert, "Um 1968—Die Repräsentation der Dinge," in *Um 1968*, ed. Ruppert, 21–22; Chaussy, *Die drei Leben des Rudi Dutschke*, 152–54; Krebs, *Ulrike Meinhof*, 132.

46. "Anklageschrift vom 9. Juni 1967," in Archiv, Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (AHIS), SAK 130, 12.

rubric “sales producers” (*Verkaufsproduzenten*). In August 1967, Dutschke and the SDS had intervened in a conflict between several department stores and the union Handel, Banken, und Versicherungen (Trade, Banking and Insurance) over a law allowing for an extension of store hours. Employees were reluctant to work as late as nine o’clock at night on Saturdays.<sup>47</sup> Dutschke made much of the sit-in demonstrations in department stores, which he considered to be a “form of late-capitalist guerrilla praxis.” The revolutionary tactics were rather simple: “We entered the department stores en masse, distributed flyers, more or less obstructed the normal sales rhythm, and encountered a lot of sympathy on the part of the sales producers. The management was forced to temporarily cease profit maximisation.”<sup>48</sup> Berlin’s most prestigious department store, KaDeWe, had indeed chosen to close early because sit-in discussion groups had been established on all floors. Foreshadowing later events, some of the protesters apparently lit cigarettes inside the KaDeWe. At another department store, a bomb threat was made.<sup>49</sup> The chair of West Berlin’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Karl-Heinz Schmitz, stated, “Enough of the storm troops of extraparliamentary activism.” His party pressed for legal charges against lawyer Horst Mahler, who had been present at KaDeWe.<sup>50</sup> Cold War-minded public opinion tended to identify the actions of the student movement with those of the socialist rulers in the capital of East Germany.<sup>51</sup> However, Dutschke and his coauthors celebrated the event as a success, an example of “a tactical victory” by a “radical small minority” over the “superior forces of the state apparatus.”<sup>52</sup>

By 1968 such forms of protest were thoroughly established. In West Berlin, the shopping areas around Wittenbergplatz with the KaDeWe (the largest department store in Continental Europe), Tauentzienstraße and Kurfürstendamm, served astonishingly regularly as central locations for protest meetings. The main reason for this concentration can be seen in the politics of media attention, as protesters sought to challenge society at its most valuable places. Retail

47. Cf. Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 205.

48. R. Dutschke, T. Käsemann, and R. Schöller, “Vorwort,” in *Der lange Marsch*, ed. Dutschke, Käsemann, and Schöller, 20.

49. “Urteil der 6. großen Strafkammer des Landgerichts Berlin,” (506) 2 P Kls 3/67, 55/67 (13 May 1968): 26–27, AHIS, SAK 130, 12. See Lönnendonker, Rabehl, and Staadt, *Antiautoritäre Revolte*, 485; Lönnendonker, Fichter, and Staadt, *Hochschule im Umbruch*, 226.

50. Lutz Horst, “Anzeige gegen Studenten-Anwalt,” *Bild*, Berlin, 28 August 1967, 3; Renate Philipp and Lutz Horst, “Volle Kassen wie zu Weihnachten!,” *Bild*, Berlin, 28 August 1967, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/203062/1003.jpg.pdf> (accessed 13 March 2011).

51. “König Kunde war der Dumme,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 27 August 1967.

52. Dutschke, Käsemann, and Schöller, “Vorwort,” 21.

was a growth sector in West Germany, with volume increasing continuously: 5.9 percent in 1966, only 0.4 percent in 1967 as a consequence of the recession, but recovering to 4.8 percent in 1968. Growth was even more pronounced in the department store business: 8.8 percent in 1966, 2.8 percent in 1967, and 10.3 percent in 1968.<sup>53</sup> Germany's largest department store company increased its sales by 12 percent in 1967, achieving an annual turnover of 3.3 billion deutsche marks. Sales among the largest three companies—Karstadt, Kaufhof, and Helmut Horten—amounted to 8.1 billion deutsche marks in March 1968, when twelve new department stores were under construction throughout Germany; many more expanded their sales.<sup>54</sup> A process of concentration favoured the big companies vis-à-vis their small-scale competitors: while the overall retail trading volume of 1967 showed an increase of 175 percent compared to 1954, Karstadt realised an increase of 432 percent in the same period.<sup>55</sup> This success story now became the focus of protest. The chair of West Berlin's Association of Merchants and Industrialists, Heinz Mohr, lamented that "the disturbers of the peace [*Ruhestörer*] were not in the least active in the districts with a predominant population of workers, where the wrath of the people would soon put an end to their criminal trade. The disturbers of the peace rather go to the districts where their aim to gain attention from the mass media can be met more effectively."<sup>56</sup> In the eyes of this captain of industry, the institutions of parliamentary democracy and their executive organs lacked the unrelenting rigour he attributed to the man in the street. He saw the task of securing what he called freedom and law and order—that is, protecting commerce from riots and deflecting any damage to West Berlin's image as a place of industry—as merely a police matter.

That police did not always find it easy to fulfill such hopes for clean and quick removals of protesters was true beyond Berlin: a London commune staged a Christmas 1969 protest at a department store that generated press and police action. According to a radical Berlin newspaper, "The department stores hire people dressed up as Father Christmas who give presents to the children, which in reality have to be paid for by the parents, fooling the child with the

53. "Jahresrückblick 1967," *FfH Mitteilungen* 9.1 (January 1968): 2; "Jahresrückblick 1968," *FfH Mitteilungen* 10.1 (January 1969): 1. See also Banken, "Quantitative Entwicklung der bundes-deutschen Warenhäuser."

54. "Entwicklung bei den Warenhäusern," *FfH Mitteilungen* 9.3 (March 1968): 6; "Warenhaus-Expansion in Berlin," *FfH Mitteilungen* 10.11 (November 1969): 10.

55. "Ausmaß und Formen der Konzentration im Einzelhandel," *FfH Mitteilungen* 10.2 (February 1969): 3.

56. Heinz Mohr, address to a reception for new members and their sponsors, 5 November 1968, *Mitteilungen Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller* 105 (November 1968): 17.

mystical character of the object. We thus assembled a group, 10 people dressed up as Father Christmas. . . . And they then cleared out the toys and gave them to the children. After 10 minutes, Selfridges had to call the police, and the press was shooting pictures of policemen taking the presents from the children and putting them back on the shelves. Things like this are fun in the first place, and second, they communicate a very simple message: take what you need.”<sup>57</sup> In May 1968, students in Paris also focused on the sphere of consumption when they occupied the Censier Annexe of the Sorbonne. They distributed flyers and pamphlets in shops and cafés, calling on people to squat in empty flats, and asked the employees of the department stores Bazar de l’Hôtel de Ville and Belle Jardinière to pass out food to strikers.<sup>58</sup>

Matters of consumption were usually not the main focus of debates, articles, flyers, or protest campaigns. However, such matters were important and were often seen in connection with other areas of concern. In Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s seminal October 1967 interview with SDS members Dutschke, Rabehl, and Christian Semler, the topic of consumption was not the main subject, but Enzensberger argued that consumption as a means of appeasement would not work forever. It was no coincidence that this approach had worked smoothly for twenty years but was now beginning to change. Rabehl pointed out that the ideology of security would vanish since people desired fulfilment over security. Dutschke then brought up “militant needs” that would turn against the “military complex,” and the conversation moved on to Vietnam and the politics of protest and resistance.<sup>59</sup>

## Kommune I

Although Dutschke never moved into a commune and eventually distanced himself from an excessive focus on questions of lifestyle, he played an important role in developing the concept of small communes as seedbeds of the revolutionary countermilieu. Kunzelmann reports that a strategy meeting conducted in the Bavarian village of Kochel in June 1966 discussed the commune in the context of Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man* and Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*.<sup>60</sup> Kunzelmann based the idea of a commune on a rather literal

57. Peter Polish, “Londoner Straßen-Kommune,” *Agit* 883 46 (15 January 1970): 6.

58. Seidman, *Imaginary Revolution*, 124; Baynac, *Mai retrouvé*, 196, 257.

59. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Ein Gespräch über die Zukunft mit Rudi Dutschke, Bernd Rabehl, und Christian Semler,” *Kursbuch* 14 (August 1968): 110–45.

60. Kunzelmann, *Leisten Sie keinen Widerstand*, 47–48.

reading of a right to resist according to natural law, which Marcuse unfolded at the very end of “Repressive Tolerance.”<sup>61</sup>

Kommune I was established in a shared flat in January 1967 and ostentatiously turned away from the values and lifestyle of the bourgeois and Cold War–minded older generations. In the promotion of the commune—a form of living free from parents’ or landlords’ influence on its furnishings—the notion of a self-determined lifestyle and thus style of consumption played an important role. The idea was to abolish private property within the group and thus create a counterconcept overcoming the eschatological promises of classical Marxism in favour of living a communist life in the here and now. Moreover, the commune movement was clearly inspired by its romantic visions of the Maoist people’s communes and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The armed Red Guards banned a number of traditional products because of their religious connotation as well as consumer items with Western names or connections, such as woollen clothing, whiskey, cosmetics, jewellery, high-heeled shoes, mechanical toys, playing cards, and taxis.<sup>62</sup> A long article in *Der Spiegel* reported on the Red Guards’ repertoire of disruptive protest in November 1966, describing in detail how they valued “Mao quotes over neon signs.” Despite the brutal aspects of the Red Guards’ conduct and a regime of terror, the successes of modernisation policy were highlighted: “For the first time in human memory, all Chinese have a roof over their heads and clothes to wear.” The article described how members of the people’s communes had to yield all “private property down to the cooking pot to the common property of the commune. In return, everything was free: food, clothing, the doctor, and the hairdresser.”<sup>63</sup> In 1969, writer Peter Schneider arrived at a more abstract notion of the cultural revolution, which would abandon all relations where “the human being has become a commodity and the commodity has become the subject.” This still had very tangible consequences, as when Schneider questioned whether personal ownership of cars was still tolerable and suggested tearing down “fascist tenement blocks” and replacing them with “houses that are there to serve not the needs of renting out but the needs of being lived in.”<sup>64</sup>

61. Dieter Kunzelmann, “Notizen zur Gründung revolutionärer Kommunen in den Metropolen,” in *Subversive Aktion*, ed. Böckelmann and Nagel, 144; Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” in Wolff, Moore, and Marcuse, *Critique of Pure Tolerance*, 116–17.

62. See Giovanni Blumer, *Die chinesische Kulturrevolution 1965/67* (Frankfurt, 1968); Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 79; Slobodian, *Foreign Front*, 170–99; Gilcher-Holtey, 1968, 35–41.

63. “Kulturrevolution: Brutal sein,” *Der Spiegel* 48 (21 November 1966): 114–31.

64. Peter Schneider, “Die Phantasie im Spätkapitalismus und die Kulturrevolution,” *Kursbuch* 16 (March 1969): 4.

Kommune I pursued the semiprofessional pirating of books<sup>65</sup> and carried on a flourishing mail-order trade in Mao Bibles, their own writings, texts by Wilhelm Reich, Horkheimer, and others as well as revolutionary stickers and badges. There were enthusiastic customers but also frequent complaints regarding issues of money.<sup>66</sup> This went hand in hand with regular shoplifting, conceived as a practical demonstration against private property.<sup>67</sup> One of Kommune I's several compilations of writings and documents from their lawsuits was entitled *Klau mich* (Steal Me). With a grabbing hand printed on the cover, it predated Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book*.<sup>68</sup> Fritz Teufel as well as two other members of Kommune I were sentenced to a penalty, paid from the communal budget, after being caught stealing in a supermarket. He declared that he had committed theft not because of need but out of political conviction.<sup>69</sup> On the occasion of the 1967 Easter March campaign for disarmament, a leaflet authored by members of Kommune I questioned whether protest against the Bomb could avoid addressing the question of property by dodging fares, shoplifting, and dining and dashing: "Whoever doesn't dispossess the petty bourgeois remains one himself."<sup>70</sup> West Berlin's minister of the interior pressed criminal charges against the unknown authors of the leaflet. Meanwhile, the communards discussed how their radical ideas could be put into practice. Looting a grocery shop was suggested.<sup>71</sup>

What they chose proved to be more spectacular. The plan was to attack U.S. vice president Hubert H. Humphrey, who was visiting West Berlin, with red smoke bombs, staging a Provo happening after his convoy of cars had come to a halt. The plan was foiled when members of the secret police had the conspirators arrested after observing their acquisition of potentially explosive chemicals. In the absence of conclusive evidence of real explosives, however, the communards created the impression that they were harmless pranksters. In the ensuing media hype, the flour and sugar that police found among the chemicals turned into pudding and custard pie, and the event went down as the Puddingattentat (Pudding Assassination). Ulrike Meinhof, at the time the editor of

65. See Olenhusen and Gnirß, *Handbuch der Raubdrucke*.

66. One of many similar letters, see Mainzer Studentenzeitung to Kommune I, 24 September 1967, AHIS, Correspondence of Kommune I (130,01). See also Kunzelmann, *Leisten sie keinen Widerstand*, 54–56.

67. *Ibid.*, 60–62.

68. Langhans and Teufel, *Klau mich*. See Hoffman, *Steal This Book*.

69. Oberstaatsanwalt Kuntze, "Anklageschrift vom 9. Juni 1967," 14, AHIS, SAK 130, 12; Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 107.

70. "Ostermarschierer, Ostermartyrer," in *Leben ändern*, ed. Schulenburg, 31–32.

71. Investigator in charge of the Disciplinary Committee of FU Berlin to the chair of the Disciplinary Committee, Roman Herzog, 5 May 1967, AHIS, SAK 130, 07; Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 113–14.



the political magazine *konkret*, criticised the communards for talking about themselves rather than “turning the sensation they caused to Vietnam . . . , with the truth on Vietnam, with facts, numbers and politics.” However, she did sympathise with the underlying message: “Not the destruction of vital harvests meaning death and starvation for millions, but protest against these acts, is criminal. . . . It is considered impolite to aim pudding and curd at politicians, but not to roll out the red carpet for politicians who have villages wiped out and cities bombarded. . . . Napalm yes, pudding no.”<sup>72</sup> If only in the imagination of the journalists, everyday commodities lent themselves to raising awareness of the hardship and misery that war caused in a far corner of the world.

### The Department Store Leaflets

After the Puddingattentat, the antiestablishment figures of Kommune I increasingly became the focus of media attention. They held regular meetings for media work, in which newspaper clippings and the reactions of “the system” to their actions were considered. During one such session in May 1967, they focused on a series of news reports on an accidental fire in Belgium’s largest department store, À l’Innovation, in Brussels, leaving more than three hundred people dead and several hundred injured.<sup>73</sup> A provocative fascination with arson had germinated in radically minded intellectual circles. A rebellious attitude sought to instigate acts of protest against the symbols of consumer society, which were combined with imperialism and global as well as local oppression. This was part of a transatlantic emergence of critiques of regimes of provision that became coupled with anti-Vietnam War protest. This cocktail of influences became manifest in a series of flyers Kommune I created on the occasion of the Brussels fire disaster; the flyers were investigated by the courts and widely publicised.<sup>74</sup> The Brussels fire eventually inspired arson attacks on department stores in Frankfurt and Berlin.

72. Ulrike Meinhof, “Napalm und Pudding” (May 1967), in Meinhof, *Dokumente einer Rebellion*, 72.

73. See Bernard Houssiau, *L’incendie de l’Innovation: 22 mai 1967* (Brussels, 2007).

74. Kommune I, “Neue Demonstrationsformen in Brüssel erstmals erprobt,” *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 28 (1968): 318–19; Kommune I, “Warum brennst du, Konsument?,” *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 28 (1968): 319–20; Kommune I, “Wann brennen die Berliner Kaufhäuser?,” *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 28 (1968): 320. A final flyer, “Revolution in Rosé Revolution in Rot,” is printed in Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 142. The flyers were all dated 24 May 1967 and are printed in Kommune I, *Quellen zur Kommuneforschung*. See Silke Mende, “Warum brennst du, Konsument?”—Flugblatt Nr. 7 der Kommune I (24. Mai 1967),” in *historicum.net*, *Arbeiten mit Quellen*, [http://www.historicum.net/no\\_cache/persistent/artikel/5138/](http://www.historicum.net/no_cache/persistent/artikel/5138/) (accessed 23 July 2007); Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side*, 476–520.

The media suggested that the Brussels fire might have been the result of arson by protesters against a special campaign selling American products. Apparently Belgian police had found some “anti-American leaflets” by a Maoist group criticising the sales exhibition.<sup>75</sup> The Springer tabloid *Bild* reported that anonymous letters had threatened department store arson. *Bild* quoted from the confiscated “communist” leaflets: “The Anti-Imperialists will not stop until they have cleared the country and the department store L’Innovation from the flag that has become a symbol of aggression and outrage.”<sup>76</sup> A Belgian public prosecutor denied these rumours, but not until a week after the fire and thus a week after the leaflets appeared.<sup>77</sup>

Taking these cues, Kommune I cynically drew a comparison with the napalm bombardments in Vietnam: “With a new gimmick in the varied history of American advertising methods, American sales weeks were opened in Brussels: . . . [T]he inhabitants of the Belgian metropolis were met with an exceptional spectacle: a burning department store with burning people, for the first time conveying this crackling Vietnam feeling (to be there and to burn along) in a European city.”<sup>78</sup> Under the heading “Why Do You Burn, Consumer?” this leaflet shows a characteristic amalgamation of various levels of political violence, invoking the Vietnam War, Hiroshima, the shah’s regime in Iran, the Berlin Wall, barbed wire, and the Iron Curtain and coupling those images with Coca-Cola and the so-called German economic miracle. Despite the pointed cynicism and biting irony that characterised this document, there are also references to the “human tragedy” in Brussels. The communards sought to unmask the rhetoric of affluence as a crucial resource of legitimisation in the American war effort. They were disgusted at how much more public sympathy the victims of a department store fire received than the victims of war in Vietnam.<sup>79</sup>

Another example of Kommune I’s particular relationship to advertising and commerce appeared in a convergence of advertising slogans and criticism of the Vietnam War: “The day is ending, time for Jonny [*sic*] Walker. / An

75. “Brandkatastrophe in Brüssel: Feuer in Kaufhaus möglicherweise durch Brandstiftung,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, 23 May 1967, 1; “Wie in einem Leichenschauhaus,” *BZ*, 24 May 1967, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/192944/425.jpg.pdf> (accessed 14 February 2011).

76. “Es brennt! Es brennt!: Aber eine Frau im Restaurant wollte unbedingt ihre Seezunge haben,” *Bild*, Berlin, 24 May 1967, 10. Ulrich Enzensberger claims that West Berlin’s chief fire officer had stated in an interview with *Bild* that communist war protesters setting fire to the KaDeWe was an acute possibility. However, the fire officer had talked only about fire hazards without mentioning any protesters. Cf. Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 141; “Feuerwehr wäre hilflos,” *Bild*, Berlin, 24 May 1967, 4.

77. See the collection of newspaper clippings in AHIS, SAK 130,14.

78. Kommune I, “Warum brennst du, Konsument?” (24 May 1967), *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 28 (1968): 319.

79. Kommune I, “Wann brennen die Berliner Kaufhäuser?,” in *ibid*.

American soldier killed in Vietnam costs the USA 12 million DM. / A dead Vietcong costs 1.6 million. / Because being particular in one's tastes always costs a bit more."<sup>80</sup> Another Kommune I leaflet was even more outspoken: "When will the Berlin department stores burn? . . . Starting today, he goes to the clothing departments of KaDeWe, Hertie, Woolworth, Bilka, or Neckermann and discreetly lights a cigarette in the fitting room." A future escalation of violence was anticipated: "When barracks blow up somewhere, when somewhere in a stadium the stands collapse, please don't be surprised." The final words betray the rebellious students' limited knowledge of English: "Burn ware-house, burn!"<sup>81</sup> This adapted the rallying cry of African American protesters during the "ghetto riots" from Watts to Detroit in stilted English.<sup>82</sup>

Ex-situationist Kunzelmann and his fellow communards may have drawn on Debord's interpretation of the August 1965 riots in the Watts neighbourhood of Los Angeles. Debord saw the events in Watts in accordance with his theory of the spectacle, transforming issues of race into issues of consumption: "The Los Angeles rebellion was a rebellion . . . against the world of the commodity in which worker-consumers are *hierarchically* subordinated to commodity standards."<sup>83</sup> He saw the lootings by the black protesters as attempts to break the spectacle of commodities to which they had been subjected all their lives yet denied access. The essay was distributed as a pamphlet whose front cover featured a photo of a burning department store in Watts.<sup>84</sup> However, transatlantic influences motivating protest in the sphere of consumption should not be overestimated. The German translation of sections from an influential American civil rights pamphlet omitted the passages on consumer boycott and selective buying.<sup>85</sup>

In many ways, the leaflets offered a cynical commentary on the coverage of the Brussels fire disaster in the Springer press. Teufel declared in court that he had been disgusted by the detail and compassion of press coverage of the

80. Kommune I leaflet, n.d., AHIS, Korrespondenz der Kommune I, 130,01. The final sentence is a verbatim quote of the 1966 advertising slogan for the cigarette brand Atika. The poem also included slogans for the cigarette brand HB and the fast food chain Wienerwald. See also Kommune I, "Revolution in rosé Revolution in rot," in Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 142.

81. Kommune I leaflet, n.d., AHIS, Korrespondenz der Kommune I, 130,01.

82. See Wilfried Mausbach, "'Burn, Ware-House, Burn!': Modernity, Counterculture, and the Vietnam War in Germany," in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola*, ed. Schildt and Siegfried, 175; Reavis, *Burn, Baby, Burn*. The German word for department store is *Warenhaus*.

83. Debord, "Déclin et la chute" (trans. as "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/decline.html>).

84. Scribner, "Buildings on Fire," 30.

85. Oppenheimer and Lakey, *Manual for Direct Action; Anleitung zum Handeln: Taktik direkter Aktionen*, trans. Ekkehart Krippendorff (Berlin, 1967).

Brussels disaster while reporting on the Vietnam War tended to downplay the conflict, depicting it as a misfortune.<sup>86</sup> Ulrich Enzensberger points out retrospectively that the victims of Brussels had been used for scaremongering propaganda, insinuating that left-wing protesters were to blame. However, it seems likely that such allegations did not originate with Springer but had already been spread in Belgium. Enzensberger also highlights that *Bild* printed information calling the arson allegation into question on the following day, but only in a tiny notice on the final page where it was reported that a member of the implicated Maoists had stated, “We have nothing to do with the fire. We distributed leaflets, but we do not throw bombs.”<sup>87</sup> (For more on the radical left’s criticism of Springer’s journalism, see chapter 5.) On this occasion, the Springer tabloid *BZ* wrote that the Kommune I leaflets were “peppered with obscenities that would in all likelihood get you thrown out even of a brothel. . . . Whoever glorifies this catastrophe, which can possibly be traced back to arson by left-wing extremists, and praises it as a model for emulation belongs behind bars.”<sup>88</sup> When legal proceedings were opened against the authors of the leaflets, *BZ* went a step further and imagined a transnational terrorist network. Under the subheading “Disgusting,” it alleged that Kommune I enjoyed “direct connections with Brussels terrorists” because of the detailed descriptions the communards had given of the “preparations for the arson attack.”<sup>89</sup>

In reality, members of Kommune I were accused of incitement to arson. Illustrating his case, the chief public prosecutor stated in his indictment that on the occasion of the shah of Iran’s state visit, Kommune I had desired the confrontations with the police during which Benno Ohnesorg was shot: “This development shows that intellectual and ideological debate has degenerated into intolerance and terror.” He also highlighted the fact that the communards had considered supporting themselves by “appropriating vacant houses, theft, and looting.”<sup>90</sup> During the demonstration against the shah, Teufel had been arrested

86. “Urteil der 6. großen Strafkammer des Landgerichts Berlin,” 13 May 1968, 28–29, AHIS, SAK 130, 12.

87. Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 143.

88. “400 Tote—für sie ein Happening,” *BZ*, 26 May 1967, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/192970/438.jpg.pdf> (accessed 14 February 2011). See Kellerhoff, “1968 und die Medien,” 94–98. Kellerhoff’s account of the leaflets is exclusively based on Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*. He concludes that the Springer press coverage of the events in Brussels was “sound journalistic workmanship” because it attributed allegations of arson to specific sources, while the leaflets were “tasteless” and “scandalous.” Kellerhoff has been working for the Axel Springer Verlag since 1998.

89. “Verfahren gegen die Kommune I,” *BZ*, 27 May 1967, 4, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/192976/441.jpg.pdf> (accessed 16 February 2011).

90. “Anklageschrift vom 9. Juni 1967,” AHIS, SAK 130, 12, quoted in Taubes, “Surrealistische Provokation,” 1070.

and charged with throwing a stone. He spent seventy days in pretrial custody, during which time he started a hunger strike. At the same time, police officer Karl-Heinz Kurras, who had shot the unarmed Ohnesorg, went free, claiming self-defence. When Teufel's lawyer, Mahler, had his client's remand in custody reviewed, his release was rejected on the grounds that he might flee given his loose living conditions that did not tie him to any possessions. The public prosecutor explained the case with reference to the ten thousand deutsche marks he had invested in his own furnishings.<sup>91</sup> Teufel was eventually acquitted of the charges. When being questioned by the presiding judge of the leaflet trial, he declared that the leaflets protested not only the Vietnam War but also "saturation and complacency."<sup>92</sup> Mahler used the apparent influence of Marcuse's thought—that is, a serious academic inspiration—in a failed attempt to fend off a forensic psychiatric and neurological examination of the defendants.<sup>93</sup> In their annotated documentation of the legal proceedings, the communards highlighted the fact that countless anonymous commentators and passers-by invoked the gas chambers in response to their provocations.<sup>94</sup>

The members of Kommune I took both trials as further opportunities to pursue their satirical assault on the authorities. One leaflet, "Have a Nice Trial—Incite to Arson!," ironically stated that since their initial call had not yet generated any real fires, it was now time to appeal to the masses. Mocking West Berlin's Cold War city marketing, the communards wrote, "Berlin must become a world city again by adopting the extraordinary success of the Belgian Vietnam protesters." The lower part of the leaflet provided a form that like-minded people could detach to declare that they, too, were inciting to arson. This used a legal clause adopted from their own indictment to which they added that matches or a petrol-infused cloth would do the job. Then came a multiple-choice section in which people could select from a list of targets, including the high-rise headquarters of Springer publishing and a department store to which the specific name had to be added.<sup>95</sup> Further leaflets called on people to buy Hong Kong-made water pistols at KaDeWe or bubble blowers at Woolworth and to use these items to disrupt court proceedings: "The globular shape and the gentle bang which these *exquisite* bubbles create when bursting

91. Kommune I, *Gesammelte Werke*, 47.

92. Minutes of the proceeding printed in Langhans and Teufel, *Klau mich*, n.p.

93. Horst Mahler to Landgericht Berlin, 6. Gr. Strafkammer, 506-55/67, 10 July 1967, 5, AHIS, SAK 130, 12.

94. Kommune I, *Gesammelte Werke*, 46.

95. Kommune I, "Macht Euch einen schönen Prozeß—ruft zur Brandstiftung auf!," in Kommune I, *Quellen zur Kommuneforschung*, n.p.

will be reminiscent of the globular bombs of *exquisite* anarchists.”<sup>96</sup> Despite these and other provocations made during the court proceedings, which earned the defendants several days of arrest for contempt of court, the judicial enquiry ended with an acquittal. The criminal division concluded that the leaflets constituted incitement to arson, but the judges were unable to prove conclusively that the defendants actually desired an implementation.<sup>97</sup>

The defence had thus had only partial success in claiming freedom of artistic expression based on expert opinion by renowned philologists.<sup>98</sup> Quoting André Breton, Raymond Queneau, and Sören Kierkegaard, Jacob Taubes, a professor of Jewish studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, highlighted parallels between the leaflets and various texts by the Parisian surrealists. Ultimately, the leaflets appeared to be an act of literary provocation in the spirit of “Baudelaire’s *épater le bourgeois*.”<sup>99</sup> Eberhard Lämmert, a professor of German studies, pointed out that the leaflets were clearly imitating the language of “the press and advertising propaganda.”<sup>100</sup> His colleague, Peter Wapnewski, stressed “absurdity” as a leitmotif of the leaflets and thought that they intended to show that it was “inhuman to bemoan the victims of the Brussels department store fire while simultaneously ignoring the victims of the war in Vietnam.”<sup>101</sup> In his view, the texts, “while offending our feelings of tact and style,” sought “to prevent, or prohibit, the burning of people.”<sup>102</sup>

A number of other expert opinion statements were ultimately not consulted at court. Literary scholar Peter Szondi remained ambivalent as he called attention to the fact that the idea of left-wing radicals setting fire to a department store had originally been conceived not by the communards but by journalists reporting on such rumours in Belgium. At the same time, he argued that one leaflet was an entirely fictitious newspaper article based on invented sources and evidence.<sup>103</sup> In another passage, he paraphrased the anticapitalist content of Kommune I’s media critique by arguing that the leaflets “implicitly accused the USA of pursuing their war efforts as a consequence of the needs of

96. Kommune I, “Auf in den Kampf! Jeder Brandstifter sein eigener Feuerwehrmann!” and “Lasst nicht nur eine Luftblase platzen sondern tausend!,” both in *ibid*.

97. “Urteil der 6. großen Strafkammer des Landgerichts Berlin,” (506) 2 P KLR 3/67, 55/67 (13 May 1968), AHIS, SAK 130, 12.

98. Expert opinion statements by Lämmert, Szondi, and Wapnewski are printed in *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 28 (1968): 316–45.

99. Taubes, “Surrealistische Provokation,” 1073.

100. Lämmert, “Brandstiftung durch Flugblätter?,” 323.

101. Wapnewski, “Brandstiftung durch Flugblätter?,” 340.

102. *Ibid.*, 342.

103. Szondi, “Aufforderung zur Brandstiftung?,” 330, 335.

their industry” by depicting the U.S. government as a company with a new advertising idea.<sup>104</sup> A prominent jurist and former president of the Higher Regional Court Stuttgart, Richard Schmid, pointed to an article by *New Yorker* journalist Jacob Brackman in which an imaginary opponent of the Vietnam War fantasised about defoliating Central Park and burning down Rockefeller Center without anyone being as “dull-witted as to take this for incitement to arson.”<sup>105</sup> Literary critic Karl Heinz Bohrer thought that “surrealist cynicism terrorised the nerves of the morally approachable.”<sup>106</sup> Günter Grass diagnosed a “pubescent . . . quixotic anarchism,” placing the leaflets in the tradition of Georg Büchner’s *Der Hessische Landbote* (1834), though less profound. Moreover, Grass thought that advertising language, the language of the Springer tabloid *BZ*, and the language of the commune “equally showed fascist symptoms.” He seemed to miss the idea that the leaflets intentionally mimicked the characteristic style of advertisements and tabloid journalism. More to the point was his observation that the leaflets betrayed a “vulgar” understanding of Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*.<sup>107</sup> Hans Werner Richter, a writer and founder of the renowned literary association Gruppe 47, refused to contribute expert opinion, branding the leaflets as merely “acting out an anarchist revolutionary romanticism.” The communards only played at revolution and “discredited all revolutionary endeavours . . . playing into the hands of the reaction.”<sup>108</sup> Theodor Adorno’s refusal was less wordy. As a consequence, he got involved in a brawl with protesting students while lecturing at the Freie Universität Berlin.<sup>109</sup>

Kommune II, another flat-sharing community with more of a focus on psychology and revolutionary rigour, criticised the defence strategy of portraying the leaflets as mere satire and insinuated that true revolutionaries had to go beyond just talking about fire: “We suspect . . . that the recent capitalist hype, interviews, photos, brochures, etc. has spoilt you. Has money turned you into prostitutes? Do you again intend to grind your fag *in front of* the department store like the bourgeois brakemen?”<sup>110</sup> Kommune II, including future Red Army Faction (RAF) member Jan-Carl Raspe, were in some respects ideologi-

104. Ibid., 333.

105. Richard Schmid to Schiele, 20 July 1967, AHIS, SAK 130, 12; Jacob R. Brackman, “Onward and Upward with the Arts: The Put-On,” *New Yorker*, 24 June 1967, 34–35.

106. Bohrer, “Surrealismus und Terror,” 37.

107. Günter Grass to Horst Mahler, 5 July 1967, in Kommune I, *Gesammelte Werke*, 43–45.

108. Hans Werner Richter to Horst Mahler, in *ibid.*, 42–43.

109. See Wolfgang Kraushaar, “Herbert Marcuse und das lebensweltliche Apriori der Revolte,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, ed. Kraushaar, 3:197.

110. Kommune II, “Gegen Kommune I,” 317.

cally more rigorous than their famous counterparts. Like them, the members of Kommune II opted for a “communal economy” with all private incomes going into a fund for communal use. The planning of consumption was also a matter of collective deliberation.<sup>111</sup>

## Department Store Arson in Frankfurt

A few days after the leaflet trial, three future department store arsonists visited Kommune I. Gerd Koenen argues that the younger Andreas Baader wanted to challenge the intellectual leader of the commune, Kunzelmann, when acting out the provocative fantasy.<sup>112</sup> Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and two friends, Thorwald Proll and Horst Söhnlein, travelled to Frankfurt. The next day, Ensslin and Baader went to a department store, playfully tried out a few folding chairs, and put homemade incendiary bombs into a lounge cabinet. Fire broke out in two department stores—Schneider and Kaufhof—around midnight on 2–3 April 1968. The fire did not harm anyone but caused considerable material damage, in part by triggering the sprinkling system. According to the court, damage amounted to 282,339 deutsche marks at Schneider and 390,838 deutsche marks at Kaufhof, all of it covered by insurance.<sup>113</sup> Newspapers had initially reported that damage totalled 1.2 million deutsche marks. The Frankfurt department stores apparently organised a “fire-watch service” for fear of “political acts of revenge.” They advertised a high reward for information leading to the arrest of the arsonists.<sup>114</sup>

Police followed lead and easily caught the four arsonists. A poem in the

111. Kommune II, *Versuch der Revolutionierung*.

112. Koenen, *Vesper, Ensslin, Baader*, 142–49. Proll later emphasised that the department store arson was influenced by Kommune I. See Proll and Dubbe, *Wir kamen vom anderen Stern*, 7; Proll, *Mein 68*, 51–57.

113. “Urteil des LG Frankfurt (‘Brandstifterurteil’) vom 31. Oktober 1968, 4 Kls 1/68,” in *Aktuelle Dokumente*, ed. Münch, 178–79. The most comprehensive and solid account of the Frankfurt department store arsons is Sara Hakemi and Thomas Hecken, “Die Warenhausbrandstifter,” in *RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Kraushaar, 1:316–31. Hakemi and Hecken interpret the events in the context of a left-wing tradition of critiques of consumer society (Kommune I, Marcuse). They argue that further developments—i.e., the formation of the RAF—saw critiques of consumer society recede into the background in favour of anti-imperialist ideologies. They thus underestimate the continued importance of critiques of consumer society in the RAF’s ideology, especially within its anti-imperialism. For other accounts of the Frankfurt department store arsons, see Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 41–45; Mausbach, “‘Burn, Ware-House, Burn!’,” 175–202.

114. “Brandstiftung in Frankfurter Kaufhäusern,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 4 April 1968, 36; Uwe Nettelbeck, “Die Frankfurter Brandstifter: Viermal drei Jahre Zuchthaus für eine sinnlose Demonstration,” *Die Zeit* 45 (8 November 1968).



style of Kommune I leaflets was found in Proll's notebook: "When will the Brandenburg Gate burn? When will the Berlin department stores burn? When will the Hamburg warehouses burn? . . . Smash capitalism."<sup>115</sup> Investigators also found a piece of scrap paper on which someone had scribbled, "We set fire to department stores so that you stop to buy. . . . Pressure to consume terrorises you. We terrorise the commodity so that you are done with the terror that turns you into consumers."<sup>116</sup>

SDS spokesperson Reiche was initially "shocked by . . . unjustifiable acts of terror." However, the West Berlin branch of the SDS later issued a statement that was far more accommodating. Kommune I did not dissociate itself from arson as a means of political struggle, and members publicly declared their understanding of the arsonists. After the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the communards offered a sweeping legitimisation that pointed to the civil unrest in the United States: "Arson as a political means has become a daily necessity for blacks."<sup>117</sup> A flyer adopting the usual biting sarcasm explained that King had received the Nobel Peace Prize because he refused to fight the "war of . . . a minority against the many rich." With a dose of hubris, a post-script asked if people distancing themselves from the Frankfurt department store arsons should not also distance themselves from Black Power.<sup>118</sup>

The Frankfurt arsonists were sentenced to three years in prison for setting fire to the Schneider department store, which Baader and Ensslin had admitted. In the case of Kaufhof, they were acquitted because of lack of evidence. Although all four were sentenced to the same penalty, the extent of Proll and Söhnlein's complicity was never fully clarified.<sup>119</sup> The sentence against Proll was mainly based on the notes found in his possession.<sup>120</sup> Despite some claims to the contrary, the court did recognise political motivation. The judges put on record that the defendants had come to the conclusion "that their previous endeavours could not meet with success given the 'narrow-minded bluntness of a satisfied consumer society.' They now wanted to set up a beacon to activate the masses."<sup>121</sup> The court accommodated Baader's repeated references to Marcuse:

115. Proll and Dubbe, *Wir kamen vom anderen Stern*, 117.

116. "Leseabschrift eines Zettels, gefunden bei Frau Vogel," AHIS, SAK 250, 05.

117. "Brandstiftung/Kaufhäuser: Phosphor und Schwefel," *Der Spiegel* 15 (8 April 1968): 34.

118. Enzensberger, *Jahre der Kommune I*, 271.

119. "Urteil des LG Frankfurt ('Brandstifterurteil') vom 31. Oktober 1968, 4 Kls 1/68," in *Aktuelle Dokumente*, ed. Münch, 183, 188. See also Proll and Dubbe, *Wir kamen vom anderen Stern*, 16.

120. "Urteil des LG Frankfurt ('Brandstifterurteil') vom 31. Oktober 1968, 4 Kls 1/68," in *Aktuelle Dokumente*, ed. Münch, 181.

121. *Ibid.*, 172.

Ensslin and Baader had no longer considered “peaceful, nonviolent change of existing ‘class rule’ possible.”<sup>122</sup> The court also dealt with the idea of a right to resist according to natural law, to which Baader had referred, invoking Marcuse.<sup>123</sup> The judges rejected this reasoning “for lack of effectiveness” because “influencing the war in Vietnam by means of domestic terror against domestic property” was unrealistic. Ironically, this seemed to suggest that a strike against the U.S. Army might be covered by natural law—a line of reasoning that the RAF eventually followed. The Frankfurt judges finally considered the question of whether the defendants’ strong belief in a right to resist might constitute a “mistake as to the wrongful nature of the act [*Verbotsirrtum*].” They again denied the rationale with reference to Marcuse, for whom the “question of revolutionary violence” was allegedly “solely a moral question.” Instead, they opted for a positivistic interpretation: “Even the political criminal, the delinquent of conscience [*Gewissenstäter*], knows that he is violating a rule of the state. That is to say, the concept of guilt in the applicable criminal code is not moral or religious, but it is ‘political’ in the sense that the offender consciously fails to ‘adapt’ to the applicable legal order.”<sup>124</sup> For the most part, the defendants indeed refused to cooperate with a justice system that they considered a mere instrument of an order they wished to overcome. In the end, the court did not acknowledge political conviction as the main motivation.

The general public failed to comprehend the defendants’ attempts to explain the connection between the world of consumption embodied in a department store and the deadly routine in Vietnam.<sup>125</sup> Ensslin stated, “The USA is putting the rule to the test in Vietnam so that America’s affluence can be preserved.”<sup>126</sup> Witness Bernward Vesper, Ensslin’s onetime fiancé, also emphasised the connection between affluence and the Vietnam War: “Commodities take on human traits, while the dead . . . are . . . considered mere statistics.”<sup>127</sup> Proll authored the defendants’ closing words that dealt with the justice system but did not come back to the motive. Consumption was broached only with reference to prison conditions, where “a society that consists of nothing but consumption” was inverted.<sup>128</sup>

122. Ibid., 191–92.

123. Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” 116–17.

124. “Urteil des LG Frankfurt (‘Brandstifterurteil’) vom 31. Oktober 1968, 4 Kls 1/68,” in *Aktuelle Dokumente*, ed. Münch, 205.

125. Krebs, *Ulrike Meinhof*, 167–68.

126. Ensslin quoted in *Baader-Meinhof-Report*, 20.

127. Bernward Vesper, “Nachwort zu Baader u.a.,” in Baader et al., *Vor einer solchen Justiz*, 20.

128. Ibid. Also printed in “Erklärung der im Kaufhausbrandprozeß angeklagten Andreas

Ties between the increasingly commercialised lifestyle laboratory of Kommune I and the department store arsonists remained close. In May 1968, Ulrich Enzensberger wrote to Baader, “We thought up a new sales sensation: group sex, to bring in more money.”<sup>129</sup> Baader—in custody for the Frankfurt department store arson—answered that Kommune I was still appearing only in the cultural pages of the newspapers: “You must make the leap into advertising, Fanta etc. What kind of money would that bring in?”<sup>130</sup> In prison, Proll continued to dabble in anarchic poetry. He invoked Proudhon and predicted commercialisation: “5 years later: the federal republic is a pedestrian zone. you can buy private anarchism.”<sup>131</sup> Kommune I member Volker Gebbert wrote to Proll that another commune, Potskommune, was earning money from interviews about its consumption habits: “There is some money to be earned with the Left.” Kommune I had signed a contract for an arson story with a popular publishing house.<sup>132</sup>

After Ensslin had put the department store arson in the context of anti-Vietnam protest, the West Berlin chapter of the SDS issued a statement that turned against the argument that the Frankfurt fires had wilfully destroyed what society had produced. The SDS took the line that the owners of the means of production constantly destroyed societal wealth. The statement shared a radical critique of Western consumer society that highlighted planned obsolescence, wasteful packaging, profit-oriented product research, and advertising. However, the critique went further by addressing the legal framework upholding this system: it punished the worker who stole stockings at the hosiery factory but not the managers responsible for the production of short-lived stockings. The West Berlin SDS shared the defendants’ challenge to a global regime of provision: “Had one taken the political reasoning of the accused comrades seriously—the clues to the war in Vietnam and the clues to the methods of capitalist production and consumption—one would have had to understand that the genocide in Vietnam . . . is only the up-front and brutal expression of a society that over here is aspiring to suppress” the masses’ true desire for self-determination by means of a quickly revocable system of pseudo-liberties. In

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Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Horst Söhnlein, und Thorwald Proll,” *Charlie Kaputt* 3 (December 1968).

129. Ulrich Enzensberger to Andreas Baader, 10 May 1968, Correspondence of Kommune I (130,01), Archive IfSHH.

130. Andreas Baader to Kommune I, 10 June 1968, in *ibid.*

131. Thorwald Proll, “Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft 1968/69,” in Proll, *Mein 68*, 9–12.

132. Volker Gebbert to Thorwald Proll, n.d., in *ibid.*, 64–65. See Horst Tomayer, Christian Buchloh, Peter Homann-Meinhof, Heike Proll, Ellinor Butscher and Ulrich Sander, “Nicht angetört: Über Potskommune, Lincke, und ihre Zeitungen,” in *Subkultur Berlin*, ed. Sander and Christians, 66–73.

comparison to the crimes of this system, the Frankfurt arsons appeared merely a “helpless symbol,” a petty offence. The system had to condemn the defendants so that the propertied could continue to destroy societal wealth and the nonpropertied would not dare to demand the wealth that an “equitable—i.e., communist society—could produce even today.”<sup>133</sup>

Ulrike Meinhof travelled to Frankfurt to observe the trial and visited the defendants in custody, thus meeting her future comrades for the first time.<sup>134</sup> She wrote an article condemning the arson on the grounds that the fire consumed commodities. The arsonists thus acted in conformity with capitalism. Nevertheless, she approved of Teufel’s words alluding to Bertolt Brecht’s comparison between founding and robbing a bank: “It is still better to set fire to a department store than to run one.”<sup>135</sup> Meinhof clearly shared a critical attitude towards matters of consumption, quoting Vance Packard’s *The Waste Makers* and André Gorz’s *Stratégie ouvrière et néocapitalisme*.<sup>136</sup> The latter inspired her to interpret the blessings of affluence as “substitutional satisfaction” to hoodwink individuals about the conditions under which they had to work as producers. The former provided her with a framework in which the destruction of societal wealth seemed to be built into the system of capitalist accumulation. Was setting fire to goods in a department store so different from destroying freshly produced goods to prevent market congestion and falling prices? Following Packard, Meinhof fumed, “The industry is still trying to overcome the glut of the consumer goods market by ‘new models every two years’; by wasting millions on research that serves less the products’ improvement than their saleability; by the individual rubbish bin for senseless packaging . . . ; by equally mendacious and costly advertising.” Planned obsolescence wasted millions “so that freezers, razors, ladies’ stockings, toys, light bulbs break much earlier than necessary . . . to artificially keep demand going, to realise rates of profit that are only reinvested into private pockets, not to satisfy social needs.” She would have preferred that the riches of society go into education, health care, public transport, silence, pure air, and sex education.<sup>137</sup>

Critical observations concerning the flood of commodities were by no

133. Statement of the Landesverband Berlin des SDS, AHIS, SAK 250, 04.

134. Krebs, *Ulrike Meinhof*, 168.

135. Ulrike Meinhof, “Warenhausbrandstiftung,” *konkret* 14 (4 November 1968); translation in Meinhof, *Everybody Talks about the Weather*, 244–48. See Colvin, *Ulrike Meinhof and West German Terrorism*, 42–45.

136. Gorz, *Stratégie ouvrière* (German ed., *Zur Strategie der Arbeiterbewegung im Neokapitalismus*, trans. Rainer Zoll and Jürgen Schaltenbrand [Frankfurt, 1968]).

137. Ulrike Meinhof, “Warenhausbrandstiftung,” in Meinhof, *Dokumente einer Rebellion*, 87–88.

means limited to the Far Left. In 1968, a professional retail journal observed, “We are facing a bewildering host of endeavours to get rid of huge overcapacities.” Even the professionals likened their contemporary commodity market to a Babel as a consequence of “the incredible increase in variety and volume of consumer goods.” The current “hardly measurable mass of consumer goods” included many that no one could have imagined only half a century earlier. They diagnosed the pressure that overproduction exerted on the retail sector when a single product was offered in countless types and different packaging: “Often the effectiveness of an advertising campaign to which the consumer is constantly and pitilessly exposed via the journalistic media is decisive for the marketing success of this or that brand. Nowadays, the producer who . . . employs the largest possible means in an advertisement campaign has every chance of establishing a lead, even to the point of near monopoly.”<sup>138</sup> The federal retail organisation Hauptgemeinschaft des Deutschen Einzelhandels used the term *Werbeterror* (advertising terror) when denouncing the aggressive and often semilegal marketing practices of organised promotional trips (*Kaffeefahrten*).<sup>139</sup>

While the retail specialists still strove to solve the riddle of selling the unprecedented abundance, Meinhof posed the question of distribution and identified regimes of provision that were upheld by the legal system and privileged property and profit. Hence, she considered the progressive moment of the Frankfurt department store arson to lie in the criminal transgression of this order: “Those who abuse property are protected by the law. It does not protect those who are victims of this abuse, nor those who create the riches by work and consumption, but those who appropriate it legally according to the law-making of the capitalist state.” Consumers—together with producers—featured as creators of societal wealth. The “surplus value” they produced was then misappropriated by capitalists. Meinhof claimed that “collective needs” remained “flagrantly unsatisfied in the rich capitalist countries.”<sup>140</sup>

These words represented a clear departure from her views two and a half years earlier, when her assessment of socioeconomic negotiations had been much more conventional and optimistic. On the occasion of wage disputes in the West German metal industry in early 1966, she had criticised employers’ reluctance to agree to a reduction in working hours, but overall she held that collective bargaining was “appropriate to fit economic growth and common

138. “Hauptgemeinschaft für stärkere Zusammenarbeit,” *Der Einzelhandel* 21.7 (July 1968): 3.

139. “Bitterer Kaffee,” *Der Einzelhandel* 21.9 (September 1968): 3.

140. Meinhof, “Warenhausbrandstiftung,” 87–88.

welfare to one another”<sup>141</sup> This position eroded during the second half of 1967 with Ohnesorg’s shooting and the onset of the Federal Republic’s first recession. Many employers used the crisis to slash or curtail voluntary social benefits, holiday pay, and Christmas allowances as well as wages above the general pay scale. The Industrial Union of Metalworkers (IG Metall) collected evidence on these developments and published a book on business ethics. Meinhof castigated these measures as “securing profits at the expense of workers’ households.” However, she located the real problem in the period of prosperity, when workers and trade unions had been “cheated out of their power for a mess of pottage”—that is, the perks that had subsequently been taken away. She concluded that ethics did not exist in business, only profit and class interest. Affluence merely veiled class barriers. Moral protest was futile; only effective democratic control of business—that is, codetermination—would establish the economy’s real needs.<sup>142</sup> She was developing a crucial idea: affluence clouded people’s ability to realise their own needs.

Meinhof added another tenet to her future philosophy in February 1968 when criticising the fact that provocative but nonviolent student protesters were frequently accused of “terrorism.” She diagnosed a tendency to put “terror” from the left on a level with the historical terror from the right. However, she went a step further in assuming that fascism had had “the task of liquidating any chance of socialism in Germany for decades.”<sup>143</sup> Meinhof took the next step in her intellectual development “from protest to resistance” after the assassination attempt on Dutschke and the subsequent blockades of Springer publishing. She justified the students’ adoption of physical violence as a means of resistance and did not mince her words about what this violence comprised: throwing stones, smashing windows, setting fire to Springer delivery vans, demolishing editorial offices, slashing tyres, knocking over construction site trailers, and breaking through police lines. In an attempt to uphold the differentiation between violence against things and violence against people, Meinhof ignored the significant amount of injury to persons over the Easter weekend, emphasising instead that the physical damage caused by the students would easily be repaired, much of it by insurance companies. Her line of reasoning aimed at delegitimising her opponents: those who called the student

141. Ulrike Meinhof, “Lohnkampf” (February 1966), in Meinhof, *Dokumente einer Rebellion*, 60.

142. Ulrike Meinhof, “Unternehmersmoral” (August 1967), in *ibid.*, 74. See also Vorstand der Industriegewerkschaft Metall, *Weißbuch zur Unternehmersmoral* (Frankfurt, 1967).

143. Ulrike Meinhof, “Gegen-Gewalt” (February 1968), in Meinhof, *Dokumente einer Rebellion*, 78.

protests “terror” failed to measure “bombs on Vietnam, . . . terror in Persia, [and] torture in South Africa” with the same yardstick. Kurt Georg Kiesinger and Lyndon Baines Johnson were representatives of a violent system that had brought forth Springer and Vietnam. They lacked the political or moral legitimisation to either regret the fate of Dutschke and King, who had fought against the violence of the system, or object to the students whose “counterviolence” resisted the real terror and violence. She explicitly cautioned against “insensible fury replacing superior rationality” and against responding to “the paramilitary police operation with paramilitary means.”<sup>144</sup> She later threw this caution to the winds, but a characteristic element of her radical reasoning was already clearly discernible: with reasonably convincing arguments, she amalgamated very different phenomena of political violence from very different historical and geographical contexts into two opposing categories according to moral standards with the aim of delegitimising the establishment and in turn legitimising political resistance.

In November 1968, she displayed this widespread tendency to introduce moral scenarios from transcontinental contexts into her assessment of the Frankfurt department store arsons. She referred to American ghettos and pointed out that the looting “ghetto Negro” could learn that a system that denied him what he desperately needed was rotten. The German people, however, would hardly find what they really needed in department stores, with the notable exception of dishwashers, which were too heavy to carry away. This juxtaposition of the real needs of African American looters with the false needs of German customers was somewhat flawed since African Americans were as keen on television sets as their German counterparts, and German department stores did sell plenty of goods—including food—that could not easily be subsumed under false needs. Overall, Meinhof remained sceptical regarding the educational effect of department store arson or looting. Her account remained ambivalent: she felt a tension between a “counterrevolutionary” element of doing the same as the capitalist system—that is, destroying goods—and the progressive aspect of attacking this system by exploiting the symbolic value of violence. Ultimately, this tension mirrored the dialectics that had already characterised Kommune I’s leaflets in their attempt to unmask the system by its own means.<sup>145</sup>

Meinhof had already adopted the title “Falsches Bewußtsein” (False Con-

144. Ulrike Meinhof, “Vom Protest zum Widerstand” (May 1968), in *ibid.*, 81.

145. Meinhof, “Warenhausbrandstiftung,” 87–88. Biographies of Ulrike Meinhof cover her article on department store arson, but beyond this, the topic of consumer society does not feature in the literature on the RAF.

sciousness) in a contribution to an edited volume on marriage and emancipation. This essay started with an unidentified Marcuse quote to the effect that capitalism produced affluence but not happiness and freedom for all.<sup>146</sup> Her assessment—which worked with meticulous statistical material on the vast gender discrepancies in wages for equal work—argued that emancipation was falsely equated with women entering salaried work. This process was only one necessary step, consumer sovereignty in “a world in which the value of human beings is measured in terms of their income.” To Meinhof’s mind, the question of emancipation encompassed much more far-reaching issues: whether the blessings of technological progress were to be employed to unburden people—especially women—from “the acquisition of their daily needs concerning food and clothing, or to provide luxury and good business to a few.”<sup>147</sup> That the creation of needs for the purpose of sales increases had generated new burdens for the homemaker was yet another story.

On 4 November 1968, the same day that Meinhof’s department store arson article was published, the television magazine *Panorama* aired an interview in which the imprisoned Ensslin tried to justify her choice of target, seeking the root of evil in the callousness of consumer society: “The people in our country and in America and in every West European country, they have to gorge themselves. They have to gorge themselves so that it does not occur to them to think, for example, that we have something to do with Vietnam and what we might have to do with it. . . . I cannot believe that the day will . . . never come when people will be fed up with just being full . . . when they will be fed up with the self-delusion of taking all the nice provisions for the meaning of life.” She explained that she, too, liked the things that could be bought at department stores, but if the price was human consciousness, it was too high. To see a frightening “loss of consciousness,” which she called “unworthy of human beings,” did not require looking as far as Vietnam; the misery was apparent in her own society. She then declared that she would never resign herself to late capitalist society drifting towards fascism, for which she cited developments in America as evidence. She would never resign herself to what has been done for centuries, would never pretend that she could not do anything. Finally, Ensslin distanced herself from department store arson without explaining why, leaving open the question of whether she would embark on a different kind of direct action. She had already stated in court that the way the protest had been carried out was a mistake, but it was still nothing of which she was ashamed.<sup>148</sup>

146. Ulrike Meinhof, “Falsches Bewußtsein,” in *Emanzipation und Ehe*, ed. Rotzoll, 33.

147. *Ibid.*, 35–36.

148. Ensslin, interview. Passages from the interview are quoted in Siepmann, *Heiß und kalt*,



Ensslin seems to have seen her act as a symbol or wake-up call that went unheard.

Journalist Dieter E. Zimmer, an assistant editor for *Die Zeit*, admitted that it was debatable whether the violence in “direct action” such as department store arson was “real” or of a symbolic character, whether it was more likely to reinforce or harm the capitalist system. In his opinion, a utilitarian perspective was more to the point: even if one fully supported the revolutionaries’ intentions, one still had to admit that “there is no means of transmission that could make an act of this kind in any way educational or productive. . . . If one really seeks an effective way to forfeit the sympathies that exist in some parts of the population, if one does not want this revolution to happen with the people but against the people, then one will have to set alight as many department stores as possible.”<sup>149</sup> He correctly diagnosed the acute difficulties left-wing militancy encountered in meeting its goal of mobilising the masses beyond a relatively small group of like-minded or well-meaning comrades and observers. Conversely, he ignored the idea that many activists did not care whether they were popular and understood that they were fighting against the majority of the population in affluent societies, thinking such people to be the victims of false needs and complicit in a fundamentally flawed system.

The Frankfurt arson attacks constitute a significant departure in the history of left-wing protest in Germany, since the anti-authoritarian protesters had previously—despite some more militant rhetoric—limited themselves to breaking the law during protest meetings, demonstrations, and related confrontations with the authorities. Apart from some smashed windows and an incendiary device that caused minor damage at the Criminal Court Moabit during Kommune I’s leaflet trial, the Frankfurt department store arsons were the first politically motivated attacks from the Left outside this context.<sup>150</sup> Baader and Ensslin’s evasion of their sentences by going underground eventually proved to be the beginning of their well-known radicalisation in the RAF.

Although many contemporaries perceived the Frankfurt department store arsons as either mere spontaneous action or pure crime, they must be seen in the context of their intellectual origins, which embed them in a wider history of protest. By 1962, Gruppe Spur had already pointed to the manipulated con-

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513. Proll later emphasised the anticonsumerist message of the department store arson. There were two motives: the Americans’ involvement in Vietnam, and the call to refuse consumption (*Konsumverweigerung*). See Proll and Dubbe, *Wir kamen vom anderen Stern*, 7, 23, 39.

149. Zimmer, “Eine Absage als vorläufige Schlußbemerkung,” 342.

150. Hakemi and Hecken, “Warenhausbrandstifter,” 1:316.

sumer and emphasised the depoliticising role of consumption, which group members saw in connection with destruction. Subversive Aktion continued from this basis, diagnosing alienation on two levels: (1) the absorption of artistic and critical impulses into the sphere of commerce deprived human beings from crucial cultural and political means for an adequate exchange with their societal environment; (2) affluent society also colonised seemingly private fields of retreat such as sexuality or leisure. At least implicitly, the consumer already featured as a potential revolutionary subject, but for most people, affluent consumption seemed to foster identification with “the system.” Consumption thus became a central tenet of ideology and was put in a tradition of totalitarian ideologies, an idea that also connected to Germany’s fascist past. The notion of terror was introduced and coupled with consumption to refer to structures of violence underlying affluent society. The subversives around Kunzelmann, Dutschke, and Rabehl made a decisive move in joining the SDS. They thus took their political programme of revolutionising everyday life on the basis of a theoretical analysis of both consumption and production as well as their method of performative action in the sphere of commerce into the wider student movement. In terms of theoretical framework, Kommune I hardly went beyond Subversive Aktion. The May 1967 leaflets on the Brussels fire disaster were completely in line with earlier happenings, but the communards now merged a critique of regimes of provision with a collective lifestyle, the satisfaction of personal needs with political action. What was new was the intensity with which they used the media and the courts to propagate and radicalise their position.

West German society was prepared to dedicate a high degree of public attention to the protesters, turning the leaflets and to a lesser degree the arsons into media hype. This process resulted not only from the communards’ virtuosity in playing the full range of media scandals but also from the fact that they had really touched a nerve with their contemporary discourse of legitimisation: ideological justification via superior provision. Conversely, Kommune I and the department store arsonists shared an important aspect of the commercial sensationalism they criticised: the performative moment of gaining instant publicity by innovative means. An amalgamation of various levels of political violence became typical of their tactics. Both the leaflets and the Frankfurt arsons firmly tied symbols of war to symbols of affluence. However, despite the odd mention of Woolworth or Coca-Cola, among others, there was no specific targeting of American stores or products. Germany’s fascist past was invoked in a number of contexts, with rather variable meanings: the educators of the late 1950s and early 1960s warned against massification; Rabehl coined the

term *Konsumfaschismus*; Grass claimed that both Springer tabloids and *Kommune I* showed evidence of fascist symbols; Meinhof's concept of counterviolence pointed to fascist terror; and Ensslin thought that capitalism's drift towards fascism was most evident in America.

Meinhof's treatment of the Frankfurt department store arsons and her subsequent contacts with the arsonists proved to be crucial steps in her theoretical development, as chapter 3 demonstrates. But before I analyse the armed rebellion against consumer society that the RAF and related groups pursued, the next chapter scrutinises the wider intellectual context of such positions. At least since 1963 and up to the court proceedings against the arsonists, evidence indicates that consumption-related protest was influenced by Marcuse's writings. It is difficult to determine the exact degree of Marcuse's or other theorists' influence because German critiques of regimes of provision had their own distinct roots and developed their own dynamism. The emergence of widespread perceptions of connections between the development of consumer society and destruction or violence was a historical novelty in many industrialised countries but especially in West Germany.

## CHAPTER 2

### Neo-Marxist Critiques of Affluent Society: “Need to Break the Rules”

“If these young people detest the prevailing system of needs and its ever increasing mass of goods, this is because they observe and know how much sacrifice, how much cruelty and stupidity contribute everyday to the reproduction of the system.”

—Herbert Marcuse (1967)<sup>1</sup>

The historical and intellectual developments analysed so far need to be located in the wider context of the pervasive conflict between competing concepts of universal well-being during the Cold War. The social theory of the Frankfurt School, especially Herbert Marcuse’s analysis of capitalism, and its influence on the New Left were part of this transatlantic quest for appropriate ways to organise or animate societies.<sup>2</sup> The Frankfurt School’s insights into modern mass society were read not only as analysis but also as directions for use. However, Marcuse’s concrete influence on the protagonists of West German critiques of regimes of provision should not be taken for granted, since other influences also existed. Activists made their own observations regarding regimes of provision, and these observations had practical consequences for political action, which Marcuse would not have endorsed. While most of the existing literature inconclusively ponders the exact extent of Marcuse’s influence on the protest movement, it seems helpful to identify critiques of affluent society as a focal point in the mutual exchange between the philosopher, who openly showed his solidarity with the protest movement, and the student rebels, allowing both sides to link social theory with everyday activities.

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1. Herbert Marcuse, “The Question of Revolution,” *New Left Review* 45 (1967): 7 (German orig., “Ist die Idee der Revolution”).

2. See Tim B. Müller, *Krieger und Gelehrte*. A recent study of the transatlantic dimension of student protest mentions Marcuse in passing without going into any detail: see Klimke, *Other Alliance*.

Consequently, activists found it easy to embrace Marcuse's writings in which the émigré philosopher described the "preformation" of the individual both as a condition and a result of structural processes of commodity consumption. Moreover, activists followed his belief that before entering the fight for freedom, revolutionaries had to liberate themselves from capitalist consumer culture. Consumption seemed to lead to a loss of political freedom. Marcuse's eloquent opposition to this form of "manipulation" helped to lend credibility to the idea of "emancipating" the individual from consumer society among parts of the West German intelligentsia, but they were ultimately unable to impart this position to the wider population.<sup>3</sup>

The complex critique of regimes of provision and of affluent society emerging from the writings of the Frankfurt School as well as from theory papers by Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS) activists formed a central part of the cognitive orientation of the activists analysed in this volume. This chapter thus reconstructs and contextualises contemporary critiques of regimes of provision, especially the work of Marcuse, one of the first Marxists to provide a theory of consumer society, as it developed over four decades.<sup>4</sup> Most existing research on the intellectual legacy of the Frankfurt School simply refers to Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*, quickly subsuming it under more general notions of Marx's concept of commodity fetishism. This is then taken as an important influence on the New Left,<sup>5</sup> usually without going into too much detail.<sup>6</sup> Marcuse's later writings in particular rarely feature in existing research.<sup>7</sup> The aim is to overcome this reduction in favour of a more comprehensive contextualisation of Marcuse's critique of affluent society from *Eros and Civilization* (1955) to *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972).

3. Wolfgang Ruppert, "Zur Konsumwelt der 60er Jahre," in *Dynamische Zeiten*, ed. Schildt, Siegfried, and Lammers, 767–68.

4. This chapter goes beyond Philip Walsh, "Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Theory: Beyond the Consumer Society," in *No Social Science*, ed. Dahms, 235–60; Kellner, "Critical Theory." One ambitious overview of the sociology of consumption ignores Marcuse: see Schrage, *Verfügbarkeit der Dinge*.

5. Kraushaar, "Einleitung"; Kailitz, *Von den Worten zu den Waffen*, 91–101.

6. E.g. Hecken, *Versagen der Intellektuellen*, 120–24; Günter C. Behrmann, "Kulturrevolution: Zwei Monate im Sommer 1967," in *Intellektuelle Gründung der Bundesrepublik*, ed. Albrecht, Behrmann, and Bock, 312–86.

7. Notable exceptions are Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse*, 276–319; Kellner, "Radical Politics"; Roland Roth, *Rebellische Subjektivität*; Wheatland, *Frankfurt School*, 326–34. Wheatland argues that after 1968, Marcuse largely reacted to the student movement rather than directing it, but this observation is solely based on Marcuse's relations with the American Students for a Democratic Society.

## A Freudian Perspective on Needs

In his Marxist Freud exegesis *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse referred critically to consumer society by assuming that repression resulted not only from the conditions of production—as in classical Marxist analysis—but also from the conditions of consumption.<sup>8</sup> At this point, however, Marcuse did not yet assume “false” needs: “The high standard of living . . . is restrictive in a concrete sociological sense: the goods and services that the individuals buy control their needs and petrify their faculties. In exchange for the commodities that enrich their life, the individuals sell not only their labor but also their free time.” This process obscured the possibility of liberation: “People . . . have private automobiles with which they can no longer escape into a different world. . . . They have dozens of newspapers and magazines which espouse the same ideals.” Innumerable choices diverted attention from what Marcuse considered the real issue: the lost “awareness that they could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfactions.”<sup>9</sup> The ideology of consumption thus reproduced and justified domination, but crucially, Marcuse did not deny that the goods of affluent society afforded actual benefit and use value. However, a car or a TV offered an escapism that obscured the possibility of autonomy. A connection between consumption and violence emerged only when Marcuse pointed to a new quality in the discrepancy between the enhanced possibilities of liberation as a consequence of prosperity and continuing repression: “It is with a new ease that terror is assimilated with normality, and destructiveness with construction.”<sup>10</sup>

On the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of Sigmund Freud’s birth, Marcuse delivered a much-noted public lecture in which he distinguished between quantitative and qualitative progress. The former, he argued, was aimed at growing societal wealth and thus a primary cause of culture. It increased the means to meet human needs, but thereby also expanded humans’ needs. According to Marcuse, the question remained open whether such “technical progress” also contributed to the perfection of humanity and society, to more freedom and happiness. Conversely, the second mode of progress—qualitative or humanitarian progress—aimed at realising freedom and morality and at the reduction of slavery, arbitrary rule, repression, and suffering.<sup>11</sup> Initially, technical progress was a precondition for overcoming slavery and pov-

8. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 37.

9. *Ibid.*, 100.

10. *Ibid.*, 102.

11. Marcuse, “Idee des Fortschritts,” 425–26.

erty, but this did not mean it would always entail humanitarian progress. The former was thus a necessary but not sufficient condition for the latter. There was a possibility that questions concerning the distribution and control of societal wealth became uncoupled from technical progress—for example, in a totalitarian welfare state. In the history of ideas up to the French Revolution, thinkers such as Condorcet saw technical and humanitarian progress as working hand in hand. However, a crucial change occurred in the nineteenth century, when Comte, Mill, and other theorists conceived of progress as independent of qualitative norms and thus at least theoretically uncoupled the two levels. For Marcuse, this meant that the qualitative element of progress was henceforth relegated to the realm of utopia. In the allegedly value-free concept of progress that unfolded in industrial society, productivity—that is, increased production of material and intellectual goods—was elevated to the rank of highest value. When confronted with questions about its meaning or purpose, adherents of the productivity rationale usually pointed to the satisfaction of needs. And this is where Marcuse concentrated his critical and moral impulse by questioning the perpetuating satisfaction of needs that had been elevated to a principle: “If the concept of needs includes food, clothing, and shelter as well as bombs, entertainment machines, and the destruction of unsalable foodstuffs, then we will not run into any danger in maintaining that the concept is as insincere as it is unsuitable for the definition of legitimate productivity.”<sup>12</sup>

The decisive idea is that needs and productivity ought to be linked back to criteria of legitimacy. Implicitly, armaments, entertainment industries, and the destruction of vital goods became illegitimate consumption—although Marcuse did not yet use the term *consumption* at this point—as opposed to legitimate consumption that met basic needs. Drawing on Freud, Marcuse explained that the mainspring of the development that brought about culture—in the sense of both modes of progress—was drive displacement, including restricted consumption. Humans denying themselves full consumption of the fruits of their productivity was thus a necessary precondition for perpetuating productivity, which, however, entailed alienated labour on the basis of a promise of future benefits or happiness. On the basis of this Hegelian-Freudian overview of human development, Marcuse posed a crucial question: What if drive displacement and progress have fulfilled their historical function, making the conquest of human impotence and of material want a distinct possibility? Drawing on Friedrich Schiller’s letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Marcuse sought to replace progress and productivity for their own sake with an aesthetic

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12. Ibid., 427.

and moral vision of “the highest development of intellectual and mental capacities” that went “hand in hand with the existence of material means and goods for the satisfaction of human needs.” He envisioned minimising modern social alienation—not a one-sided rejection of consumption or material progress but an attempt to overcome the Janus-faced character of the two modes of progress. This vision of a free society for all on the basis of technological progress—that is, “more or less total automation”<sup>13</sup>—became not only a central issue of Marcuse’s future work but also a rich source of inspiration for the intellectual and political projects of the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The idea proved so attractive because it promised nondestructive consumption in accordance with genuine needs while minimising alienated and heteronomous labour.

### True and False Needs

While avant-gardist groups such as Subversive Aktion had already begun reading Marcuse’s works of the 1950s in the early 1960s, his ideas only spread to wider circles with *One-Dimensional Man* (1964; published in German translation in 1967). The book drew on Marcuse’s long-standing preoccupation with the topic during the 1950s.<sup>14</sup> At the heart of the New Left’s fascination with this work was the differentiation between true and false needs, the latter comprising most “of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate.”<sup>15</sup> This was aiming at the heteronomous character of socially generated needs—affluent humans were still alienated from their products—but it could also be read as a justification of unconventional lifestyles and protest when existing regimes of provision were identified with false needs. On the first page of *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse described a historical shift from openly employed authority towards subtle techniques of exercising control. Subjugation to the latter even became comfortable as a consequence of the experiences of joy that consumption of mass-produced goods entailed. Subsequently, a “comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom” imparted by the technological apparatus prevailed.<sup>16</sup> The goods and services that this apparatus

13. Ibid., 435, 438, 444.

14. Tim B. Müller, *Krieger und Gelehrte*, 418, 448, 563.

15. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 5 (German ed., *Der eindimensionale Mensch: Studien zur Ideologie der fortgeschrittenen Industriegesellschaft* [Frankfurt, 1967]).

16. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 1.



produced imposed the social system as a whole. Marcuse identified crucial regimes of provision that were to become focal points of protest by the new social movements: “mass transportation and communication, the commodities of lodging, food, and clothing, the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole.” Consumer goods thus seemed key to indoctrination and manipulation, promoting a “false consciousness.”<sup>17</sup> Advertising, public relations, and planned obsolescence had been turned from wasteful and “unproductive overhead costs”<sup>18</sup> into basic production costs that were passed on to the consumer in both material and ideological senses.

Marcuse was addressing the repressive function of the affluent society that failed to tackle the real issue: reducing alienated labour, “the need for stupefying work where it is no longer a real necessity.”<sup>19</sup> This issue reverberated greatly with the lifestyle choices of the student protesters. In this reading, advanced industrial society was for all intents and purposes providing its members with “a good way of life—much better than before,” but it came at the price of militating against qualitative change, since it created “one-dimensional thought and behaviour” unable to transcend established discourse,<sup>20</sup> since it was subordinated to the economic demands of consumer society. In Marcuse’s view, all benefits of technological progress—administrative control replacing physical control, reduction of heavy physical work, assimilation of occupational classes, equalisation in the sphere of consumption—did not make up for the continued lack of autonomy, since individuals still had no effective control over the crucial political and social decisions that governed their daily existence: “The slaves of developed industrial civilization are sublimated slaves, but they are slaves.”<sup>21</sup> Affluence became a crucial means of perpetuating this bondage in both capitalist and state-socialist societies: “The more the rulers are capable of delivering the goods of consumption, the more firmly will the underlying population be tied to the various ruling bureaucracies.” Marcuse also addressed the transfer of this ideology to the developing world, which was to become so crucial for the anti-imperialist plank of the protest movements. A development model of rapid industrialisation—equally administered by both

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17. *Ibid.*, 12.

18. *Ibid.*, 49.

19. *Ibid.*, 7.

20. *Ibid.*, 12.

21. *Ibid.*, 32.

Cold War camps—was imposed on developing countries that had to discard pretechnological forms in favour of “mechanized and standardized mass production and distribution.” He foresaw an era of neocolonialism.<sup>22</sup>

Like most of Marcuse’s major works, *One-Dimensional Man* had an extended section dedicated to the aesthetic correlate of social and economic change. Here again, he diagnosed a narrowing effect on people’s consciousness and implicitly suggested a politicisation and radicalisation of artistic expression. Art and intellectual culture were bound to lose their transcendent dimension once they became familiar goods and services by means of the massive reproduction that integrated them into modern everyday commercial life. Marcuse was not prepared to see this process as a “democratization of culture.”<sup>23</sup> He captured it with the concept of “repressive desublimation.” Art was integrated into both private life and the commercial sphere “from a ‘position of strength’ on the part of society, which can afford to grant more than before because its interests have become the innermost drives of its citizens, and because the joys which it grants promote social cohesion.” The loss of conscience that this omnipresence of formerly critical or subversive ideas entailed led to tolerance vis-à-vis injustice and evil; it made “for a *happy consciousness* which facilitates acceptance of the misdeeds of this society. It is the token of declining autonomy and comprehension.”<sup>24</sup> Especially the militant offshoots of the protest movement would seek to regain this autonomy and blame commercial mechanisms for its loss.

The final chapter of *One-Dimensional Man* analysed why possible liberation was not commonly embraced. Lifting his analysis of needs to a higher level of abstraction, Marcuse maintained that values ultimately had been translated into needs: first, the notion of freedom had acquired a material dimension by being tied to satisfaction; second, traditional values were eroded by the increasingly uninhibited “development of needs on the basis of satisfaction.” The central values of enlightenment, such as justice, freedom, and humanity, became contingent on “the satisfaction of man’s material needs, the rational organization of the realm of necessity.”<sup>25</sup> Marcuse identified the entertainment industries as a crucial factor in upholding this constellation. People tolerated the creation of nuclear weapons and radioactive fallout, but they could not do without media entertainment. Just before the conclusion, he imagined a society without television and advertisement: “The non-functioning of television and

22. Ibid., 43, 46–47.

23. Ibid., 61.

24. Ibid., 72, 76.

25. Ibid., 234–35.

the allied media might thus begin to achieve what the inherent contradictions of capitalism did not achieve—the disintegration of the system.”<sup>26</sup>

Advanced industrial societies seemed caught up in an ever-accelerating drive on a one-way road of expansion: further “development of the productive forces on an enlarged scale, extension of the conquest of nature, growing satisfaction of needs for a growing number of people, creation of new needs and faculties.” But these forms of productivity and progress gradually lost their liberating potential as they were “organized into a totalitarian system,” in the sense of an all-encompassing ideology backing a highly efficient and omnipresent system that dominated not only the realm of the actual but also the realm of the possible: “At its most advanced stage, domination functions as administration, and in the overdeveloped areas of mass consumption, the administered life becomes the good life of the whole, in the defense of which the opposites unite.”<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, reformist change within the system seemed impossible. Provided one accepted this analysis and intended to contribute to a revolutionary collapse of the capitalist system, symbolic or direct action against the sources of repressive needs was not entirely implausible. However, Marcuse did not suggest that the sources of such repressive needs were tangible in a way a department store is. In many respects, *One-Dimensional Man* was a pessimistic book that emphasised the pervasive and persistent powers of a questionable system seemingly immune to criticism and revolutionary change.

While the analysis of affluent society in *One-Dimensional Man* intellectually connected regimes of provision with abstract notions of repression and control, consumption and political violence were only implicitly correlated. However, Marcuse’s understanding of violence already pointed to the direction that would follow in his later writings in response to the protest movements. Violence appeared as a ubiquitous phenomenon of human existence that cultural and political development had to alleviate: “Suffering, violence, and destruction are categories of the natural as well as human reality, of a helpless and heartless universe.”<sup>28</sup> In the early 1960s, the interesting phenomenon seemed to be the continuation of domination despite the relative but deceptive lack of tangible violence. With the issue of violence taking centre stage in the course of the Vietnam War and various protest and liberation movements throughout the world, Marcuse clearly did not accept an interpretation of violence that held responsible those who allegedly threatened an otherwise orderly and peaceful society.

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26. Ibid., 246.

27. Ibid., 255.

28. Ibid., 237.

## Repressive Tolerance

Marcuse's critique of "repressive tolerance" continued ideas from *One-Dimensional Man* but went a step further by focusing on "an increasing concentration of power" that integrated "the particular countervailing powers by virtue of an increasing standard of living." He now identified possible countervailing powers, among them "the common consumer whose real interest conflicts with that of the producer." However, consumers, like labourers or intellectuals, had to submit "to a system against which they are powerless and appear unreasonable." This system ultimately rested on its increasing but incomplete satisfaction of needs. The practices upholding such a false regime of provision were not simply imposed from above but equally tolerated from below: "Their removal would be that total revolution which this society so effectively repels."<sup>29</sup>

After more or less dismissing art as an effective engine of change, since the forces of the market swallowed up "the protest of art against the established reality," Marcuse turned to a discussion of "the issue of violence and the traditional distinction between violent and non-violent action," which he crucially wished to overcome. The problem was that tolerance was extended only to practices that served "the cohesion of the whole on the road to affluence or more affluence." Marcuse used the term *radically evil* to characterise these practices and somewhat haphazardly named publicity, propaganda, aggressive driving, special forces, merchandizing, waste, and planned obsolescence as "the essence of a system which fosters tolerance as a means for perpetuating the struggle for existence and suppressing the alternatives." Remarkably, someone seems to have felt the urge to substantiate the claim to "radical evil" with a more convincing example and replaced "aggressive driving" with a phrase addressing the "violence in Vietnam" for the German edition.<sup>30</sup> Revolutionary violence sought to break "the historical continuum of injustice, cruelty, and silence for a brief moment, brief but explosive enough to achieve an increase in the scope of freedom and justice, and a better and more equitable distribution of misery and oppression in a new social system." Marcuse's goal was a just regime of provision. He sought to calculate the optimal way of distribution that would prioritise vital needs yet incur "a minimum of toil and injustice." The lofty ideal was a satisfaction of needs that did "not feed on poverty, oppression,

29. Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Wolff, Moore, and Marcuse, *Critique of Pure Tolerance*, 93, 102.

30. Ibid., 83; Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, and Herbert Marcuse, *Kritik der reinen Toleranz*, trans. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt, 1966), 95.

and exploitation.”<sup>31</sup> Crucially, Marcuse treated questions of distribution in immediate conjunction with questions of violence. Despite the systemic violence that he diagnosed, he denied that anyone could claim a fundamental right of resistance “against a constitutional government sustained by a majority.” However, according to natural justice, oppressed minorities were allowed “to use extralegal means if the legal ones have proved to be inadequate.” In such cases, extralegal resistance had the function of unmasking injustice: “They do not start a new chain of violence but try to break an established one.”<sup>32</sup> Dieter Kunzelmann, Andreas Baader, and others invoked this passage to justify their rebellion.

### Lecturing Rebellious Students

In May 1966, when the German translation of *One-Dimensional Man* was not yet published, Marcuse spoke at the first Vietnam Congress organised by the SDS at Frankfurt. In his opening passage, Marcuse acknowledged oppositional youth as an important factor and asserted that their rebellion resulted from disgust with surrounding lifestyle. The youth movement was, he declared, “the negation of . . . the system of the ‘affluent society.’” He contrasted societal wealth, technological progress, and domination of nature with the unnecessary perpetuation of the struggle for existence both on a national and a global level. A fatal unity of productivity and destruction, of prosperity and misery, appeared as the root of a diffuse aggressiveness that included the “commercial rape of nature.” His example tried to bridge the everyday experience of highly industrialised societies with the horrors of war in a distant country: “The same aggressive forces lead from death on the highways and streets to bombings, torture, and burnings in Vietnam.” Compared to the forty-nine thousand highway deaths and four million injuries from traffic accidents each year in the United States, casualty figures from Vietnam seemed less significant. People, especially members of the working class, were tied into a system of increased productivity and of rising standards of living that only a few minorities started to resist. Even among America’s underprivileged, being drafted and sent to Vietnam could appear like an improvement, the first step up the ladder of social mobility.<sup>33</sup>

31. Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” 105.

32. Ibid., 116–17.

33. Marcuse, “Vietnam” (English trans., <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter-6Doc3Intro.pdf> (accessed 12 June 2011)).

Marcuse wrote a new preface for the 1966 edition of *Eros and Civilization* in which he adopted a very political tone and referred to affluent society, the Vietnam War, and Auschwitz in conjunction. He asserted that the scientific management of instinctual needs turned merchandise into objects of the libido. Self-propelling productivity was seeking ever new outlets for consumption and destruction both domestically and globally, but at the same time it was restrained from “overflowing” into the regions where misery prevailed. When he came to the Vietnam War, he argued that “science, technology, and money” would first destroy and then do “the job of reconstruction in their own image.” In passing, he referred to “photographs that show a row of half naked corpses laid out for the victors in Vietnam: they resemble in all details the pictures of the starved, emasculated corpses of Auschwitz and Buchenwald.”<sup>34</sup> Writing to Max Horkheimer in June 1967, Marcuse pointed to U.S. atrocities “outside the metropole” and went so far as to call contemporary America “the historic heir to fascism.”<sup>35</sup>

A month after the shooting of student Benno Ohnesorg by a plainclothes police officer on 2 June 1967, Marcuse came to the Freie Universität Berlin, where he gave two lectures and participated in four panel discussions organised by the SDS and the students’ union executive committee. His performance turned him into a media star.<sup>36</sup> The notion of consumer society did not figure explicitly in Marcuse’s talk on “The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition.” However, he crucially legitimised the radical opposition triggered by the experiences of the American civil rights movement and the Vietnam War with reference to a *system* comprising wars, productivity, destruction, and waste that “degrades everything, in an increasingly inhuman way, to the status of a commodity whose purchase and sale provide the sustenance and content of life.” Marcuse not only referred to “the terror employed outside the metropolis” but also suggested that this system comprised both fascism and affluent society: “We find ourselves up against a system that from the beginning of the fascist period to the present has disavowed . . . the idea of historical progress.” He made it clear that German and American student activists were opposing the majority of the population and “a democratic, effectively functioning society that at least under normal circumstances does not operate with terror.” Marcuse’s position on violence was pragmatic: for the time being, the

34. Herbert Marcuse, preface to *Eros and Civilization*, 3rd ed. (Boston 1966), xi–xxvi, <http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/55erosciv/ec0066pref.htm> (accessed 13 June 2011).

35. Herbert Marcuse to Max Horkheimer, 17 June 1967, in *Frankfurter Schule*, ed. Kraushaar, 2:262.

36. Behrmann, “Kulturrevolution,” 335–36.

opposition was in no position to create a “new general interest” in its projects; violence was thus a question of tactics and could easily backfire.<sup>37</sup> In a London lecture in late July 1967, Marcuse briefly appealed to his audience to use any means of protest that fulfilled two conditions: it needed to be able to cope with the “institutionalized violence” of the authorities, and it needed to have “a reasonable chance of strengthening the forces of the opposition.” Specifically, he mentioned flexible forms of demonstration and boycott, a piece of advice that was heeded.<sup>38</sup>

While in Berlin, Marcuse also gave a talk that did not mention violence at all but held out an alluring concept stemming from Marx: the realm of freedom, which Marcuse wished to reanimate. In “The End of Utopia,” he declared, “I believe that one of the new possibilities, which gives an indication of the qualitative difference between the free and the unfree society, is that of letting the realm of freedom appear within the realm of necessity—in labor and not only beyond labor.”<sup>39</sup> In his expression of the aim of socialism at the end of the third volume of *Das Kapital* (chapter 48, section 3), Marx saw the realm of freedom *beyond* the realm of necessity.<sup>40</sup> According to Marcuse’s interpretation, Marx saw the latter as providing the precondition—including alienated labour—for the former, which he conceived as allowing for artistic and scholarly pursuits. A basic requirement for the blossoming of the realm of freedom was thus a reduction in working hours. Now that this condition had at least partially been met, Marcuse could hold out the perspective that the obligation to alienated wage labour might be largely overcome with the help of technology. He thus drew Marx’s utopian perspective on socialism much closer to present-day reality and suggested that the student movement might play a decisive role in bridging the remaining gap.

Marcuse thus sought to undo a historical development in which Marx and Engels had shifted the emphasis away from questions of consumption and towards gradualism and productionism, thus projecting a communist mode of provision into the future of socioeconomic development: “Only then can . . . society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each ac-

37. Marcuse, “Problem of Violence.” Marcuse did not edit the transcription that appeared in Marcuse, *Ende der Utopie*. See also “Moral und Politik in der Überflugesellschaft: Eine Podiumsdiskussion,” *ibid.*, 83–119.

38. Marcuse, “Liberation.”

39. Herbert Marcuse, “The End of Utopia,” trans. Jeremy Shapiro and Shierry M. Weber, <http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/60spubs/67endutopia/67EndUtopiaProbViol.htm> (accessed 21 June 2011); Marcuse, *Ende der Utopie*, 12.

40. Marx, *Kapital*, in Marx and Engels, *Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA), ed. International Marx Engels Foundation, section 2, 15: 794–95.. See Klagge, “Marx’s Realms.”

according to his needs!”<sup>41</sup> This passage from Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme* popularised the old socialist notion of consumption according to one’s needs that had been theoretically established by various French thinkers—Étienne-Gabriel Morelly, Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, Étienne Cabet, and Louis Blanc—well before Marx. However, Marx now put the focus onto the obstacles preventing the realisation of such a regime of provision. In this view, the state was by no means only a neutral entity to secure market regulations but rather a concentration of the means of violence to uphold the existing power structures, especially the bourgeoisie’s right to appropriate the products of other people’s work via the commodification of labour—in other words: a repressive regime of provision. In actual political practice, the conceptual linking of consumption to a revolutionary objective took a backseat. For the time being, Marx and his followers emphasised the idea that concentration of property went hand in hand with corresponding structures of authority.

The monopoly on violence in the hands of modern centralised territorial states has complex roots, one of which is the emergence of market societies. The state had to ensure the security of trade routes, commercial contracts, and markets. The freedom of commodity owners required a specialised apparatus combining means of law and violence.<sup>42</sup> Hegel derived the monopoly on violence from the market without taking into account other forms of legitimacy deriving from the individual: “The different interests of producers and consumers may come into conflict. . . . Police control and provision are intended to intervene between the individual and the universal possibility of obtaining his wants.”<sup>43</sup> Hegel also observed that disproportionate accumulation of wealth would drive a society on a course of expansion: “It must find consumers and the necessary means of life amongst other peoples, who either lack the means, of which it has a superfluity, or have less developed industries.”<sup>44</sup>

In the summer of 1967, when Marcuse gave a short interview to one of the most important periodicals of the German New Left, Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s *Kursbuch*, Hegel’s commercial expansionism had apparently taken a violent turn. On the question of whether modern affluent society had not made the idea of revolution completely obsolete, Marcuse quickly came to the topic

41. Marx, “Kritik des Gothaer Programms” (1875), in MEGA section I, 25: 15 (English trans., <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch01.htm> [accessed 14 September 2012]).

42. This is following Fisahn, “Legitimation des Gewaltmonopols,” 13–15.

43. G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin, 1820), section 236; G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. S. W. Dyde (Kitchener, 2001), 185–86, <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/hegel/right.pdf> (accessed 23 August 2012).

44. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, section 246.



of the Vietnam War, where he thought the limits of capitalism and “neocolonialism” were apparent. Especially in the German version, his vocabulary was clearly reminiscent of the Holocaust—for example, he invoked a Vietnamese “Final Solution” and referred to “Sieg durch totale Verbrennung und totale Vergiftung” (victory by burning and poisoning everything). He emphasised that liberation movements in the developing world could succeed only with support from the metropole. Marcuse offered a rather lucid analysis of the eventually successful Western strategy in the Cold War: the state-socialist societies were subject to “a life and death competition” in which the social needs of their citizens had to be subordinated to political and military exigencies.<sup>45</sup>

By December 1968, Marcuse had gone remarkably far in taking sides with the New Left. In a speech for the New York radical weekly *Guardian*, he rejected the idea of a unified leftist political party but recommended that groups of activists protest local grievances by creating unrest and riots. He explicitly stated that “militant minorities” would take the lead in this endeavour. He intended to steer a middle course between conventional party politics and an illegal underground. The fragmentation of the Left thus became a virtue, because a multitude of competing “small and highly flexible autonomous groups” could act simultaneously in many local contexts, creating “a kind of political guerrilla movement in times of peace or so-called peace.”<sup>46</sup>

### Horkheimer Adorno and Galtung

Marcuse was criticised by his colleagues from the Frankfurt School, who did not embrace the new revolutionary movement in the same way that he did. In their view, his notion of universal liberation and happiness being just around the corner but hindered by a repressive system was ultimately a simplification.<sup>47</sup> Not unlike Marx’s critique of the anarchists, they emphasised their own approach of a more complicated development. Nevertheless, Marcuse greatly admired the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and was clearly influenced by it.<sup>48</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno had put forward their critique of consumer society in

45. Marcuse, “Question of Revolution,” 3–7 (German orig. “Ist die Idee der Revolution”).

46. Herbert Marcuse, “On the New Left,” in *The Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Douglas Kellner, vol. 3, *The New Left and the 1960s* (London, 2005), 122–27.

47. Max Horkheimer, “Marcuses Vereinfachung” (29 August 1967), in *Frankfurter Schule*, ed. Kraushaar, 2:285. See Walter-Busch, *Geschichte der Frankfurter Schule*, 218–25.

48. Herbert Marcuse to Max Horkheimer, 31 August 1962, in *Frankfurter Schule*, ed. Kraushaar, 2:155–56.

the chapter, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception.” They assumed that society no longer systematically excluded the working class from consumption but achieved total integration via consumption, which became an element of social control and thus prevented subjective autonomy. Completed in Horkheimer and Adorno’s American exile in 1944, after several years of experience with American consumer society, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* did not have a wider impact until its 1969 reissue, although pirated copies circulated among students much earlier.<sup>49</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno introduced the dimension of violence into the analysis of their contemporary society via the assumption that fascism was a derivative of capitalism, an assumption that originated in the 1930s. Therefore, the democracies of the Western world could also be seen as containing the seeds of totalitarianism, which germinated in the realms of consumption, advertisement, and the production of “false needs.” An implicit comparison between consumer society and the regime of National Socialism was thus established.

In 1968, Adorno observed that his contemporary society had not moved beyond what Marx criticised as “the anarchy of commodity production.” Although the borders between material production, distribution, and consumption seemed to be melting away, the social destiny of the individual remained as contingent as ever.<sup>50</sup> The availability of consumer goods made class differences become less visible, but affluent society only concealed “the more visible forms of poverty” and strove “to maintain the illusion that utopia . . . had already been realised.”<sup>51</sup> The chair of the German Society for Sociology had his doubts but did not wish to negate affluence: on the contrary, the “increasing satisfaction of material needs” foreshadowed the concrete possibility of a life without misery. Marx and Engels only criticised the utopias of their time because they thought they would hinder the realisation of “a truly humane organisation of society.” Unforeseeable for them, needs had completely become “the function of the production apparatus . . . instead of the reverse.” Consequently, needs remained conditioned on profits. Certain needs were artificially “produced by the profit motive, and thus at the cost of the objective needs of the consumers, that is adequate housing . . . education and information over the processes that most affect them.”<sup>52</sup> This ignorance about what most affected

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49. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*, in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 3:141–91.

50. Theodor W. Adorno, “Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?: Einleitungsvortrag zum 16. Deutschen Soziologentag,” in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8:367, 369.

51. *Ibid.*, 355.

52. *Ibid.*, 361–62.

the consumers was achieved “by means of the culture and consciousness industries” via the concentration and centralisation of the mass media, through which “it has become possible to force into line [*gleichzuschalten*] the consciousness of countless individuals from just a few points.”<sup>53</sup>

But what was it that most affected the consumers? Adorno was a bit evasive on this question. He lamented a lack of “indispensable critical ideas” and an incapacity “to imagine the world differently than it overwhelmingly appears.”<sup>54</sup> However, at one point he stated rather clearly that the universal interest was not universal employment but liberation from heteronomous work. While acknowledging that differentiation between true and false needs ought not to be signed over to bureaucratic regimentation, Adorno still thought that such differentiation contained a worthwhile point concerning the relations of violence: “Delimited to a horizon in which at any moment the Bomb can fall, even the most luxuriant display of consumer goods contains an element of self-mockery.”<sup>55</sup> However, the concept of *Gewalt* had a much wider significance in Adorno’s political thought than just physical threat. In the chapter on the culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno claimed that its products conveyed an “omnipresent power” by virtue of their being a “model of the gigantic economic machinery, which . . . keeps everyone on their toes, . . . at work and in the leisure time.” Consumers are tied to the productive apparatus and its pressures and hierarchies even after their shifts are finished. While “power” is a correct translation for *Gewalt* in this context, it is important to bear in mind the double meaning of the German term, combining senses of *violentia* and *potestas*, which cannot easily be reduced to “force” wielded by state actors and “violence” used by nonstate actors. Horkheimer and Adorno thus arrived at the statement, “The power [*Gewalt*] of industrial society is imprinted on people once and for all.”<sup>56</sup> Later generations of experts on violence have tried to restrict the scholarly use of the term *Gewalt* to the narrower sense of certain forms of violence,<sup>57</sup> but the more philosophical perspective on the relationship between abstract powers and concrete manifestations of violence is also legitimate.

In this context, Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung developed the notion of “structural violence” to raise awareness of violence by supplementing the phenomenon of manifest violence with the harmful consequences of social

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53. Ibid., 367.

54. Ibid., 364.

55. Ibid., 365–66.

56. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 3:148; Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 100.

57. See Baumann and Schwind, *Ursachen, Prävention, und Kontrolle*.

structures—that is, clusters of social institutions that prevent people from meeting their basic needs. Positive influences emanating from such structures could be accompanied by a narrowing down of ranges of action and life chances. In this context, Galtung explicitly mentions the consumer society's rewards, drawing on Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*. The critical notion of "structural violence" could be applied both to those benefiting from the rewards of affluent societies and to those remaining more or less systematically excluded. The former addressed processes of manipulation and alienation, while the latter pointed to the inequitable and deadly consequences of social arrangements, especially in the context of North-South relations. Galtung made a second insightful observation when considering the object side of violence. He acknowledged two senses of psychological violence in the destruction of things: "as a foreboding or threat of possible destruction of persons, and . . . as destruction of something very dear to persons referred to as consumers or owners."<sup>58</sup> Both notions carry a sense of the perpetrator's self-liberation from bourgeois constraints. Student protesters seeking freedom unfettered by property ties embraced an act of communication that signalled a rejection of certain values tied up with the destroyed object.<sup>59</sup> Such destruction could be directed against previous acts of political communication that used certain objects or a general state of affluence to legitimise other political contents.

### Neitzke and Semler on Department Store Campaigns

Members of the SDS were quite capable of arriving at their own theoretical conclusions concerning affluent society without immediate guidance from eminent philosophers. In early 1969, Peter Neitzke and Christian Semler sought to diversify the theory of political action involving department stores. Unlike Dutschke and Marcuse, the two leading members of the West Berlin SDS did not locate the revolutionary subject in a "countermilieu" or in marginalised minorities but, more conventionally, in the wage-earning masses. However, they did acknowledge the sphere of distribution as a sensible albeit secondary field of agitation.

Their text, "Warenhausaktionen" (Department Store Campaigns) identified three types of political campaigns in the distribution sector: the burning of commodities, the appropriation of vital goods by the masses, and the

58. Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," 170.

59. *Ibid.*, 187.

smashing of shop windows. They flatly rejected the first in response to the Frankfurt department store arsons. Semler and Neitzke held that “the destruction of consumer goods” was an act of “existentialist self-liberation . . . without political perspective for the masses.”<sup>60</sup> The option of appropriation seemed more promising. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the German November Revolution—at a point when the SDS had already lost some of its ideological momentum and unity—Semler had suggested clearing out some department stores and handing out the spoils to passersby: “Today economic development has reached a point where goods can be distributed for nothing. . . . That’s propaganda of the deed.”<sup>61</sup> This was clearly nodding to anarchist traditions. Semler and Neitzke saw the department store as a scene of political propaganda that simulated the blessings of “socialist production” and thus anticipated a socialist future: “In itself, the department store presents the social formation for the free distribution of goods.”<sup>62</sup> However, this stage of development had not yet been reached and remained an illusion: “The concept of the department store still holds the illusion of a comprehensive promise of happiness: to be able to partake in the world of commodities.” The contradiction lay between the “realm of freedom”—Marx’s concept introduced to the Berlin students by Marcuse in 1967—simulated by advertisement and the crude realities that still severely limited the masses’ ability to fulfil their “real needs.” To bridge this seeming contradiction, capitalism “impels ceaseless and unlimited consumption.”<sup>63</sup> This created “forced consumers” who had to pay for capitalism’s “particularisation of markets” in three ways. First, the prices of goods included the costs of advertising. Anyone who did not want to fall behind the cultural level that society had reached was thus obliged to support the “production of needs.” Second, planned obsolescence produced desire for the latest products and forced the consumer to purchase. Finally, many goods on the market were fundamentally superfluous, lying beyond the historical growth of needs.<sup>64</sup>

The SDS theoreticians went to such lengths in analysing the department store as a political stage as a consequence of the events of 18 January 1969: following a rally commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the showcases of the KaDeWe were

60. Neitzke and Semler, “Warenhausaktionen,” 8–9.

61. “APO: Nach vorn geträumt,” *Der Spiegel* 46 (11 November 1968): 70.

62. Neitzke and Semler, “Warenhausaktionen,” 9.

63. *Ibid.*, 8.

64. *Ibid.*, 9.

systematically smashed, and management reported damages of five hundred thousand deutsche marks.<sup>65</sup> This became the prototype for countless attacks against the windows of retail institutions. Neitzke and Semler criticised such tactics: “Not accompanied by propagandistic measures, the lightning operation against the windows of KaDeWe constitutes . . . a dangerous compromise.” The smashing of windows appeared to be a cross between the other two forms of retail protest, remaining “silent about whether destruction or theft was intended.” In Neitzke and Semler’s view, “attacks against the centres of distribution” still lacked a theoretical foundation, an ideological message that could be conveyed to the masses. Clinging to their Marxist credentials, they wanted to see “the attack on the windows of a department store, which ranks highly among the love objects of West Berliners,” in the context of a larger economic and political nexus—that is, the predominance of the means of production in revolutionary theory. They were not impressed by their comrades’ praise for the smashing of windows in terms of “mobile warfare” against “rigid police tactics” and thus cautioned against the allure of easily demonstrating the impotence of the state monopoly on violence.<sup>66</sup> Far from shying away from the use of revolutionary violence, Neitzke and Semler represent the scepticism—and perhaps cluelessness—with which activists with a more conventional Marxist background tended to see the smashing of windows.

Their approach departed from a passage in the first volume of *Das Kapital* in which Marx deals with “natural needs” such as food, clothing, heating, and housing, highlighting the relativity of “necessary needs,” which depended on historical and moral factors. With a sideswipe at Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*, Neitzke and Semler maintained insightfully that the “static, undialectical opposition of ‘false’ and ‘real’ needs has always been historically wrong.”<sup>67</sup> The two activists sceptically concluded “that it cannot be in the interest of socialists to even create the impression that they wanted to mobilise the masses to stop consuming.” Any agitation or propaganda in the “sphere of consumption” had to educate about the character of goods in a capitalist system. Like the members of Kommune I, Neitzke and Semler were inspired by the blacks of the ghettos of Newark and Chicago, who, in the German activists’ reading, realised themselves as a revolutionary class through the looting and destruction of white-owned shops and department stores. However, Marxists did not content themselves with storming the centres of distribution but aimed for the

65. “Nach dem Protestmarsch klirrten die Scheiben,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 19 January 1969.

66. Neitzke and Semler, “Warenhausaktionen,” 9.

67. *Ibid.*, 8. They quote Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London, 1976), 1:275.

“sphere of production” with the perennial goal of inciting strikes in industrial factories.<sup>68</sup>

### The Radical Realm of Freedom

When Semler and Neitzke published their article on department store campaigns, Marcuse, too, had come back to Marx’s “realm of freedom” and had drawn conclusions from the experiences of the protest movement that fed back into his work, in many ways radicalising his political message. Most of the existing secondary literature has neglected the fact that Marcuse both specified and broadened his analysis of affluence, violence, and resistance in *An Essay on Liberation*, which emerged from his many lectures and speeches. A more comprehensive reconstruction of his line of argument is thus needed.

Marcuse was still operating on the familiar basis of a critical analysis of consumer capitalism, whose false and immoral comforts and “cruel affluence” had to be rejected in favour of a regime that “subordinates the development of productive forces and higher standards of living to the requirements of creating solidarity for the human species.”<sup>69</sup> Poverty and misery were to be abolished and peace attained.<sup>70</sup> Solidarity and cooperation—the liberating solidarity of many individuals who freely chose a collective—were central to this endeavour.<sup>71</sup> Marcuse was encouraged by what he took to be a dissolution of social morality manifest in a collapse of work discipline, a refusal to comply with rules and regulations, wildcat strikes, boycotts, sabotage, and other gratuitous acts of noncompliance.<sup>72</sup> The American ghetto riots seemed an indicator of systemic crisis, and he observed that even the United States could not indefinitely deliver its goods, “guns and butter, napalm and color TV.”<sup>73</sup> The system could not endlessly rely on a growing “parasitic sector of the economy” based on “waste, destruction, and management.”<sup>74</sup> Marcuse’s project was still based on the “utopian possibilities . . . inherent in the technical and technological forces.” With little attention to the detail of such a transformation, Marcuse

68. Neitzke and Semler, “Warenhausaktionen,” 9.

69. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 6 (German ed., *Versuch über die Befreiung*, trans. Helmut Reinicke and Alfred Schmidt [Frankfurt, 1969]).

70. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, ix–x.

71. *Ibid.*, 88.

72. *Ibid.*, 83.

73. *Ibid.*, viii.

74. *Ibid.*, 7, 82.

promised that “the rational utilization of these forces on a global scale would terminate poverty and scarcity within a very foreseeable future.”<sup>75</sup>

Friedrich Engels had held out similar visions in his 1872 treatment of *The Housing Question*. Arguing against what he considered backward-looking Proudhonism, he thought that the Industrial Revolution had raised productivity to a level that for the first time in human history opened the possibility of distributing labour in a sensible way so that everyone could partake in abundant consumption and sufficient leisure to pursue science, art, and human relations and ultimately do away with class rule.<sup>76</sup> In 1844, Engels had identified the overproduction crisis as a characteristic of capitalism, which made “the people starve from sheer abundance.” The remedy was a just regime of production and thus of provision, a planned economy that would curtail luxury only as far as was necessary. According to Engels, the Malthusian theory of population—that is, the idea that population growth was bound to outstrip food supply—fooled his contemporary bourgeois economists about the very real possibility of huge increases in productivity that would satisfy people’s needs. The capitalist system based on competition, its false “antithesis between production and consumption,” and the cynical ideology of the Malthusian trap had “turned man into a commodity” and “slaughtered . . . millions of men.”<sup>77</sup> What Engels did not foresee was the extraordinary increase in the number and varieties of consumer goods that capitalist societies would produce without entertaining the distributive regime he desired. In many respects, Marcuse was asking why wealthy societies—even state-socialist ones—had never fully realised Engels’s vision.

To answer this question, Marcuse developed a modernised version of Marx’s theory of alienated labour. In 1932, Marcuse had become one of the first to write a comprehensive interpretation of Marx’s *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844); in it, Marcuse reviewed Marx’s criticism of bourgeois political economy as “a nonhuman science of an inhuman world of things and commodities.”<sup>78</sup> The young Marx had sharply diagnosed a simple relation: “The *devaluation* of the world of men is in direct proportion to the *increasing value* of the world of things.” The more the worker produced, the more power-

75. Ibid., 4.

76. Friedrich Engels, “Zur Wohnungsfrage” (1872), in MEGA, section 1, 24:16.

77. Friedrich Engels, “Umriss zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie” (1844), in MEGA section 1, 3: 486–90 (English trans., <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/df-jahrbucher/outlines.htm> [accessed 20 June 2011]).

78. Marcuse, “Neue Quellen zur Grundlegung.” See Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse*, 80.



ful became “the alien world of objects.” Compared to this growing material world, the worker and his “inner world” became poorer: “the less belongs to him as his own . . . , the less he has to consume.” By putting his life into the object, the worker surrendered his life to the object. The capitalist system deprived him of the objects he produced, which meant that the worker could not realise himself and fell under the sway of his products, in the extreme case “to the point of starving to death.” Under these conditions, proper consumption was available only to the propertied minority, but this did not prevent Marx from acknowledging the real value of material goods, which were to a certain degree a source of freedom, but the fulfilment of human nature lay in nonalienated labour. And material goods tended to remove the worker from the possibility of nonalienated labour because their acquisition forced him into alienated labour, which meant that freedom now occurred “in his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up.” In labour, the real human function, in contrast, “he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal.” Wages were an immediate consequence of alienated labour, and they did not hold the key to the more fundamental problem, increased wages remained “*payment for the slave*, and would not win either for the worker or for labor their human status and dignity.”<sup>79</sup>

In 1848, Marx and Engels observed that certain conditions were required for labour to “continue its slavish existence.” However, from their contemporary bourgeoisie’s apparent inability to guarantee even minimum living standards, they inferred crisis.<sup>80</sup> At least for highly developed societies, this proved wrong, and Marx, Engels, and their followers came to project the introduction of a socialist regime of production and provision into an ever more distant and theoretical postrevolutionary future. The situation Marcuse was facing was that either Marx and Engels’s analysis had been falsified by highly industrialised societies producing goods that finally did provide human status and dignity to the workers, or it had to be shown that Marx was still right, that increases in wages were inherently related to violence, and that the wage earners of late capitalism had still much more to win than material abundance.

The material level of the new society that Marcuse envisioned “could be

79. Karl Marx, “Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte (Zweite Wiedergabe)” (1844), in MEGA section 1, 2: 363–75 (English trans., <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm> [accessed 20 June 2011]).

80. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei* (1848), MEW, 4:473 (English trans., <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007> [accessed 21 June 2011]).

considerably lower than that of advanced capitalist productivity.”<sup>81</sup> The root of the problem was the creation of false needs, which also occurred when one simply followed the old socialist maxim of “each according to his needs.” The historical development of socialism had fatefully led to a deflection from its original goals. This phenomenon resulted from the competitive coexistence with the West since the Russian Revolution and the ill-advised acceptance of the American standard of living as a model.<sup>82</sup> This false policy was perhaps best summed up by Nikita Khrushchev’s famous 1959 formula, “Catch up and overtake.” Marcuse objected not to “the rapid improvement of the material conditions” but to “the model guiding their improvement.”<sup>83</sup>

That the allure of goods had structurally replaced more open forms of violent conquest was again deeply rooted in Marxist thought. Marx and Engels pointed out in the *Communist Manifesto* that cheap commodities were the “heavy artillery” of the bourgeoisie that battered down all Chinese walls: “It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst.”<sup>84</sup> This proved a clear-sighted analysis given the adoption of Western consumer standards by state-socialist societies. Ultimately, the commodity artillery would batter down not the Chinese wall but the Berlin Wall, which sought to separate two regimes of provision while permitting some commodities to diffuse through.

In Marcuse’s ideal world, individuals were to be protected from the destructive implications of their needs—that is, aggressive competition up to the point of the nuclear arms race—so that they could satisfy those needs without hurting themselves. People had to be freed from the second nature that the “so-called consumer economy” had created by tying them “libidinally and aggressively to the commodity form.” This dependence even held the danger of humankind’s destruction. The task was to “abolish [man’s] existence as a consumer consuming himself in buying and selling.”<sup>85</sup>

This did not mean that automobiles, television sets, or household gadgets were repressive as such. The unfortunate constellation was that people had become dependent on these goods for their own actualisation. People had to buy their own existence on the market, only to realise capital’s profits. The system of “voluntary servitude” was unprecedented in its “capacity to produce

81. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 89.

82. *Ibid.*, vii.

83. *Ibid.*, 87.

84. Marx and Engels, *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*, MEW, 4:466.

85. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 4, 11.

long-range contentment and satisfaction.” This led to the paradoxical situation that capitalist production relations were simultaneously responsible for servitude and toil and for greater happiness and fun, but the latter obscured the fact that capitalism was still based on “the private appropriation of surplus value . . . and its realization in the corporate interest.”<sup>86</sup> The bridging of the consumer gap was only illusory. Labour being increasingly based on mental, rather than physical energy did not change its debilitating qualities. Marcuse characterised the simultaneity of happiness and suffering with Hobbes’s famous description of the state of nature: “a civilized *bellum omnium contra omnes*.” Within this battle, Marcuse branded the “needs of the middle classes,” shared by the majority of organized labour, as counterrevolutionary. At the same time, capitalist culture had not yet reached every house or hut: the system had its limits and produced a glaring contrast between the privileged and the exploited and thus the radicalization of the latter.<sup>87</sup>

Ultimately, Marcuse adopted a pose that could easily be seen as patronizing by those whom he wanted to liberate from an atmosphere of aggressive and competitive toil that “compels the vast majority of the population to ‘earn’ their living in stupid, inhuman, and unnecessary jobs.”<sup>88</sup> Nonnecessary consumption was transgressing on the “realm of freedom.”<sup>89</sup> Two possibilities existed: “the extension of the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom”—the American model of progress—or “the possible extension of the realm of freedom, to the realm of necessity,” as suggested by the members of the protest movement, who sought to determine their own necessities, values, and aspirations. The simultaneity of the two possibilities expressed “the basic contradictions of capitalism at the stage of competitive technical progress.” The American model meant that an ever-increasing number of commodities and luxuries had to be bought to attain “at least a modicum of freedom within the framework of capitalist society.” Marcuse crucially included the defence industry in these luxuries. While large sectors of poverty and misery persisted, those who enjoyed the so-called luxuries had to pay the price of an intensified dependence on the ruling powers.<sup>90</sup>

If only social energies were withdrawn from weapons production, material accumulation, and the expansion of state authority, technology could sup-

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86. Ibid., 12–13.

87. Ibid., 13–16.

88. Ibid., 62.

89. Ibid., 20, 50.

90. Marcuse, “Realm of Freedom.”

port human leisure, not competitive toil.<sup>91</sup> Marcuse envisioned an unprecedented type of revolution occurring at a high level of material development that would enable “man to conquer scarcity and poverty.”<sup>92</sup> In a way, Marcuse sought to halt historical development as it had worked for centuries. Man was to survey what he had achieved at the cost of “hecatombs of victims” and conclude “that it is enough, and that it is time to enjoy what he has and what can be reproduced and refined with a minimum of alienated labor.” This step would not abandon “technical devices which alleviate and protect life” and free “human energy and time.” People were to be emancipated from the dictates of the commodity market: “Freedom from the rule of merchandise over man is a precondition of freedom.”<sup>93</sup>

The fact that in principle, societal wealth did allow for universal liberation and happiness was in Marcuse’s view systematically veiled by the reduced consciousness of late capitalism. The constellation amounted to a veritable perception disorder. Competitive performances; standardised fun; symbols of status, prestige, and power; and advertised virility and commercialised beauty killed the possibility of perceiving the alternative: “freedom without exploitation.”<sup>94</sup> This position was drawing on György Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), which translated Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism into a concept of reification leading to a false consciousness, a “veil” that prevented the true realisation of class consciousness.<sup>95</sup> In accordance with Lukács’s veil of “fetishistic illusions enveloping all phenomena in capitalist society”<sup>96</sup>—which also informed Guy Debord’s idea of the spectacle—Marcuse was ever more pessimistic about the classical revolutionary agent, the working classes, who seemed to be satiated with consumer goods. What was needed was the “development of consciousness which would remove the ideological and technological veil that hides the terrible features of the affluent society.”<sup>97</sup> The realisation of liberation would at least initially be the task of a minority.<sup>98</sup> Because the opposition was directed against a well-functioning and prosperous society, it became unpopular and isolated from the masses. He hoped that revolutionary forces would emerge from radical politics by “active minorities.” This assigned the part of the revolutionary subject to “potential

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91. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 89–90.

92. *Ibid.*, 19.

93. *Ibid.*, 90–91.

94. *Ibid.*, 17.

95. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 86.

96. *Ibid.*, 14.

97. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 61.

98. *Ibid.*, 88–89.

catalysts of rebellion,” to the political campaigning of those students and minorities who were not yet integrated into the general economic process and thus had only limited means of engaging in consumption-based upward social mobility.<sup>99</sup>

On the topic of violence, *An Essay on Liberation* made some trenchant epistemological observations. In established discourse, the term *violence* was not applied to the actions of the police and the military. The “bad” word was reserved for those who disturbed the established order, usually regardless of their motivations and goals.<sup>100</sup> Once one applied the concept of violence to the acts of military and police, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence became questionable. If “legitimate violence” included “wholesale burning, poisoning, bombing,” Marcuse argued that the actions of the radical opposition could hardly be characterised with the same concept. The “unlawful acts committed by the rebels in the ghettos, on the campuses, on the city streets” seemed to fall into a wholly different category from “the deeds perpetrated by the forces of order in Vietnam, in Bolivia, in Indonesia, in Guatemala.” Disrupting the business of a supermarket or the flow of traffic seemed a legitimate protest “against the far more efficient disruption of the business of life of untold numbers of human beings by the armed forces of law and order.” Such protest touched on a vital nerve of the existing order, which legitimised itself via its “functioning”—the absence of war, unrest, and economic crisis—and the protection of property, trade, and commerce while seeking to suppress the protesters’ attempts to point out the omnipresence of violence.<sup>101</sup> Marcuse fully acknowledged that human associations needed enforceable law and order. To a degree, it was normal that society tried to protect itself against “the victims of its well-being,” but doing so had to be measured in terms of the legitimate.<sup>102</sup> And here Marcuse held the revolutionary conviction that the established order had already invalidated its own law via the abuse of its power in seeking to uphold a violent and repressive society.<sup>103</sup>

The explicit analytical combination of violence and affluence made Marcuse’s denunciation of consumer society more forceful: “This society is obscene in producing and indecently exposing a stifling abundance of wares

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99. Ibid., 51, 79.

100. Ibid., 72.

101. Ibid., 51, 67, 77.

102. Ibid., 77–78. Marcuse’s attempts to differentiate among forms of violence and to tie them to legitimacy are lost on Wheatland, who thinks that Marcuse sought “to legitimate *all* acts of opposition” via demonising the system (*Frankfurt School*, 329).

103. Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, 62.

while depriving its victims abroad of the necessities of life; obscene in stuffing itself and its garbage cans while poisoning and burning the scarce foodstuffs in the fields of its aggression.”<sup>104</sup> The Marxist concept of imperialism now featured more prominently. Rejecting one-sided *tiers-mondism*, Marcuse stated unequivocally that revolutionary change in advanced capitalist countries had to take the lead in a process that would create the preconditions for the liberation and development of the Third World.<sup>105</sup> Marcuse nodded to Frantz Fanon in invoking “the wretched of the earth” fighting the “affluent monster.”<sup>106</sup> And Marcuse left no doubt as to which side he supported, declaring that “working according to the rules and methods of democratic legality appears as surrender to the prevailing power structure.” The opposition was directed against the social system as a whole and could thus not remain legal and lawful.<sup>107</sup> In some respects, this offered a blank cheque to those who wished to legitimise their illegal revolutionary acts, since practically all manifestations of the social and political system—violent or not—could be read as evidence of its repressive nature.

In December 1970, Austrian American psychoanalyst Friedrich Hacker asked Marcuse explicitly whether he believed that in their contemporary world perceptions of injustice and expectations of change would suffice to create a revolutionary situation with good prospects. Marcuse replied that it was difficult to tell since “the general affluence also represented true satisfaction and not only substitution.” He still emphasised that the ruling powers took caution to keep the ruled in a state of inanity and pseudo-information via the mass media, but the capitalists’ profit rate ultimately would fall. He unequivocally rejected acts that sought to trigger a revolution in a situation that was not ripe. Doing so would unnecessarily create martyrs. Conversely, he criticised double standards that tended to forget the people whom the powerful had sacrificed in the interests of preserving their rule while becoming overly sensitive about the violence of a revolutionary regime that was seriously fighting to eradicate misery and exploitation. That said, he rejected “futile acts of violence,” even those motivated by the highest idealism, because they only played into the hands of the ruling powers. He pointed to the crucial historical difference between terror wielded by those who already occupied power (the Jacobins, Hitler, Stalin) and the individual terror of the “noblest anarchists,” which evaporated.<sup>108</sup>

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104. *Ibid.*, 7–8.

105. *Ibid.*, 81.

106. *Ibid.*, 7.

107. *Ibid.*, 64–66.

108. Marcuse, “Das dritte Gespräch.”

## Counterrevolution and Revolt

Marcuse further radicalised his position in *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972), which resulted from his numerous speeches and lectures. He now envisioned nothing less than the revolutionary overthrow of the United States and its allies. The opening passage stated that the counterrevolution “in its extreme manifestations . . . practices the horrors of the Nazi regime.”<sup>109</sup> Brutal force was “about to exterminate . . . desperate resistance movements.” Marcuse castigated American society as “an institution of violence, terminating in Asia the genocide which began with the liquidation of the American Indians.”<sup>110</sup> In another passage, he likened the equipment of the American police to that of the SS. In response to the May 1970 Kent State shootings, he wrote bluntly, “Fascism will not save capitalism: it is itself the terroristic organization of the capitalist contradictions.” Despite this rather drastic rhetoric, which ever more explicitly amalgamated Nazi Germany with the contemporary state apparatus, Marcuse clearly stated that Nixon’s United States was not a fascist regime. However, its economic and technological resources gave it an even greater potential for totalitarian organisation than Hitler’s Germany.<sup>111</sup>

The better part of the book, which Marcuse had discussed with his friend André Gorz, was still dedicated to the familiar but subversive question, “Can one not make a living without that stupid, exhausting, endless, labor—living with less waste, fewer gadgets and plastic but with more time and more freedom?”<sup>112</sup> Human labour must cease to produce commodities in accordance with the “law of value” and instead embrace the “law of freedom” and produce for human needs. Without the competition with capitalist progress, socialism could eliminate alienated labour “while renouncing the wasteful and enslaving conveniences of the capitalist consumer society.” Marcuse promised a lot, an “environment which would no longer perpetuate violence, ugliness, ignorance, and brutality.” The philosopher rejoiced that consumer society might become capitalism’s gravedigger. He even predicted that “the first truly *world-historical* revolution”<sup>113</sup> would still happen in the twentieth century.<sup>114</sup> As symptoms of the impending collapse, he cited declining real wages, inflation, unemploy-

109. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 1 (German ed., *Konterrevolution und Revolte*, trans. R. Wiggershaus and R. Wiggershaus [Frankfurt, 1973]). See Wheatland, *Frankfurt School*, 332–33.

110. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 132–33.

111. *Ibid.*, 24–25, 28.

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*, 2–3.

114. *Ibid.*, 7–8.

ment, and the international monetary crisis after the termination of the Bretton Woods system.<sup>115</sup>

Marcuse now clearly assigned the part of creating a new civilisation to a new consciousness—encompassing moral, psychological, aesthetic, and intellectual faculties—that would no longer be a matter of privilege but would constitute a radically different “*counter-consciousness*” capable of changing prevalent values and aspirations. “Consumer society” was ultimately a misnomer because it meant a society systematically organised in the interests of those who controlled *production*. The impulses of the coming revolution would be precisely the needs that arose when basic needs were satisfied. They would transcend both “state capitalist and state socialist society.”<sup>116</sup> Marcuse had clearly left the notion of a one-dimensional society behind and now addressed two types of needs: consumer needs and transcending needs.<sup>117</sup> Society’s failure to realise the former would give rise to the latter.

Marcuse now treated the question of the revolutionary subject more explicitly and extensively. He conceived of an “integral idea of socialism” that was to function as a guide for the radical left, which had to overcome the fact that relatively high living standards and the existing power structure made people apathetic if not hostile to socialism. Those who did not belong to suppressed minorities did indeed benefit from society’s richness and usually disliked rebellion because it called into question the necessity and value of their performance and prosperity.<sup>118</sup> The rebels seemed to “permit themselves what the people have to forego and repress.”<sup>119</sup> Large parts of the working class had become part of bourgeois society, and the revival of radical socialism was left to small minority groups of middle-class origin.<sup>120</sup> He explicitly acknowledged communes as cells and laboratories “for testing autonomous, nonalienated relationships,” but more generally, he also mentioned those who did not vote and did not pay taxes, those in prisons and jails.<sup>121</sup> Ultimately, the revolutionary subject remained rather diffuse—those men and women who were capable of tearing aside the Lukácsian veil to develop “their own needs, to build, in solidarity, their own world.”<sup>122</sup> Beyond this revolutionary nucleus, there was allegedly already an apolitical and spontaneous awareness that the “fetishism of the

115. Ibid., 23.

116. Ibid., 18, 23, 30–32.

117. Ibid., 16–19. See Kellner, “Critical Theory,” 71.

118. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 3–4, 14.

119. Ibid., 130.

120. Ibid., 5.

121. Ibid., 46, 50.

122. Ibid., 131.



commodity world is wearing thin.” Ultimately, this constellation would extend the potential mass base for a revolution. The experience of exploitation accompanied by a high standard of living—“the reality behind the façade of *consumer society*”—now appeared as the unifying force integrating a potentially vast revolutionary subject.<sup>123</sup> It was no longer the hermetic and static society of *One-Dimensional Man* but the drawbacks of consumer society that now seemed to promise a united front.

Marcuse was quite prepared to fend off criticism that the integration of the working class only referred to the sphere of consumption and thus did not change their proletarian status. He very consciously focused on consumption because it was part of humans’ social existence and thus determined consciousness and influenced behaviour: “To exclude the sphere of consumption . . . from the structural analysis offends the principle of dialectical materialism.”<sup>124</sup> Marcuse explained again why the revolution he envisioned had not yet taken place. The integration of libertarian subcultures into expanding commodity markets was a factor.<sup>125</sup> More important, power itself had undergone a metamorphosis: “The ideology retreats from the superstructure . . . and becomes incorporated in the goods and services of the consumer society.”<sup>126</sup> Weber’s “inner-worldly asceticism” had been replaced by “Keynesianism with a vengeance.”<sup>127</sup> Competitive consumption made the rule of capital extend into all dimensions of work and leisure. Resonant of Bourdieu and Passeron’s concept of symbolic violence and its influence on people’s habitus, Marcuse underlined the idea that the “steered satisfaction of material needs” reproduced the system’s values and ideology,<sup>128</sup> coupled with “a political, military, and police apparatus of terrifying efficiency.”<sup>129</sup> Both internal expansion of the market and external imperialism were responsible for “the victims of the *prosperitas Americana*.”<sup>130</sup> Marcuse quoted an early version of the pamphlet *Consumption: Domestic Imperialism* by radical activist David Gilbert, who had joined the Weather Underground in 1969.<sup>131</sup> Explicitly referring to a present

123. Ibid., 15–16, 21.

124. Ibid., 6.

125. Ibid., 12.

126. Ibid., 84–85.

127. Ibid., 22.

128. Ibid., 14. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *La Reproduction: Éléments pour une théorie du système d’enseignement* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1970).

129. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 7.

130. Ibid., 19–20.

131. Ibid., 14; Gilbert, *Consumption*.

“revolt against the ‘consumer society,’”<sup>132</sup> Marcuse’s tone became ever more radical: the revolution was necessary because the system could survive only via the “global destruction of resources, of nature, of human life.”<sup>133</sup> He now emphasised that the rebellion had politicised two areas of human life that had hitherto been deemed largely apolitical: the realm of nonmaterial needs and the realm of nature.<sup>134</sup>

Commenting on Delacroix’s famous painting *La Liberté guidant le peuple* and highlighting the role of women in the coming revolution, Marcuse declared, “She has a rifle in her hand—for the end of violence is still to be fought for.”<sup>135</sup> He reinforced his opinion that “this society strives to impose the principle of nonviolence on the opposition while daily perfecting its own ‘legitimate’ violence.” As a result, counterviolence was “bound to cost dearly, in lives and liberties.” However, he also warned in no uncertain terms that action directed at vague, general, or intangible targets was senseless<sup>136</sup> and even played into the hands of the establishment: radical mass action had to be “self-limiting.”<sup>137</sup> When these lines of caution were written, the German Red Army Faction (RAF)—for whom Marcuse and especially *Counterrevolution and Revolt* became rather important—had already embarked on a militant offensive that most contemporary observers perceived as unlimited violence. However, the concept of self-limiting counterviolence remained a cornerstone of the political thought and internal debates of the radical left.

In 1975, Marcuse gave his opinion on the RAF’s attempt to free some of its members from prison by occupying the West German embassy in Stockholm, an endeavour that ended in disaster with the murder of two embassy personnel and the death of two hostage takers after the accidental detonation of their explosives. When a German television journalist accused Marcuse of being an “advocate of violence,” he countered that his considerations on the right to resist had merely sought to remind people of “one of the oldest chestnuts of Western civilisation.” As a Marxist, he disapproved of individual terror as a means of revolutionary struggle. The RAF’s Stockholm episode showed “that

132. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 20, 72.

133. *Ibid.*, 7.

134. *Ibid.*, 129.

135. *Ibid.*, 78.

136. *Ibid.*, 52–53.

137. *Ibid.*, 133. Kellner argues that Marcuse abandoned the defence of revolutionary violence in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, which allegedly articulated the political realism of a movement facing a long and difficult struggle. It seems that he was more cautious about forms of violence that would prove counterproductive, but this did not mean he denied the violent character of the revolutionary struggle he thought was imminent. See Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse*, 291, 299.

an action . . . that was subjectively meant as a political action in the interest of the revolution objectively had a counterrevolutionary function.”<sup>138</sup> Following the assassination of West German attorney general Siegfried Buback and the kidnapping of industrial leader Hanns Martin Schleyer, Marcuse again faced critical questions about his position on violent resistance. In an interview with *Die Zeit*, he denied that murder was a legitimate means of politics. As a result of the glaring disparity between the highly concentrated violence of the state apparatus and the weakness of terrorist groups isolated from the masses, any creation of insecurity or fear among the ruling class would not translate into a revolutionary factor. He characterised the situation in the Federal Republic as a “preventive counterrevolution” and argued that under these conditions, the provocation of violence would prove to be destructive for the Left. However, he did not stop at these pragmatic observations but underlined that any Marxist revolutionary morals had to be mirrored by the means that were embraced in their name: open class struggle but not insidious aggression. Marcuse sought the explanation for the terroristic tactics of clandestine groups like the RAF in the frustration these radicals experienced in the face of their isolation from the masses.<sup>139</sup>

Shortly before his death in July 1979, Marcuse again emphasised the significance of a counterculture in denying the existing order its legitimacy. The breakup of repressive consumer society would not work via any imposed limitations on consumption: “Emancipation from consumer society must become a vital need of the individuals.” People were to radically transform their consciousness and instinctual drives, a process that would result in an “internal weakening of consumer society.”<sup>140</sup>

This detailed analysis of Marcuse’s thought has demonstrated that he was a central figure in the transatlantic emergence and development of far-reaching critiques of consumer society in several respects. In his critical analysis, Marcuse was much more explicit than his colleagues from the Frankfurt School in addressing concrete and everyday manifestations of “repressive affluence.” Based on his reading of *Grundrisse*, he accentuated the more “utopian” ideas

138. “Zu den Ereignissen in Stockholm: Interview des ARD-Magazins Monitor vom 28.4.1975,” *diskus* 25 (2 June 1975): 19, in *Frankfurter Schule*, ed. Kraushaar, 2:793.

139. Herbert Marcuse, “Mord darf keine Waffe der Politik sein,” *Die Zeit* 39 (23 September 1977), <http://www.zeit.de/1977/39/mord-darf-keine-waffe-der-politik-sein> (accessed 30 May 2011).

140. Herbert Marcuse, “Die Revolte der Lebenstrieb: Vortrag auf den 6. Frankfurter Römerberggesprächen über die ‘Angst des Prometheus’ vom 18. Mai 1979,” *Psychologie heute* 6.9 (1979): 40–41, in *Frankfurter Schule*, ed. Kraushaar, 2:835.

both in the early works of Marx and Engels and in *Das Kapital*. Marcuse thus deemphasised a dichotomy between an early “utopian” and a late “scientific” Marx, reinvigorating the Marxist tradition of analysing economic relations with respect to concomitant relations of violence. He wrapped this impulse in the catchy notion of a “realm of freedom,” which he at least implicitly held out as the ultimate alternative to contemporary society. His vision of a possible reduction of the social obligation to perform alienated work—if only society relinquished its desire for unnecessary commodities—was highly appealing to the rebellious youth of his time. Crucially, Marcuse developed his later work in a reciprocal exchange with the emerging protest movements, which in many respects contributed to a radicalisation of his thought.

Much of Marcuse’s political thought remains topical several decades after his death, when well-being for all is still far from being realised on a global level and one wonders why a basic income guarantee is not more seriously considered as an alternative in affluent societies. The quintessence of Marcuse’s critique of affluent society underlying his work as it unfolded might be reduced to four basic assumptions. (1) Affluent society has an inhuman, even fascist, downside. His concept of fascism was more rhetorical than analytical, allowing him increasingly to subsume various scenarios of historical and contemporary abuses of power. (2) Despite the fact that technological and material progress makes life more comfortable, it stands in the way of freedom, even if organised in a representative democracy. (3) The omnipresence of formerly critical ideas and of formerly keenly desired goods without revolutionary consequences to the distributive system amounts to a loss of consciousness. This in turn leads to an increased tolerance vis-à-vis injustice and violence occurring within and without highly developed societies. (4) A blatant mismatch exists between the highly concentrated violence of the state apparatus and the weakness of the counterviolence that the new social movements employ in an attempt to challenge the former.

Contrary to his colleagues from the Frankfurt School, Marcuse came to embrace a genuinely revolutionary perspective, actively supporting the protest movement, interpreting various moments of crisis as harbingers of system collapse, and holding out the vision of revolutionary upheaval in the very foreseeable future. Given his basic assumptions, it becomes clear why he accorded the protest movement an important role in his revolutionary worldview. Though he came up short of assigning it the role of a revolutionary subject, Marcuse saw in the diverse protest activities pioneers of and pointers to a new consciousness that would help to break up the system of repressive affluence and eventually inspire much broader sections of society. The protest impetus against the Viet-

nam War and other contexts of neoimperialism appeared to him as concrete manifestations of the downsides of affluent society. Moreover, in forging new lifestyles and forms of living together, the protest movement also developed a tangible alternative to the compulsions of material progress, which had not yet been apparent in the rather hermetic scenario of *One-Dimensional Man*. Finally, he conceived of his own role as a mentor to the movement, striving politically to channel its impulsive energies and seeking to avoid relapsing into commercial affirmation or succumbing to the revolutionary impatience of armed resistance.

SDS activists such as Semler and Neitzke were quite capable of arriving at their own conclusions concerning the cues that Marcuse's work delivered. Marcuse's work offered sufficient points of contact with other thinkers who analysed material progress critically and influenced the protest movement—Marx, Engels, and Lukács among the classics; Adorno, Horkheimer, and Debord among the contemporaries. To address the other side of the mutual attraction, the next chapter shows that the legacy of these thinkers—despite Marcuse's unmistakable warnings against actionism and individual terror—proved an important backdrop for the unleashing of a veritable militant revolt against consumer society.

## CHAPTER 3

# Consumer Society under Fire: The Militant Targeting of an Abstract Enemy

“consumption is the system’s power”

—Ulrike Meinhof (1973)<sup>1</sup>

The popular and scholarly memory of West German “terrorism” is dominated by the events of the “German Autumn” in 1977: the assassination of attorney general and former Nazi Party member Siegfried Buback; the failed kidnapping and murder of banker Jürgen Ponto; the kidnapping and murder of Hanns Martin Schleyer, who served as president of two influential associations of German industrialists and had been a member of the SS from 1933 to 1945; and finally the hijacking of a Lufthansa airplane by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which demanded the release of ten Red Army Faction (RAF) members detained at the high-security prison at Stuttgart-Stammheim. These acts were carried out by the so-called second generation of the RAF, whose main objective was to force the release of the imprisoned members of the first generation—Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, Jan-Carl Raspe, and their associates.<sup>2</sup>

At this point, the RAF’s critical focus on issues of consumption had already receded into the background. However, it is indispensable for an understanding of how the young rebels around the department store arsonists became such unbending enemies of the state. It is worthwhile to briefly

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1. Ulrike Meinhof, “Die Massen und der Konsum” (first half of 1973), BAK, B/362, 3369, I, IX/31–44.

2. The literature on the RAF is vast but rarely based on comprehensive archival research. An overview is provided by Klaus Weinhauer, “Linksterrorismus der 1970er Jahre: Ein Literaturbericht zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland und zu Italien,” in *Die bleiernen Jahre*, ed. Hürter, 117–25. For a critical position on the mainstream of “terrorism research,” see Narr, “30 Jahre Deutscher Herbst.”

recapitulate what the first generation did to trigger the vehement response from the authorities. The main assaults attributed to the first generation resulted initially from direct confrontations with the police: the shooting of police officer Norbert Schmid when he attempted to arrest RAF supporter Margrit Schiller in Hamburg in October 1971 and the shooting of police officer Herbert Schoner in a bank robbery in Kaiserslautern in December of the same year; the fatal wounding of Hans Eckhardt, commander of the police special task force commissioned to arrest the “Baader-Meinhof gang” when he arrested RAF member Manfred Grashof in March 1972. The RAF’s major offensive of politically motivated attacks unfolded in May 1972 with the bombing of a U.S. barracks in Frankfurt, killing soldier Paul A. Bloomquist; the bombing of a police station in Augsburg and of the Bavarian State Criminal Investigations Agency in Munich, wounding five police officers; the bombing of the car of federal judge Wolfgang Buddenberg in Karlsruhe, injuring his wife; the bombing of the Hamburg branch of the Axel Springer Verlag, where despite warnings the building was not evacuated, leaving seventeen people wounded; and the bombing of the Heidelberg headquarters of the U.S. Army in Europe, killing soldiers Clyde R. Bonner, Ronald A. Woodward, and Charles L. Peck. At this point, the police had already shot and killed several RAF members and supporters: Petra Schelm, when she tried to drive through a police roadblock in July 1971; Georg von Rauch, when police tried to arrest him in West Berlin in December 1971; Thomas Weisbecker, during an attempted arrest in Augsburg in March 1972. In June 1972, British sales representative Ian McLeod was mistakenly killed when police fired through a closed bedroom door during a house search in Stuttgart. The RAF leaders on the run did not hold out for very long: Mahler was arrested in October 1970, and the other leading members were caught in June 1972. Holger Meins died as a result of a hunger strike in November 1974; Meinhof was found dead in her cell in May 1976. In the so-called Stammheim trial (1975–77), Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe were sentenced to life imprisonment on six counts of bomb attack in coincidence with four counts of murder and thirty-four counts of attempted murder.

The previous chapters have shown how abstract intellectual critiques of regimes of provision and concrete practices of political action cross-fertilised each other. The Frankfurt department store arsonists, two of whom became leading members of the RAF, set a much-noted precedent. This chapter shows that issues of consumption were also central to the activists’ further trajectory. Their acts, especially their attempts to legitimise their violent opposition, were intrinsically related to issues of consumption. This chapter provides an unprecedented systematic analysis of the statements and writings of the first genera-

tion of the RAF about regimes of provision, but goes further by doing the same for Movement 2 June and its precursors and for the autonomist groups of the early 1980s that continued the militant focus on consumption through different means. The chapter contextualises these activists' desire to overcome the individualism and moral deficit they saw as integral to consumer capitalism.

The fact that these groups emerged as a driving force in the militarization of critiques of regimes of provision must not be seen in isolation. Not only did interactions with the authorities play a decisive role, but a much broader radical milieu challenged their contemporary regimes of provision via drugs and theft or the politics of broken glass. The highly publicised "terrorists" were closely interlinked with popular protest campaigns such as the fare increase revolts, activism against Springer tabloid journalism, squatting, and the precursors of criticism of globalisation. In many respects, RAF, Movement 2 June, and the autonomists emerged from these movements seeking to radicalise them.

### The Tupamaros' Arson Attacks

A few days before Christmas 1969, a "Command Red Christmas" placed an incendiary device in a shoe box, wrapped it in red Christmas paper, and left it in the women's clothes department of KaDeWe. The package was then taken to the lost property office, where it exploded without injuring anyone, without causing any major damage, and ultimately without causing much sensation.<sup>3</sup> The explosive matter—a mixture of sodium chlorate, sugar, and herbicide—did not fall under the Explosives Act.<sup>4</sup> A similar Christmas package had been placed at the Europa-Center, a shopping centre with an adjacent international-style high-rise tower that had become a symbol of West Berlin's and West Germany's "economic miracle" and successful integration into Western consumer culture.<sup>5</sup> Radicals sent threats by phone and letter, calling on the management of West Berlin's department stores to close their stores on the Saturday before Christmas: "If, despite the warning, the bosses still want to hedge

3. See Kraushaar, *Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus*, 184–85; Wolfgang Kraushaar, "Die Tupamaros West-Berlin," in *RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Kraushaar, 1:512–30; Hakemi, *Anschlag und Spektakel*, 131–44.

4. KHM Nicht, "Bericht," 10 February 1970, I-A-KI 1; KOR Paulig, "Vorsätzliche Brandstiftung im KaDeWe am 20.12.69; hier: Untersuchung von Beweisstücken," I-A, AHIS, SAK 270,05–09.

5. KHM Sprung, "Bericht: Brandsatzlegung am 20.12.69 im Kaufhaus 'KaDeWe' am Wittenbergplatz," 20 December 1969, I-A-KJ 1, AHIS, SAK 270,05–09. On the Europa-Center, see Sedlmaier, "Berlin's Europa-Center."



their bets with consumer terror [*Konsumterror*] and not with the distribution of goods, they will no longer have anything left to give away in the afternoon.”<sup>6</sup> The authors of the threat used the word *Reibbach*, which is of Yiddish-Hebrew origin, to refer to profits and thus added potentially antisemitic connotations to their criticism of consumer society.

Responsible for the attack on KaDeWe were the Tupamaros West-Berlin, which Dieter Kunzelmann, Georg von Rauch, Thomas Weisbecker, and others had formed in November 1969. They emerged from a group calling itself the Zentralrat der umherschweifenden Haschrebellen (Central Council of Vagabond Hash Rebels) and became a precursor of the Bewegung 2. Juni (Movement 2 June).<sup>7</sup> The Tupamaros, who took their name from an Uruguayan urban guerrilla organisation, committed a series of arson attacks on various targets, including the Jewish Community Centre, the Berlin branch of the Israeli airline El Al, the Amerikahaus, and the Club 50, which was frequented by American soldiers.<sup>8</sup> Thus, two and a half years after Kommune I passed out its department store leaflets, one of their authors, Kunzelmann, was involved in this less well-known attempt to put the fantasy into practice. In some respects, the Tupamaros’ amateurish attacks involving alarm clocks and beverage bottles were attempts to defeat consumer society with its own products: “To build small solidarity groups in all areas of life that begin to resist with means that—if they are not found in the street—can be purchased at any department store is an idea of cultural revolution.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1969, the underground publisher Nova Press issued four pamphlets: the first was a German translation of Peter Kropotkin’s *Law and Authority*, while the fourth was a translation of Herbert Marcuse’s lecture “On the New Left,” in which he had called for the formation of local and autonomous protest groups.<sup>10</sup> The translator was Bradley Martin, who also authored the second pamphlet, a sixteen-page Beatnik-inspired document that called for the dismantling of department store culture.<sup>11</sup> The frontispiece consisted of a red linocut showing a man throwing a bundle of dynamite sticks, fuse burning, towards the viewer. In terms of content, the observations on “department store culture” were in line

6. Tupamaros West-Berlin, “EXTRA,” 14 December 1969, AHIS, SAK, Flugblattsammlung II; KK Butzin, “Bombenandrohung im KaDeWe,” 20 December 1969, I-A-KI 1, AHIS, SAK 270,05–09.

7. See Langer, “Der Berliner ‘Blues’”; Reinders and Fritzsche, *Bewegung 2. Juni*; Carini, *Fritz Teufel*; Kraushaar, “Die Tupamaros West-Berlin,” 1:512–30; Spies, *Acid, Mao, und I Ging*.

8. Cf. Michael Baumann, *Wie alles anfing*, 65–83.

9. “Der Prozeß gegen Dieter Kunzelmann,” *Rote Hilfe* 1 (December 1971): 43.

10. Kropotkin, *Gesetz und Autorität*; Marcuse, *Zur Situation der Neuen Linken*.

11. Martin, *Blaue Wirklichkeit*.

with Subversive Aktion's earlier forays into the subject but were more fragmented and erratic. Thus, the motif persisted, and activists likely felt a constant need to outperform previous manifestations.

Another arson attack against the KaDeWe took place on 6 May 1971, when a timed incendiary device ignited the men's clothes department, slightly injuring three customers and causing material damage amounting to five hundred thousand deutsche marks, with the damage caused mainly by the sprinkler system. On the same day, an arson attack targeted an American bank in Frankfurt. The 1971 attacks are sometimes attributed to the student movement or the RAF, but the arsonists were never identified or caught.<sup>12</sup>

## Drugs and Theft

A crucial ingredient in the emergence of more militant forms of protest could not be purchased at department stores: illegal drugs. Some of the political rebels who committed arson attacks were keen consumers of hashish and LSD; a few also took to mescaline and heroin. Society criminalised this alternative form of consumption, and unpleasant confrontations with the authorities, such as police raids of notorious pubs, with the very tangible threat of punishment and ultimately imprisonment formed an important backdrop in the emergence of anti-authoritarian enemy images and the lowering of inhibitions to leave the realm of legality. The Hash Rebels wrote in *agit* 883, "The Berlin police . . . are conducting a manhunt on alleged smokers of hash. . . . The only response to state terror is counterterror!"<sup>13</sup> Drug consumption unleashed heated discussions among the radicals about whether its destructive and "counterrevolutionary" aspects—such as dependence on dealers and market mechanisms—prevailed over its "progressive" dimension of an "expansion of consciousness" that might create a revolutionary impetus among proletarian subcultures.<sup>14</sup>

Another important source of early and ideologically charged confrontations with the police was theft. Statistics show that shoplifting was on the rise.<sup>15</sup> Although this was a widespread phenomenon that crossed social and

12. "Am Kleiderständer hing die Tasche mit der Bombe," *Hamburger Abendblatt* 105 (7 May 1971): 28. See *Baader-Meinhof-Report*, 16; Meiners, *100 Jahre KaDeWe*, 112–13.

13. Zentralrat der umherschweifenden Haschrebellen, "Der Chicago-Drive der Berliner Polizei," *agit* 883 40 (13 November 1969).

14. Cf. Klaus Weinbauer, "Der Westberliner 'Underground': Kneipen, Drogen und Musik," in *agit* 883, ed. rotaprint 25, 73–84; Stephens, *Germans on Drugs*.

15. Evangelische Akademie Hofgeismar, *Ladendiebstahl* (Hofgeismar, 1973).

political divisions, theft became particularly significant for members of the left-wing alternative milieu. Some tended to justify certain forms of theft in crude Proudhonian moral terms, often arguing that it was permissible in thriving or large shops. An emphasis on commercial semantics transcended a radical left tradition that focused on a classical proletarian discourse of distribution. Shoplifting was part of Kommune I's ideological programme.<sup>16</sup> The Hash Rebels and their cousins, the Knastrebelln (Jail Rebels), approved of shoplifting as a revolutionary act. A flyer for a November 1969 teach-in at the Technische Universität Berlin bore the title "Plea for a Just Distribution of Goods with the Crowbar." It declared, "The thief crowns himself king. He makes himself free, independent of the exploiters. . . . He is no longer directed from outside."<sup>17</sup> A substantial brochure called for organised shoplifting as a means of mobilisation and expansion of the mind: "When we are stealing today, we are only legitimately taking back what these beasts denied our fathers and grandfathers for millennia: they have only sold us cars, television sets, food, etc. in order to make even more money from us."<sup>18</sup> For those resorting to routine shoplifting as part of their livelihood, private store detectives and police became tangible enemies. According to a piece of anecdotal evidence, circulated in part to discredit Joschka Fischer, he was a semiprofessional book thief in the late 1960s.<sup>19</sup> Remembering his radical beginnings in the subculture of West Berlin in 1970, Ralf Reinders, a future member of Movement 2 June, explained that while the RAF was building up an armed group under the banner of Marxism-Leninism, he and his comrades were still preoccupied with breaking into supermarkets at night and shoplifting in the daytime.<sup>20</sup>

## Conciliatory Approach

When the Tupamaros embarked on their firebombing campaign against various targets, authorities had already embraced an approach vis-à-vis the protest

16. Enzensberger, *Die Jahre der Kommune*, 107. See above, p. 41.

17. Knastrebelln, "Plädoyer für eine gerechte Verteilung der Güter mit der Brechstange!," *Agit* 883 41 (20 November 1969): 7.

18. Reni v. Tent, "Der Antijurist: Plädoyer für eine gerechte Güterverteilung mit der Brechstange" (c. 1969), in *Der Blues*, 1:29, 31.

19. Christian Schmidt, "Wir sind die Wahnsinnigen . . .," 60. On stealing, see Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side*, 509–12.

20. Ralf Reinders and Ronald Fritsch, "Von den Haschrebelln zur Bewegung 2. Juni," in *Die Bewegung 2. Juni: Gespräche über Haschrebelln, Lorenz-Entführung, Knast*, ed. Reinders and Fritsch, 3rd ed., (Berlin 1999), 36–37.

movement that sought to deemphasise conflict and confrontation. West Berlin's minister for interior affairs, Kurt Neubauer (SPD), reflected this position in a November 1969 address he delivered at the invitation of the Berlin Association of Merchants and Industrialists. He gave the example of "citizen Müller," who smashed a shop window "to make it clear that the shop's owner is a reactionary." While Neubauer rejected such attempts to justify "criminal acts," he clearly understood the potential for a criminal act to be transformed into a political manifestation. He wanted to prevent "crime in its entirety being subjected to ideology" that would "contribute to the dissolution of our state." However, contrary to his audience, whose members always called for a strong state to protect their commerce from riots, he dismissed the heavy-handed use of executive force. He argued that in a successful campaign for solidarity and mobilisation of the students, Rudi Dutschke had relied on the formative experience of provocation and police baton.<sup>21</sup> Neubauer's stance was the West Berlin variant of a larger development that culminated in an agreement by the new social democratic-liberal coalition under Willy Brandt to offer amnesty for offences committed during demonstrations that did not carry penalties exceeding one year in prison.<sup>22</sup>

For radicals, the state's conciliatory approach towards the protest movement constituted a challenge. If they wished to uphold a revolutionary impetus, they had to depict the government's move as repressive and transcend the movement's established strategy of limited and performative rule breaking.<sup>23</sup> A discursive strategy of amalgamating geographically and historically diverse zones of grievances fit the bill.

### Meinhof's Notion of "Consumer Terror"

A far-reaching notion of *Konsumterror* (consumer terror) was firmly established in Ulrike Meinhof's political thought in the spring of 1969, when Iranian author Bahman Nirumand, whom Meinhof had befriended in 1967 and whose controversial writings had carried great weight in the student movement's criticism of the shah of Iran, faced revocation of his German residence permit. The threatened move renewed the wave of protest against the German authorities' position vis-à-vis the Iranian regime. Meinhof pointed to West German trade

21. Kurt Neubauer, "Der Freiheitsbegriff in der parlamentarischen Demokratie," *Mitteilungen Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller* 109 (December 1969): 27.

22. See Dostal, 1968.

23. On performative rule breaking, see Sedlmaier and Malinowski, "'1968.'"

interests in Iran, to diplomatic attempts to downplay the disturbances during the shah's June 1967 visit, and ultimately to the West German government's fawning over a dictator of an oil-rich country who was a Cold War ally. She concluded, "We have grasped the connection between consumer and police terror . . . and the interests of German capital in the exploitation of the Persian people."<sup>24</sup> In the run-up to the Iranian royal couple's visit to Berlin, Meinhof had written an open letter to Farah Diba that was distributed as a flyer. Drawing on Nirumand, Meinhof sarcastically contrasted the picture the Iranian empress had drawn of the Iranian upper echelons' affluent life for a German glossy magazine with the misery and destitution most Iranians faced under a programme of economic modernisation.<sup>25</sup>

The world of consumption played a role throughout Meinhof's critical thought. The television play *Bambule* (Shindy), which she finished in January–February 1970, drawing on previous fieldwork, is a story of rebellion in a closed institution for adolescent girls. Together with Baader, Ensslin, and Thorwald Proll, who had been released on parole until the revision of their case, Meinhof became involved in the *Heimkampagne*, which sought to challenge the repressive conditions children and adolescents faced in institutions of care. The screenplay revolved around the personal experiences of a group of adolescent girls who challenge the daily regime in their West Berlin institution. Issues of consumption and department stores featured only marginally, but imagery from the commercial sphere contributed to Meinhof's analysis of the political background she held responsible for the misery and violence experienced by the young women, some of whom resorted to sex work. In one scene, a punter in a car offers twenty marks to one of the girls if she will become his steady girlfriend. All he gets, however, are a few minutes in the car park of Neckermann, one of West Germany's major mail-order companies. Meinhof explained in a foreword that the authorities cared only about the fact that girls prostituted themselves, not that they "did not have the clothes that advertisement ordered." Gisela, one of the protagonists, finds a job arranging cups at a Karstadt department store. At the same time, the department store is hosting a police exhibition, which Meinhof introduces to metaphorically interlace consumer goods and governmental authority: "In front of Gisela a puppet of a policeman on a stand with wheels is passing by. The puppet begins to sway and falls exactly in front of Gisela onto the packing table, crashes into the cups. The

24. Ulrike Meinhof, "Alle reden vom Wetter," in Meinhof, *Dokumente einer Rebellion*, 99. See Nirumand, *Persien*.

25. Ulrike Meinhof, "Offener Brief an Farah Diba," *konkret* 6 (1967): 21–22.

puppet's stupid gob lies among the fragments of the cups.”<sup>26</sup> Meinhof apparently became frustrated with the project during the actual production, declaring that her work had been turned into a consumer item.<sup>27</sup> She later self-critically reflected on her own role as an intellectual and producer of texts in a system in which “even language is a commodity.”<sup>28</sup> *Bambule* was to be shown on German television in May 1970, but the showing was called off because Meinhof was already wanted for her role in Baader's escape from prison, during which a library clerk was severely injured.

### Broken Glass

In early 1970, the smashing of shop windows had become a frequent form of political protest. Following a demonstration on Berlin's shopping boulevard Kurfürstendamm, the militant underground newspaper *agit 883* reported 137 broken shop windows, 7 demolished showcases, 19 injured policemen, and 24 damaged police cars. Harking back to anarchist precursors, the ideological justifications of these riots attempted to walk the tightrope between friendly consumption and hostile consumption: “When we use the term ‘bourgeoisie’ we don't mean it in terms of the French individualist anarchist Emile Henry, who, around the turn of the century, threw a bomb into a café and in his justification in court claimed that each bourgeois who could afford a cup of coffee shared responsibility for the exploitation of the workers. Last Wednesday, however, only those cafés were attacked that are known to discriminate against comrades with long hair or Mao badges, refusing them service. . . . Other places that do serve comrades were of course spared.” At this point the typesetter inserted a comment: “This differentiation . . . is nevertheless problematic because the comrades who threw stones into the upper floor of Café Kranzler could not know whether they would injure the manager or only a tourist having coffee.”<sup>29</sup>

The prototype of conflict between nonconformist consumers and the management of traditional cafés originated in September 1968 with the “cake battle” at Café Laumer in Frankfurt. A group of young people including SDS

26. Meinhof, *Bambule*. On *Bambule*, see Colvin, *Ulrike Meinhof and West German Terrorism*, 51–75.

27. Dittfurth, *Ulrike Meinhof*, 265; Aust, *Baader-Meinhof-Komplex*, 113.

28. Meinhof, “nenee-ahab” (n.d., probably 1973), quoted in Colvin, *Ulrike Meinhof and West German Terrorism*, 169.

29. *Agit 883* 54 (26 March 1970): 2.

member Paul Gerhard Hübsch had been denied service because of their “unkempt appearance” and unconventional behaviour.<sup>30</sup> The manager of the café called the police, who manhandled some of the young people and cordoned off the premises with several police vans. The young people were punished for resisting law enforcement officers (section 113 StGB), and a Provo-inspired protest campaign resulted. A week later, Hübsch used the SDS delegates’ conference in Frankfurt to emphasise the issue as a chance to politicise long-haired youth. This time, media star Fritz Teufel was served by the manager himself, but police observing the events were pelted with whipped cream and chocolate sweets. Most of the attackers were sent to prison.

By March 1970, *agit 883* had identified easier targets than cafés: banks, motor shows, boutiques, furriers, and jeweller’s shops and beauty parlours were “hubs of consumer terror” that had to be attacked with stones and Molotov cocktails. The justification is again interesting since it introduced another level of critique, seeing violence as an attempt to stop the commercial co-optation of alternative lifestyles: “a response to industry’s attempts to commercialise clothing and lifestyles of the extraparlimentary opposition and to offer to satisfy comrades’ needs at brazenly high prices.” However, the activists concluded that only militancy would stop the process, a conclusion that was perhaps too optimistic and underestimated capitalism’s flexibility: “Even during the biggest economic crises, it did not occur to the textile industry to offer the uniforms of the Rotfrontkämpferbund [the paramilitary arm of the Communist Party of Germany, created in 1924] as the *dernier cri*.”<sup>31</sup> Of course, in most cases, motivations and justifications for smashing shop windows were less explicit.

### **The RAF Seeks to Address Those Excluded from Consumer Society**

One of the RAF’s first declarations was also printed in *agit 883*. The revolutionary message sought to justify the forcible freeing of Baader from prison and was addressed to those who remained excluded from consumer society: “You have to communicate the act to those who don’t receive compensation for the exploitation they suffer by way of standards of living, consumption, saving with a building society, consumer credit, midrange cars.” This Marcusian figure of thought could easily be projected from a local to a global level and

30. Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side*, 492; Brückner, *Ulrike Marie Meinhof*, 94–97.

31. *Agit 883* 54 (26 March 1970): 2. See also Detlef Vierke, letter to the editors, *Agit 883* 41 (20 November 1969): 2.

formed a central argumentative framework in the RAF's founding document: "You have to communicate it to those who don't get anything from the exploitation of the Third World, from Persian oil, Bolivia's bananas, South Africa's gold, who have no reason to identify themselves with the exploiters."<sup>32</sup> The amalgamation of the two levels enabled the revolutionaries to point to international liberation movements and scenarios of Third World suffering, but they were mistaken about the number of people who were entirely immune to the temptations of better living standards and midrange cars. The RAF even conceived of false or insufficient consumption as diametrically opposed to armed resistance that sought to overcome these conditions: "Who doesn't die will be buried alive: in prisons, in foster homes, in the holes of Kreuzberg, Wedding, Neukölln [working-class districts of West Berlin], in the stone coffins of the development areas . . . , in the perfectly equipped kitchens of council flats, in bedroom palaces that have not yet been paid for."<sup>33</sup>

In "The Urban Guerrilla Concept," written in April 1971, consumption was central to the RAF's ideological attack on its main enemies: the institutions of state violence and the Springer corporation.<sup>34</sup> The notion of "consuming" served as a general means of dismissal—for example, in contemptuously referring to those on the political left who the RAF believed acted as free riders: they just consumed the RAF instead of contributing to the struggle.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the RAF acknowledged its roots in the broader student movement and approvingly quoted one of its central political slogans: "Resist *Konsumterror!*"<sup>36</sup> People still had to put up with hierarchical exploitation at the workplace despite the fact that increased productivity already created enough wealth to satisfy their basic needs. From this perspective, a consumer society that kept the real wealth back from the masses was part of a repressive system manifesting itself in "prisons, . . . consumption in instalments, . . . *Bild* and *BZ*, urban fringe tenement housing, immigrant ghettos."<sup>37</sup>

Horst Mahler, who had been arrested in October 1970, wrote an article for *Der Spiegel* in January 1972 addressing the authorities' strategy of ostentatiously treating RAF members as mere criminals while denying them political status. He declared that revolutionary politics were inevitably criminal. As a lawyer, he presented a Marxist interpretation of the state as a managing com-

32. "Die Rote Armee aufbauen," *Agit* 883 62 (1970): 6.

33. *Ibid.*, 2.

34. "Das Konzept Stadtguerilla," in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 27–48.

35. *Ibid.*, 29.

36. *Ibid.*, 35.

37. *Ibid.*, 47.



mittee for the interests of the propertied classes: “The state’s penal power derives historically from the protection and perpetuation of the rule of propertied minorities over the unpropertied and exploited majority of the people.” This system of legality had been responsible for the “scientific and methodical extermination of people,” the threat of nuclear devastation, and millions of deaths by starvation in the Third World. In addition to emphasizing the revolutionary significance of the Third World, Mahler argued that the developed world’s wealth was only make-believe and ignored widespread poverty among the disadvantaged. For Mahler, high living standards appeared as a “mess of pottage, for which we have sold our birthright as subjects of our societal fate.” Alluding to the RAF’s bank robberies, he declared that the guerrillas would take the means required for their struggle from those “who have acquired and monopolised . . . at the expense of the people.” They would thus turn against “the rich and powerful and spare the unpropertied and exploited.”<sup>38</sup>

The RAF’s next major manifesto, “Serve the People: The Urban Guerrilla and Class Struggle,” made only marginal reference to issues of consumption. However, consumption as a domestic analogue of imperialist expansion was firmly established in the RAF’s ideological repertoire. In this perspective, “the system” tried to uphold the status quo by “stringing the working class along via formation of wealth and promises of reform.” These mechanisms created the illusion that the workers received their share of the common good via the “means of consumption” while remaining excluded from the means of production. “The system” refused to differentiate between these different types of property. Similarly, the failure to differentiate between revolutionary and self-interested attacks on property reduced the former to mere crime. A glimmer of hope seemed to come not so much from intellectual critics but from those who refused to strive for “petty percentage and stupid consumption.”<sup>39</sup> In late May 1972, the RAF hoped that as people recognised the Vietnam War as a crime of U.S. imperialism, they would also realise that “consumption in instalments does not make them happy.”<sup>40</sup>

The RAF’s applauding statement on the attack on members of the Israeli team during the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich was authored primarily by Meinhof. The militant Palestinian Black September Organisation had detained

38. Horst Mahler, “Die revolutionäre Linke ist kriminell,” *Der Spiegel* 5 (24 January 1972): 30–31.

39. “Dem Volk dienen: Stadtguerilla und Klassenkampf,” in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 134–36.

40. “Tonbandprotokoll von dem Teach-in der Roten Hilfe, Frankfurt: Erklärung von 31. Mai 1972,” in *ibid.*, 149.

Israeli athletes and officials, initially killing two, in an attempt to obtain the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israel and more broadly to respond to the violence the Palestinian people had suffered at the hands of Israeli military forces. The German security forces' failed rescue attempt at NATO's Fürstenfeldbruck air base turned the event into a disaster for both sides, with the remaining nine hostages, one German policeman, and five of the eight members of Black September killed.

The RAF's document is primarily known for its fatuous construction of a connection between "the fascism of developed imperialism"—of which the Federal Republic of Germany was a part—and "Israel's Nazi fascism."<sup>41</sup> The equation of German "nationalist extermination policies" with "Israeli extermination policies"<sup>42</sup> shows a conflation of the RAF's theoretical premises based on a concept of fascism that subsumed all forms of governmental authority and an understanding of National Socialism as merely a transient manifestation of a more comprehensive imperialist system.<sup>43</sup> The RAF considered Black September's Munich hostage taking to be "antifascist" and "anti-authoritarian," part of a worldwide anti-imperialist strategy. The RAF's third major declaration was written after its main cadres had been arrested and imprisoned, with Meinhof suffering the harsh conditions of "isolated" internment in the "dead wing" of Cologne's Ossendorf prison. The whole tone is more ideological than previous statements, more ready to amalgamate even the most disparate contexts in an ambitious—and at times hazardous—effort to justify the group's continued attempts to wage "guerrilla warfare" from inside prison walls. Even more than before, the RAF was drawing on Manichaean worldviews.<sup>44</sup> Despite their feverish activities, the interned cadres of the RAF misjudged their position of weakness, which they sought to overcome with a far-reaching claim of leadership that depicted themselves as a revolutionary vanguard even relative to their comrades still at large.

Under the heading "Oil and Road Casualties" the Black September statement tried to bridge two revolutionary scenarios: global imperialism in the Third World and its reflection in the everyday life of highly industrialised societies. Not unlike Marcuse, the RAF pointed to automobile production resulting in 170,000 road casualties in West Germany over ten years; in 1972, the

41. "Die Aktion des »Schwarzen September« in München: Zur Strategie des antiimperialistischen Kampfes, November 1972," in *ibid.*, 159. On Nazi analogies in RAF statements, see Holger J. Schmidt, *Antizionismus, Israelkritik, und "Judenknax,"* 58–59.

42. "Aktion des »Schwarzen September«, " 171.

43. See Bergstermann, "Von 'Isolationsfolter' und 'Vernichtungshaft.'"

44. See Biermann, "'Metropolenguerrilla' contra 'Schweinesystem.'"

United States was expected to suffer 56,000 road casualties, with 20,000 more in West Germany, “for the benefit of . . . the oil and automobile corporations” that realised their profits at the expense of the Third World.<sup>45</sup> These numbers seemed to dwarf the number of casualties that resulted from the actions of the RAF and Black September.

The RAF was desperately looking for the cracks in the shiny surface of consumer society. The group had to find a way to instil fear that the “vicious circle of consumption—the anarchy of capitalist production . . . only for the market, not for the people’s needs—might meet the limits of people’s psychological flexibility.” Optimistically, the activists thought that “loyalty on the basis of nothing but . . . ‘consumer shit’” had already started to crumble.<sup>46</sup> Looking for the revolutionary subject, the document tried to go beyond Marx by pointing out that in modern affluent society, the powerful had a much more comprehensive grasp on the workers’ life than just depriving them of surplus value: “Their physical exploitation at the factory has been superseded by the exploitation of their feelings, thoughts, wishes, and utopias . . . by the despotism of the capitalist in all areas of life via mass consumption and mass media.” Exploitation was thus not limited to the sphere of production but extended to the sphere of consumption: “With the introduction of the 8-hour day, the system’s 24-hour day of ruling the worker has started its triumphant advance—with the creation of mass purchasing power and high income groups, the system has started its triumphant advance over plans, needs, alternatives, fantasy, spontaneity.”<sup>47</sup> In many respects, this was a radical reading of the conditions that Alain Touraine had labelled “postindustrial society.” Touraine also highlighted that all levels of social life, including education, consumption, and information, had been turned into productive resources and thus into objects of political design. In Meinhof’s view, this constellation had corrupted people to such a degree that they had lost any class consciousness, becoming ready “to tacitly accept every crime of the system” in return “for a car, a few rags, a life insurance policy, and a mortgage.” They were hardly able to imagine or desire anything beyond “a car, a holiday trip, a tiled bathroom.” Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, and Mao had simply not known these conditions since they were not facing the readers of Springer tabloids, television viewers, motorists, mail-order commerce, and “quality of life.” In a worldview that saw capitalism’s quest for profit as the mainspring of political manifestations, consumer society

45. “Aktion des »Schwarzen September«,” 156.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 166. See Touraine, *Auf dem Weg zur postindustriellen Gesellschaft*, 104.

appeared as analogous to fascism: “not openly fascist, but via the market.”<sup>48</sup> On a list of factors hindering liberation, “consumption” and “the media” ranked first.<sup>49</sup> This approach ultimately placed a morally justified and ascetic path of revolutionary violence in diametrical opposition to a highway of opportunism paved with material goods.<sup>50</sup>

Meinhof’s emphasis on consumer society and a revolutionary subject in the metropole met with criticism from Mahler, who confronted it with his own belief in the revolutionary masses in the Third World. His *Arbeiteraristokratie-papier* (Worker Aristocracy Paper) featured a detailed discussion of Lenin’s theory of imperialism, unfolding a concept of embourgeoisement that sought to explain the lack of revolutionary impetus among West German workers. Not entirely unlike Meinhof’s approach, his reasoning was also based on an analysis of regimes of provision. Mahler thought that affluent societies were characterised by what might be called an inverted Malthusian trap: “As producers of material goods, human beings become superfluous on the whole. The value of products falls in relative and absolute terms. The volume of affluence . . . increases by geometrical progression. Fewer workers in material production reproduce a constantly growing number of unproductive consumers.”<sup>51</sup> This led to his crucial point: a significant proportion of the “unproductively consumed revenues” were sucked away from the Third World, where poverty and the “dirty work” concentrated, the real mainspring of embourgeoisement.<sup>52</sup> On a global scale, the polarisation of society that the classics of socialism had predicted had become a reality, while in the highly industrialised societies, it had been damped down and even turned into its opposite.<sup>53</sup>

The difference between Meinhof and Mahler was one of setting priorities. Meinhof sought to establish revolutionary consumers: those who remained at the margins of consumer society. Refusing to write off the masses in the metropole as a revolutionary subject, she thought that the process of embourgeoisement that Mahler described still excluded crucial parts of the population of industrialised societies. Mahler had already developed his concept of the worker aristocracy in a long statement delivered at the opening of his trial in West Berlin in October 1972. While emphasising the liberation movements of

48. “Aktion des »Schwarzen September«,” 166. See also Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 56–57.

49. “Aktion des »Schwarzen September«,” 167.

50. See Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 58.

51. [Horst Mahler], “Erstens existieren Widersprüche . . . ,” late 1972/early 1973, 9, AHIS, KOK 03/002.

52. *Ibid.*, 10.

53. *Ibid.*, 13.

the developing countries, he also highlighted immigrant workers and fringe groups in the industrialised countries as possible revolutionary agents. He was thus not so far removed from the position Meinhof came to adopt.<sup>54</sup>

### Meinhof: “Die Massen und der Konsum”

During the first half of 1973, the contradictions of affluent society were Meinhof’s key concept for overcoming the RAF’s isolation from the masses. She sought to understand the mechanism of embourgeoisement rather than resigning herself to its inevitability. She thought that “consumer society, i.e. privileged repression”<sup>55</sup> had to be an integral part of revolutionary theory and practice because “consumption is the system’s power,” and without “consumption the system’s sway over the people will collapse.” Why, Meinhof asked, could the system so ill afford unemployment? Her answer was that the unemployed did not consume and thus highlighted a crucial gap in legitimisation. She clearly stated that it was impossible to abolish consumption, which was not evil per se; the task was to crack its mechanism, its capitalist application.<sup>56</sup> Meinhof put the emphasis on the destructive side of capitalist consumption: “It is important that a part of the wages paid to the worker so that he can reproduce himself, is again taken away from him via consumer shit. He thinks he is reproducing himself and will only notice years later that he is exploited not only at the factory but on top of it in his reproduction. Obsolescence, psychological destruction through television, compensatory satisfaction of needs.”<sup>57</sup> Targeting consumers’ increasing individualisation,<sup>58</sup> Meinhof recognised that revolutionary analysis remained in its infancy concerning this topic. So far, it had

54. Horst Mahler, “Erklärung zum Prozeßbeginn am 9.10.1972,” in *Bewaffneter Kampf*, 184–97. On the conflict between Mahler and Meinhof, see Mahler, *um die reihen zu schliessen*; Bernhard Gierds, “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla: Meinhof, Mahler, und ihre strategischen Differenzen,” in *RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Kraushaar, 1:248–61. Gierds reconstructs the differences between Meinhof and Mahler on a rather narrow basis of primary sources. His argument is that the controversy resulted from Mahler focusing his political views on a revolutionary subject—that is, the people of the Third World—while as a consequence of the deprivations she suffered during the early phase of her confinement, Meinhof allegedly only tolerated self-referentiality, especially the imagined identification with Auschwitz, as a legitimate political framework. Gierds denies Meinhof any further theoretical linkage.

55. Ulrike Meinhof, “irgendwie komm ich nicht damit klar . . .,” late 1972/early 1973, BAK, B/362, 3370.1, XV/21.

56. Ulrike Meinhof, “Konsum,” late 1972/early 1973, 1, BAK, B/362, 3370.2, XVI/169–70.

57. Ulrike Meinhof, “Theorie und Praxis,” late 1972/early 1973, BAK, B/362, 3370.2, XVI/109.

58. Ulrike Meinhof, handwritten notes on the futility of life in consumer society, late 1972/early 1973, BAK, B/362, 3370.2, XVI/184.

produced only a few cues, among which she jotted down “the destruction of retail markets by the department store companies, generally the department store companies.”<sup>59</sup> To address this lack of insight, Meinhof produced a fourteen-page typewritten paper, “Die Massen und der Konsum” (The Masses and Consumption) that was probably meant to become a collective strategy paper. However, she withdrew it after criticism from her comrades. This and many other documents were confiscated by the authorities on 16 July 1973, during the first major search of the RAF inmates’ cells.<sup>60</sup>

The paper departed from what Meinhof considered the central problem of the New Left and of the RAF: they were isolated from the masses. She resorted to Marxism to tackle this problem and tried to identify the masses’ most important interests.<sup>61</sup> Opinion polls suggested stable prices and secure jobs, but she wanted to go further. Asking “What occupies people?,” she wrote a lighthearted and impressionistic overview of the year, with each month represented by some consumption-related small talk: “They say that the whole thing is rubbish and that prices are particularly high in December and the entire Christmas rush is actually only there for business and department stores and that it is rather stupid to join in, but what can you do—is what they say and they go shopping.”<sup>62</sup> The topic of consumption seemed omnipresent: “Children like nothing better than watching commercials. . . . Everyone talks about consumption. Day and night, morning, noon, evening. . . . Consumption, consumption, consumption.” Meinhof was not prepared to simply dismiss this as false needs. If the masses wanted the goods, a Marxist was in no position to blame them for it. She asked rather self-critically, “We say: advertisement. Advertisement is an exterior cause. . . . What is the interior cause of consumption? . . . What is the contradiction in consumption?”<sup>63</sup>

Meinhof was touching on a crucial point: clinging to manipulationist theories, militant protest had targeted exterior manifestations of consumer society and had lost sight of the question of why people embraced its products. She now openly acknowledged that increased consumption had fostered equality between people: “C&A, Karstadt, Neckermann, Quelle, Kaufhof, Hertie—they all offer the same clothes, everyone buys them there. Workers, employees,

59. Ulrike Meinhof, “Zu der Kritik an dem Paper,” 1972/first half of 1973, BAK, B/362, 3370.1, XV/5–7.

60. Ulrike Meinhof, “Die Massen und der Konsum,” first half of 1973, BAK, B/362, 3369.1, IX/31–44. Thanks to Kerstin Schenke at Bundesarchiv, who helped me to locate these documents in the records of the Bundeskriminalamt.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

pupils, apprentices, students, intellectuals.” The problem was that this equality had not reduced competition; quite the contrary, consumption added fuel to competition as people aspired to property.<sup>64</sup> Meinhof’s understanding of consumption was ambivalent. She acknowledged it as a real need that could not be theorised away; however, she also set out to highlight the drawbacks and limitations of capitalist affluence, adopting a tone reminiscent of conservative despair of civilisation: “Millions of women go to the factory to get ahold of consumption. Parents neglect their children. Morality has disappeared.”<sup>65</sup>

Like most of her contemporaries, Meinhof was not prepared to view all humans as consumers in one way or another. To her mind, consumption was a new phenomenon of the twentieth century: “In the past, there was no consumption. There was food, clothing, and a roof over one’s head. . . . And thousands died of starvation.” People who lived today still remembered these conditions and noticed that conditions were better than in the past.<sup>66</sup> They enjoyed the reduction in working hours, but one constant remained: exploitation through the absorption of surplus value. What had changed was that people could buy infinitely more in return for more intensified work; their wages sufficed for more than food, shelter, and clothing; they had more time; and they no longer went to the Workers Educational Association. The workers of the nineteenth century dreamt of sufficient vital goods, while today people dreamt of unnecessary goods.

Meinhof interlaced two types of critiques of regimes of provision. When analysing the existing conditions, she stuck to a classical critique of consumer society, to which she attributed a depoliticising power: “People no longer go to the . . . Socialists, to Marx, Engels, Bebel, Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg. . . . Instead they only think of consuming.”<sup>67</sup> In a preliminary note that tied in with the Black September statement, she emphasised that in the old days, the alternatives had been socialism and utopia. Along with the worker’s external misery, utopia had been eradicated, so that today’s alternatives were “job change, Mallorca, colour television, car.”<sup>68</sup> Meinhof assumed a deeper motivation below material interest: “It is not consumption that the masses desire, think about day and night, risk their lives for, fight, make each other’s lives miserable, abuse their children, violate the law, are completely crazy, nuts—It is the realm

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64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ulrike Meinhof, “Über Konsum,” quoted in Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 79.

of freedom.”<sup>69</sup> Adopting Marx’s expression and following Marcuse, she maintained a more profound goal for human endeavour. Realising that the reduction in working hours had not produced the realm of freedom that Marx had imagined, Meinhof argued that workers were in fact facing a twenty-four-hour day, the analysis of which held a “wholly unexplored dimension.”<sup>70</sup> Consumption meant in fact more work and diverted people from real, noncommodified leisure. Capitalist consumer society had conquered Marx’s realm of freedom by annexing it to the realm of necessity.

When trying to find a revolutionary subject that would break this mechanism and help to establish a true realm of freedom, Meinhof resorted to the second, more optimistic and forward-looking critique of regimes of provision. Certain consumers could, for all intents and purposes, become revolutionary subjects: “Police prevent the masses from doing what is otherwise a matter of course for them: going to the department store . . . and simply getting what they need.” According to this view, the regime of provision was ultimately upheld not by people’s moral convictions but only by state violence that separated the people from the goods and drove “them into the forced labour of the factory, under the despotism of capital.”<sup>71</sup> She saw widespread shoplifting as a manifestation of revolution: “The revolution has already broken out! The masses have already consciously emancipated themselves. . . . They are stealing!”<sup>72</sup> People had two options: “The legal path to consumption went via the factory, the office, the exploitation, the university . . . , the abominable, exploitative, repressive path.” The other option was theft: “Most people . . . do both: they earn money and steal; . . . they give themselves into the grip of consumption by toiling busily . . . ; on the other hand they swipe something here and there.”<sup>73</sup> To her mind, the system had already started to disintegrate over its own concept of property.<sup>74</sup>

Meinhof was not the first to treat shoplifting in conjunction with the RAF. Her intricate filing system for newspaper clippings—the comprehensive clas-

69. Ulrike Meinhof, “Die Massen und der Konsum,” first half of 1973, BAK, B/362, 3369.1, IX/31–44.

70. Ulrike Meinhof, “noch was zu münchen paper und der Kritik daran,” quoted in Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 79.

71. Ulrike Meinhof, “Die Massen und der Konsum,” first half of 1973, BAK, B/362, 3369.1, IX/31–44. Marx had also emphasised that, in essence, labour under capitalism always remained forced labour (*Kapital*, MEGA section 2, 15: 793–95).

72. Ulrike Meinhof, “Die Massen und der Konsum,” first half of 1973, BAK, B/362, 3369.1, IX/31–44.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.



sification listed rubrics on mail-order trade, department stores, retail, and consumption—contained articles from a series on “plant security” from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, among them “Fire, Bombs, Theft—Dangers That Department Stores Are Facing” and another reporting that the number of shoplifters caught had doubled between 1967 and 1970 and that they were causing damage of at least seventy-five million deutsche marks per year.<sup>75</sup>

In her attempt to come to grips with the problem of embourgeoisement, Meinhof sought to augment classical Marxist class analysis with a “class analysis of the consumers.” The classics of socialism had simply not known or foreseen the conditions of affluent society. Drawing on Marx, she introduced two parts of consumption: “1) The first part is the part that is absolutely essential to life—food, clothing, shelter. 2) The second part is the part that is not absolutely essential to life. The indulgences. The car. The fun. The television. A treat for the eye. The furniture and wallpaper.”<sup>76</sup> She thought that students, apprentices, women, pupils, and foreign workers—those who were furthest removed from the second part of consumption (nonvital goods)—would take the lead in the first phase of the revolution.<sup>77</sup> The second part of consumption was ultimately the central battleground of the revolutionary struggle in the metropole. While clearly focusing on sections or margins of society, she still resorted to the delusive notion of revolutionary “masses.” This obscured her attempt at differentiation.

While assuming a revolutionary impetus in the desires of the marginalised, Meinhof also called on people to rid themselves of their consumerist chains. Since most people no longer had cows or vegetable gardens, they had become completely dependent on wage labour. The proletariat allegedly had nothing to lose but their chains; however, those chains were also difficult to untangle: “the consumer shit, . . . the private microcosm inside the living holes, the balancing acts on the ladders of prestige, the careers of anxiety, the reified hopes, . . . the holiday plans, the debt.” The first revolutionary step was to free oneself from these chains.<sup>78</sup> This pointed to those who had already arrived at a certain level of critical consciousness vis-à-vis consumption, those who were

75. Ulrike Meinhof, “zeitungsausschnittarchiv ulrike—kategorien,” BAK, B/362, 3369,1, VII/1 including *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, clippings, 1972 or 1973, “Feuer, Bomben, Diebstahl—Gefahren, die im Kaufhaus drohen,” and “Zahl der Ladendiebe steigt weiter.”

76. Ulrike Meinhof, “Die Massen und der Konsum,” first half of 1973, BAK, B/362, 3369,1, IX/31–44.

77. *Ibid.*, 12.

78. Ulrike Meinhof, “über: ‘nichts mehr zu verlieren haben,’” AHIS, KOK 07/002.

ready to say “consumer shit.” Meinhof apparently hoped for an alliance between the masses, who longed for freedom but sought to realise it via consumption, and critical individuals who had already started to debunk the myth of consumerism.<sup>79</sup>

An alliance between critical intellectuals and people suffering from the psychological strain of affluent society was not mere fiction but had found expression in the international antipsychiatry movement. One group that was part of that movement was the Informationszentrum Rote Volksuniversität (IZRU, Information Centre of the Red People’s University), which had been founded by former members of the Socialist Patients’ Collective (SPK) in July 1971. The SPK had emerged when patients in the psychiatric outpatient department at Heidelberg University Hospital protested the dismissal of their attending doctor, reformer Wolfgang Huber. In the midst of the conflict with the clinic management, the SPK came under suspicion of supporting the RAF. Huber and others were convicted of participation in a criminal organisation. A number of former SPK members subsequently joined the RAF.<sup>80</sup> Huber believed that the only effective way to combat mental illness was by abolishing the “morbid commercial-patriarchal society.”<sup>81</sup> The imprisoned RAF cadres took an interest in the IZRU’s theoretical endeavours.<sup>82</sup> In a brochure that Meinhof kept in her files, the IZRU established explicit connections among addictive disorders, reified labour, the culture industries, and social democracy: “Bourgeois inwardness is the profitable sales market for the entire rubbish of the consumer goods industry, . . . entertainment and pharmaceutical industry. . . . Food has also become such a crutch in this so-called affluent society, namely a narcotic, a means of distraction and occupation: the human being as wage labourer is dispossessed of any self-determined productive activity . . . and is supposed to replace this deprivation with excessive consump-

79. Ulrike Meinhof, handwritten notes on freedom and consumption, BAK, B/362, 3370.2, XVI/165.

80. Explanations for why SPK members joined the RAF vary. Dieter Spazier and Jörg Bopp see it as a consequence of criminalisation, while the study commissioned by the Interior Ministry—authored by the wife of the clinic manager responsible for Huber’s dismissal—assumes from the outset that the SPK constituted a “preliminary stage of developed terrorism.” See Dieter Spazier and Jörg Bopp, *Grenzübergänge: Psychotherapie als kollektive Praxis* (Frankfurt, 1975); Wanda von Baeyer-Katte, “Das Sozialistische Patientenkollektiv in Heidelberg (SPK),” in Baeyer-Katte, Claessens, and Feger, *Gruppenprozesse*, 184–316; Kornelia Brink, “Psychiatrie und Politik: Zum Sozialistischen Patientenkollektiv in Heidelberg,” in *Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik*, ed. Weinbauer, Requate, and Haupt, 134–53.

81. SPK, *Aus der Krankheit*.

82. Gudrun Ensslin, “Von Kroetz stammt das Gleichnis,” AHIS, KOK 07.002.

tion activity . . . . Consequently, many people are constantly eating, . . . boozing, even if they don't want to—obesity!”<sup>83</sup>

Meinhof suggested that statements by her and her comrades had clumsily revolved around the idea of analysing consumers for the previous five years. She thus pointed back to 1968. Just as in her *konkret* article on the Frankfurt department store arson, she now invoked black looters in America who were allegedly as much in need of the revolutionary theory she was hoping to forge as those marginalised by affluent society in the Federal Republic of Germany or Japan. She apparently thought that the protest movements that had emerged globally since 1968 constituted the first phase of an anti-imperialist revolution. She maintained that this “revolution” had broken out not only because producers were separated from their products but also because consumers were separated from consumption.<sup>84</sup> She thus addressed not only the people who remained excluded from the blessings of affluent society but also the idea that desirable consumption constantly moved beyond reach, thus alienating people from the consumption at their disposal.

Meinhof thought that her revolutionary theory of the consumer held an educational message. Guerrillas would demonstrate to people how to overcome the relations of violence separating them from the desired consumption and ultimately from the realm of freedom. To this end, she envisioned a rather opaque plan for a major propagandistic action: “It is possible and easily imaginable to make open [*offen machen*] for two to three days all department stores in the F[ederal] r[epublic] with a single action of a few men without the police intervening.”<sup>85</sup> It remains unclear how this endeavour might have worked, but she apparently intended to teach the masses how to loot and to ignite mass disturbances. In her preliminary notes, she jotted down, “Storm the department stores.”<sup>86</sup> Meinhof believed that the masses would thus join the revolutionary struggle and even come to understand Marxism-Leninism. Similar to her *konkret* column on the Frankfurt department store arsons, she wanted to avoid having bombs destroy goods and endanger people. However, she considered the possibility that the authorities would place bombs in department stores and blame the damage on the RAF. At the same time, she had some clear-sighted visions of future themes and practices of political expression in the sphere of

83. “Politische Gefangenschaft,” *Rote Volksuniversität!* 10 (15 March 1973), BAK, B/362, 3369,1, VII/11.

84. Ulrike Meinhof, “Die Massen und der Konsum,” first half of 1973, BAK, B/362, 3369,1, IX/31–44.

85. *Ibid.*, 11.

86. Ulrike Meinhof, “Konsum,” late 1972/early 1973, 4, BAK, B/362, 3370,2, XVI/169–70.

consumption, pointing to squatting and to what today would be called subvertising: "Advertisement will be put into the service of the revolution. . . . With modest means one can alter nearly every placard, every advertisement. . . . The price is crossed out. The weapon . . . stuck on. The speech bubble declares the theory of liberation."<sup>87</sup> She also thought that questions of housing would become acute, pointing out that "countless squatters live illegally."<sup>88</sup> What had started as an ambitious attempt to integrate several critiques of capitalist regimes of provision petered out in the final pages when Meinhof, rather than cracking the contradictions of consumption, simply held out the hope of help from the People's Republic of China.

It is easy to see why this document encountered criticism from her comrades: it mixed harsh self-criticism with vague action plans and appeared to switch from direct action back to propaganda of the deed. At the same time, Meinhof's complicated attempts at differentiation while evoking the masses were not intuitively clear, especially since other members of the RAF had already abandoned the project of mobilising the protest movements. At some point, Meinhof explicitly withdrew her paper. Exercising self-criticism, she apologetically pointed to the harsh detention conditions she had suffered at Ossendorf.

An important theoretical backdrop for the RAF's emphasis on consumer society in 1973 was Marcuse's *Counterrevolution and Revolt*. A document confiscated from the cells of RAF inmates in mid-July shows Ensslin suggesting to the prisoners several texts, among them *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, a "concrete job for the continuation of the campaign."<sup>89</sup> Ensslin made it clear that the RAF wanted to go beyond Marcuse, regarding him as an inspiration, not a blueprint.<sup>90</sup> Apparently, part of the criticism of the Black September statement had been that Marcuse's treatment of the topic was superior to Meinhof's. For her part, Meinhof was flabbergasted that *Counterrevolution and Revolt* unfolded arguments that she thought resembled her own. In a seven-page handwritten paper, she embarked on a detailed comparison of quotes from the Black September statement with quotes from *Counterrevolution and Revolt*. She emphasised that both texts focused on how consumer society dominated the entire human being, including the psyche. Moreover, both texts seemed to

87. Ulrike Meinhof, "Die Massen und der Konsum," first half of 1973, BAK, B/362, 3369.1, IX/31–44.

88. Ulrike Meinhof, "Theorie und Praxis," late 1972/early 1973, BAK, B/362, 3370.2, XVI/112.

89. Gudrun Ensslin, "an die anwlte und gefangenen," AHIS, KOK 007.002.

90. Gudrun Ensslin, note, 7 July 1973, quoted in Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 57, 331.

look for a new type of class analysis and a new language that might break the system's hold over a false consciousness.<sup>91</sup> The internal debates over the Black September statement had thus led to "Die Massen und der Konsum," with the latter representing an attempt to specify and improve the former. Meinhof ultimately thought that her argument was reinforced by *Counterrevolution and Revolt* and by Marx's *Grundrisse*, which were new to her, and she set out to integrate the passages highlighted by Marcuse into her position.<sup>92</sup>

"Die Massen und der Konsum" and other documents confiscated during various searches of the RAF inmates' cells were available to the members of an expert committee, which the federal Ministry of the Interior established in 1978, not least to legitimize its position in the fight against terrorism via scholarly expertise. Between 1981 and 1984, this committee published five volumes on the sociological and ideological contexts of terrorism in West Germany, which, although the Interior Ministry tightly controlled the scholars, remain the most scholarly treatment of the topic to this day. The expert committee's interpretation proved enormously influential, and hundreds of other studies have relied on the volumes. Frankfurt political scientist Iring Fetscher and his assistants, Herfried Münkler and Hannelore Ludwig, coauthors of the first volume, offer an analysis of certain aspects of "Die Massen und der Konsum."<sup>93</sup> Subsequent scholarship on the RAF has completely ignored the document.

An unprejudiced assessment of Meinhof's intellectual position requires a critical examination of the official interpretation published five years after her death. Fetscher, Münkler, and Ludwig accuse Meinhof of shrinking Marx's class analysis to the level of mere incomes and consumption, culpably neglecting the sphere of production. They discard her emphasis on the sphere of consumption as naive, declaring that *Konsumkritik*—which they neither define nor contextualise—could be adopted only by individuals, never by the masses, who could at most be critical consumers. While this idea could still pass as a more or less accurate assessment of the leverage of *Konsumkritik* in terms of early 1980s realpolitik, it went further by mounting an apodictic claim that the economic realm could never be effectively moralised or politicised from the

91. Ulrike Meinhof, "Der Imperialismus ist ein Herrschaftssystem," BAK, B/362, 3369, I, III/37–43.

92. Ulrike Meinhof, handwritten notes, BAK, B/362, 3369, I, IV/31 (reverse side); Ulrike Meinhof, "nochmal zu münchenpaper," BAK, B/362, 3370, XV/11. Meinhof learned about the *Grundrisse* from Martin Nicolaus, *Konkurrenz und Mehrwert: Zur Klassentheorie bei Marx* (Berlin, 1970). Ulrike Meinhof, handwritten notes, BAK, B/362, 3370, I/3.16–20. Raspe left a marginal note on Mahler's *Arbeiteraristokratiepapier* that pointed to the "Grundrisse on consumption," BAK, B/362, 3371, 11/9.

93. Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 78–82.

consumer's end. Rather keen to establish contradictions and idiosyncrasies in Meinhof's writings, Fetscher, Münkler, and Ludwig see in her "new" emphasis on consumption a "brusque ideological volte-face." However, their heavy-handed criticism of Meinhof's argument hardly does justice to the line of reasoning adopted in her paper. Irrespective of one's political or moral judgment of the RAF, a clear line of continuity exists in the group's major documents: affluence had allowed the state to conquer the consciousness of the masses, but this apparent satisfaction was incomplete and had started to crumble. Since the June 1970 statement, "Build the Red Army!," an important if unrealistic plank in the RAF's programme had been to mobilise the downtrodden within affluent society. Meinhof's ambition in the first half of 1973 was to explain how capitalism had prevented the polarisation of classes that Marx had predicted. Moreover, she was unwilling to relegate revolutionary struggle to the Third World alone. But this did not mean she was unaware of the crucial role the means of production played in any Marxist thinking or did not agree with the principle of solidarity with various revolutionary movements in the developing world. The authors of the study commissioned by the Interior Ministry seem to be saying that her approach was ultimately like a nineteenth-century revolutionary setting his hopes on the *Lumpenproletariat*, "an amorphous agglomeration of low-income sections of the population," which was unstructured and locked in internal competition and consequently would never be capable of acting.<sup>94</sup> However, in Marx's days, the *Lumpenproletariat* lacked the crucial function for the economic system that the integrated consumer had in the demand-driven Keynesian economics of late capitalism. And the sections of society Meinhof had in mind—students, apprentices, women, foreign workers—were indeed crucially involved in social movements, which, while not toppling capitalism, eventually did exert considerable political pressure.

When treating Meinhof's fascination with shoplifting, Fetscher and his assistants deny her even the remotest claim to any Marxist credentials since she apparently did not understand that "individual maximisation of economic benefits" by illegal means only replicated capitalist morals. The socialist revolution as Marx had conceived it was far different from the competition over limited goods by nonpeaceful means. Fetscher, a leading scholar of Marxism, pointed out gleefully that Marx had produced a theory of value creation *and* a theory of distribution, while Meinhof reduced the whole theory to just the latter. Curiously, Fetscher himself had once looked for the revolutionary subject in the realm of consumption. In his address to a 1968 summer school on Marx

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94. Ibid., 82.

and Revolution he approvingly quoted Marcuse and emphasised: “The attitude of the passive consumer (whose buying motive is determined by the psychology of competition) and that of the active revolutionary are diametrically opposed to each other. How should the latter take the place of the former?”<sup>95</sup> Thirteen years later, Fetscher and his coauthors took the differences between Meinhof and Mahler—one taking consumption as an indicator of the masses’ captivation by the system, the other taking consumption as evidence of their willingness to revolt—as a blatant example of “the internal inconsistency of the ‘RAF’ ideology.”<sup>96</sup> Despite the emerging personal tensions among the imprisoned RAF members, they still conceived of themselves as a collective based on relentless openness and mutual criticism in strategy debates, which they conducted via their intricate system of circulars delivered by their defence lawyers. Mahler’s emphasis on crime being rooted in society made him in fact share Meinhof’s affirmation of theft: “Nowadays, anyone who does not steal from imperialist monopoly capital is either too stupid or too craven for it.”<sup>97</sup> Mahler differed from Meinhof in demanding improvements to the prisoners’ living conditions with television, cigarettes, and coffee; in the larger picture, they disputed the strategic implications of a shared theory of affluence that stifled revolutionary consciousness. The question was how and where to overcome the problem. While mobilising a reserve army of shoplifters was certainly rather unrealistic, Meinhof was in good company with other revolutionary theorists who had prematurely interpreted their contemporary social upheaval as the first stirrings of imminent revolution. To suggest that Meinhof was imagining a postrevolutionary society where people simply stole from the supermarkets is misconstruing the theoretical endeavours of someone who desperately sought to challenge the state’s monopoly on violence by mobilising those who broke the law of the propertied classes.

Meinhof was seeking to mobilise an existing social movement, which, in the wake of the student movement, had continued to expound the problems of everyday life in affluent society. Shoplifting justified by crude Proudhonian terms was a widespread practice in the emerging alternative milieu. Meinhof likely read about a shoplifting action by the occupants of a self-managed and collective housing project for homeless young people established in an aban-

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95. Iring Fetscher, “Von der Produktion des revolutionären Subjekts durch die Selbstverwundlung der Individuen,” in Bloch, Marcuse, Habermas, Fischer, Künzli, Fetscher, Marković, Tadić, and Fromm, *Marx und die Revolution*, 70.

96. *Ibid.*, 81–82.

97. Horst Mahler, notes, 1973, AHIS, KOK 03,002.

doned building in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin in March 1973.<sup>98</sup> In many cities—particularly in Italy but also in Germany—fare dodging, rent strikes, and “proletarian shopping” had become signs of a developing counterculture based on different moral values and lifestyles. Subsequent chapters analyse this wider context.

According to Fetscher, Münkler, and Ludwig, Meinhof realised the weaknesses of her emphasis on consumption and shifted the argument away from distribution back to production.<sup>99</sup> It would be more accurate to acknowledge that she tried to analyse how the two phenomena were connected. A speech written primarily by Meinhof but possibly coauthored by other RAF members was delivered by Astrid Proll, the younger sister of Thorwald Proll, at her trial in early October 1973. This text focused on automation and took up ideas from “Die Massen und der Konsum,” again emphasising property crime as an indicator of economic crisis: “The people are stealing at department stores in large quantities . . . , exchange values in the billions are annually carried off from the department stores.”<sup>100</sup> The speech began with a tirade that Meinhof might have been directing at her posthumous critics: “What the opportunistic rats, the pseudorevolutionaries, the desk Marxists, the Marx aesthetes, the revisionists have been doing for 100 years is turning Marxism into a commodity. . . . The revolution is not a commodity.”<sup>101</sup> Drawing on Marx, she interpreted automation as driving a process that hollowed out the exchange value of mass-produced goods.<sup>102</sup> She interpreted people’s propensity for theft as an intuitive realisation of this devaluation. The nature of the productive process made the claim of the “moneybags” to ownership of goods anachronistic and obsolete. The people no longer accepted the distribution of the gross national product on the basis of “wages, interests, and rents” and the “separation of wage labour and capital.”<sup>103</sup> She pointed to American statistics showing that people stole ten billion dollars per year in office supplies and faked receipts and expense claims. Closer to home, people demanded free rides on public transport. The idea was to let the entire system collapse. As before, she clearly stated that consumption was not per se bad: “There is no reason at all to rant about consumption. It is,

98. “Mit Säcken ins Warenhaus—Die Lebensmittel rausgeholt,” *Wir wollen alles* 4 (May 1973): 12. A copy of this issue was confiscated in Raspe’s cell at Ossendorf Prison on 16 July 1973. BAK, B/362, 3372.2. See below.

99. Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 83, 220.

100. Meinhof, “Widerspruchspapier” delivered by Proll at her trial, 2 October 1973, 13, AHIS, KOK 02.010.

101. *Ibid.*, 4.

102. *Ibid.*, 9.

103. *Ibid.*, 13.



however, messed up, a product of the development of the means of production. It replaces natural needs with historically created needs, as Marx says. The consumer shit is not only ‘shit.’”<sup>104</sup>

Drawing on Marx’s *Grundrisse*—on the same passage that Marcuse cited on the third page of *Counterrevolution and Revolt*—Meinhof continued to focus on the impact of machines. Not unlike Marcuse, she saw the technological potential 115 years after *Grundrisse* as a possible source of egalitarian liberation. She interpreted the historical development of the twentieth century as a process of capital reappropriating the surplus value that automation had produced, partially divorcing it from labour and eventually diverting it from the realisation of real needs. In terms of revolutionary strategy, Meinhof by no means ignored the developing countries. She focused on sabotaging the “logistics of imperialism,” the networks, such as oil pipelines, in the hands of multinationals, which linked developed and developing societies. Invoking the notion of “structural violence,” with reference to Johan Galtung, she envisioned an offensive against the supply networks of Western Europe going beyond the RAF’s previous attacks against the U.S. Army. This was in line with her earlier endeavours to somehow disrupt capitalism’s economic resources of legitimisation. If attacks disrupted the supply of oil or electricity, she could conceivably hope for repercussions on prices and the security of supply, which might shift the political balance in favour of the dissatisfied and eventually revolutionary consumers she sought.<sup>105</sup>

Meinhof also interpreted the crimes of National Socialism as resting on the production of consumer goods, on surplus products that went beyond basic needs: “Without cars, radios, and planes, they would not have succeeded in gassing six million Jews, destroying the organisation of the German workers’ movement, and starting the second imperialist world war.”<sup>106</sup> To her mind, the Nazis’ extermination policies were in line with the general principles of capitalism, implying a clear continuity between Auschwitz and “the genocide of the Vietnamese people”: “Transformation of living labour into things, reify life, life time into things, turn into a thing, make dead, by quantification, divide, fragment, make interchangeable, turn into a commodity. . . . Everything

104. Ibid., 16.

105. Ulrike Meinhof, “noch was zu münchen-paper und der kritik daran,” AHIS, KOK 07,006; “Imperialismustitel,” BAK, B 362, 3369, 1, III/30–31. Meinhof referred to Dieter Senghaas, ed., *Imperialismus und strukturelle Gewalt: Analysen über abhängige Reproduktion* (Frankfurt, 1972). On structural violence, see also Jan-Carl Raspe, handwritten notes, 3 December 1972, BAK, B/362, 3371, 10b/25.5.5; Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 118–19.

106. Ulrike Meinhof, “Widerspruchspapier” delivered by Proll at her trial, 2 October 1973, 15, AHIS, KOK 02,010.

into commodity, into money, into illusion of reality, to turn reality into illusion, into paper, without use value, into nothing: . . . that was Auschwitz—that is Auschwitz.”<sup>107</sup> In this worldview, Keynesianism was the system’s trick to capitalise its surplus product even in times of crisis, and fascism was the means to put it through to the masses. She seemed convinced that this mechanism was now finally at the end of its tether: “The crumbling away of exchange value cannot be undone with consumerism.” However, she also had her doubts about “whether they will manage yet another time, this time with computers, helicopters, and transmission systems without any crackling in the line. . . . With the B52s alone they won’t manage. The Vietnamese people have proved it.”<sup>108</sup> Within these parameters, Meinhof was eager to see continuities with the National Socialist past: the Olympic Games of 1936 and 1972, consumption, and “the old and the new fascism” all belonged together. She went so far as to assert a line of continuity between Auschwitz, Vietnam, and the German authorities’ disastrous attempt to free the Israeli hostages at Fürstenfeldbruck. She even used the term *verjuden*, with its highly antisemitic connotations, to characterise what she saw as the system’s effort to buy out the people with people’s shares and asset formation.<sup>109</sup>

Meinhof explained her position in a historical argument: the antisemitism of the Nazis went much further than the reactionary anticapitalism of the declining petty bourgeoisie, who mistook Jews involved in trade and commerce as the cause of the petty bourgeoisie’s historically necessary plight. Instead of abolishing the real cause, the Nazis sought “to abolish” the Jews, as if they really were what they only represented: “the money—the money system—the system.” She maintained forcefully, “Fascism turned the historical, the *human* solution of the contradiction—which would have been civil war—revolution—dictatorship of the proletariat—communism—into the antihistorical, *inhuman* final solution: Maidanek, [sic] Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz.”<sup>110</sup> Meinhof then quoted at length from Karl Marx’s *On the Jewish Question*, in which he asserted that human emancipation was hindered by economic inequality: “Emancipation from *huckstering* and *money*. . . would be the

107. Ibid., 24.

108. Ibid., 16.

109. Meinhof, “noch was zu münchen-paper und der kritik daran,” AHIS, KOK 07.006.

110. Meinhof, “NS-Faschismus”: 13–14, AHIS, KOK 07.006. An unsigned and undated document of preliminary notes for a text on “revolution and fascism” shows that some of the main arguments from “Die Massen und der Konsum” regarding shoplifting persisted well into the second half of 1973 and were increasingly tied up with considerations of Nazi Germany. The document contains a reference to a newspaper from August 1973. It was confiscated 7–8 February 1974. “Vorbemerkung zu dem paper: Revolution und Faschismus,” 20–21, BAK, B/362, 3309,2 273–74.

self-emancipation of our time. . . . The Jew is perpetually created by civil society from its own entrails.”<sup>111</sup>

### The RAF's Consumer Politics

At first, it might appear that Meinhof was alone in the RAF in emphasising matters of consumption, and indeed, evidence indicates that the topic was controversial among the RAF prisoners.<sup>112</sup> A published compilation of clandestine circulars exchanged between RAF inmates between 1973 and 1977 does not show consumption as a topic of overriding importance; the correspondence was primarily concerned with a collective search for options of political activity under the conditions of imprisonment.<sup>113</sup> However, a closer analysis of the internal discussions shows a good deal of common ground concerning consumer politics as part of the imperialist system and thus of guerrilla politics.

In early 1973, Ensslin apparently thought along similar lines as Meinhof, asking, “What can the vital correspondence with the masses (the consumer) look like?”<sup>114</sup> She pointed out that *konsumentenpolitik* was a form of domestic imperialism that assigned the role of the subject of the profits, while humans were reduced to the object. Within this relation, consumers were subject to reification and commodification, leaving them with a status somewhere in between physical object, animal, and human being. Under “consumer politics,” Ensslin subsumed the global politics of money and resources, which were domestically executed by the double standards of “Social Democratic masks”: “This culmination of history—made by the globally organised . . . bourgeoisie—explains literally everything. Their values are the commodity and the market. . . . Human beings the international currency.” Invoking Marx, she concurred with Meinhof in interpreting the “workers’ aristocracy” as potentially the final trump in the bourgeoisie’s hand. This meant the revolutionary proletariat of the capitalist metropole had a chance: “The 3. world’s claim to leadership is no longer the final word of the revolution.”<sup>115</sup> Conceiving of consumption as an integral part of self-alienation, she decried “this entire dirty universe

111. Karl Marx, “Zur Judenfrage” (1843–44), in MEW, 1:372–74 (English trans., <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/index.htm> [accessed 5 July 2011]).

112. E.g., Ulrike Meinhof, “Zu der Kritik an dem Paper,” 1972/first half of 1973, BAK, B/362, 3370,1, XV/5–7.

113. Bakker Schut, *das info*.

114. Gudrun Ensslin, handwritten note, early 1973, BAK, B/362, 3367,1, II/27/158–59.

115. Gudrun Ensslin, “Reden wir von uns,” early 1973, AHIS, KOK 07.002, printed in *das info*, ed. Bakker Schut, 15–16.

of property + consumption.”<sup>116</sup> Ensslin believed that the RAF would serve as an example that would get the masses to understand how the relationship towards consumption becomes the relationship towards oneself.<sup>117</sup> However, she also defamed her desired audience: “As long as there are only consumers, there is nothing to publish.”<sup>118</sup> What counted were deeds, not words.

Referring to Marcuse, Ensslin brought everything into a simple equation: “technological progress = growing societal wealth = higher servitude.” From this equation she concluded the existence of an “*objective* revolutionary situation in consumer society.” She perceptively diagnosed the ambivalent nature of this struggle: the fight within consumer society and the fight against it.<sup>119</sup> Identifying reification as the main issue of the armed struggle, she thought that television’s “fiction of freedom” was a major factor in the battle for consciousness. During the first historical step of the materialisation of human existence—shelter, food, clothing, and so forth—the antagonism between capital and labour could seemingly disappear, which brought Social Democracy to the peak of its bourgeois power. The Social Democrats then drummed into people the idea that the state and the status quo were the only way to obtain “quality of life.”<sup>120</sup> Bourgeois society was highly flexible in terms of ideology. It could remove all taboos except that on violence.<sup>121</sup> Only the second historical step of materialisation brought reification—“*the* disease of the system”—fully to light. The system was unable to shed this disease; the only alternative was the proletarian revolution. Ensslin then asked whether this had not been what Meinhof meant in her “consumption paper.”<sup>122</sup> In what appear to be explicit comments on “Die Massen und der Konsum,” Ensslin reflected on the proletariat’s relationship with consumption, which had completely shaped the proletariat’s relationship with itself. Like Meinhof, Ensslin took the phenomenon of theft to indicate the limits of mass consumption’s integrative powers. Capital had no answer other than state violence in the form of police and judiciary on the domestic level and genocide on a global scale.<sup>123</sup> According to Ensslin,

116. Gudrun Ensslin, “metropolenbrut,” 12 August 1974, in *ibid.*, 136.

117. Gudrun Ensslin, “Im Verhältnis des Proletariats zum Konsum,” BAK B/362, 3367,1, 49/1–50.

118. Gudrun Ensslin to Horst Mahler, 17 May 1973, BAK B/362, 3369,1, IX/44–46.

119. Gudrun Ensslin, “skizze zu bassa (arbeitsitel: stadtguerilla und metropole brd),” late 1972/early 1973, AHIS, KOK 07.002.

120. Gudrun Ensslin, “Von Kroetz stammt das Gleichnis,” AHIS, KOK 07.002.

121. [Gudrun Ensslin], “Der Imperialismus bildet eine Einheit,” BAK, B/362, 3367,1/, II/27/170.

122. Gudrun Ensslin, “Von Kroetz stammt das Gleichnis,” AHIS, KOK 07.002.

123. Gudrun Ensslin, “Im Verhältnis des Proletariats zum Konsum,” BAK B/362/3367,1, 49/1–50. A similar line of reasoning can be found in another paper presumably authored by Ensslin

Marxism seemed stuck in “dumb materialism” for the past century. She championed Mao Zedong’s emphasis on the peasant, which “preserved the countryside” and did “not fetishise the city.” In her opinion, this policy encapsulated the final stage of historical development: it unfolded the “realm of freedom” during the dictatorship of the proletariat, thus making sure that the idea did not die.<sup>124</sup> With their idealising gaze on Maoist China and the Cultural Revolution, which seemed to promise a nonbureaucratic, non-party-led revolution in everyday life, Ensslin and Meinhof were not alone among the radical left of the early 1970s.

For Jan-Carl Raspe, like Meinhof, imprisoned at Ossendorf, consumption was not the most prominent topic, but it featured importantly in some passages of his comprehensive diary-like reflections on issues of ideology and everyday politics. On the day before the early Bundestag elections in November 1972, which in some respects had turned into a referendum on Brandt’s Ostpolitik, Raspe observed that consumer politics constituted the main ideological challenge to the states of the eastern bloc. His recommendation on how to fend off this threat harked back to Mao’s China, the early Soviet Union, and the early German Democratic Republic: “The revolutionary answer would be the cultural revolution, . . . the revolution in the superstructure, in the domain of ideology, which would debunk consumer shit etc.”<sup>125</sup> The question was whether the socialist countries’ economies had not already been so completely directed to the production of consumer goods that an economic about-face was impossible. Concerning the socialist countries’ ability to transform themselves, Raspe seems to have been more optimistic than Marcuse.

This assessment apparently leaned on the compilation work *Civilizace na rozcestí* (Civilisation at the Crossroads) by Czech philosopher Radovan Richta. This large-scale project involving sixty interdisciplinary scholars attempted to analyse the social and human implications of scientific and technological development. In the context of attempts at restructuring the Czechoslovak economy, the aim was responsiveness to market-based consumer demand within the planned economy. The reformers drew on unorthodox western Marxists such as Marcuse and Erich Fromm. The impulses emanating from this project ultimately contributed to the establishment of a “communist mass consumer society” in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s.<sup>126</sup> Raspe focused on Richta’s argu-

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where she agreed that the masses “really drag off millions from department store and factory every day” (“Der Imperialismus bildet eine Einheit,” BAK, B/362, 3367, I, II/27/169).

124. Gudrun Ensslin, “Von Kroetz stammt das Gleichnis,” AHIS, KOK 07,002.

125. Jan-Carl Raspe, “Ad Ostpolitik,” 18 November 1972, BAK, B/362, 3371, 10b/5.1.1.

126. Radovan Richta and collective, eds., *Civilization at the Crossroads: Social and Human Implications of the Scientific and Technological Revolution*, trans. Marian Šlingová, 3rd ed. (White

ments concerning the relationship between consumption and consciousness: “If R.R. is right, the passive acceptance of the cycle of consumption is only possible because capital is forced to dispossess consciousness via its agents—the state including its institutions as well as advertisement.” According to Raspe, this acceptance neutralised any desire for communism despite capitalism’s recurring crises. In this context, he, like his comrades, assumed a duplication of exploitation in the sphere of consumption and a deeply rooted desire of the masses for freedom and equality. He interpreted fascism as a symptom of failed integration through mass production and mass consumption. Echoing Meinhof, he stated, “Business will run only if the masses consume.”<sup>127</sup> Arguing that the system mobilised the masses via consumption, Raspe clearly thought along Marcusean lines. He was convinced that material security was an absolute precondition for the functioning of capitalist society. Compared to earlier forms of political ideology, there was an important novelty: “The values have acquired a material guise + identification loses its ideal character, gains material character. It will thus be much more difficult to break it away.”<sup>128</sup> According to Raspe’s anti-imperialist outlook, the masses of the developing countries that suffered in the interest of capital appeared to be the price for “progress + peace + consumer freedom here.”<sup>129</sup> He attributed the “politicisation” that he observed “not among the masses, but among large parts” of the population to people becoming fed up “with the surrogates of consumption, absolute privatisation etc., which the ruling class have offered as gratification for the strict anti-communism of the masses since the 50s and 60s.”<sup>130</sup>

When it came to determining the RAF’s defence strategy at the Stammheim trial, which began in May 1975, Baader apparently made the decision not to focus on consumption. His key concept was “the war”: “You cannot explain the war via your needs, but you must be able to comprehend and explain the processes that determine the war, from which it (+ those for whom it [*sic*] fights) derive.” Only a long-lasting war would bring forth a new society, new values, and new humans.<sup>131</sup> Baader ultimately equated the RAF and “the war” with the revolutionary subject. Purpose and legitimisation—which featured in Mein-

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Plains, 1969). See also Stefan Bollinger, “Der ‘Richta-Report’—Vergessene marxistische Alternativen in Zeiten der Produktivkraftrevolution,” *Sitzungsberichte der Leibniz-Sozietät* 76 (2005): 75–90, [http://www2.hu-berlin.de/leibniz-sozietat/archiv%20sb/076/05\\_bollinger.pdf](http://www2.hu-berlin.de/leibniz-sozietat/archiv%20sb/076/05_bollinger.pdf) (accessed 28 June 2011).

127. Jan-Carl Raspe, handwritten notes, 22, 23 February 1973, BAK, B/362, 3371, 11/27.1–2.

128. *Ibid.*, 4 December 1972, 27.1.1f.

129. *Ibid.*, 6 December 1972, 3371, 10b/26.1.1.

130. *Ibid.*, 19 December 1972, 21.1.1; for a similar reference, see 7 January 1973, 11.2.1.

131. Andreas Baader, “der schlüssel ist krieg, zur linie für die prozesserklärung in stammheim, 20.5.75,” in *das info*, ed. Bakker Schut, 217.

hof's papers on consumption—took a backseat. However, Baader still shared some of the RAF's perennial convictions in assuming a “complex structure” consisting of “production process, consumption, mass communication” that inhibited the “mobilisation of the masses.”<sup>132</sup> At one point, Baader lamented that political consciousness was a “pitfall of commodity society—the pitfall consisting of alienated production and alienated consumption.” From this perspective, the state's measures against the militant prisoners, which they called “isolation torture,” appeared to constitute the system's attempt to forestall any noncommodified identity.<sup>133</sup> Ensslin similarly embraced revolutionary violence as a “productive force.” Armed politics appeared to be the only possible competition for “state monopoly capitalism.”<sup>134</sup>

In 1975, Meinhof also seems to have come around to a position that put the notion of struggle—“guerrilla/conflict/liberation”—at the ideological centre. But she was still looking for criteria to define this state. It was no longer “theft” but “renunciation of property,”<sup>135</sup> which she now used to define revolutionaries who subordinated their entire personalities to the goals of the collective. The RAF inmates thus qualified as guerrillas without property—the diametrical opposite of affluent consumers. At one point, Meinhof wrote to her lawyer, Eberhard Becker, “If anything the pigs are ready to pack our cells with consumer shit rather than integrate us into the jails.”<sup>136</sup>

The 195-page statement that Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, and Raspe read at the Stammheim trial on 13 January 1976 again shows an analysis of affluent society as a central plank in the RAF's attempts to justify its acts. For them, the Old Left, including trade unions and the SPD, were not up to the task of drawing the right conclusions from German history since they had succumbed to the consumption and privileges that a highly industrialised society offered.<sup>137</sup> The RAF ideologues thought that West German mass consumption had emerged only in the mid-1950s and hence only added a “material basis” to anti-communism—the original mainspring of the colonisation of the masses' consciousness by U.S. imperialism. Mass consumption itself did not explain the

132. Ibid., 219.

133. “andreas am 18.6.,” in *texte*, 90.

134. Gudrun Ensslin quoted in Alfred Klaus, “Bericht vom 15.1.1976 über die Auswertung des am 22.1.1975 in den Zellen der Angeklagten Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, und Raspe beschlagnahmten Beweismaterials,” 12, AHIS, KOK 04,004.

135. Ulrike Meinhof, “an hamburg,” 7 October 1975, in *das info*, ed. Bakker Schut, 222.

136. Ulrike Meinhof to Eberhard Becker, 1973, BAK, B/362, 3370,1, XI/26.

137. Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, and Jan-Carl Raspe, “Erklärung zur Sache,” 13 January 1976, 13, [http://labourhistory.net/raf/documents/0019760100\\_04.pdf](http://labourhistory.net/raf/documents/0019760100_04.pdf) (accessed 29 June 2011); extracts in ID-Verlag, *Rote Armee Fraktion*, 198–265.

masses' negative attitude towards socialism. The RAF cadres believed that consumption served as a pointer to imperialist contexts.<sup>138</sup> The vast quantities of commodities that the Marshall Plan furnished—not least with the intention of undermining the appeal of communist parties—served “as vehicles for the transport of U.S. imperialist ideology.” Quoting Marshall Plan administrator Richard M. Bissell, whose later career at the CIA made him a plausible target, the defendants tried to show that at least initially, the Marshall Plan was far less generous than was often assumed. In this interpretation, a purposeful expansion of Europe's capacity to consume was adopted only from 1949 onwards, when the United States realised the full economic potential of a constellation that addressed overproduction within the United States and channelled profits towards American companies. The aim was to deliver not food but the industrial reconstruction of Europe in accordance with U.S. interests. Had the Marshall Plan simply supported the interests of European consumers, it would have been a losing deal, a mere shifting of capacity to consume from the United States to Europe. The concerted expansion of European consumption capacities, however, generated profits while forestalling communism and letting the United States appear to be a benefactor. West Germany was the bridgehead in this endeavour.<sup>139</sup>

In this context, the “Korea boom”—the boost of the West German economy as a result of the increased demand in armaments induced by the Korean War in 1950—exemplified West Germany's integration into the “imperialist cycle” as well as the connections among armaments, war, and economic upswing. The Korean War ultimately appeared to be a “precondition for the effectiveness of the anticommunist offensive in consumer culture.”<sup>140</sup> West German industry's subsequent export orientation was then, at least in its initial phase, interpreted along the lines of a classical theory of social imperialism: the expansion of consumption capacities via increasing real wages was achieved by shifting capitalism's contradictions to the periphery, a process that resulted in a “harmonious development” of class relations within West Germany.<sup>141</sup>

The document referred to the United States as “the centre of transnational corporations,” highlighting American development schemes: John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress and Walt Rostow's takeoff model. The former aimed to establish economic cooperation between the United States and South Amer-

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138. *Ibid.*, 21.

139. *Ibid.*, 37–38.

140. *Ibid.*, 42.

141. *Ibid.*, 45.



ica against the backdrop of the Cuban Revolution, seeking to prevent Latin American collaboration with the Soviet Union and rhetorically coupling material progress with freedom. In *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960), Rostow envisioned an age of high mass consumption as the ultimate goal of industrial modernisation, thus defining the American norm as integral to the economic progress of all developing societies. Rostow was again a somewhat plausible illustration for the RAF's worldview: a staunch anticommunist involved in the development of the Marshall Plan and a main figure in the Vietnam War as national security adviser to both Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson. The defendants at Stammheim only mentioned these schemes, going into little detail, and castigated their "demagogic function" when highlighting the millions of people who, according to statistics by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, suffered from malnutrition.<sup>142</sup> These huge figures implicitly were also meant to dwarf the four cases of murder and the fifty-four cases of attempted murder of which the RAF leaders were accused.

Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, and Raspe argued that capital tried to force all countries into "imperialist accumulation" and embraced propaganda to create the corresponding "ideological climate"—for example, via "fascist Hollywood hero series." Leaning on an article in *Der Spiegel*, the Stammheim defendants explained that American TV series—*Kojak*, *Columbo*, *Bonanza*, and *Kung Fu*—reached five hundred million viewers in ninety-five countries. They quoted a UNESCO study showing that "television with its universal language had proved to be an efficient instrument for the spreading of the ideology of consumption." For the analysts of "soft power" *avant la lettre*, the ideology of consumption was made for "objects resigning themselves to their repression."<sup>143</sup> The category of consumption as an abject indicator of imperialist power structures was firmly established in the RAF leaders' thinking. It was no longer a question of proving this connection, but of applying it to diverse contexts: "bureaucracies gobbling up national income . . . , luxury consumption, equipment, prestige objects, imperialist systems of communication and the corresponding programmes of brainwashing, the police apparatus, and first and foremost armaments purchased from imperialist corporations."<sup>144</sup> The reformist impulses within the Warsaw Pact appeared as an "attempt at reconstructing the global

142. Ibid., 96.

143. Ibid., 102; "Fernsehen: Sauce in Serie," *Der Spiegel* 48 (24 November 1975): 178–81; Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis, *Television Traffic—A One-Way Street?: A Survey and Analysis of the International Flow of Television Programme Material* (Paris, 1974).

144. Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, and Jan-Carl Raspe, "Erklärung zur Sache," 13 January 1976, 107.

market . . . to arrive at a convergence of the systems via consumerist strategies.”<sup>145</sup> Ostpolitik—a “social democratic project of neocolonialism”—appeared to be a new variant of a much older constellation that put the pressure on the Soviet Union. According to the RAF, imperialism’s “destructive potential” had encircled the Soviet Union and thus forced a specific “model of accumulation” upon it: the “development of heavy industries and consumer goods industries, surplus production to be utilised in armaments, thus surplus destruction with the consequence of aggravating shortages in consumption.”<sup>146</sup>

In her final writings, composed just weeks before her death, Meinhof still located the RAF’s struggle in a framework of the “manipulation of the masses” consisting of “a postfascist state, consumer culture, chauvinism of the metropole, . . . the media, psychological warfare, social democracy.”<sup>147</sup> She accused the Legal Left of merely marketing and consuming the memory of anti-Vietnam War activism.<sup>148</sup> This construction swallowed the masses’ revolutionary impetus, turning mere indignation into a blunt weapon that necessitated armed struggle. Historically, she located a fateful convergence in New Deal Taylorism, which she understood as a method of splitting the proletariat: economic struggle was shifted into the sphere of the state, social policy preempted class struggle with a depoliticising effect, and finally consumer culture—that is, mass production of consumer goods via assembly line production—entailed high wages at the price of an intensification of work.<sup>149</sup>

The RAF’s treatment of the Western Cold War strategy and of market-oriented policies since the New Deal is an interesting example of inversionary discourse: the radicals addressed many of the crucial tactics and strategies that policymakers in Washington and Bonn embraced, but from an anti-imperialist worldview, the successes of the Marshall Plan and Keynesianism appeared to be negatives since they contributed to the stabilisation of the system. There was agreement that stabilisation had occurred, but one side welcomed it and used it to legitimise its position in the postwar world order, while the other side embarked on a historical inquiry into the origins of the hated system of a depoliticising materialism, which it sought to delegitimise.

In marked contrast to the scholarly literature, a few contemporary observ-

145. Ibid., 129.

146. “brief von andreas an die gefangenen, 3 fragmente aus der ‘erklärung zur sache,’” in *texte*, 197–98.

147. Ulrike Meinhof to Hanna Krabbe, 19 March 1976, in *letzte texte von Ulrike*, ed. Internationales Komitee, 6.

148. Ulrike Meinhof, “geschichte der brd, alte linke: fragment—zu den beweisanträgen,” in *ibid.*, 29.

149. “brief ulrike—discussion hier,” in *ibid.*, 26. See also Jacobs, ““Democracy’s Third Estate.””

ers highlighted the RAF's far-reaching critique of consumer society and its corresponding culture revolutionary plank. East German dissident Wolf Biermann, who in 1969 had donated ten thousand deutsche marks to Horst Mahler for the legal defence of West Berlin students, stated in July 1972, "Lenin said that the first shot must only be fired when the revolution starts. The communists from the Baader-Meinhof-Group risk their lives for the contrary position: that is to say, they want to prove that if at long last the first shot does not go off, the revolution will be slumbered and gorged away."<sup>150</sup> Social psychologist Peter Brückner went into more detail after he had been temporarily suspended from his university professorship under the terms of the 1972 Radikalenerlaß, which banned people deemed to be political radicals from public service positions. Brückner argued that the social-revolutionary revolt of the early 1970s implied a focus on the segments of society not integrated into the capitalist relations of work and consumption. This went hand in hand with radical resistance against this destructive integration.<sup>151</sup> What was often criticised as a contradictory approach of trying to cater to both the privileged and the poverty-stricken was in fact an ambitious attempt to call the allegedly universal benefits of economic affluence into question and thus address the entire spectrum of the working population as potential opponents and victims of the capitalist system. Brückner points to contemporary phenomena such as increases in property offences, squatting, citizens' initiatives, and "revolts against pressure to perform and consumption."<sup>152</sup>

The RAF's early 1976 writings represent an end point to its critical focus on issues of consumption. January 1976 was the last time that the RAF's attempts to legitimise its position vis-à-vis the authorities and the public focused so explicitly on consumption. A quantitative analysis of the most comprehensive published compilation of RAF statements, *Rote Armee Fraktion: Texte und Materialien zur Geschichte der RAF*, provides a clear message: the term *Konsum* and its derivatives appear on 40 of the 379 pages covering the time between "Build the Red Army!" (June 1970) and Germany's reunification in October 1990. Only three of these references come from after Meinhof's death in May 1976. In December 1984, RAF prisoner Brigitte Mohnhaupt came back to the historical analysis given in the January 1976 statement: consumption was as a strategy to undermine the socialist states and the working

150. Rote Hilfe, *Dokumentation: Vorbereitung der RAF-Prozesse durch Presse, Polizei, und Justiz*, BAK, B/362, 3372,2.

151. Peter Brückner, "Politisch-psychologische Anmerkungen zur Roten-Armee-Fraktion" [1973], in Brückner, *Über die Gewalt*, 47.

152. Ibid. See also Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 282.

class,<sup>153</sup> and a 1986 declaration used the term *Konsumterror* to address a totality of social control.<sup>154</sup> With Meinhof's departure from the scene, the most agile mind that had chosen to focus on issues of consumption no longer delivered impulses in this direction. Moreover, the culmination of the conflict between the RAF and the state during the German Autumn overshadowed the first generation's project of a wide-ranging intellectual analysis as a backbone of their revolutionary endeavour. The second generation's attempts to free the imprisoned cadres left a legacy of self-referentiality, and the successors did not attain the same intellectual scope.

## Movement 2 June

The tradition of an explicit militant focus on issues of consumption was continued by Movement 2 June, which took its name from the day Benno Ohnesorg died.<sup>155</sup> This group was allied with the RAF but developed its own, more anarchist, ideology, at times criticising the tactics of its prominent comrades. The February 1975 kidnapping of the Christian Democratic Union's candidate for mayor of West Berlin, Peter Lorenz, by Movement 2 June was not perceived in the context of resisting regimes of provision, since the militants demanded the release of several imprisoned comrades, including Horst Mahler. However, in seeking to justify the kidnapping, Movement 2 June drew on issues of distribution and moral economy. In a leaflet with a print run of thirty thousand, the activists explained how the paperwork that Lorenz carried showed him to be indifferent to price increases for public utilities. More specifically, he had no time for the distress calls of a mother of a child with Down syndrome who was in financial trouble while Lorenz earned in excess of twenty thousand deutsche marks per month. Adopting a Robin Hood pose, the kidnappers sent seven hundred deutsche marks they found on Lorenz to the woman. They wanted to redirect a party donation of ten thousand deutsche

153. Christian Klar and Brigitte Mohnhaupt, "Erklärung zu 77," 4 December 1984, in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 317, 321.

154. "Die revolutionäre Front aufbauen" (1986), in *ibid.*, 365.

155. *Der Blues*. This is a nonscholarly thousand-page edition of sources related to Movement 2 June, compiling various documents from the West Berlin social-revolutionary subculture of the 1970s. In some cases origin, date, and/or author remain unclear. Available sources are much thinner than for the RAF, but there is still a lot that existing research has ignored. See Tobias Wunschik, "Die Bewegung 2. Juni," in *RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Kraushaar, 1:531–61; Rollnik and Dubbe, *Keine Angst vor niemand; Viett, Nie war ich furchtloser; Meyer, Staatsfeind; Reinders and Fritsch, Die Bewegung 2. Juni*.

marks from building tycoon Karsten Klingbeil to an aid organisation for disabled people. The kidnappers stressed that Lorenz “buys up houses and land in urban renewal areas to demolish the old buildings and build apartment houses that no one can afford, or concrete blocks like Märkisches Viertel or Steglitzer Kreisel, where he was involved as a notary.” Then they asked, “How many shifts does a worker have to knock off to reach Peter Lorenz’s standard of living?”<sup>156</sup>

The authorities gave in to the militants’ demands and set the prisoners free, although Mahler refused to be exchanged. The kidnappers were eventually arrested. During their pretrial confinement in the summer of 1978, former member of Kommune I Fritz Teufel, Ralf Reinders, Gerald Klöpfer, and Ronald Fritzsche gave an interview to the journal *Stern*. When asked what personal and political experiences had led them to go underground and join the urban guerrillas, they included issues of consumption: “Family, school, factory, office, business, university, jail, concrete blocks, the entirely ordinary terrorist insanity of capitalist everyday life that drove youths onto the barricades all over the world, experimenting with new forms of struggle and of living together. The wish to lead an autonomous life. Not to be a dress-up doll, a little cog, a robot, a manipulated consumer idiot in a social as-if nature controlled by profit-seeking interests.”<sup>157</sup>

During their lengthy trial, members of Movement 2 June explained their ideological outlook. They considered violence an intrinsic feature of capitalism. Not unlike Meinhof, their historical perspective harked back to the New Deal, “the system that turned one’s own workers as consumers into a selling market.”<sup>158</sup> Movement 2 June, openly declaring itself anarchist, believed that the principles of the ruling class would inevitably lead to the destruction of the planet. Despite apparent similarities with the RAF’s concept of violence, Movement 2 June differed in its outlook towards people representing the hated system. Reinders claimed that Movement 2 June saw Lorenz, who had been released after five days of confinement in a basement, not only as an enemy but

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156. Movement 2 June, “Die Entführung aus unserer Sicht . . .” (March 1975), [http://www.bewegung.in/mate\\_zeit.html](http://www.bewegung.in/mate_zeit.html) (accessed 24 February 2011). Märkisches Viertel is a housing estate of about 17,000 flats with chains of high-rises built between 1964 and 1974 by a publicly owned building society. To critics it became a symbol of inhuman concrete brutalism. The Steglitzer Kreisel is a high-rise office complex built between 1968 and 1977. It became a major construction scandal with the state of Berlin losing a major loan guarantee; several local politicians were suspected of corruption.

157. “Die Unbeugsamen von der Spree,” in *Die Bewegung 2. Juni*, ed. Reinders and Fritzsche, 117. The interviewees did not authorise publication in *Stern*.

158. “Ablehnung der Strafkammer wegen Befangenheit,” in *Der Blues*, 2:579.

also as a human being, and he had been treated accordingly.<sup>159</sup> Reinders believed that attacking the state or its representatives was insufficient. Resistance had to enter the realm of political economy and had to involve an alliance between militant groups and social movements: “First, we will squat in houses and keep them, and then entire districts. . . . We will first occupy the factories and then manage them ourselves. . . . We will scrap nuclear power plants just like all medium-range missiles and any other dreck.” Reinders acknowledged the Polish Solidarity movement as an explicit example. The task was to prevent isolation from social movements. The authorities must not be allowed to sever the bond between the forces of counterviolence and nonviolence. These thoughts clearly originated from a critical analysis of the RAF’s fate.<sup>160</sup>

However, the two militant groups had many parallels in their goal of a better world. Movement 2 June thought that two conditions had to be met so that human beings could find self-realisation: a just distribution of the goods and the abandonment of any manipulation of needs. This implied a positive image of human nature: “Man realises himself in creative, autonomous, thus non-alienated work and not in hanging around.”<sup>161</sup> Reinders—again, not unlike the members of the RAF—gave an overview of Germany’s postwar history. Capitalism had steadily gained strength relative to socialism. His outlook on the so-called economic miracle was decidedly negative: “a system that drilled people in *Konsumterror*; that always went along with debt and made sure that not only fathers but mothers had to go to work as well.” According to Reinders, humans were subject to comprehensive compulsion: anyone who resisted was deprived of work or even prosecuted. In addition, the media led a veritable “war against the minds,” hammering into people “how important consumption was, how futile resistance would be, and how everything that did not conform to the beat-up capitalist norm posed a danger to the monthly instalments.”<sup>162</sup> Movement 2 June interpreted the contemporary economic situation as state monopoly capitalism, raising prices to the detriment of consumers, who had to resort to shoplifting.<sup>163</sup> In times of crisis, the state had to support the corporations, to the detriment of the social infrastructure: “The interests of the entire society have to take a backseat to the interests of the capitalists. Fewer doctors, fewer teachers, bad hospitals and schools, expensive public transport, bad resi-

159. “Schlusswortmarathon im Lorenz-Prozess,” in *ibid.*, 868–69.

160. *Ibid.*, 879–80.

161. “Ablehnung der Strafkammer wegen Befangenheit,” 584.

162. “Schlusswortmarathon im Lorenz-Prozess,” 865.

163. “Die Welt wie wir sie sehen,” in *Der Blues*, 2:715–16.

dential and recreational spaces are the consequence.”<sup>164</sup> Soaring unemployment figures meant that critiques of *Konsumterror* were receding into the background.<sup>165</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the Trilateral Commission, and other such institutions seemed to uphold peace in their division of the Third World, but in reality, they fostered “wars of steel, cars, textiles, and currency.”<sup>166</sup>

During their trial, the members of Movement 2 June split into three factions: those who wanted to continue as before, those who joined the RAF, and those who embraced a concept of resistance harking back to the traditions of subversive action. When writing on the crisis of the Left in 1979, Teufel, one of the main advocates of the third approach, still used notions of consumption when invoking a radical identity. Adopting the tone of cowboy-and-Indian westerns, he addressed his “red sisters and brothers,” praised “collective freedom and collective happiness,” and associated them with intangible values: “Our love and solidarity, our fantasy, our courage, our patience, our determination, our cleverness, our tenderness, our ability to criticise and self-criticise, our hope is stronger than everything that palefaces can buy for money.”<sup>167</sup> In 1980, when he coined the term *Spaßguerrilla* (fun guerrilla), Teufel was still adhering to the old commune concept of gaining publicity via the calculated breaking of rules.<sup>168</sup>

This approach met with criticism from comrades who saw in this strategy and in the kidnapping of Lorenz only “short-lived victories” and “consumable rituals.”<sup>169</sup> They wanted to dissolve Movement 2 June and join the RAF. This debate led to reflections on their history. A discussion paper by the imprisoned members clung to the established strategy and identified the protest movement, the first to embrace socialist ideas “after twelve years of Nazi terror and 20 years of Cold War agitation,” as the root of the struggle. Glorifying “proletarian youth” who took up militant resistance in the early 1970s, they characterised their fight as opposing three types of evil: heteronomy and oppression; indifference to genocide and imperialism; and finally “the insane capitalist consumer apparatus distorting human needs into the grimace of alien profit.”<sup>170</sup>

164. Ibid., 721.

165. “Die Unbeugsamen von der Spree,” 121–22.

166. “Schlusswortmarathon im Lorenz-Prozess,” 878.

167. Fritz Teufel, “Indianer weinen nicht—sie kämpfen,” in *Klaut sie!*, ed. Roth and Teufel, [http://www.bewegung.in/mate\\_indianer.html](http://www.bewegung.in/mate_indianer.html) (accessed 24 February 2011).

168. AG Spass muss sein!, *Spassguerilla*.

169. “Auflösungspapier 2. Juni,” 2 June 1980, [http://www.bewegung.in/mate\\_aufloesung.html](http://www.bewegung.in/mate_aufloesung.html) (accessed 24 February 2011).

170. Reinders, Viehmann, and Fritsch, “Zu der angeblichen Auflösung.”

Those who wanted to continue Movement 2 June favoured social-revolutionary goals over a “fetish” of violence. Drawing on Régis Debray’s *A Critique of Arms*, written in the context of South American guerrilla movements, members of this camp identified a distinct trajectory of decline of armed revolutionary struggle, beginning with the separation of “the violent method from its economic and social areas of application” and ending with “left-wing terrorism” that remained aloof from the people.<sup>171</sup>

On 13 October 1980, Ralf Reinders, Roland Fritsch, Till Meyer, Gerald Klöpper, and Andreas Vogel received prison sentences of between ten and fifteen years for the kidnapping of Lorenz. Teufel was acquitted on the kidnapping charge but was sentenced to five years in prison for membership in a criminal organisation.<sup>172</sup> Simultaneously, police experts had to “defuse” what appeared to be high-risk explosive devices at KaDeWe and Deutsche Oper Berlin. However, each package turned out to contain just an alarm clock, a bottle of water, and some Negerküsse (a candy similar to a chocolate marshmallow), which, a note suggested, should be given to the children of the explosives expert.<sup>173</sup> Movement 2 June had pioneered the distribution of Negerküsse when trying to calm down customers during the robbery of two West Berlin banks in the summer of 1975.<sup>174</sup> The candy subsequently became an oft-repeated symbol for a limited and “human” use of militant means. A confession about the fake bombs was printed in the journal *radikal*, explaining that Deutsche Oper was not only “a place for pseudo-educated consumers of culture” but also the stage for the Iranian shah’s 1967 visit, during which Ohnesorg had been shot. The hoax at KaDeWe was meant to make it clear that “Mrs and Mr Clean cannot buy their junk goods completely undisturbed” while Movement 2 June comrades were sentenced “to languish in high-security areas.”<sup>175</sup> An article printed in the same issue of *radikal* took a similar line, criticising the myth of armed struggle, which created hierarchies within the radical left. The author emphasised forms of everyday resistance and emblematically praised an unnamed cheese thief at a Karstadt department store.

171. Ibid. Cf. Debray, *Critique des armes*.

172. Meyer, *Staatsfeind*, 416.

173. Eine autonome Zelle aus der Bewegung 2. Juni, “Gruß vom Blues: tik-tak heißt die neue Taktik” (13 October 1980), *radikal* 83 (1980): 5.

174. Reinders and Fritsch, “Von den Haschrebelln,” 49–52.

175. Eine autonome Zelle aus der Bewegung 2. Juni, “Gruß vom Blues,” 5. See also “Der Mythos des bewaffneten Kampfes—oder: ‘die einen klauen Lorenz und ich eben meinen Käse bei Karstadt,’” *radikal* 83 (1980): 4.



## The Autonomists

An emphasis on the everyday dimension of resistance, a subjective concept of the politics of the first person, and a refusal of hierarchies are characteristic of the *Autonomen*, a social movement that emerged in West Germany in the early 1980s, chiefly in the context of the squatter movement.<sup>176</sup> It is difficult to ascribe an unambiguous political or social ideology or a stringent theory to the only loosely federated autonomist groups. They acted not only in many local initiatives and campaigns but also as militant wings of the antinuclear movement and the peace movement. The variety of topics they addressed went along with a range of legal and illegal practices of protest, from conventional demonstrations to property damage and sabotage. Their ritualised militant confrontation of the authorities frequently ran the danger of becoming an end in itself. Their eclectic theories combined elements of neo-Marxism, poststructuralism, and anarchism.<sup>177</sup> As a matter of principle, they conducted their debates anonymously, often using colourful pseudonyms. The authorities heavily criminalised their publications, such as the journal *radikal*, which declared its explicit sympathy with Movement 2 June.<sup>178</sup>

*Radikal* dedicated its December 1980 issue to the topic of consumption. A number of long letters to the editors discussed the significance of consumption in the alternative milieu, thus outlining what might be called autonomist critiques of regimes of provision. The main focus was on negative effects of consumption, which resulted in the “repression of real needs,” turning “people into emotional cripples” and thus enabling the ruling classes “to prevent any resistance at the outset without openly employing any violence.”<sup>179</sup> One author identified a new consumerism among the members of the Left, which he interpreted as a response to the more ascetic lifestyles of the 1970s. He observed insightfully that the professionally established adherents of the student movement formed the potential for a new market segment. To this observer, the term *Konsumterror* still identified an important issue—the “dictatorship of the commodity,” which was “more effective than any other form of authority”—but it was discredited through dogmatic use. He called on the Left to undertake an “appraisal of its own needs” to regain the capacity to act politically: “A Left

176. Anders, “Wohnraum,” in *Das alternative Milieu*, ed. Reichardt and Siegfried, 473–98.

177. See Haunss, *Identität in Bewegung*; Schwarzmeier, *Die Autonomen zwischen Subkultur*; Schultze and Gross, *Die Autonomen*; Geronimo, *Feuer und Flamme*.

178. Freia Anders, “Die radikal und das Strafrecht,” in *Herausforderungen des staatlichen Gewaltmonopols*, ed. Anders and Gilcher-Holtey, 221–59.

179. “Konsum als Droge,” *radikal* 85 (December 1980): 13.

that seriously wants to fight the system of the jail and of the commodity must start very seriously to crack its own imprisonment in the net of consumerism and closely connected careerism.”<sup>180</sup>

Another contribution represented a shift away from issues of violence by putting the focus on individual change in left-wing lifestyles. Based on Erich Fromm’s best-selling book, *To Have or to Be?*, the author diagnosed an “alternative ideology” characterised by a search for a “recovery of intensity and use value.”<sup>181</sup> This ideology argued for the replacement of the “grim greed for commodity-sensual stupefaction” with “self-awareness and self-liberation,” which, however, still appeared in the form of commodities, resulting in an alternative “consumer ethos of the simple but nevertheless discerning . . . life.” At the same time, the author detected the downside of such a breakthrough: increased commercial exploitation of alternative lifestyles. These considerations were explicitly inspired by Marcuse’s notion of “repressive desublimation” and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of “deterritorialisation.”<sup>182</sup> The analysis led to a pessimistic but prophetic vision of the future: “What will remain is the part of alternative life, with which the anxiously inhibited masses can almost cope: the alternative consumer ethos.”<sup>183</sup>

While this author offered no suggestions for how to deal with the dilemma, a statement by a group calling itself the Smoking Bulldozers [*sic*] of Alaska forcefully rejected the alternative movement’s consumer ethos. The Bulldozers did not want to consume differently; they wanted to liberate desire from the capitalist economics of exchange value, which in their view caught any liberating impulses in a “net of consumption.” They sought to confront this inevitability with a concrete utopia of the here and now and a radicalised politics of the first person that uncoupled itself from the long-term objective of liberation: “We no longer prepare for our liberation or the world revolution . . . , we simply play . . . getting ourselves the hi-fi system we have always been keen on . . . , setting fire to Karstadt, not to protest against the murdering in El Salvador; no, the winter is too cold for us, and this way it will get a little bit warmer on Ku[rfürsten]damm . . . and all of a sudden even the level of use value is left behind.”<sup>184</sup> This was meant to be a radical departure from the alter-

180. Ulli, “Links vom Konsum?,” *radikal* 85 (December 1980): 13.

181. Harry Ticker, “Von Wilden, Kindern, alternativen Konsumenten,” *radikal* 85 (December 1980): 14–15.

182. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1987).

183. Ticker, “Von Wilden,” 15.

184. Rauchende Bulldozer Alaskas, “Unterm Pflaster liegt der Asphalt,” *radikal* 85 (December 1980): 17.

native milieu and its ideals of 1968. In September 1982, an autonomist group reappropriating the name Movement 2 June attempted an arson attack on a supermarket in Berlin's Kreuzberg district. The incendiary device in a washing powder container did not go off. A statement of responsibility put shopping centres and supermarkets in the context of urban renewal and the hunger strikes of imprisoned comrades: "Supermarkets . . . will burn as long as they exist."<sup>185</sup>

With an increased commercialisation of the public sphere as part of a boom in shopping centres and pedestrian zones, retail and business associations sought to ban undesirable elements—punks, hippies, homeless people—from shopping streets and enclosed malls. This effort was backed by rules of conduct for patrons that were enforced by private security agencies and ultimately by the police. The "undesirables" did not always go along with the new rules, and the realm of commerce became a contested terrain, raising far-reaching questions about the legal status of public streets and the semipublic sphere of retail. In November 1982, a meeting of punks protesting the new regime in the commercial centre of Wuppertal ended with a massive police operation using batons and mace, countered by paint bombs, a campfire, and a quest for "job security among the glaziers."<sup>186</sup> A week before Christmas of that year, a group calling itself Revolutionärer Morgen (Revolutionary Morning) attacked Wuppertal's "centres of consumption"—that is, department stores and large clothing shops—with butyric acid, an action that the perpetrators conceded was not particularly successful because they did not use enough of the unpleasant-smelling chemical. However, they declared that they wanted to attack "organised inhumanity," which resulted in people "missing out on their real needs, and basically only existing to secure the affluence of a few by working and consuming for them—by allowing them to determine our entire life."<sup>187</sup> The alternative daily paper *taz* dedicated an entire page to "Troublemakers in the Pre-Christmas Period," reporting on attempts to disrupt commerce at KaDeWe by involving shop assistants in endless sales conversation, on violent encounters between punks and police in Hannover's inner city, and on demonstrations in a Bochum department store. In some cases, police officers in riot gear shielded shop windows and conducted security checks at entry points.<sup>188</sup> Such activities had al-

185. Bewegung 2. Juni, "Erklärung zum Brandanschlag auf REAL in 36," *radikal* 109 (October 1982): 5.

186. "Wuppertal: Picknick im Konsumwald," *radikal* 110 (November 1982): 28; "Wuppertal: Samstag-Fieber," *radikal* 111 (December 1982): 27. See Sedlmaier, "Youth and the Semi-Public Sphere."

187. Revolutionärer Morgen, "Wuppertal: Leben, lieben, und dafür kämpfen," *radikal* 112 (January 1983): 26.

188. "Störenfriede in der Vorweihnachtszeit," *taz*, 20 December 1982, 3.

ready become an annual routine: at Christmas the preceding year, the Kurfürstendamm had been the scene of collective action, including the burning of Christmas trees, smashed windows, traffic blockades, and organised shop-lifting. Activists were asked to send Christmas packages to prisons.<sup>189</sup>

Fourteen years and nine months after the Frankfurt department store arson, an incendiary device ignited the men's clothes department of the Wertheim department store on the Kurfürstendamm. A statement of responsibility by a group calling itself the Hungernden Psychopathen (Starving Psychopaths) was printed in *radikal*. There were clear parallels with the events of April 1968: the device had been planted without warning but had been timed to go off during the night, avoiding injury to people but causing considerable material damage. The authors of the statement articulated a rather strong but diffuse discontent with affluent society: "We meant to crack down on the 'hunky-dory atmosphere' right in the prestige heart of the pigs. . . . Just at the time of the annual Christmas junk, we've decided on a department store at the largest and most grotesque consumer racecourse of the Wild West city to add some flaming authority to our permanent puking feeling." The protest also included smashed windows at banks and supermarkets.<sup>190</sup> Parallels ended when it came to publicity: department store arson barely received notice in newspapers in 1982, perhaps because of fear of copycat arsonists. Only a fortnight later, a similar attack occurred in Munich, where an incendiary device was set off at the Hertie department store shortly before closing time, causing material damage amounting to ten thousand deutsche marks. Rather arbitrarily putting the attack in the context of a struggle to prevent computers and data surveillance from taking over society, *radikal* commented that the attack was inappropriately timed during business hours, but nevertheless, no one was hurt.<sup>191</sup> A statement of responsibility appeared in the journal's next issue, stressing that the attack was meant to demonstrate that resistance was possible even in staunchly right-wing Bavaria. However, the belated justification seems primarily to have been intended to fend off criticism. While agreeing with much of the RAF programme, the perpetrators denied that they were just fellow travellers since they avoided injury to human beings. The explanation that they had set the fire on a staircase to avoid hurting anyone was dubious unless they counted on the

189. "Festausschuß der Aktionseinheit "Spaßgerilja" und "Autonome Gruppen," "Weihnacht '81," *radikal* 100 (January 1982): 3.

190. die hungernden Psychopathen, "Äktschen: Brennende Weihnacht," *radikal* 112 (January 1983): 6; Erregte Straßenarbeiter, "Äktschen: Klirrende Weihnacht," *radikal* 112 (January 1983): 6.

191. "München: Flammende Grüße," *radikal* 112 (January 1983): 29.

sprinkler system to extinguish the fire.<sup>192</sup> The perpetrators of the 1982–83 department store attacks were never caught.

Awareness of radical practices targeting the commercial sphere was more pronounced among retail organisations in the early 1980s than in the late 1960s, when the relevant professional journals more or less ignored it.<sup>193</sup> A commentator fulminated that “a subculture of those who refuse to work and pay their rent is forming, and they, with the assistance of governmental funding and the occasional illicit employment, squat in houses, loot shops, devastate streets . . . and blithely and parasitically survive without contributing anything useful to the economy.” However, the author also acknowledged that even the Young Socialists of the SPD had opted for the socialisation of the department store corporations and for a transition to socialist forms of production.<sup>194</sup> Another outraged commentary by a retail functionary reported on “directions for shoplifting by leftist troublemakers” in an autonomist journal: “Perhaps we can soon learn from these columns how to build Molotov cocktails, how to . . . set fire to department stores, how to organise demonstrations in the main shopping streets, including the smashing of windows and showcases and subsequent looting to buy drugs?”<sup>195</sup> Unbeknownst to the indignant tradesman, all of these radical practices were indeed debated in autonomist journals.

In the spring of 1983, a collective shoplifting spree took place in Berlin’s Kreuzberg district. People in black leather jackets took groceries from supermarkets and, posing as modern-day Robin Hoods, distributed the goods to passersby.<sup>196</sup> In November 1983, *radikal* reported on a multipronged attack on KaDeWe: protesters dispersed butyric acid in the food hall, poured waste oil over toy tanks, and destroyed clothes with sulphuric acid.<sup>197</sup> In March 1984, an arson attack targeted the West Berlin branch office of IKEA, causing material damage of ten thousand deutsche marks. The act protested the Swedish retailer’s “pseudo-leftist image” and its use of cheap prison labour in the production of its furniture.<sup>198</sup>

192. “München: Im Herzen der Bestie,” *radikal* 113 (February 1983): 28.

193. This contention is based on a systematic search of the journals *Ffh Mitteilungen*, *Mitteilungen Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller*, and *Der Einzelhandel: Fachorgan des Landesverbandes Einzelhandel des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz* for 1967–69 and 1981–83.

194. “Verstaatlichen: u.a. die 4 Warenhauskonzerne sowie C&A, Otto- und Quelle-Versand,” *Der Einzelhandel* 34.8 (August 1981): 4.

195. Hubertus Tassar, “Kommentar: Klauanweisung linker Chaoten im ‘Klenkes,’” *Der Einzelhandel* 36.5 (May 1983): 8.

196. “Ghetto: Träume werden war!,” *radikal* 115–16 (April–May 1983): 4.

197. “Handschriftliches: Einkaufen macht Spaß,” *radikal* 122 (November 1983).

198. “Berlin/Wallau: IKEA abgebrannt,” *radikal* 126–27 (March–April 1984): 46. The article also insinuates that a major fire on 13 March 1984 that destroyed IKEA’s administrative hub at

The people analysed in this chapter did not belong to the very poor. They did not seek to fulfil their own needs but liked to think of themselves as acting on behalf of the downtrodden, the excluded, and the oppressed. They took an active part in social groups that had begun to move forward to new conditions of life. Beneficiaries of West Germany's affluence and members of a broad protest movement that rather successfully claimed cultural and political influence, members of left-wing intellectual circles powerfully sought to reassert moral values developed against the backdrop of the horrors of World War II and Cold War confrontation. However, they found their path to the society and the regimes of provision they imagined blocked. Their desires and ambitions were not completely implausible under the circumstances, given the breadth and impetus of the protest movement, and given the scenarios of a "realm of freedom" and communist society drawn up by eminent thinkers.

The concurrence of militant forms of protest and theoretical critiques of regimes of provision analysed in this chapter led activists to embrace ever more abstract and comprehensive notions of consumption and of consumer society. Especially for the RAF, the latter became an abstract political enemy that combined social evils on many levels. The idea was to overcome consumer society—or even consumption—as such, not simply to consume differently. The regime of provision they targeted was capitalist consumer society in its entirety, including its global repercussions. The intellectual coupling of issues of consumption with affluent society's inherent structures of violence—as pioneered by the broader protest movement—became a matter of course that no longer required explicit justification.

This chapter's close reading of hitherto neglected documents and theoretical fragments such as Meinhof's "Die Massen und der Konsum" and Raspe's observation that consumer society gave a material quality to idealistic bourgeois values has established an idea previously overlooked by the existing literature: issues of consumption and critiques of regimes of provision were vital to the theoretical framework of the RAF's first generation. A central goal in the RAF's actions was overcoming the moral deficits its members saw as integral to consumer capitalism: alienation, exploitation, and destruction. Simultaneously, they perceived their peer group (the New Left) and the hoped-for revolutionary subject ("the masses") as mired in the mechanisms of consumer society and thus forced to reproduce the counterrevolutionary values of material progress and personal freedom. The antidote they prescribed was the

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Wallau, near Frankfurt, causing material damage in excess of seventy million deutsche marks was also caused by arson, but this cannot be verified.

collective enterprise and discipline of system-transcending armed resistance. In a position of relative weakness, especially when imprisoned, the cadres of the RAF increasingly hoped that the marginalised, those who remained excluded from consumer society, would come to the activists' revolutionary rescue by acting out their real needs. However, these hopes were frustrated by the reluctance of the vast majority of their contemporaries to pose the question of violence against a regime that seemed much less terrible than its predecessor.<sup>199</sup> From this perspective, the oft-cited disunity and inconsistency within the RAF seems less pronounced, since a good deal of common ground and continuity existed in the imprisoned cadres' ambitious project of a militant neo-Marxist critique of capitalist consumer society. Differences occurred over questions of priorities and tactics. Meinhof's attempt to differentiate between external and internal incitements to consume—that is, advertisements or pressure to buy as opposed to genuine desires for freedom and equality—marks a significant departure from the student movement's broader theories of manipulation or depoliticisation and is not as naive as her official critics contended. Her emphasis on theft and other forms of illegal disobedience as a process of moral emancipation aimed to reestablish a connection with the neoanarchist subculture of the early 1970s and with the militant parts of the social movements. In many respects, the RAF's critique of capitalist regimes of provision helped to integrate their heterogeneous ideological portfolio, which, next to these neoanarchist influences, contained elements of communism, especially Maoism; the neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School; the anti-imperialism of a proletarian internationalism; antifascism; and the concept of a revolutionary avant-garde in the urban guerrillas' armed struggle. A critical analysis of consumer society promised to actualise these ideologies, some of which had their roots in the past and in developing societies. Concrete pointers to issues of consumption helped to communicate abstract and at times contradictory ideas, especially with regard to the discursive strategy of amalgamating geographically and historically diverse grievances and forms of political violence in an attempt to legitimise the desperate revolutionary struggle.

After Ulrike Meinhof's death, a related focus on issues of consumption was embraced by Movement 2 June and the emerging autonomist movement, which walked a tightrope between solidarity with and criticism of the RAF and conceived of self-empowerment as bridging the gap between genuine needs and political resistance. They embarked on a battle against the commercial adaptation of alternative subcultures and the commodity character of life-

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199. These considerations are inspired by Dahrendorf, "Politics of Frustration."

styles. Causing material damage by triggering the sprinkler systems in large stores with rather limited incendiary devices became a repeated strategy for throwing spanners into the works of capitalist consumer society. Arson attacks on department stores occurred in the context of the squatters' movement—December 1980 in Göttingen and July 1982 in Berlin—and as part of the protests against the meeting of the International Monetary Fund in West Berlin in September 1988. These events are further contextualised in the following chapters.



## CHAPTER 4

### Public Transport: Protest against Fare Increases

“The students who sat or stood on the tram tracks to thus blockade the tram traffic used violence to coerce the tram drivers to stop their vehicles.”

—Federal Court of Justice (1969)<sup>1</sup>

While the previous chapters focus on radical and militant challenges to comprehensive and abstract regimes of provision that culminated in a veritable revolt against capitalist consumer society, this chapter demonstrates that political violence also arose from more specific conflict over public commodities. The activists constantly faced the threat not only that their actions would be criminalised but also that violent escalations would occur. Civil disobedience and performative rule breaking frequently resulted in court cases where activists found themselves accused of violence—for example, when they blockaded a tramway to protest fare increases they deemed irreconcilable with basic social justice. In the contemporary legal discourse, the offence of coercion—even if limited or symbolic—implied violence.<sup>2</sup> This principle was established by the Federal Court of Justice’s 1969 Laepple verdict, which is the obvious starting point for this chapter because it established a legal framework that was crucial for many subsequent confrontations arising from the use of blockades as a means of protest.

Protests against public transport fare increases peaked with Hannover’s spectacular 1969 Red Spot campaign, when protests caused the collapse of the

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1. Bundesgerichtshof, “Entscheidung vom 8.8.1969—2 StR 171/69” (Laepple-Urteil), BGHSt 23,46.

2. Freia Anders and Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, “Prolog,” in *Herausforderungen des staatlichen Gewaltmonopols*, ed. Anders and Gilcher-Holtey, 11. On coercion, see Otto Backes and Peter Reichenbach, “Demonstrationsfreiheit und Gewalt: Die Gefährdung politischer Grundrechte durch das Strafrecht,” in *Internationales Handbuch*, ed. Heitmeyer and Hagan, 1339–60.

city's entire public transport system and eventually forced the transport company and the municipality to rescind the increases. However, the issue was much more prevalent, affecting many West German cities from 1966 to the early 1980s. Specific groups radicalised the protests by introducing more militant means, which reduced the issue's mass appeal. The *Spontis*—groups of political activists that sought to continue the traditions of the 1968 movement by invoking the spontaneity of the masses—gained particular momentum in Frankfurt, where their most prominent members, Joschka Fischer and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, invested the fare increase issue with high revolutionary hopes. The second important radicalising impulse came when the *Revolutionäre Zellen* (RZ) joined the fight against fare increases. The revolutionary cells were a decentralised network that emerged in the early 1970s in parallel with the RAF and Movement 2 June. The RZ sought to combine anti-imperialist and social-revolutionary motives, frequently leading to ideological divisions among individual cells. Quantitatively, their more limited actions clearly outstripped those of the RAF and of Movement 2 June. According to the federal prosecutor's office, the RZ confessed to 186 militant attacks between 1973 and 1993. In marked contrast to the RAF, and despite their involvement in some attacks that did claim human lives, members of the RZ repeatedly professed to their opposition to killing people.<sup>3</sup> The authorities rarely arrested RZ members because they did not go underground but combined clandestine illegal actions with legal political work within social movements.

### The Laepple Case

The intellectual coupling of sit-in protest with violence entered German legal history in the verdict against Klaus Laepple, who was charged with “mental coercion” (*geistige Nötigung*) in October 1966. Laepple, a member of the Christian Democratic Union, was far from a revolutionary radical.<sup>4</sup> He saw himself as a moderniser and displayed a knack for exploiting the student movement's potential for commercial purposes: “To students he opened up sources of supply at reduced prices, from furniture to franchised filling stations. . . . A Volkswagen was raffled off to raise the turnout for elections for the . . . student parliament. [He] justified the scope of this catalogue of consumer goods with

3. “Anklage gegen ein Mitglied der ‘Revolutionären Zellen (RZ),’” 12 November 2000, <http://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/txt/showpress.php?newsid=23> (accessed 18 July 2011).

4. “Demonstrativer Dreikampf,” *Die Zeit* 9 (27 February 1970); Olaf Bartz, “Konservative Studenten.”

the jargon of a mail-order business: ‘We must attach importance to the service section to animate student self-administration.’”<sup>5</sup> As chair of the integrative Arbeitskreis Kölner Hochschulen, he had taken responsibility for a demonstration against fare increases of up to 52 percent by the Cologne public transport services (KVG). While the demonstration initially proceeded peacefully, including the removal of sit-in blockades by the police, confrontations in its aftermath culminated in the use of mounted police and water cannon against protesters.<sup>6</sup>

The KVG took civil action against Laepple.<sup>7</sup> Laepple was initially sentenced to reimburse the KVG for two-fifths of the damage caused by the blockade—roughly eighty-nine thousand deutsche marks—because of his “illegal and culpable interference” with a business enterprise. This penalty covered loss of income but not any physical damage. The Cologne District Court ruled that Laepple’s conduct had not been covered by his office since it went beyond the realm of university politics.<sup>8</sup> However, the resulting criminal case went all the way up to the Federal Court of Justice, which in 1969 rescinded Laepple’s earlier acquittal on the charge of “mental coercion” while clearing him on the charge of breach of the public peace: “The students who sat or stood on the tram tracks to thus blockade the tram traffic used violence to coerce the tram drivers to stop their vehicles. . . . An acknowledgment of a right to demonstrate . . . would come down to the legalisation of a terror exercised by militant minorities, which is absolutely incompatible with a . . . constitution based on the principles of democracy and liberty.”<sup>9</sup> What had started as a consumer protest was quickly bound up with the question of violence, and chief judge Paulheinz Baldus, who had been a high-ranking jurist during the Nazi period, freely invoked the notion of terror in the reasons given for the judgment. This wide concept of violence with respect to coercion established a precedent for a number of controversial rulings against sit-in blockades in the context of the peace movement and antinuclear protests of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>10</sup> The Federal Constitutional Court did not rescind this interpretation until 1995.<sup>11</sup>

5. Eva Schmidt-Häuer, “Der ‘Provo’ von der CDU,” *Die Zeit* 1 (6 January 1967): 2.

6. Ferdinand Ranft, “‘Schreien sie ruhig nach Demokratie . . .’: Studentenführer Laepple und die Grenzen des Demonstrationsrechts,” *Die Zeit* 43 (25 October 1968).

7. Eva Schmidt-Häuer, “Der ‘Provo’ von der CDU,” *Die Zeit* 1 (6 January 1967): 3.

8. “Zahlen soll er,” *Die Zeit* 14 (7 April 1967).

9. Bundesgerichtshof, “Entscheidung vom 8.8.1969—2 StR 171/69” (Laepple-Urteil), BGHSt 23, 46. See also Zeidler, Merten, and Vogel, *Recht auf Demonstration*.

10. See Jürgen Baumann and Schwind, *Ursachen, Prävention, und Kontrolle*, 1:39.

11. See Freia Anders, “Die Gewaltfrage an der Startbahn West,” in *Gewalt im politischen Raum*, ed. Bulst, Gilcher-Holtey, and Haupt, 285.

However, there were a number of contemporary critics. Richard Schmid, a prominent jurist and the former president of Stuttgart's Higher Regional Court, pointed out in 1969 that what he considered an erroneously wide concept of violence was based on the double meaning of the German word *Gewalt*, combining senses of *violencia* and *potestas*. Schmid called the verdict's reference to terror "embarrassing": "The abuse of the word bespeaks the fact that the criminal division [of the Federal Court of Justice], like many other citizens, . . . is reluctant to acknowledge the particularity of the student movement, especially of its methods. This results in the iniquitous equation with fascist, nationalist, or racist movements." Schmid's analysis of the protesters' use of "violence" was equally lucid: these acts showed only "extrinsic characteristics of violence" but were "conceived as symbols of violence that are deemed to have a political impact."<sup>12</sup> Klaus Tiedemann, professor of criminal law at Gießen University, criticised the "artificially systematic" construction of the Laepple verdict: "This expansion of the penal concept of violence . . . with its persistent inclusion of so-called passive violence is ultimately based on political considerations of crime prevention. However, for the concept of violence, these are unambiguously excluded by the wording of the law: the concept of violence is and will remain tied to the exertion of physical force. The mere sitting or standing in front of a door, on tramway tracks, etc. does not comply with such requirements as to the deployment of kinetic energy; rather, it is mere stasis and perhaps action, but not violence."<sup>13</sup> Massive criticism of contemporary jurisprudence, and particularly of the Laepple verdict, was articulated by the Frankfurt Higher Regional Court under President Curt Staff, who argued that in the final analysis, courts were guided by a concept of order derived from "late absolutism." According to staff, from this followed the idea that one must not infer violent intentions and hostility to the law (*rechtsfeindliche Tendenzen*) from acts of violence that occurred in the course of a demonstration. Otherwise, citizens might refrain from exercising their constitutional rights.<sup>14</sup>

12. Richard Schmid, "Was dürfen Demonstranten? Das Laepple-Urteil des Bundesgerichtshofs: ein Fehlurteil," *Die Zeit* 38 (19 September 1969). On Schmid, see Hans-Ernst Böttcher, "Richard Schmid (1899–1986): Recht für die Menschen, nicht für den Staat," in *Streitbare Juristen*, ed. Kritische Justiz, 487–95.

13. Klaus Tiedemann, "Bemerkungen zur Rechtsprechung in den sogenannten Demonstrationsprozessen," *Juristenzeitung* 24 (1969): 720.

14. "OLG Frankfurt," *Kritische Justiz* 3 (1970): 103; Dostal, 1968, 200–202.

## Red Spot Campaign

At the same time that these debates about the Laepple verdict were taking place, much larger campaigns against fare increases were under way. Between 1968 and 1975, a coalition of action groups that eventually became known as the Aktion Roter Punkt (Red Spot Campaign) organised protest campaigns against public transport fare increases in several West German cities. The most well known of these protests took place in 1969 in Hannover, where they were more comprehensive and successful than elsewhere. Despite their scope and significance for the development of left-wing protest, the conflicts over fare increases remain scarcely documented and hardly touched by historiography.<sup>15</sup>

In most cases, actions against fare increases were not limited to radical activists but enjoyed support from wider circles of society, including trade unions and youth associations. In January 1968, riots and damage to property resulted from such protests in Bremen. As in Cologne, young people—chiefly apprentices and pupils—demonstrating against fare increases were quickly associated with terror. Only a few days after the start of the protests, Bremen's head of government, Hans Koschnick (SPD), said, "However much I support the right to free speech, forms of terror have been exerted here that we will now combat by the strictest means. I support firmer intervention of the police." Demonstrators faced six hundred policemen and four water cannons while four public prosecutors prepared what a news report hyperbolically called "summary courts" (*Schnellgerichtsverfahren*) to deal with "radical elements" charged with damaging buses or throwing firecrackers and stones against trams.<sup>16</sup> Prosecutors in Bremen did not immediately resort to the "mental coercion" precedent from the Laepple case but preferred to pursue suspects on the basis of other elements of the offence, such as dangerous disruption of traffic (*Gefährlicher Eingriff in den Straßenverkehr*, section 315 b, d StGB). This ap-

15. Historiographical attention to the topic has so far been limited to regional perspectives: see Berlit, *Notstandskampagne und Rote-Punkt-Aktion*, 125–43; Mechler, "Hannover und die APO"; Michelpers, *Draufhauen, Draufhauen, Nachsetzen!* A comprehensive compilation of primary sources pertains to Freiburg: Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, *gleich wird's grün*. See also Kesten and Schröder, "Proteste gegen Fahrpreiserhöhungen." For an autobiographical account, see Matthias Sesselmann, *Von der APO zum Opa: Autobiographie und Gedanken eines 68ers* (Erzhausen, 1987), 19–24.

16. "Auch am Donnerstag Krawalle in Bremen: Lehrlinge und Schüler demonstrieren gegen Fahrpreiserhöhung," *Badische Zeitung*, 19 January 1968, 5, in *gleich wird's grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 11109. See also "Bremen: Wie man meistert," *Der Spiegel* 5 (29 January 1968): 34; "'Die Polizei muß psychologisch umrüsten': Spiegel-Interview mit dem Bremer Regierungschef Bürgermeister Hans Koschnick," *Der Spiegel* 5 (29 January 1968): 36.

proach allowed for an accelerated procedure (*beschleunigtes Verfahren*) that assumed the facts of the case to be simple and the punishment to be minor and thus provided for a depoliticised handling of protests that did not raise fundamental questions of violence.

In other cases, jurists showed a remarkable degree of independence. The question of how far *Landfriedensbruch* (breach of the public peace) could be imputed to all participants of a gathering that turned violent remained contentious. Law professor and Free Democratic Party politician Jürgen Baumann protested efforts to hold “passive” participants accountable and demanded that only individual offences by “active” participants should be punished.<sup>17</sup> A Bremen district court judge went a step further, acquitting an apprentice who had been accused of disruption of traffic and coercion on the grounds that “it is really a matter of general public interest to openly discuss unjustified—or even supposedly unjustified—fare increases by a monopoly company like the Bremer Straßenbahn AG and to force a review of these increases by appropriate means.”<sup>18</sup>

The Bremen demonstrations and sit-ins ultimately had at least partial success in effecting a review and reduction of the fare increases. A month after these protests, Rudi Dutschke gave an address to the International Vietnam Congress in Berlin in which he invoked the protesting pupils of Bremen in the same breath as “action committees for the expropriation of Springer” and revolutionary movements in Greece, Vietnam, and Spain: “The Bremen students have demonstrated how the politicisation of immediate needs of daily life . . . can unfold a subversive explosive force.”<sup>19</sup> The politics of daily life became a source of hope for the radical left.

Press reports about violence and conflicts with authorities as well as about the relative success of the Bremen protest activities, were instrumental in the transfer of this specific form of protest to other German cities. In early February, young people’s protests against fare increases in Kiel and Bochum entailed blockades, clashes with police, and stink bombs.<sup>20</sup> Only weeks after the events in Bremen, flyers protested similar fare increases 570 kilometres further south in Freiburg. Some of these incidents put the question of public transport fares in the more general context of public spending by, for example, questioning

17. Jürgen Baumann, “Schutz des Gemeinschaftsfriedens”; Dostal, 1968, 174–75.

18. “Demonstranten: Volle Touren,” *Der Spiegel* 19 (6 May 1968): 49; “AG Bremen,” *Kritische Justiz* 1 (1968): 79–80.

19. Dutschke, “Geschichtlichen Bedingungen,” 122–23.

20. “Neue Krawalle und Stinkbomben: Mehrere Rädelsführer gestellt,” *Die Welt* 30 (5 February 1968): 3, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/206585/2743.jpg.pdf> (accessed 5 June 2010).

military expenditures or the maintenance of a local civil defence shelter. The seemingly peaceful university town in southwest Germany saw massive conflicts between demonstrators blockading traffic and hundreds of police officers. Water cannons were used for the first time in Baden-Württemberg when trying to clear streets and dissolve demonstrations. The police followed a rather uncompromising strategy: “With several riot squads [*Greiftruppen*], ringleaders should be extracted from the crowd and hauled away in prisoner transport wagons standing by.”<sup>21</sup> During the protest, water cannons damaged high street shops and targeted people in shopping arcades.<sup>22</sup> A theology student was injured on the university campus when police hit him over the head with a baton, breaking his glasses and injuring his eye and causing heavy bleeding and unconsciousness. The extent of his injury was eventually disputed, with an official and “objective” document signed by the mayor and district president dismissing reports that the student had suffered a detached retina and juxtaposing the incident with charges against demonstrators who had allegedly hurt a policeman’s eye by throwing acid against a water cannon.<sup>23</sup> The next day, Baden-Württemberg’s prime minister, Hans Filbinger (CDU) – who had to resign in 1978 when it was discovered that as a military judge for the German navy during World War II he had been responsible for several death sentences – endorsed the police’s conduct; the General Students’ Committee (AStA) retorted by likening the circumstances to the events of 2 June 1967 in Berlin.<sup>24</sup>

At this point the conflict had shifted to a journalistic debate on law and order, with the adversaries holding each other responsible for the emergence of violence, while the original criticism of fare increases had taken a backseat. However, the arguments that students printed on flyers and voiced at public

21. Minutes of a meeting between municipality and police to protect public order, 8 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 8955.

22. Winfried F. recollecting excessive use of water cannons against passersby in Freiburg’s city centre, 13 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 2147; letter of an electric shop to the mayor’s office, 12 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 9091; AStA Freiburg, “Freiburger Extrablatt” (flyer), 15 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 1684: 3.

23. “Der ungeklärte Zwischenfall: Schwerer Vorwurf des Allgemeinen Studentenausschusses gegen die schlagenden Polizisten in der Alten Universität,” *Badische Zeitung*, 12 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 11363; draft for an official poster, “Der ungeklärte Zwischenfall,” 12 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 9005.

24. AStA Freiburg, “Freiburger Extrablatt” (flyer), 15 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 1684, p. 1.

meetings were still noteworthy. They stressed the public nature of transport services and highlighted their essential function of relieving the inner city from traffic congestion: “A motorist and his car need 30 to 50 times as much space as the same person riding the tram.”<sup>25</sup> Dismissing purely financial concepts of public transport fares, they saw cheap fares as good public policy. Public transport did not have to cover its costs. Freiburg’s AStA chair also noted that the municipality had neglected to protest the inclusion of public utilities in the new value-added tax system.<sup>26</sup>

The value-added tax was a partial trigger for the wave of protests against public transport fare increases. On 1 January 1968, the Federal Republic of Germany introduced a new value-added tax in keeping with a European Community mandate to establish a general, multistage, but noncumulative turnover tax. This major tax reform led to some consumer price increases because it allowed producers and traders to reclaim the value-added tax they paid either from the tax office or from their customers. The complicated and fraud-prone new system proved a cash cow and simplified production and commerce by replacing the old cumulative turnover tax, but it left the end consumer with the value-added bill. Many retailers used the new tax system to inflate prices—for example, by adding the value-added tax without subtracting the old turnover tax. Some public transport services also did so.<sup>27</sup>

The new tax was only one aspect of protesters’ socioeconomic arguments, which highlighted other crucial questions of distribution. The municipality built roads and car parks without charging users additional fees, but the costs of public transport had to be borne by its users. Even the authorities’ rigorous attempts to clear the inner city of blockades and demonstrations seemed driven by interests bound up with commercial consumption and powerful economic interests. An AStA flyer in the style of a newspaper quoted a report from the region’s subscription newspaper, *Badische Zeitung*, in which tradespeople lamented significant decreases in business: “A large department store . . . estimated the damage already caused by the demonstrations at 100,000 to 120,000

25. Ibid., 2.

26. Minutes of a public meeting of the municipal council at the Historic Merchant Hall at Freiburg’s Münsterplatz, 15 February 1968, in *ibid.*, document 9379, p. 61.

27. See Werner Sporbeck, *Die neue Umsatzsteuer (Mehrwertsteuer) in ihrer Auswirkung auf die Gemeinden* (Göttingen, 1969); “Mehrwertsteuer: Geburt eines Goldesels,” *Handelsblatt*, 28 December 2006, <http://www.handelsblatt.com/mehrwertsteuer-geburt-eines-goldesels;1197920> (accessed 26 March 2010); “Nehmen’s halt ein Taxi’: SPIEGEL-Interview mit Bundesfinanzminister Franz-Josef Strauß über die Mehrwertsteuer,” *Der Spiegel* 3 (15 January 1968): 26–27; “Mehrwertsteuer: ganz entsetzlich,” *Der Spiegel* 2 (8 January 1968): 25.



marks.” The students also pointed out that the police had started to clear the streets by force the day after a representative of the large department store had met with the mayor to press for a quick termination of the demonstrations.<sup>28</sup>

While at this point student protesters were still far from militantly challenging the state, a somewhat exaggerated account of students “storming” the Freiburg District Court to free their detained comrades in arms—a rather stereotypical image of revolutionary activity—was spread by the mayor and was picked up by the Berlin tabloid press and the *Observer*.<sup>29</sup> The protesters, on the other hand, believed that authorities were following a strategy of criminalisation. A flyer quoting article 20 of the Federal Republic’s basic law—“All state authority is derived from the people”—argued, “Deploying water cannons and police cordons insinuates that the demonstrators are in the wrong. ‘Ringleaders’ were . . . arrested and detained overnight. . . . But there are no ringleaders: the demonstration continued without them, even grew. . . . This is how they try to destroy the political concerns of the demonstration.”<sup>30</sup> Only “disruption of public order” (*Ordnungsstörung*) appeared to give the protests the weight necessary to force the municipal authorities to at least reconsider the issue of fare increases.<sup>31</sup>

When Mayor Eugen Keidel (SPD) convened the municipal council to debate the issue of fare increases again, he delineated what he considered the legitimate realm of the political: “The reestablishment of order in Freiburg is a matter of the primacy of the political—more precisely, national political [*staatspolitischen*—solution over the solution of violence. . . . In a democracy, the use of the police . . . can only be the very last resort—i.e., if political measures and all political will were unable to convince an undemocratic minority of the constitutional legality [*Rechtsstaatlichkeit*] of the political procedure.” The mayor seemed rather certain about who was democratic and who was not. He did not differentiate between legality and legitimacy, reserving the right to use force against those who remained unconvinced by the established political

28. AStA Freiburg, “Freiburger Extrablatt” (flyer), 15 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 1684, p. 2.

29. Draft of an official placard, “Der ungeklärte Zwischenfall,” 12 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 9005; “Tumult vor dem Amtsgericht,” *Bild-Zeitung*, Berlin, 8 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 11296; “Crisis Near as Student Revolt Rocks Bonn,” *Observer*, 11 February 1968, 7.

30. Aktionsgemeinschaft gegen die Fahrpreiserhöhung, “Was ist los in Freiburg?” (flyer), 8 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 1694.

31. AStA Freiburg, “Freiburger Extrablatt” (flyer), 15 February 1968, in *ibid.* document 1684, p. 3.

process. Keidel also reflected on the precedent that the events in Bremen had created, but he claimed that Freiburg was facing a much more difficult financial situation than the “rich port and trading centre” as a consequence of its growth, its lack of industry, and the reduction in subsidies from the *Land* for student tickets, among other factors. The council, whose meeting was broadcast over loudspeakers in the town hall square, decided to stick to the fare increases with only minor social concessions and an additional weekly ticket.<sup>32</sup> Demonstrations and protests did not flare up again. The Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS) distributed flyers advertising its Berlin Vietnam conference.<sup>33</sup>

In Hannover in 1969, the anti-fare-increase coalition had more success, eventually forcing the private transport services company to rescind the increases.<sup>34</sup> Here as well, the physical confrontation started when police tried to dissolve sit-in blockades with batons and water cannons. A much-criticised police operation took place 10 June 1968, when authorities confronted a far-reaching challenge to the legitimacy of their conduct: they were associated with Nazi Germany. A well-publicised picture showed demonstrators dismissing withdrawing police with the Nazi salute.<sup>35</sup> “Polizei, SA, SS,” became a favourite chant, often intoned under clouds of tear gas, which was used because water cannons were deemed too dangerous because of overhead power lines. Hannover’s chief of police characterised the tear gas as a “mild means” of restoring order.<sup>36</sup> The atmosphere became especially tense when protesters tried to remove officers’ gas masks and when the activists were encircled by hundreds of police officers. Police, facing between two thousand and five thousand demonstrators, had orders to use their batons only in cases of emergency and their firearms only in cases of extreme emergency. However, the former were used frequently, and the protesters and those arrested suffered many injuries. The contrast between uniformed and armed policemen wearing gas masks and

32. Minutes of a public meeting of the municipal council at the Historic Merchant Hall at Freiburg’s Münsterplatz, 15 February 1968, in *ibid.*, document 9379, appendix 3.

33. Schulze [probably police officer], report on student demonstration against planned fare increases, 16 February 1968, in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 9058; SDS Freiburg, “Informationen zum Vietnam-Kongress 17./18. Februar in Berlin,” in *gleich wird’s grün*, ed. Archiv soziale Bewegungen & Stadtarchiv Freiburg, document 9059.

34. See Berlitz, *Notstandskampagne und Rote-Punkt-Aktion*, 125–43.

35. Printed in *ibid.*, 134; “Schöne Anarchie,” *Der Spiegel* 26 (23 June 1969): 72; Mechler, “Hannover und die APO,” 140.

36. Chief of police Fritz Kiehne quoted in “Schöne Anarchie,” *Der Spiegel* 26 (23 June 1969): 72.

plainclothes demonstrators was stark and did not facilitate communication.<sup>37</sup> The situation was not improved when Mayor Otto Barche (SPD) justified the use of water cannon as necessary in the “fight against anarchism.”<sup>38</sup> The emergence of violent confrontation apparently attracted additional protesters who were outraged about police brutality.<sup>39</sup> Police subsequently took a much more cautious line in the face of protesters’ growing solidarity, which called into question the strategy of singling out ringleaders.<sup>40</sup>

Student protests in Hannover forged a wider alliance with other citizens who sympathised with criticism of the fare increases. The consumerist platform played a role in this success. *Der Spiegel* reported that the “housewives with their shopping bags” standing in front of department stores were not afraid of the students who demonstrated in front of them; some women even joined in. The protests had the potential to appeal to a majority. The basic line of reasoning was simple: the Überlandwerke und Straßenbahnen Hannover AG (ÜSTRA) had raised fares three times in five years, while service was on the decline and the dividends on the stock corporation’s annual profit of 1.6 million deutsche marks remained unchanged at 6 percent. Some protesters suggested that ÜSTRA should be transferred to community property or given tax-exempt status.

The protests were accompanied by the remarkable creation of a successful alternative regime of provision. The red spot came to symbolize a well-organised system of hitching lifts in private cars that replaced the paralysed public transport system, especially after ÜSTRA completely ceased operations on 12 June 1968. Thousands of motorists displayed the red spot behind their windscreens, while those in need of rides held up spots at converted tramway stops. Eventually, even the municipal government, assisted by several newspapers, printed and distributed large numbers of cards bearing the red spot, thus trying to capture the grassroots campaign. During this “extraordinary week of fraternity,” there were numerous instances when local shop owners supported protesters by offering them free goods. A spokesman for the German Communist Party, which supported the campaign but gained only marginal influence, pointed out that the tramway tracks belonged to the citizens of Hannover. The SDS proclaimed that “automobiles were no longer private property but had become socially useful means of transport” and raised the possibility of free

37. Berlitz, *Notstandskampagne und Rote-Punkt-Aktion*, 130.

38. Bernd Michels, “ÜSTRA Blockade: Hauch von Anarchie,” *konkret* 14 (30 June 1969): 7.

39. Ibid.

40. Mechler, “Hannover und die APO,” 141.

fares.<sup>41</sup> A flyer proclaiming “Beautiful anarchy!” stressed that “this spontaneously organised solidarity is something entirely different from the profit-oriented system to which transport and the rest of the economic system are subject.”<sup>42</sup> The blockades of tramways became more efficient and less prone to expose individuals to the charge of coercion: when the city council issued a first nonbinding and not very far-reaching compromise proposal on 14 June 1969, protesters simply filled the tracks with concrete overnight.<sup>43</sup>

After eleven days of blockades, protesters celebrated a remarkable success: the political authorities gave in and lowered the fares to a uniform tariff of fifty pfennigs.<sup>44</sup> Basically the government had bought out the public transport company with state subsidies. Moreover, Preußenelektra, ÜSTRA’s majority shareholder, renounced an already approved but much-disputed dividend payout of 1.4 million deutsche marks.<sup>45</sup> Fear of violent escalation was central to the government’s crisis management. Lower Saxony’s interior minister, Richard Lehnert (SPD), said that “permanent street battles” would have been needed to dissolve the blockades: “It would be easy to fill the hospitals, but I cannot give a firing order, not me.”<sup>46</sup> When the transport company complained about the lenient police operation, authorities responded with the sober statement that the “operation of the streetcar and bus services with defensible means of policing seems impossible.”<sup>47</sup>

However, this success also took the wind out of the Hannover mass movement’s sails. The SDS failed in its attempts to continue the protests with the ultimate goal of free public transport or to transfer the protest potential to other issues. Commentators such as Klaus Rainer Röhl argued that student activists’ far-reaching demands amounted to “anarchism” and “revolutionary impatience” and were alienating the working class; nevertheless, he hoped to preserve the protest’s wide social support, which clearly transcended small groups of student radicals.<sup>48</sup> Appalled by an incident in which workers had burned red flags waved by members of the SDS, Uwe Nettelbeck went a step further, con-

41. “Schöne Anarchie,” *Der Spiegel* 26 (23 June 1969): 72–74.

42. “Wir lassen uns nicht für dumm verkaufen!” flyer quoted in Berlitz, *Notstandskampagne und Rote-Punkt-Aktion*, 137. See also Bernd Michels, “ÜSTRA Blockade: Hauch von Anarchie,” *konkret* 14 (30 June 1969): 6–8.

43. Mechler, “Hannover und die APO,” 143–44.

44. Bernd Michels, “ÜSTRA Blockade: Hauch von Anarchie,” *konkret* 14 (30 June 1969): 6–8.

45. Mechler, “Hannover und die APO,” 144.

46. Lehnert quoted in “Schöne Anarchie,” *Der Spiegel* 26 (23 June 1969): 74.

47. “Stellungnahme der Polizeidirektion zu Vorwürfen der Üstra,” Autumn 1969, quoted in Berlitz, *Notstandskampagne und Rote-Punkt-Aktion*, 134.

48. Klaus Rainer Röhl, “Roter Punkt und rote Fahnen,” *konkret* 14 (30 June 1969): 5.

demning the entire campaign as “social-fascist attempts at solidarity with the character of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.” He mocked the “defeat of Hannover”: the next fare increase was certain to come. The “dubious popular front” that stretched all the way to Springer’s tabloid *Bild* had proved incapable of transmuting social demands into political mobilisation. Other campaigns of the protest movement—such as the anti-Springer campaign—originated from late capitalism’s crisis of legitimacy, while the outcome of the Hannover protest provided the welfare state with an opportunity to veil its illegitimacy by granting social comforts, a result facilitated by the fact that part of the protest movement aspired only to individual and private freedom.<sup>49</sup> Without expressing it in such terms, Nettelbeck had lucidly diagnosed that protest in the name of the consumer was problematic if one simultaneously saw smooth consumption as stabilising the system via veiling its lack of legitimacy. Consequently, he embraced forms of protest that went against the contemporary consumer and aspired to revolutionary solutions. But anti-fare-increase protests had by no means completely exhausted themselves in the summer of 1969, and they were in many respects more political than Nettelbeck conceded.

ÜSTRA was municipalised in 1970, and as Nettelbeck had predicted, the next fare increase came in March of that year without triggering significant protests. This time the police occupied strategic tramway intersections from the outset, and the authorities had cleverly chosen to implement fare increases during the winter.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the protest’s most significant success was the transfer of the protest pattern—blockade and red spot—to other cities. Only days after the resolution of the Hannover protests, the Baden-Württemberg government decided to end similar protests in Heidelberg by instituting state subsidies that rendered the disputed fare increases unnecessary.<sup>51</sup> Such positions offered an obvious contrast to that taken a year earlier in Freiburg.

A commentary in the newly founded independent Marxist journal *Rote Presse Korrespondenz* emphasised that the legitimisation for police operations had been tarnished.<sup>52</sup> However, tramway campaigns must not be misunderstood as attacking the consumption sector as such: “The success of tramway blockades in several cities suggests the dangerous conclusion that it was finally the right moment to initiate the definite destruction of consumer terror

49. Uwe Nettelbeck, “Notabene Hannover,” *konkret* 15 (14 July 1969): 3.

50. Mechler, “Hannover und die APO,” 146.

51. Bernd Michels, “ÜSTRA Blockade: Hauch von Anarchie,” *konkret* 14 (30 June 1969): 8.

52. “Rote-Punkt-Aktion in Heidelberg,” *Rote Presse: Korrespondenz der Studenten-, Schüler-, und Arbeiterbewegung* 31 (19 September 1969): 13.

[*Konsumterror*].”<sup>53</sup> The authors of this piece were convinced that such a perspective would “overestimate the consumption sector” as a field of class struggle and unduly neglect the sphere of production. Would bakeries be occupied only because the prices for rolls went up, and would protesters then take baking into their own hands, as they had done with the improvised public transport system? They saw the political relevance of the anti-fare-increase protests not so much in the effective reduction of fares and more in clearly illustrating that the state employed its means of violence not on the side of consumers and workers but on that of the producers and employers. Faithful to Marx’s theory of the state, the revolutionaries sought to expose “the state as a service enterprise for capital” and “to transfer the proletarian’s state of consciousness from being fixated on the sphere of consumption to class consciousness.” Within this framework, they clearly saw and welcomed political agitation against fare increases, which were easy to legitimise since they took place where people collectively confronted the increases—on the streets—as well as easy to communicate, since everyone had an interest in cheaper fares. A tramway had nothing luxurious about it, and it was immediately clear that its chief purpose was to get people to work.<sup>54</sup> However, the important aspect of the protests was the blockades, since they posed the question of power. Without blockades, the red spot campaign would have degenerated into a mere service enterprise.<sup>55</sup>

What remained across Germany was a clear sense that users of public transport could make a difference when resorting to rigorous means. In 1971, a song by the rock band Ton Steine Scherben became a hymn for the fare dodgers. “Mensch Meier” raised the scenario of the Berlin public transport services burning. On the album cover, the band called on people to dodge fares, pointing to the military spending of public money: “For the price of the Starfighters of the . . . armed forces, we Berliners could ride for free for an entire year.”<sup>56</sup> A year later, a flyer signed with the pen name Leo Jogiches, a founding member of the Spartacus League, called for free fares and broadened the issue to include a payment strike on public services. The question of collective public consumption was broached in neo-Proudhonian terms with reference to armaments and prestige building projects: “We pay with our taxpayers’ money for the Berlin Transportation Company (BVG). . . . *They* are allowed to destroy our green spaces, our cities, because *they* make money out of it. . . . Let’s prevent

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53. Ibid., 11.

54. Ibid., 12.

55. Ibid., 13.

56. Ton Steine Scherben, *Mensch Meier/Nulltarif*.

organised theft through organised resistance!”<sup>57</sup> After the demise of the SDS, leadership in protests against fare increases shifted to communist groups such as the German Communist Party or the Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterjugend.<sup>58</sup> The Hamburg Proletarische Front organised fare-dodging campaigns, justifying them with an analysis of the proletarian daily grind: “One is redeveloped away from the inner city to the suburbs, has to commute an hour to get to the factory, and the heftiest increases are . . . for long journeys. . . . 1 hour journey there; 2 hours work for one’s wages, 7 hours work for the big shots, therefore more than a quarter of an hour per day for the ticket alone.”<sup>59</sup> The equation of journey time and labour time by a proletarian group is significant, given the general shift of focus away from production-related protest and towards issues of consumption. More generally, fare dodging became a widespread and publicly acknowledged phenomenon during the early 1970s. Repeat offenders faced criminal proceedings and ultimately imprisonment.<sup>60</sup>

### The Frankfurt *Spontis*

A massive presence of state violence accompanied the protests against fare increases that flared up around the country. The most prominent such episode was the 1974 protests against the Frankfurt public transport association involving the *Spontis*, including Joschka Fischer and Daniel Cohn-Bendit.<sup>61</sup> Cohn-Bendit summarized how consumer protest was quickly confronted with force and violence: “When the fight against the fare increases took place in Frankfurt in 1974, the tramways were blockaded. The cops took positions all over the city centre, and after a week it was impossible to even conduct a demonstration, 500 people were arrested, and everyone got scared.”<sup>62</sup> A high school student was knocked over by a water cannon and seriously injured.<sup>63</sup> The incident led to complaints about disproportionate violence and arbitrary justice.<sup>64</sup> Con-

57. L. Jogiches, “I. März: Fahrpreiserhöhung? OHNE UNS!” (flyer), 29 February 1972, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis, Berlin.

58. Bundesministerium des Innern, *Verfassungsschutz*, 30.

59. “Schwarzfahren = Geld sparen,” *Wir wollen alles* 10 (November 1973): 16.

60. “Wer uns beschiebt: In Bussen und Bahnen fahren immer mehr Leute schwarz,” *Der Spiegel* 42 (9 October 1972): 65–66.

61. See Schütte, *Revolte und Verweigerung*; Kraushaar, “Frankfurter Sponti-Szene.”

62. Cohn-Bendit, *Der große Basar*, 65.

63. “Gegen Fahrpreiserhöhung und Polizeiterror—Nulltarif,” *Wir wollen alles*, insert: *Häuseratszeitung*, in *Carlo Sponti* 18–19 (1974): 2.

64. See RK [Revolutionärer Kampf]-Redaktionskollektiv der WWA, “Chronik: Kampf um die Strassenbahntarife in Frankfurt,” *Carlo Sponti* 18–19 (1974): 3; “6 Monate für nicht stattgefundenen Landfriedensbruch,” *Rote Robe* 1 (28 February 1975): 32–34.

versely, systematic sabotage of ticket vending machines and violence against ticket inspectors had become well-established practices.

The “spontaneist” Frankfurt Revolutionärer Kampf (Revolutionary Struggle) was a latecomer to the issue of fare-increase protests, embarking on its vigorous protest campaign against the Frankfurter Verkehrsverbund after the group’s commitment to a related political issue, the *Häuserkampf* involving the politics of housing and squatting, had more or less ground to a halt. Beginning in May 1974, supporters agitated in factories and urban areas trying to drum up support for a boycott of the trams and demanding free fares and paid travel time to and from work, a demand that exceeded those of earlier fare-increase protests.

The *Spontis*’ involvement in the conflict over fare increases contributed to a radicalisation that intensified beyond what had happened in Hannover and Bremen. From their experience with the *Häuserkampf* and strikes, the *Spontis* had concluded that protests that did not employ violent means were bound to be ineffective. The state’s structural violence had to be resisted: “If the government wants to enforce fare increases with a linked transport system and police, this is violence, violence against the interests of the working population. . . . Anyone who wants to protest the fare increases will also have to say how to take practical action against them, will have to counter the magistrate’s violence with the violence of those affected.”<sup>65</sup> From this perspective, the issue of fare increases was immediately coupled with violence and “police terror” (*Polizeiterror*).<sup>66</sup> On 21 May 1974, ten days after the first demonstration against the increases, agitation intensified, and flyers called for improvised collective insurance schemes to pay fines for fare dodging and resistance against ticket inspectors.<sup>67</sup> When the disputed network fares were introduced despite the protests on 26 May, barricades went up on tramway tracks. The activists frequently clashed with the police: “Water cannons were constantly driving in front of the trams to prevent them from being brought to a standstill that would have enabled passengers, passersby, and demonstrators to jointly discuss the fare increases. Police squads were guarding stops. . . . Using batons, tear gas, and water cannons, police tried to clear the Zeil [one of Germany’s busiest shopping streets]. Numerous injured . . . and arrests were the city’s response to demands for a retraction of the fare increases. . . . [T]ear gas was sprayed into demonstrators’ eyes at close range, helicopters pursued indi-

65. “Gegen Fahrpreiserhöhung und Polizeiterror—Nulltarif,” *Wir wollen alles*, insert: *Häuserzeitung*, in *Carlo Sponti* 18–19 (1974): 2.

66. Häuserrat Frankfurt, *Wohnungskampf in Frankfurt*.

67. Revolutionärer Kampf and Redaktionskollektiv *Wir wollen alles*, “Chronik: Kampf um die Strassenbahntarife in Frankfurt,” *Carlo Sponti* 18–19 (1974): 3–4.



viduals right to their front door, and gave detailed instructions by radio, leading to arrests.”<sup>68</sup>

The red spot concept was only introduced belatedly, after hostilities were already under way. After initially denouncing red spot campaigns as a failure given the moderate outcome of Hannover, the *Spontis* admitted a mistake. However, the tactic failed to draw in wider circles of the population and had only moderate success.<sup>69</sup> Unlike Hannover in 1969 and unlike the *Spontis*’ earlier successes on housing issues, mass support was not forthcoming. The Frankfurt fare increase campaign remained more isolated than its predecessors in other cities, a phenomenon that may have resulted in part from press coverage, especially in *Bild*, that called the demonstrators “terrorist groups” who beat up workers.<sup>70</sup> The trade unions withdrew their support. Representatives of department stores called on the authorities to bring the “troublemakers of the Zeil” to justice, citing jobs that might be lost as sales declined.<sup>71</sup> In addition, the *Spontis*’ “military” position was considerably weakened by large-scale investments in police riot gear.<sup>72</sup>

Individual forms of fare boycott remained after the campaign’s end. One activist described how to exploit a glitch in new ticket machines: a certain sequence of inserting coins and pushing buttons produced not only a ticket but also a return of money. It was suggested that money obtained in this way should not be used for personal ends but should instead go into an account to cover the legal expenses incurred by the anti-fare-increase campaign, to buy provisions for striking workers, or to support comrades in Chile.<sup>73</sup>

Looking back, the police emphasised that “whether squatting or now tramway fares, it is always the same people. They always look for new occasions to ‘unmask the system,’ as they say.” Opposing “the system” was indeed an integrative moment in the protest milieu, and issues of consumption became more prominent as they allowed for a concrete localisation of grievances assumed to be caused by a more complex socioeconomic system. In addition, consumer protest that developed spontaneously could then be seized opportunistically by groups interested in fostering revolutionary potential. Frankfurt police assumed the existence of “a small hard core of 500 to 800 activists” with

68. “Zu den Ereignissen in Frankfurt,” *ID* 37 (1974): 4.

69. Revolutionärer Kampf and Redaktionskollektiv *Wir wollen alles*, “Chronik: Kampf um die Strassenbahntarife in Frankfurt,” *Carlo Sponti* 18–19 (1974): 3–4.

70. “Wer hat die besseren Argumente,” *Carlo Sponti* 18–19 (1974): 7.

71. *Ibid.*, 3.

72. Cf. Christian Schmidt, “*Wir sind die Wahnsinnigen . . .*,” 82.

73. “FVV-Automateneignungsaktion: Das Fahrgeld kommt vom Volk und kehrt zum Volk zurück!,” *ID-Nachrichtendienst* 49 (23 August 1974): 3–4.

another 1,000 “sympathisers” joining protest activities. Moreover, the police reflections on riots over fare increases offer one of the rare sources providing any information regarding the social makeup of the protest groups. Of the 325 activists arrested during the “fare riots,” 118 were university students (mostly in the humanities), 35 high school students, 40 employees, 42 factory workers, 5 apprentices, 2 U.S. soldiers, 2 judicial trainees, 1 director, 1 post office clerk, 2 graduate economists, 3 trainee teachers, 1 tutor, and 1 graduate educationalist. (Occupations for the remainder of those arrested were not specified.) The average age was estimated at “just under or above 20.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, fewer than half of those arrested (44 percent) were students.

When protests reignited in June 1975 when the Frankfurter Verkehrsverbund proposed another round of fare increases, more militant forms of protest emerged, but once again, no real mass support was forthcoming. Police took massive action against the endorsement of criminal acts (*Aufforderung zu strafbaren Handlungen*), mainly arresting the authors of flyers “suggesting fare dodging as a form of protest against daylight robbery.”<sup>75</sup> With the successive setbacks in factory agitation and protests against squatting and fare increases, the *Sponti* movement started to disintegrate, especially since debates about terrorism came to overshadow other matters.

## Revolutionary Cells

The Revolutionary Cells joined the campaign against fare increases via clandestine direct action. Their interventions against concrete regimes of provision took place in the context of various protest movements. In some respects, they pioneered organisational patterns that autonomists later adopted. During the protests against fare increases in West Berlin, revolutionary cells printed and distributed large numbers of counterfeit multijourney tickets—120,000, according to their own claims. The revolutionary ruse lay in an attempt to lead “some ten thousand people to do something illegal”: that way “many workers, housewives who vote for CDU and SPD have consciously ridden on counterfeit tickets distributed by an illegal revolutionary organisation.”<sup>76</sup> In Frankfurt,

74. Gerhard Ziegler, “Demonstranten in Frankfurt: ‘Immer dieselben,’” *Die Zeit* 27 (28 June 1974).

75. “Aktionen gegen die Fahrpreiserhöhung,” *ID* 84 (1975): 4.

76. “Falsche Karten flambierte Automaten Fahrpreiskampf (1975),” in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG Amsterdam, [http://www.nadir.org/nadir/archiv/PolitischeStroemungen/Stadtguerilla+RAF/tz/fruechte\\_des\\_zorns/zorn\\_1\\_11.html#12](http://www.nadir.org/nadir/archiv/PolitischeStroemungen/Stadtguerilla+RAF/tz/fruechte_des_zorns/zorn_1_11.html#12) (accessed 19 April 2010); “Die

the RZ's method of choice was arson attacks against newly installed ticket machines, which a statement called "cash-hungry robots." Accompanying flyers offered instructions on simple ways of sabotaging the ticket machines.<sup>77</sup> Ticket machines in Cologne and Munich were also sabotaged. Violence against objects was seen as an attempt to develop a feasible form of protest beyond "words and slogans" with which people would identify: "This campaign was supposed to take up the discrepancy between general protest against the fares and complete perplexity regarding the forms of combat to be used."<sup>78</sup> In September 1976, a revolutionary cell firebombed the Frankfurt transport services' central register of fare dodgers.<sup>79</sup> Nine months later, this tactic was repeated in Berlin. The RZ assured their clientele that, despite news reports to the contrary, all evidence on fare dodgers had been destroyed.<sup>80</sup> To combat the image of wanton destruction, the group declared, "It is not our intention to senselessly destroy the Berlin Transportation Company. Buses and trains should travel unimpeded, but for free!!!!"<sup>81</sup>

In late January 1978, more attacks against ticket machines occurred in Frankfurt.<sup>82</sup> A new dimension arose two months later when a revolutionary cell responded to the doubling of the Frankfurt fare dodging penalty to forty deutsche marks by attacking the private property of ticket inspectors: a FIAT automobile was "flambéed with petrol," and a small explosive device damaged another inspector's front door. The statement of responsibility announced that these actions had occurred in support of low-income fare dodgers who could not afford to purchase tickets. The statement also attacked the emerging system of control and surveillance that went hand in hand with "the ever-more-brazen theft from our household budgets: the economic miracle of the parasites of the system." The *Apparat* was leaning on "total computer survey, reintroduction of

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'Revolutionäre Zelle' verteilte 100.000 Fahrkarten in Berlin," *Info Hamburger undogmatischer Gruppen* 3 (5 August 1975): 3; "Schwarz fährt am billigsten!," *Info Hamburger undogmatischer Gruppen* 6 (17 December 1975): 15, IISG, ID-4157, ZK 46635.

77. See "Zerstörung von Fahrkartenautomaten des Frankfurter Verkehrsverbundes am 8.1.1977," BAK, Bundesministerium der Justiz (BMJ), Hauptgebiet (HG) 4, B 141/62511, 4030 E-40/77.

78. ID-Archiv im IISG Amsterdam, *Früchte des Zorns*.

79. "Brandanschlag auf die Schwarzfahrerkartei des Frankfurter Verkehrsverbundes (September 76)," in *ibid*. According to another source, the arson attack took place on 8 December 1976. See "Schwarzfahrerkartei vernichtet," *Revolutionärer Zorn* 3 (1977): 18.

80. "Brandanschlag auf die Schwarzfahrerkartei Berlin (Juni 77)," in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG Amsterdam. See also "Hurra, die Schwarzfahrerkartei ist abgebrannt!," *ID* 184 (2 July 1977).

81. "Zur Aktion gegen auf [sic] die Berliner Verkehrsgesellschaft (August 77)," in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG Amsterdam.

82. "Wir haben den FVV . . .," *ID* 215 (4 February 1978).

the Nazi block warden system (today this is called Community Beat Manager [*Kontaktbereichsbeamter*]), daily traffic controls, stepping-up the personnel of government and private cops, plant security, store detectives, tramway ticket inspectors, and private surveillance companies.” The statement closed by threatening physical harm to ticket inspectors if they did not quit their jobs.<sup>83</sup> On 10 November 1978, the RZ attacked the homes of two ticket inspectors in Frankfurt with small-scale explosive devices and butyric acid.<sup>84</sup>

In the early 1980s, the RZ’s activities in favour of free public transport shifted to the Ruhr. In February 1984, the Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Ruhr in Gelsenkirchen decreed that reduced fares for unemployed and handicapped people were no longer valid during rush hour. A revolutionary cell placed what it called a “tiny bomb” at the transport authority’s headquarters, stressing that it had deliberately been positioned to avoid harm to people and adjacent shops. The action was meant as “an encouragement for the hundreds and thousands who daily dodge the fare.”<sup>85</sup> A more prominent campaign involved the distribution of counterfeit tickets in all of the Ruhr’s major cities as part of a wider March 1981 protest against fare increases that included the Green Party and involved flyers, demonstrations, graffiti, and minor sabotage of ticket machines. The RZ then embarked on a more fundamental critique of consumer society. A statement signed by the Revolutionary Cells and their feminist branch, Rote Zora, invoked a decadelong movement for free public transport, taking the 1969 Red Spot Campaign in Hannover as a starting point, ignoring earlier protests in Cologne, Bremen, Freiburg, and other cities. The statement addressed the deeply ingrained principle of performance (*Leistung*) as the central obstacle to the movement’s demands: “Performance costs something. Where something is provided, you have to cough up. It is essential to protect this maxim of performance society even at the cost of a transport policy that pinpoints the intrinsic link between capitalist progress and destruction.” Individual automobile traffic and its discomforts for both its users and the wider community—including traffic deaths—emerged as the crucial problem that the RZ activists sought to address through their acts of civil disobedience: “The Moloch automobile receives homage until any kind of alternative becomes un-

83. “Aktionen gegen auf [*sic*] Fahrscheinkontrolleure, Frankfurt (März 78),” in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG Amsterdam. French autonomists also launched attacks on ticket machines in 1978. See Dieter Paas, “Frankreich: Der integrierte Linksradikalismus,” in *Angriff auf das Herz des Staates*, ed. Hess, 253.

84. Revolutionäre Zelle, “Nulltarif wär doch das Beste, gelle!” (flyer), listed in Fetscher and Rohrmoser, *Ideologien und Strategien*, 271.

85. “Aktion gegen den Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Ruhr, Gelsenkirchen (Februar 84),” in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG Amsterdam.

thinkable and the car becomes an indispensable part of life. The ‘day-to-day’ side effects: 15,000 traffic deaths each year and 500,000 injured, devastated cities planned around traffic . . . ; instead of the freedom that an owner of a car is promised, total dependence. Instead of comfort and living standards, stifling chaos in the jungle of the streets where the bourgeois ideology ‘all against all’ triumphs.”<sup>86</sup>

After 1975, no more red spot campaigns of any significance took place. The RZ’s actions originated in the context of popular protest, but attempts to revive a broader movement failed. Some modest attempts to revive the concept of the red spot as a symbol for hitchhikers occurred in the context of the emergence of ride-sharing agencies (*Mitfahrzentralen*) that conceived of themselves as an environmentally friendly variation of private transport.<sup>87</sup> These enterprises became increasingly commercialised and divorced from issues of social protest. However, in 1984, a gender-related issue entered politics in West Berlin and other German cities when activists responded to sexual violence against women by demanding that women receive nighttime taxi rides for the cost of public transport tickets. This argument was the inverse of and less controversial than the protests against fare increases: the existence of violence was taken as a reason for lowering specific fares. Some of those involved in the debates conceived of this violence as essentially nonpolitical, but feminists saw the issue as a platform for making the issue of violence against women—and of their reduced mobility—a subject of political debate.<sup>88</sup> The issue of female security at night was quickly taken up by journalists, city councils, and parliaments; after a period of pilot projects, public subsidies for nighttime taxi rides for women became a reality in many cities.<sup>89</sup>

When analysing the development of protests against fare increases from the Cologne blockades in 1966 to the campaigns of the early 1980s, certain continuities are obvious: from the beginning, this form of consumer protest was quickly confronted with questions of violence on several levels. The issue of violence immediately became and remained the focal point of public discourse

86. “Verteilung gefälschter Fahrkarten, Ruhrgebiet (März 81),” *ibid.*

87. Advertisement in *taz*, 29 November 1979, 11. A plastic sticker showing a red spot was offered at a price of seventy pfennigs.

88. See *Anagan* 5 (1985): 22–23.

89. JunsozialistInnen Frankfurt, eds., *Sicher durch die Nacht: Ein Frauen-Nachttaxi für Frankfurt* (Frankfurt, [1988]), IISG Amsterdam, ID-1352i, Bro 1849/5; Landeshauptstadt Hannover, Referat für Gleichstellungsfragen-Frauenbüro, ed., *Bewertung des Modells Taxi-Service der ÜS-TRA Hannover: Ein Beitrag zur Mobilitätssteigerung von Frauen* (Hannover, 1987), ID-1352i, Bro 713/1 fol.

on the legitimacy of such protest. Violence was an outcome of the discursive and physical interaction between protesters and government authorities. The former usually saw their own agenda as genuinely or initially peaceful, while debates about violence developed eventually, often overshadowing the original issues of protest. However, discontinuities are also evident. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was more or less a one-issue movement, loosely embedded in the wider student movement, that discursively related to other political questions and attracted relatively diverse social support. Developments in Frankfurt in 1974 marked the beginning of a process of radicalisation in which the issue of public transport fares increasingly became subordinated to wider issues of revolutionary politics. Authorities became increasingly successful in nipping in the bud any protest following the blockade-and-red-spot pattern. Conversely, social support for the protests became to at least some degree more specific and more “professional,” with small groups of activists such as the *Spontis* or the Revolutionäre Zellen trying to sharpen the issue and harness it to much more far-reaching revolutionary goals. Critiques of capitalism and regimes of provision became more fundamental. The discursive space between consumer protests and debates on violence became ever narrower, no longer affording considerable room for communication and political manoeuvring that could still be observed in the Hannover and Freiburg protests of the late 1960s. Despite the fact that the violence in relation to fare increases was mainly symbolic violence against objects, it stifled the original issue of consumer protest and made it less attractive for citizens reluctant to pose fundamental questions about definitions and legitimisations of violence and force. This construction was different when sexual violence was conceived as essentially nonpolitical, informing debates about security and leading to effective changes in response to consumer protest.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Media: The Anti-Springer Campaign

“Journalism is about one thing: sales—news a commodity; information a consumer product. Whatever isn’t suitable for consumption is bound to make them sick.”

—Red Army Faction (1971)<sup>1</sup>

The Red Spot Campaign in Hannover took place against the backdrop of a much-publicised debate over the student movement’s position on violence. After the attempt on Rudi Dutschke’s life on 11 April 1968, activists engaged in large-scale protest rallies and blockades against Springer publishing, which they blamed for inciting violence against the students and their leaders. This was the culmination of the anti-Springer campaign that the extraparliamentary opposition had initiated in 1967, formally inaugurating it in October of that year.<sup>2</sup> Interpretations and accusations of violence were part and parcel of the confrontation long before the first windowpanes were smashed. A central point of contention emerged on the issue of whether violence against objects differed fundamentally from violence against people—as many protesters claimed—or whether the former was a mere precursor of the latter. In the aftermath of Easter 1968, the legal interpretation of violence during blockades again proved controversial, ultimately reinforcing the wide concept of violence that the Laepple verdict established. The militant campaign against Springer also challenged the apparent coincidence of interests between government and media tycoon.

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1. “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 43.

2. Staadt, Voigt, and Wolle, *Feind-Bild Springer*. This book contains a detailed chapter on the anti-Springer campaign and describes the East German authorities’ perceptions of and statements against the publishing corporation. The book focuses primarily on the East-West dimension. See also Bauß, *Studentenbewegung*, 71–111; Hilwig, “Revolt against the Establishment”; Kruip, “Welt”-“Bild” des Axel Springer Verlags; Kraushaar, “1968 und Massenmedien”; Oy, *Gemeinschaft der Lüge*, 122–33; Schmidtke, “‘1968’ und die Massenmedien”; Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*; Schwarz, *Axel Springer*, 426–33; Seitenbecher, *Deutschen “Cäsar” bezwingen*.

The anti-Springer campaign focused on a specific critique of a regime of provision: an alleged manipulative monopoly on information services. The consumers of Springer's tinged news were seen as victims of manipulation and as pawns in upholding established power structures. This was sometimes alleged in rather crude terms but could also be embedded in an eloquent Habermasian critique of commercial journalism. Attacks targeted not only Springer's right-wing political orientation but its papers' swift denunciations of those who questioned the West German "economic miracle," with its privileging of consumer and conformist values.<sup>3</sup> The campaign foregrounded the idea that information was purchasable and marked a milestone in the tradition of left-wing media critiques. However, Springer used political boycotts in the media sector long before the protesters embraced this means of political communication, and anti-Springer activism experienced an important revival in the context of the peace movement of the early 1980s.

### SDS against Springer

A precursor to the anti-Springer campaign occurred at the end of 1963 when a police patrol prevented Dieter Kunzelmann from painting a provocative slogan on the not-yet-finished Springer headquarters, a high-rise not coincidentally built right next to the Berlin Wall. The message was "Ulbricht's KZ [concentration camp] and Springer's BZ [tabloid paper]—both serve the same purpose." The message was aimed at Springer's vitriolic coverage of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).<sup>4</sup>

In the late 1960s, another former member of Subversive Aktion became one of the trailblazers of the campaign undertaken by the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS). In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, Dutschke described the "society of waste" as one of the main obstacles to the realisation of a "Garden of Eden" because "the excesses of consumption typical of profit- and authority-oriented social orders—wars . . . , armaments, useless administration and bureaucracy, underutilised industrial capacities, advertising—add up to a systematic destruction of capital."<sup>5</sup> In the same interview, he called for the "expropriation of Springer" and passive resistance to the delivery of

3. Peter J. Humphreys, *Media and Media Policy in West Germany: The Press and Broadcasting since 1945*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1994), 95.

4. Böckelmann and Nagel, *Subversive Aktion*, 128.

5. "'Wir fordern die Enteignung Axel Springers': Spiegel-Gespräch mit dem Berliner FU-Studenten Rudi Dutschke (SDS)," *Der Spiegel* 29 (10 July 1967): 30–33.



Springer newspapers. However, he clearly stated that he did not think much of throwing tomatoes, smoke bombs, or stones, tactics he considered “absurd” and “helpless.” He explicitly denied any need for “terrorist violence against people” in the developed countries but stated, “Violence is *constituens* of authority and we need to respond to it with demonstrative and provocative counterviolence from our side.”<sup>6</sup> By the time of Herbert Marcuse’s visit to Berlin, Dutschke saw the campaign as a way to make visible another form of violence: that of the highly industrialised metropole against the Third World.<sup>7</sup>

An important backdrop for this critical focus on Springer was Benno Ohnesorg’s shooting by a plainclothes police officer on 2 June 1967. Students saw their role in the protests—both against the state visit of Shah Reza Pahlavi and against Ohnesorg’s death—grossly misrepresented by Springer publications. At the Freie Universität Berlin, a committee was established to analyse the demagogic coverage, one example of which occurred when *Bild* reported on 3 June, “Until now there has only been terror to the east of the Berlin Wall. Yesterday malicious and stupid muddleheads attempted for the first time to carry terror to the free section of the city.” This was printed underneath a picture showing a bleeding police officer. *Bild* reported Ohnesorg’s death but failed to mention that he had been shot, let alone by a police officer, giving a skull fracture as the cause of death: “A young man . . . fell victim to riots that young hooligans had staged. . . . We have something against SA methods. Germans neither want a brown nor a red SA.”<sup>8</sup> The same issue reported on glamorous Empress Farah Pahlavi’s attendance at a fashion show, pairing that article with an advertisement touting that the Europa-Center “is where Berlin is shopping—this is where the world is meeting.”<sup>9</sup> Springer’s Berlin tabloid, *BZ*, commented, “Anyone who produces terror must put up with hardship.”<sup>10</sup> The article stressed that the rioting students lived off taxpayers’ money without having contributed to the remarkable postwar boom that had brought prosperity to West Germany. It emphatically declared that the city of Berlin belonged only to those who contributed to this feat, and not to those bound to disturb the harmony of the *Wirtschaftswunder*; which Springer journalists wanted to safeguard.

6. Ibid., 33.

7. Dutschke, “Zum Verhältnis.”

8. “Blutige Krawalle: 1 Toter,” *Bild*, Berlin, 3 June 1967, 1, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/193050/478.jpg.pdf> (accessed 12 June 2010).

9. “Sonderschau für Farah: Berliner Chic ist wundervoll,” *Bild*, Berlin, 3 June 1967, 3, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/193058/482.jpg.pdf> (accessed 13 June 2010).

10. “Das ist Terror!,” *BZ*, 3 June 1967, 3, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/193086/496.jpg.pdf> (accessed 25 August 2010). See Kruip, “Welt”-“Bild” des Axel Springer Verlags, 225.

In September 1967, the SDS decided on an action programme against Springer. A central focus was “analysis and general education about the systematic destruction of societal riches via consumer terror, planned obsolescence, and development of unproductive industries.”<sup>11</sup> When a number of opposition groups formally inaugurated the campaign in October, the issue of consumption still featured prominently. The campaign sought to address a “press structure geared towards private profit maximisation and consumer advertisement leaning towards concentration.”<sup>12</sup> The campaign eventually was supported by Springer’s competitors, Gerd Bucerius and Rudolf Augstein, founders and part-owners of the influential weeklies *Die Zeit* and *Der Spiegel*, respectively.<sup>13</sup>

The SDS agitated for a boycott of Springer, targeting the stall operated by the Springer-owned publisher Ullstein at the 1967 Frankfurt Book Fair, an effort that led to police involvement. An early success that generated media attention was a boycott resolution “against the monopoly of Axel Springer” signed by seventy-one members of the renowned literary association Gruppe 47 and seven major publishers.<sup>14</sup> Protest was commodified with badges reading “Expropriate Springer,” twenty-one thousand of which were sold before the end of 1967.<sup>15</sup> Long before the violent events of Easter 1968, the anti-Springer campaign was compared to terror—for example, in a defence of Springer published in the company’s *Die Welt* and written by Austrian American author and publisher Hans Habe, who denied Springer’s critics any intellectual merit and likened the student protesters to a “terror organisation that uses violence” to prevent the sale of newspapers.<sup>16</sup>

11. “Resolution der 22. Delegiertenkonferenz des SDS zum Kampf gegen Manipulation und für die Demokratisierung der Öffentlichkeit vom September 1967,” in *APO*, ed. Otto, 256.

12. “Vereinbarung einer APO-Kampagne gegen den Springer-Konzern (Oktober 1967),” in *ibid.*, 257.

13. Dahrendorf, *Liberal und unabhängig*, 188.

14. “Gruppe 47: Dichter, Dichter,” *Der Spiegel* 43 (16 October 1967): 178–82; “Buchmesse: Heiß gekocht,” *Der Spiegel* 44 (23 October 1967): 197–99; “Die Bücher interessieren sie nicht,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 17 October 1967, 10; “Gegen das Monopol von Axel Springer,” in *Vaterland, Muttersprache: Deutsche Schriftsteller und ihr Staat seit 1945*, ed. Michael Krüger, Susanne Schüssler, Winfried Stephan, and Klaus Wagenbach (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1979), 251. In response to the resolution, see Marcel Hepp, “Boykotthetze und Bürgerkriegskonzept,” *Bayernkurier*, 21 October 1967. See Gilcher-Holtey, “APO und der Zerfall.”

15. Carl Guggomos, “Wie man Springer ‘enteignet,’” *konkret* 13.12 (1967): 13.

16. Hans Habe, “Die Parforcejagd auf Axel Springer: Ein offener Brief an den Verleger,” *Die Welt*, 27 December 1967, 6.

## Broken Glass

Several weeks after these lines were printed, “direct action” against shop windows of *Berliner Morgenpost* branch offices first took place. The attacks occurred on the night of 1 February 1968 after a political event at the Technical University Berlin that included the screening of a film by Holger Meins and others that showed how to make Molotov cocktails and ended with a still of Springer’s headquarters.<sup>17</sup> The attacks on the *Morgenpost* did not feature incendiary devices, but cobblestones were used. Dutschke and composer Hans Werner Henze apparently were among those throwing stones, although their involvement was not publicised at the time.<sup>18</sup>

West Berlin’s minister of justice, Hans Günter Hoppe (FDP), commented on the broken glass: “These are fascist methods. It started once before in Germany with smashed shop windows.”<sup>19</sup> *Bild* printed a cartoon that depicted an SDS member smashing a *Berliner Morgenpost* window in 1968 next to two storm troopers breaking the window of a Jewish shop in 1938. Accompanying commentary made generous use of the terms *terror* and *anarchist*.<sup>20</sup> The analogy between seven smashed windows and the November pogrom clearly neglected obvious differences in the scope of the events and the power relations that produced them, but it was embraced well beyond Springer newspapers. Adolf Arndt, a prominent lawyer and a member of the Bundestag from the Social Democratic Party—wrote a letter to Axel Springer in which Arndt described how the recent incident reminded him of “Hitler’s brown SA pounding the shop windows of Jewish department stores to pieces.”<sup>21</sup>

A spokesperson for the students countered, “If these arguments are true, then the Jews smashed the windows of the *Völkischer Beobachter* [the Nazi

17. Thomas Giefer, “Wie ein Satz, den man hinwirft und der Wirklichkeit wird,” in *Starbuck*, ed. Gerd Conradt, 78–80; Volker Pantenburg, “Die rote Fahne. Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie 1966–1968,” in *1968*, ed. Klimke and Scharloth, 203–4. Cobblestones, Springer newspapers, and the sound of breaking glass feature in Harun Farocki’s film *Ihre Zeitungen*, made in May 1968, as well as in *Unsere Steine*, by Ulrich Knaudt. See Farocki, “Ihre Zeitungen.”

18. Dutschke, *Aufrecht gehen*, 199; Ditfurth, *Ulrike Meinhof*, 230; Schneider, *Rebellion und Wahn*, 246–47.

19. “Einer rief: Es gibt 21 Filialen,” *Die Welt* 29 (3 February 1968): 3; Bernd Nellesen, “Das ist kein Jux mehr—das ist Terror: Zu den Vorgängen in Westberlin,” *Die Welt* 29 (3 February 1968): 3.

20. “Terror-Aktion gegen Zeitungs-Filialen,” *Bild*, Berlin, 3 February 1968, 3, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/204642/1791.jpg.pdf> (accessed 13 July 2010).

21. “Unruhen: Gebrochenes Rückgrat,” *Der Spiegel* 7 (12 February 1968): 33; Arndt’s letter to Springer is printed in “Empörung und Abscheu,” *BZ*, 6 February 1968, 2.

Party newspaper].”<sup>22</sup> However, the Springer press continued publishing references to the Nazi past, as when *Bild* asked, “What is done against those who, in flyers and meetings, request that other people’s property be taken away or even destroyed? . . . In the late 1920s, early 1930s, it started just like this. . . . The end was dictatorship, war, the destruction of Germany and Europe.” This commentary concluded by declaring that these developments were especially dangerous in West Berlin, “where nobody can distinguish who is a western demonstrator and who is an agitator sent across from the east.”<sup>23</sup> The Nazi past had become a ubiquitous context for debates about the protests, with some commentators noting that such demonstrations would not have occurred under Hitler and calling for the forcible cutting of demonstrators’ hair or them to be thrown over the wall into East Berlin.<sup>24</sup>

Helmut Gollwitzer, a professor of Protestant theology at the Freie Universität Berlin and a friend of Dutschke, and Jacob Taubes, a professor of Jewish studies there who had delivered his expertise on Kommune I’s department store arson flyers, warned against comparing student action with Nazi terror on the grounds that doing so prevented an evenhanded appraisal of the students’ concerns. However, the smashed Springer windows and the subsequent discourse on violence constituted a turning point in the anti-Springer campaign. Other prominent intellectuals started to withdraw their support. The Republikanischer Club, one of the intellectual centres of the extraparlimentary opposition and cosponsor of the anti-Springer campaign, condemned the smashing of windows as delegitimising the awareness campaign.<sup>25</sup>

### Jörg Huffschnid’s Habermasian critique of Springer

The chair of the Republikanischer Club, economist Jörg Huffschnid, an assistant professor at the Institute for Market Concentration Research of the Freie Universität Berlin, tried to integrate the critique of the Springer group into a wider theory of political economy. The notion of a depoliticised consumer society played a central role in this analysis: “The profit seeking of private enterprise in a late capitalist society can . . . only be realised through extensive

22. “Warnung vor falschen Analogieschlüssen,” *Stern*, 3 March 1968, 22, in *APO*, ed. Otto, 262.

23. “Enteignet Deutschland . . .,” *Bild*, Berlin, 5 February 1968, 1, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/204662/1801.jpg.pdf> (accessed 9 June 2010).

24. Siegfried, “‘Don’t Trust Anyone Older Than 30?,”” 743.

25. “Maßnahmen gegen Übergriffe,” *Telegraf* 23.30 (6 February 1968): 2.

waste, which can only be obscured through the almost total manipulation of consumer society.”<sup>26</sup> Huffschnid drew on Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy’s Marxist work on monopoly capital,<sup>27</sup> focusing on advertising, consumption, and mass culture as crucial components of the capitalist system. Like Ulrike Meinhof, Huffschnid was influenced by André Gorz, whom Huffschnid followed in assuming a large-scale economically driven “production of needs.” Consequently, the articulation of needs in the marketplace was no longer an expression of the subjective freedom of individuals but had become an expression of the dominance of an economically powerful minority.<sup>28</sup> This argument was supposed to counter legitimisations of Springer’s economic success by virtue of the fact that it resulted from the purchasing decisions of millions of sovereign consumers. Axel Springer himself had resorted to a theory of consumer democracy: “Each day, each month, a kind of democratic vote happens at the newspaper kiosks and at the front doors in Germany about whether the readers want to buy these newspapers.”<sup>29</sup> The anti-Springer campaign doubted whether any fair—let alone democratic—competition existed in the news market given the dangers of market concentration and manipulation.

According to Huffschnid, advertising was vital to journalism, an issue that extended far beyond the anti-Springer campaign. The Bundestag had established two expert committees to examine media problems. The Michel Commission, named after its chair, Elmar Michel, a former assistant secretary of state at the Ministry of Economics, investigated charges of collusion between broadcasting and daily press. The Günther Commission, chaired by Eberhard Günther, president of the Federal Cartel Authority, was a fact-finding commission on press concentration.<sup>30</sup> Huffschnid was drawing in part on the material published by these commissions.

The Federal Constitutional Court ruled in 1967 that freedom of the press protected the advertising sections of newspapers, pointing out advertisements were necessary for a paper’s economic independence. In addition, the judges

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26. Jörg Huffschnid, “Politische Ökonomie des Springer-Konzerns: Wirtschaftliche Dynamik und gesellschaftliche Bedingungen privater Pressemacht in der Bundesrepublik,” in *Imperium Springer*, ed. Jansen and Klönne, 53. See also Jörg Huffschnid, “Ökonomische Macht und Pressefreiheit,” in *Auferstehung der Gewalt*, ed. Grossmann and Negt, 32–41.

27. Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital: An Essay on the American Economic and Social Order* (New York, 1966).

28. Huffschnid, “Politische Ökonomie,” 63.

29. Axel Springer quoted in Otto Köhler, “Springers Sprecher nicht,” *Der Spiegel* 1 (1968): 37.

30. See Fritz Sängler, “Deutsche Presse am Wegkreuz,” *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte* 3 (1968): 155–57; Dussel, *Deutsche Tagespresse*, 234–35.

gave advertisements the same status as news.<sup>31</sup> This decision had implications for the question of journalistic freedom vis-à-vis economic interests constituted by large-volume advertising. That newspapers depended on advertisement income, which again figured importantly in processes of economic concentration, had already been established by contemporary journalism studies. That this constellation was responsible for dying newspapers and a decrease in the diversity of opinions expressed was controversial. However, lower-circulation papers had difficulty competing with the big players, who were more attractive for advertisers.<sup>32</sup> Hufschmid explained that only a small percentage of profits derived from the journalistic product, while most came from advertisements, on which capital was relying to realise its profits. According to Hufschmid, 81 percent of West Germany's advertising expenditures went to magazines and newspapers, turning those periodicals into a hypercommodity responsible for the smooth flow of the commodity cycle.<sup>33</sup>

In Hufschmid's analysis, the rise of advertising since the eighteenth century had turned the "critical reader into a consumer, the society of 'critically reflecting private people' into a consumer society." This contention drew heavily on Jürgen Habermas's analysis of the pernicious effects of commercialisation on the public sphere. Habermas pointed out that the public sphere had become a platform for advertising during the nineteenth century. The chair of the Republikanischer Club paraphrased the Frankfurt social philosopher: "The private newspaper in a commercial society thus mutates from an organ of the critical public opinion of private individuals—especially against the authority of the state—into an organ of manipulating 'public relations' in the service of trade and industry vis-à-vis . . . the consumer."<sup>34</sup> Hufschmid assumed that consumption had a stabilising function in postwar West Germany and that it was manifested in the "permanent demand to consume that appears in different ways in both the editorial and advertising sections of the West German press."<sup>35</sup> Such an analysis applied not merely to Springer but to any press in a developed

31. BVerfG, "Entscheidung vom 4 April 1967—1 BvR 414/64" (Südkurier-Urteil), BVerfG 21, 271. See Eicke, *Werbelaune*, 121–22.

32. See Reinhart Ricker, *Anzeigenwesen und Pressefreiheit* (Munich, 1973), 82. Hufschmid, like Habermas, was drawing on one of the founders of both journalism as an academic discipline and nonmarket economics: see Karl Bücher, *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft* (1883), chapter 5, "Die Anfänge des Zeitungswesens." For examples of companies using advertisement volume to pressure editorial staff, see Eicke, *Werbelaune*, 126–37.

33. Hufschmid, "Politische Ökonomie," 65.

34. *Ibid.*, 66, 69. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (1962; Munich, 1989), especially chapters 18, 20.

35. Hufschmid, "Politische Ökonomie," 70.

economy. From this perspective, those disrupting the functioning of West Germany's depoliticised consumer society were bound to appear as enemies of the Springer press: "This press consistently responds even to such groups appearing so harmless and apolitical as the *Gammler* [dropouts] with a vocabulary borrowed from fascist jargon . . . : an attitude such as that of the *Gammler*, who refuse the obligation to constantly work for new consumer goods, does indeed call into question the foundations of the existing order."<sup>36</sup> For Huffscheid, consumer society was a degenerate and manipulated society that was ready to accept the "mutual affirmation of ideology and business," the latter selling its own interests as those of society as a whole.<sup>37</sup>

## Easter 1968

Critiques of Springer's tabloid journalism gained considerably more public impact with the assassination attempt on Dutschke. The SDS issued a manifesto that reinforced the issue of consumption: "Every critique is being deadened or presented as the man in the street's sorrows for his own consumption." The second in a list of five demands for a "democratic public" read, "Abolition of consumption propaganda, which is to be replaced by proper consumer information."<sup>38</sup> More publicity was generated when fourteen famous intellectuals signed a statement demanding a public debate about Springer's market power and criticising the "alliance of unscrupulous mass-consumption journalism and revived nationalistic ideology."<sup>39</sup>

Hands-on protest targeted the commodity side of the Springer empire. Its tangible production and distribution network provided ubiquitous points of protest and direct action—blockades of access roads and sabotage (setting delivery vans on fire) to prevent the delivery of the tabloid papers. Photographs of burning newspaper vans became iconic and served as proof of the demon-

36. Ibid., 71. *Gammler* were members of youth subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s who refused bourgeois values, especially the idea of an agreeable outward appearance and the benefits of gainful employment. See Gotthardt, *Abkehr von der Wohlstandsgesellschaft*; Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side*, 399–416. For examples of Springer tabloids denouncing members of youth and protest cultures in drastic terms, see Republikanischer Club, *Springer enteignen?*, 26–28.

37. Huffscheid, "Politische Ökonomie," 78.

38. "Grundsatzklärung des SDS zur Kampagne für die Enteignung des Springer-Konzerns," in *Hochschule im Umbruch*, ed. Lönnendonker, Fichter, and Staadt, 5:295–96.

39. Theodor Adorno, Hans Paul Bahrdt, Heinrich Böll, Peter Brückner, Ludwig von Friedeburg, Walter Jens, Eugen Kogon, Golo Mann, Alexander Mitscherlich, Hans Dieter Müller, Heinrich Popitz, Helge Pross, Helmut Ridder, and Hans-Günther Zmarzlik, "Die Erklärung der Vierzehn," *Die Zeit* 16 (19 April 1969), in *Frankfurter Schule*, ed. Kraushaar, 2:363.

strators' violence. The protests only delayed delivery, as police throughout Germany safeguarded the distribution of the papers. In this struggle, the issue of violence quickly took centre stage. Confrontations between protesters and police at Easter 1968 involved twenty-one thousand policemen across the Federal Republic. Two protesters were severely injured when delivery vans sped through a crowd, and a photojournalist and a student died as a result of the skirmishes in Munich, with police and demonstrators accusing each other of responsibility for the deaths.<sup>40</sup> The countless confrontations between demonstrators and police were more intense and physical than most previous demonstrations, marking a new dimension in the protest movement's tangible experience of violence. The extraparlimentary opposition—often displaying a devil-may-care faith in the righteousness of their cause—realised that the emergence of demonstration violence amounted to a criminalisation of their tactics.<sup>41</sup> Two weeks after the Easter disturbances, Interior Minister Ernst Benda stated in a Bundestag debate that prosecutions had been initiated in 827 cases.<sup>42</sup>

Numerous eyewitness accounts testified to the disproportionate use of police force. *Der Spiegel* reported that Huffs Schmid had been "torn away from the crowd without reason, dragged by the hair by several policemen to be kicked and beaten."<sup>43</sup> Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger called for "a strengthening of the means for protecting the state" against "militant leftist extremist powers, who have openly set about to destroy our parliamentary democratic order."<sup>44</sup> Kiesinger's statement was delivered after large-scale protests had begun but before the two fatalities in Munich, and it seemed to corroborate the widespread fears of emergency laws. Many commentators on both sides tried to compare the events with those in the late years of the Weimar Republic or Nazi Germany. SDS members tried to legitimise stones thrown by demonstrators with reference to Springer's structural violence: "A tendentious headline in *Bild* is more violence than a stone against the head of a policeman."<sup>45</sup> *Bild* alleged that an SDS member had suggested that "Berlin must burn like the slums

40. See "Todesopfer: Gewisse Scheu," *Der Spiegel* 18 (29 April 1968): 74–77; Hemler, "Von Kurt Faltlhauser zu Rolf Pohle," 231–33.

41. "Vorbemerkung der Herausgeber," in *Auferstehung der Gewalt*, ed. Grossmann and Negt, 5.

42. Görtemaker, *Kleine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 204.

43. "'Vor dem Knüppel sind alle gleich': Die Unruhen in Berlin," *Der Spiegel* 18 (29 April 1968): 36.

44. Kiesinger, "Warnung an Gewalttäter" (13 April 1968), quoted in Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 177.

45. "'Gefahr für uns alle': Studenten gegen Springer," *Der Spiegel* 19 (6 May 1968): 42.



in . . . American cities.”<sup>46</sup> Ulrike Meinhof made a statement that subsequently was frequently repeated: “When fire is set to a lorry with Springer newspapers, that is arson. When all Springer cars burn, that is a political action.” Police accused her of using her car to blockade Springer.<sup>47</sup> Protesters in Rome tried to show their solidarity with German students by attacking the offices of Porsche and Mercedes with Molotov cocktails.<sup>48</sup>

### **Violence against Things, Yes; against People, No**

Springer and SDS charged each other with instigating violence. The latter’s theoreticians came up with a fragile differentiation: “Violence against things, yes; against people, no.”<sup>49</sup> This strategy was supported by Helmut Gollwitzer, who participated in a public debate in the main lecture theatre of Technische Universität Berlin. Many participants stressed that the attacks on Springer’s distribution network had a symbolic and demonstrative character. Ralf Dahrendorf thought they were less political than parliamentary debates on the question of press concentration and should therefore be discontinued, while former chair of the General Students’ Committee (AStA), Knut Nevermann, charged that the protesters had no concrete vision for the expropriation of Springer or, more broadly, for what an economic system based on the principles of “council democracy” should entail.<sup>50</sup> Several panels discussed whether the use of violence was legitimate under certain conditions, a question that had the potential to split the extraparliamentary opposition, since some groups, especially those affiliated with the peace movement, thought that such methods would ultimately serve the opposing side. The Campaign for Democracy and Disarmament distanced itself: “It is of course counterproductive to throw stones into Springer’s show windows. This does not persuade anyone but provides Springer with ammunition.”<sup>51</sup> Despite this criticism, the Berlin students’ union execu-

46. “Zeitungswagen in Flammen,” *Bild*, Berlin, 13 April 1968, 5, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/204954/1947.jpg.pdf> (accessed 14 June 2010).

47. “Gesellschaft/Meinhof/Baader: Löwe los,” *Der Spiegel* 9 (22 February 1971), <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43334628.html> (accessed 14 June 2010).

48. “Verlorenes Wochenende,” *Der Spiegel* 17 (22 April 1968): 25–27; “Polizei/Gefahrenabwehr: Gesunde Vernunft,” *Der Spiegel* 17 (22 April 1968): 30–33.

49. “Verlorenes Wochenende,” *Der Spiegel* 17 (22 April 1968): 27.

50. “Änderungen durch vollendete Tatsachen?: Diskussion in der TU über Autobahnblockade, Gewalt und eine Reform der Demokratie,” *Der Tagesspiegel* 6871 (17 April 1968): 6.

51. “Flugblatt des zentralen Ausschusses der KfDA zu den Osterunruhen 1968,” in *APO*, ed. Otto, 273.

tive committees used the concept of counterviolence as well as notions of structural violence to legitimise the anti-Springer campaign. Violence against objects was appropriate as a last resort of communication and articulation of dissent when all other means had been exhausted, as a final reply against the authorities' means of repression—that is, “truncheons and water cannons.” The rationale was to demonstrate that state violence would interfere with the articulation of any dissent outside the conventional channels: “Our violence against things, which are the means of Springer’s smear campaign and the means of the police, is counterviolence against the oppression to which everyone is subject and that only manifests itself against us in the streets.”<sup>52</sup>

Defending the SDS strategy against critical questions from *Spiegel* reporters, the two chairs of the SDS, Karl Dietrich Wolff and his brother, Frank Wolff, made three points that recurred in left-wing justifications of violence against objects. They questioned the congruency of legitimacy and legality by pointing out that they disputed an authoritarian interpretation of legality, claiming a fundamental right of resistance against the brutal police force, which otherwise could simply batter demonstrators and prevent any political action outside established channels. Second, they criticised ill-directed violence such as “friendly fire”—that is, cobblestones thrown from the back of a crowd of demonstrators, hitting those in the front, or an individual who randomly slashed car tyres in a fight “against all owners of cars.” This was a reference to Michael “Bommi” Baumann, later among the founders of Movement 2 June, who had been arrested for vandalising cars over the Easter weekend. Third, they questioned the notion of nonviolence, pointing to court decisions that designated peaceful sit-in demonstrations as violence (cases following the Laepple verdict).<sup>53</sup>

There were many dissenting voices. A statement from a conservative student organisation rejected any differentiation between violence against things and violence against people, arguing such a distinction would elevate violence to a means of politics and lead to a general acceptance of violence.<sup>54</sup> Ten days after the Dutschke shooting, the conservative Deutsche Studenten-Union was

52. AStA TU, AStA FU, and AStA Kirchliche Hochschule, “Warum Gewalt?,” in *ibid.* See also Haug von Kuenheim, “Scherben und vertane Chancen: Studentische Selbstkritik—Demonstrationspause oder neue Aktionen?,” *Die Zeit* 17 (26 April 1968).

53. “‘Ohne uns wäre es viel schlimmer gekommen’: Spiegel-Gespräch mit den SDS-Vorsitzenden Karl Dietrich Wolff und Frank Wolff,” *Der Spiegel* 17 (22 April 1968): 36–43. See also Karl Dietrich and Frank Wolff, “Zu den Oster-Aktionen,” *Neue Kritik* 47 (April 1968): 3–6.

54. Vereinigte Arbeitsgemeinschaften an der FU, “Entscheidung gegen revolutionäre Gewalt,” *Der Tagesspiegel* 6871 (17 April 1968): 6.

founded on the platform of nonviolence, with Klaus Laepple as its chair.<sup>55</sup> A commentary in *Die Welt* invoked the possibility of “anarchy,” referring to “a small group of anarchist-revolutionary terrorists” and declaring, “No one wants clashes between police and demonstrators, none of us want violence. For us, violence is never, ever a means of politics. Only the radical wing of an organisation of the extreme left wants violence to produce martyrs later on.”<sup>56</sup> Although these two comments were rather different in tone, they again contain three basic points that both liberal and conservative critiques of provocative and symbolic violence would make: violence was not an integral part of any political system and consequently could be banned or blamed on criminal or extremist minorities; no fundamental differentiation between different forms or levels of violence existed; and theoretical arguments for violence would lead to actual violence.

Many commentators displayed a readiness to compare the events to Nazi terror or the Socialist Unity Party (SED) regime in the GDR: according to the author of one letter to the editors of *Berliner Morgenpost*, “Behind these activities the ‘SED’ is obviously emerging. . . . All these events are reminiscent of Kristallnacht. Back then the Jews were robbed of their property; today it is the Springer concern that is threatened.”<sup>57</sup> In an expert opinion for the court proceedings against medical student Gerhard Paar, who was eventually sentenced to one year in prison for sedition and violation of the public peace during the blockade of a Springer print shop, psychologist Peter Brückner diagnosed a “pogrom atmosphere” in the early months of 1968, when angry crowds attacked students in a number of instances.<sup>58</sup>

Oskar Negt, at the time assistant to Habermas, observed that anything that defied the normal or ran counter to the expectations created by everyday norms was perceived as terror, riot, and violence. Regardless of intention, any breaking of rules was “magnified to a human rights injury and to a system-threatening . . . relapse to barbarism, anarchism, and fascism. Already *their*

55. “DSU: Ruf von rechts,” *Der Spiegel* 18 (29 April 1968): 73–74.

56. Werner Titzrath, “Wem beugt sich der Staat?,” *Die Welt* 89 (16 April 1968): 2.

57. “Es sind keine Studenten,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 23 April 1968, 2. Also drawing comparisons with Weimar were Georg Schröder, “Die Standfestigkeit wird geprüft,” *Die Welt* 90 (17 April 1968): 2 (letter to the editors saying that “synagogues will soon burn again!”); Walter Barkey, “Wie damals,” *Die Welt* 90 (17 April 1968): 2.

58. Peter Brückner, “Springerpresse und Volksverhetzung,” *Kritische Justiz* 1.4 (1969): 339–54; “Ein Jahr Gefängnis,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 5–6 October 1968, 2, <http://www.medienarchiv1968.de/dl/220294/5588.jpg.pdf> (accessed 13 October 2010). See also Heinz Grossmann, “Der Pogrom und der einzelne,” in *Auferstehung der Gewalt*, ed. Grossmann and Negt, 7–12.

form of publicity turned the students into terrorists who could be fought with legitimate counterterror.”<sup>59</sup> Negt argued that the spontaneous blockades of Springer newspapers marked the first time in postwar German history that society’s suppressed potential for violence had been repoliticised. And he went a step further, positing that an admission of violence constituted an admission of a deficit in legitimacy for any society.<sup>60</sup> Those who even mentioned this latent potential for violence or tried to make it visible were then suspected originating this violence.

Introducing a typology of violence, Negt differentiated between the rarely occurring revolutionary or emancipatory violence and the preponderant and futile destruction of human beings and goods in imperialist wars. Alluding to Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Negt claimed that institutions that originally derived from revolutionary force but were no longer committed to it turned enlightenment into mass betrayal.<sup>61</sup> Politicians and the public could easily talk about “nuclear death rates” or, like Chancellor Kiesinger, ally themselves with the violence of the National Socialist state while being utterly outraged about left-wing demonstrators who, like Baumann, slashed tyres. Consequently, Negt sought to elucidate the difference between progressive and reactionary violence. The destruction of a Vietnamese village by American soldiers could not reasonably be reduced to the same abstract denominator “act of violence” as “the burning and looting of American department stores by a minority held in the proletarian misery of the nineteenth century by economic force and racist terror while immediately and sensually experiencing the contradictions of ‘affluent society,’ discriminatory privileges and mindless waste.” From this perspective, French workers and students who damaged cars by using them to build barricades were “returning some human use value to commodities” that had “assumed a life of their own in becoming part of the reified violence [*sachliche Gewalt*] exercised over people.”<sup>62</sup> Violence against things was thus not directed primarily at objects but at the reified social relations they embodied. The campaigns against Springer were similarly directed not at the person of a successful entrepreneur but at the reified vio-

59. Oskar Negt, “Rechtsordnung, Öffentlichkeit, und Gewalt,” in *Auferstehung der Gewalt*, ed. Grossmann and Negt, 182.

60. *Ibid.*, 168.

61. *Ibid.*, 184. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “Kulturindustrie—Aufklärung als Massenbetrug,” in *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt, 1969): 128–76.

62. Negt, “Rechtsordnung, Öffentlichkeit, und Gewalt,” 178–79.

lence that a communications network of this size commanded. The violence of the students was thus the spontaneous and manifest expression of resistance against such power structures.<sup>63</sup>

## Aftermath

A rather curious amalgamation of matters of consumption and political violence, corroborating at least some of Negt's considerations, appeared in an apparently fabricated report on the front page of Springer's most important tabloid, *Bild*, on the Tuesday after Easter 1968, exactly two weeks after the Frankfurt department store arson attacks. Under the headline "Furniture Shop Set on Fire," the paper alleged that the SDS had committed an "attack on private property" against a furniture shop in the Ruhr city of Gladbeck. A large photograph showed the proprietor standing amid the debris of his burnt-out shop and holding an object on which someone had spray-painted the word *Bild*, which the caption explained was "a kind of symbol for the private property they hated." This was seamlessly juxtaposed with information on the alleged "military precision" with which the Springer blockade had been planned. Further down, the article alleged that "free choice was no longer going to be a matter of the buyer of a newspaper but of the red student council."<sup>64</sup> However, the fire in the furniture shop had been an accident, and the incident bore no connection to the student protests, as another Springer newspaper, the *Hamburger Abendblatt*, reported a few days later in a very brief piece on the final page.<sup>65</sup> On the Wednesday after Easter, Springer's Berlin tabloid, *BZ*, headlined, "No-Protest Zone around the Ku[rfürsten]damm: Heavy Economic Damage Due to the Constant Riots." According to the brief article, the guild of the proprietors of restaurants and inns had made demands to this effect in talks with the West Berlin government.<sup>66</sup>

Trade unions kept their distance from the anti-Springer campaign, a marked contrast to their support for protests against fare increases. The latter

63. Ibid., 180–81.

64. "Möbelhaus in Brand gesteckt," *Bild*, Berlin, 16 April 1968, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/205009/1972.jpg.pdf> (accessed 4 June 2010).

65. "Möbelhausbrand nicht von Demonstranten gelegt," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 19 April 1968, <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/219912/5403.jpg.pdf> (accessed 4 June 2010); "Weint euch aus," *Der Spiegel* 17 (22 April 1968): 49.

66. "Bannmeile um den Kudamm: Schwere wirtschaftliche Schäden durch die ständigen Krawalle," *BZ* 92.90 (17 April 1968), <http://www.medienarchiv68.de/dl/205141/2027.jpg.pdf> (accessed 5 June 2010).

seemed to attract a broad spectrum of oppositional groups that could identify with resisting higher living expenses. Laepple's role is illuminating in this context. He believed that student leaders had duties resembling those of trade unionist leaders—that is, catering to the material needs of fellow students and keeping to the political confines of university reform.<sup>67</sup> The anti-Springer campaign was more complicated: criticism was directed towards a regime of provision in which many of the radical protesters' potential allies happily participated, and educating them about their "false" consumption proved difficult. Not only the debates about violence but also the lack of identification with an intellectual and abstract critique explain the trade unions' reluctance to embrace the anti-Springer campaign. They emphasised that the protests would lead to loss of earnings and possibly jobs, an issue that had not arisen in connection with the transport companies.<sup>68</sup>

In May 1968, only weeks after the assassination attempt on Dutschke, the Günther Commission declared that constitutionally guaranteed freedom of the press was threatened by the degree of control Axel Springer had achieved over the publishing industry. Springer preempted any official steps towards decartelisation by divesting itself of the journals *Bravo*, *Eltern*, *Jasmin*, *Kicker*, *Das Neue Blatt*, and *Twen*, none of which had been at the forefront of criticism.<sup>69</sup>

After Easter 1968, Springer quickly ceased to be a major issue in the protest movement, largely because on 30 March, the national SDS announced that the anti-Springer campaign had failed.<sup>70</sup> After the unexpected Easter flare-up, discourse shifted towards debates on the disputed emergency laws and issues of violence.<sup>71</sup> Countless supporters and observers distanced themselves from the campaign, signalling to SDS organisers that the Springer issue had failed to bring about the desired mobilisation of the masses. However, critical publications kept appearing. The final major collection of essays of the anti-Springer campaign was again initiated by the Republikanischer Club and was edited by Peter Brokmeier. This volume went beyond the criticism of monopoly concentration by focusing on the press as a whole as advertising that defined information as a commodity. Sociology student Heiner Schäfer contributed an article that built on Huffs Schmid's approach in analysing how Springer journalism

67. "DSU: Ruf von rechts," *Der Spiegel* 18 (29 April 1968): 74.

68. "Studenten-Solidarisierung: Geschlossene Gesellschaft," *Der Spiegel* 18 (29 April 1968): 68–70.

69. "Springer-Verkauf: Um Gottes willen," *Der Spiegel* 27 (1 July 1968): 52–59. See also Humphreys, *Media and Media Policy*, 99–101.

70. Staat, Voigt, and Wolle, *Feind-Bild Springer*, 146.

71. See Lönnendonker, Fichter, and Staat, *Hochschule im Umbruch*, 5:69–88.

sought to echo the consumer interests of the lower classes. Reader surveys elicited their alleged needs, while editorial articles pretended to acknowledge these interests and held out an “ethos of social mobility” to foster consumption. The “social climber” would continue to subscribe to this ethos even if “objectively social and material gratification did not . . . pay for his hard labour.”<sup>72</sup> Schäfer focused on the youth magazines *Bravo* and *Twen*, which Springer had already sold by the time the volume appeared. Drawing on reader surveys, Schäfer described how Springer saw *Twen* readers as “consumption pioneers” who “fulfil their rebellious behaviour in extravagant consumption,” thus resulting in the profit-driven creation of “false consciousness.”<sup>73</sup>

### Origins of Political Boycotts in the Media Sector

The oft-voiced accusation that the anti-Springer campaign was connected to East German propaganda was not entirely far-fetched: East German writers had produced their own critical literature about the Springer trust.<sup>74</sup> In 1963, a book by Franz Knipping (originally a doctoral dissertation) had described Springer as a dangerous propagandist for nuclear weapons.<sup>75</sup> In 1966, Walter Ulbricht gave a speech at the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the SED in which he demanded that the Springer group stop its Cold War agitation. According to Ulbricht, Springer was one of many factors hindering a confederation of East and West Germany. He also mentioned the manipulation of West German workers by consumption and promised increased goods for East Ger-

72. Heiner Schäfer, “Schichten- und gruppenspezifische Manipulation in der Massenpresse,” in *Kapitalismus und Pressefreiheit*, ed. Brokmeier, 63–67. See also Heiner Schäfer, “Die BILD-Zeitung: Eine Ordnungsmacht im Spätkapitalismus,” in *Auferstehung der Gewalt*, ed. Grossmann and Negt, 19–29.

73. On the idea of young rebels as pioneer consumers, see Sedlmaier and Malinowski, “‘1968’ as a Catalyst.”

74. See Kraushaar, *Achtundsechzig*, 158–60; Jürigs, *Verleger*, 255; Staadt, Voigt, and Wolle, *Feind-Bild Springer*, 43–75. It is problematic to assume an East German campaign or long-term strategy against Springer, as Staadt, Voigt, and Wolle tend to do. It rather seems to be a continuous monitoring—with occasional interventions—of one of the most important symbols of the competition between the two German states supplemented by propaganda journalism that caricatured capitalism, using Springer as an exemplary case.

75. Staadt, Voigt, and Wolle, *Feind-Bild Springer*, 76; Knipping, *Jeder vierte zahlt an Axel Cäsar*; Verband der Deutschen Journalisten, *Hetzer, Fälscher, Meinungsmacher*. Kraushaar assumes that the basic ideas of the SDS anti-Springer campaign originated with the SED. See Wolfgang Kraushaar, “Kleinkrieg gegen einen Großverleger,” in *RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Kraushaar, 2:1115.

man citizens.<sup>76</sup> A five-part East German TV series, *Ich—Axel Cäsar Springer*, was meant to revive the issue of press concentration. However, records from the East German Ministry for State Security show that the Central Committee established a task group to support the existing West German anti-Springer campaign only in late October 1967.<sup>77</sup> Some overlap in anti-Springer activities subsequently occurred, but student leaders were careful to preserve their independence.<sup>78</sup> Springer, however, was always eager to demonstrate the existence of an East German anti-Springer campaign that had allegedly engendered protest in the West. The publishing house assembled meticulous documentation of the supposed path that anti-Springer slogans had taken from the SED anniversary commemoration to adoption by West German students and the liberal press. This collection of press clippings was regularly updated and was sent out to a number of business and political leaders in August 1967.<sup>79</sup>

Ironically, Springer himself had unleashed charges of distortion of competition and monopoly in the early 1960s, when several publishers attempted to establish commercial television programming. At the time, Springer argued that the advertisement business of state-run broadcasting companies constituted undue competition for the advertisement business of private publishers.<sup>80</sup> Springer headlines invoked “television terror” and “television dictatorship” in their reporting on public channels whose “television monopoly” allegedly disadvantaged the public.<sup>81</sup> In December 1966, Axel Springer declared that only advertising guaranteed the “freedom and independence” of *Die Welt*.<sup>82</sup> While his attempts to gain a foothold in broadcasting did not succeed—commercial television was not introduced in Germany until 1984—the debate about media concentration increasingly turned against Springer, though it did not challenge the economic roots of his commercial success.

Even more remarkable is the fact that the tactic of a politically motivated boycott flanked by economic pressure had been embraced by Springer long before any students resorted to this strategy. After the erection of the Berlin

76. Staadt, Voigt, and Wolle, *Feind-Bild Springer*, 89.

77. Kruip, “Welt”-“Bild” des Axel Springer Verlags, 226.

78. Staadt, Voigt, and Wolle, *Feind-Bild Springer*, 132–33.

79. Kruip, “Welt”-“Bild” des Axel Springer Verlags, 226; Verlagshaus Axel Springer, *These*.

80. See Seitenbecher, *Deutschen “Cäsar” bezwingen*, 13–21; “Springer: ‘Bild’ im Bildschirm?,” *Der Spiegel* 6 (3 February 1965): 40–53; Bernd Jansen, “Öffentliche Aufgabe und wirtschaftliche Interessen der privaten Presse,” in *Kapitalismus und Pressefreiheit*, ed. Brokmeier, 172–93. Meinhof criticised the project: see “Springer-Fernsehen,” *konkret* 4 (1965), in Meinhof, *Dokumente einer Rebellion*, 51.

81. “Springer: ‘Bild’ im Bildschirm?,” *Der Spiegel* 6 (3 February 1965): 41.

82. Springer, *Deutsche Presse*, quoted in *ibid.*, 23.



Wall, Springer newspapers intensified their massive campaign against the regime in East Berlin. They had already stopped printing the GDR's radio and television programme in 1960, and in a circular letter to newspaper wholesalers dated 2 September 1961, Springer threatened to stop doing business with them if they continued to distribute journals that printed the eastern TV schedules.<sup>83</sup> The Hamburg communist weekly *Blinkfüer* obtained an injunction from the Hamburg Regional Court—later upheld by the Higher Regional Court—that forbade the Springer group from threatening wholesalers. Simultaneously, *Blinkfüer* filed a claim for damages resulting from Springer's threats. The courts found Springer had flexed its economic muscle for political reasons and thus had unlawfully encroached on a business enterprise. Springer appealed to the Federal Court of Justice (BGH), which issued a ruling that was exceedingly advantageous for the publishing giant. The 1963 decision held that restraint of competition as enshrined in antitrust law did not apply because Springer's publications and *Blinkfüer* appealed to different audiences. The BGH found that Springer had only pursued a civic concern—that is, an expression of opinion—rather than attempting to impose his will in commercial intercourse. Consequently, the judges found, Springer's conduct was covered by freedom of opinion. This ruling immediately provoked criticism and a constitutional complaint, with its detractors urging the judges to take into account Springer's economic power and the fact that freedom of opinion also applied to *Blinkfüer*. The decision was not announced until May 1969, by which time Springer newspapers had resumed printing the East German television programme, *Blinkfüer* had gone bankrupt, and the protesters had a concrete example of what Springer could do with its economic might protected by the law. The Constitutional Court reversed the BGH's judgement, maintaining that although calls for boycott were indeed covered by freedom of expression, even among those with economic power, such calls were not protected by the law if they were accompanied by economic pressure, which, the judges decreed, was not conducive to the free competition of opinion.<sup>84</sup>

Such differences in legal opinion were an important backdrop to the anti-Springer campaign. As with the legal debates about blockading public transport, lower courts tended to be much more amenable to the protesters' argu-

83. Schulz, "Blinkfüer"; Hans Dieter Müller, *Springer-Konzern*, 238–45; Kurt Groenewold, "Das Urteil des Bundesgerichtshofes in der Blinkfüer-Affäre: Ein Kommentar," in *Kapitalismus und Pressefreiheit*, ed. Brokmeier, 142–56.

84. Bundesverfassungsgericht, "Entscheidung vom 26.2.1969—I BvR 619/63" (Blinkfüer-Urteil), BVerfGE 25,256, 1969; Donald P. Kommers, *The Constitutional Jurisprudence of the Federal Republic of Germany*, 2nd ed. (Durham, 1997), 372–75.

ments than did the appeals courts. Some lower courts acknowledged the blockades as demonstrations and thus as constitutionally protected forms of protest and found that “the call for state authority” must not be the last resort in the conflict with the students; instead, they urged a “democratically informed concept of order.”<sup>85</sup> According to the Frankfurt District Court, the fact that the blockade of newspaper deliveries leaving a print shop affected the rights of a third party did not necessarily mean that the event was “nonpeaceful” in nature. The court pointed to the 1958 Lüth verdict, in which the Federal Constitutional Court had upheld the right of the director of the Hamburg government’s press office, Erich Lüth, to call for a boycott of Veit Harlan’s first post-World War II film. The film director, who had made several antisemitic films during the Nazi period—most notoriously *Jud Süß*—had been granted an injunction against Lüth in the lower courts. The Constitutional Court, however, had reinforced freedom of expression in what became a landmark decision, stressing the primacy of constitutional basic rights in all other realms of the law. In analogy to the Lüth decision, the Frankfurt judges of 1968 demanded that conflicting interests protected by the law be weighed against each other. The attempt to prevent the delivery of *Bild* for one day by means of a blockade that highlighted threats to freedom of information was an eminently public matter, to which the right of unhindered road traffic had to be subordinated. Accordingly, they judged the economic damage resulting from the prevention of delivery to be a limited interference with commercial activities—not unlike the effects of a strike—and thus considered it acceptable.<sup>86</sup>

Some jurists introduced the concept of “social adequacy” to the discussions about coercion by blockade to ascertain the “degree of unlawfulness” of an act of coercion. Hans Janknecht,<sup>87</sup> at the time a member of the criminal law commission of the German Association of Judges and later the general state prosecutor in Bremen, considered it “still socially adequate if students, for lack of other options, fought against a press conglomerate’s long-lasting and targeted hate and smear campaign . . . by preventing the delivery of newspapers

85. Dostal, 1968, 156–57; “AG Esslingen,” *Juristenzeitung* 23 (1968): 799–800; “AG Frankfurt,” *Juristenzeitung* 23 (1968): 200–205.

86. Dostal, 1968, 160–61; “AG Frankfurt,” *Juristenzeitung* 23 (1968): 204–5; Bundesverfassungsgericht, “Entscheidung vom 15.1.1958—1 BvR 400/51” (Lüth-Urteil), BVerfGE 7, 198, 1958; Henne and Riedlinger, *Lüth-Urteil*; Nipperdey, “Boykott und freie Meinungsäußerung”; Dieter Grimm, “Karriere eines Boykottaufrufs,” *Die Zeit* 40 (2001), [http://www.zeit.de/2001/40/Die\\_Karriere\\_eines\\_Boykottaufrufs](http://www.zeit.de/2001/40/Die_Karriere_eines_Boykottaufrufs) (accessed 12 July 2010).

87. On Janknecht, see Der Senator für Justiz und Verfassung, “Bürgermeister Scherf verabschiedet Bremens Generalstaatsanwalt Dr. Hans Janknecht in den Ruhestand” (21 December 2001), <http://www.senatspressestelle.bremen.de/detail.php?id=14567> (accessed 12 July 2010).

for a day, blocking the gates of the print shop, or setting fire to delivery vans. If compensation between libel and personal injury is acceptable, damage to property opposite incitement of the people cannot be condemned as socially inadequate.” Janknecht not only invoked section 130 (*Volksverhetzung*) of the Criminal Code in favour of the student protesters but was even prepared to include burning delivery vans in the legal balancing act. For Janknecht, the dividing line between legal and illegal was that between demonstration of a cause and the factual enforcement of this cause. If the latter was the case, he considered it coercion.<sup>88</sup>

### The Legal Interpretation of Violence during Blockades

The Easter 1968 Springer blockades produced a controversial sequel in civil law, posing the question of accountability for damage inflicted by demonstrations. The Springer group sued SDS members for compensation since most insurance policies excluded damage caused by riots and civil commotion.<sup>89</sup> Horst Mahler and Günter Amendt were each sentenced to pay around seventy thousand deutsche marks. As in the Laepple case, the amount was determined by loss of earnings—in this instance, as a consequence of the delayed delivery of newspapers.

The BGH confirmed these rulings in May 1972, rejecting the defendants’ argument that they were exerting a right to resist. In Mahler’s case, the civil court of appeal transferred criminal terms such as *abettor* and *instigator* to civil law. The judges again extended the notion of violence to a remarkable degree, asserting that the “use of any kind of violence in the battle of political opinions was incompatible with the free democratic order of the Federal Republic. Thus the violence committed in the course of the demonstration does not even matter essentially because the gathering of people in front of the claimants’ premises associated with the demonstration already constituted an

88. Janknecht, “Verfassungs- und strafrechtliche Fragen zu ‘Sitzstreiks,’” 37.

89. See “Demonstrations-Schäden: Innere Unruhe,” *Der Spiegel* 18 (29 April 1968): 68. According to this article, German insurance policies generally excluded damage caused by riots and civil commotion, a practice that traced back to a Nazi order that declared such unrest nonexistent in Germany. While this somewhat simplifies a complicated development in insurance law, it is true that civil commotion insurance was discontinued by the Nazi authorities in 1934. However, this action did not create a legal obstacle to commercial insurance against damage by civil commotion. The Federal Insurance Supervisory Office visited the issue in response to the student protests in 1968 and upheld the conventional—but not categorical—exclusion of insurance liability in such cases because they were incalculable. See Karsten Friedrich, *Der Rechtsbegriff der Versicherung und die Praxis des Versicherungsaufsichtsamts* (Frankfurt, 1974), 90–91.

obstruction of the claimants' business by violence of which the defendant . . . approved." This approval made it irrelevant whether the defendant himself had caused the physical damage. This ruling reinforced the same basic interpretation as the Laepple verdict: obstructing or blockading something constituted violence. The BGH rejected all contrary rulings by courts of lower instance and similar opinions in the specialist literature in favour of limiting demonstrators' right to blockade traffic or impede the delivery of newspapers. The judges stated explicitly that their ruling did not abridge the right to demonstrate by confronting the individual demonstrator with "unreasonable risks," as the appeal had argued. The judges also assumed that the blockade ultimately amounted to "illegal censorship" of the press and that "permissibility of a limited use of violence" held "the danger of constantly increasing violence that would ultimately challenge the legal order as such."<sup>90</sup> Heinz DÜx, a judge on the Frankfurt Higher Regional Court, criticised the sentence against Mahler on the grounds that it "destroyed a livelihood" and was governed by the "political agenda of the administrators of justice, namely . . . hierarchically structured relations of power." In this context, he did not consider the exertion of violence per se contrary to the law.<sup>91</sup>

Mahler had neither thrown stones nor handled fire. He had been one of the first to enter Springer's headquarters after the police cordon had been broken, for which he received a suspended criminal sentence of ten months plus the civil claim of seventy thousand deutsche marks. During the criminal case, Axel Springer was summoned as a witness and questioned by Mahler's defence lawyer, Otto Schily.<sup>92</sup> Mahler evaded his sentence by escaping to a military training camp in Jordan along with other members of the RAF.<sup>93</sup> During the night of 7–8 March 1970, a few days after Springer's first appearance in court, Molotov cocktails were hurled at the private home of Malte-Till Kogge, editor in chief of *BZ*, causing only minimal damage.<sup>94</sup> The Sozialistische Büro in Offenbach raised the money for Amendt, who was accused of blockading a

90. "Entscheidung des BGH vom 30.5.1972—BGH VI ZR 139/70"; "Oberlandesgericht: Mahler muss 76000 Mark Schaden ersetzen," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 31 May 1972, 14.

91. Dostal, 1968, 244; Heinz DÜx, "Zivilurteile als Disziplinierungsmittel," *Kritische Justiz* 2 (1969): 397. See also Marianne Regensburger, "Der Fall Horst Mahler oder Wie die Springer-Presse einen für den Abschluß präpariert," in *Kapitalismus und Pressefreiheit*, ed. Brokmeier, 114–27.

92. "Baader: Macht kaputt," *Der Spiegel* 21 (18 May 1979): 100; Kraushaar, "Kleinkrieg gegen einen Großverleger," 2:1098.

93. "Mahler: Im Auge," *Der Spiegel* 18 (29 April 1968): 63–65. See Martin Jander, "Horst Mahler," in *RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Kraushaar, 1:372–97.

94. Reimann, *Dieter Kunzelmann*, 261. According to Reimann, Kunzelmann was accused of the attack on Kogge's house, but the evidence remains inconclusive. See "Der Prozeß gegen Dieter Kunzelmann," *rote hilfe* 1 (December 1971): 36–44.

Springer print shop in Frankfurt. Throughout the following decade, authorities continued the legal practice of holding individual ringleaders responsible for the damage inflicted by large blockades and demonstrations and presenting them with claims for indemnification that were clearly beyond the financial reach of the average demonstrator.<sup>95</sup> The strategy ended only in 1984, when the Federal Court of Justice stipulated that only demonstrators who had “actively” participated in “acts of violence” could be held accountable.<sup>96</sup>

The question of culpability for violence during the anti-Springer campaign gained an additional dimension when part-time Kommune I member Peter Urbach was exposed as an agent of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutz). He had supplied Molotov cocktails that were used to set alight delivery vans at Springer’s Berlin headquarters as well as explosives and support in other contexts, although the extent of these activities has been disputed. His involvement raises interesting questions about the role of agents provocateurs in escalations of violence. Some observers have suggested that Urbach and possibly other still-unexposed secret service agents were responsible for the escalation of violence at the demonstrations. However, this explanation does not account for the development of simultaneous violent protests in multiple German cities.<sup>97</sup> Writer and contemporary activist Peter-Paul Zahl saw the perpetuation of the Urbach story as a retrospective strategy of exculpation by former radical activist: “If one is a little bit honest and takes a look at the period between 2 June 67 and the summer of 68 . . . , then there really was the sort of thinking articulated by Meinhof: ‘From moral protest to armed resistance,’”<sup>98</sup>

Contemporary comments and developments show that the differentiation between violence against things and violence against people was not suitable for dissociating oneself from violence. Quite the contrary, it identified objects—and thus the realm of consumption—as parts of much wider power structures that could be made visible by attacking these objects. This basic pattern for both concrete action and its theoretical legitimisation was developed further in various contexts over the coming decades.

95. “Schadensersatz-Prozesse gegen Demonstranten: Ruiniert fürs ganze Leben. Ein Zeit-Gespräch mit Bundesjustizminister Jürgen Schmude,” *Die Zeit* 13 (26 March 1982), <http://www.zeit.de/1982/13/Ruiniert-fuers-ganze-Leben> (accessed 7 June 2010).

96. BGH, “Entscheidung vom 24.1.1984,” 1226–36.

97. See Siegward Lönnendonker and Bernd Rabehl, “Immer Ärger mit Peter,” *taz-Berlin*, 9 September 1983, 20; Markus Mohr, “‘S-Bahn-Peter’: Eine Textcollage zur Familien- und Kriminalgeschichte der Westberliner APO,” in *Spitzel*, ed. Mohr and Viehmann, 123–34.

98. Peter-Paul Zahl, “Wenn Du richtig raus willst, mußt Du entweder Rockstar, Fußballstar oder Dichter werden,” *taz*, 26 February 1982, quoted in Mohr, “‘S-Bahn-Peter,’” 132.

## Militants against Springer

In November 1969, *agit 883* called Axel Springer an “exemplary fascist” who used a single act by an individual—in this case, the failed bomb attack against the West Berlin Jewish Community Centre on 9 November 1969—to criminalise and discredit the entire Left with the charge of violent antisemitism.<sup>99</sup> The attack was highly controversial among the members of the radical left. While this commentary, although critical, tended to ignore the moral and political implications of an allegedly “anti-Zionist” attack on a German Jewish institution on the anniversary of the 1938 pogrom, it was right in pointing out that it had been a long-term rhetorical strategy of the Springer newspapers to equate the actions of student protesters with Nazi crimes. However, *Agit 883* reciprocated in kind, thus continuing what had become a tradition in the heated exchange between protesters and Springer journalists: charging each other with fascism. The cover picture of *Agit 883* showed an alarm clock at four minutes to twelve with the dial showing images of people whom the makers of the anarchist newspaper considered to be fascists: next to Axel Springer were the chief of staff of the Bundesluftwaffe, Johannes Steinhoff, who had been a fighter ace in World War II; and industrialist Friedrich Flick, who had been convicted of war crimes at the Nuremberg Trials and been sentenced to seven years in prison. The caption under this collage read, “The bomb continues to tick . . .”<sup>100</sup>

Georg von Rauch, a founding member of the Tupamaros West-Berlin, also propagated the “destruction” of Springer in “Es lebe das Commando Schwarze Presse” (Long Live Operation Black Press), a document he wrote while imprisoned after beating up a journalist from the glossy magazine *Quick* (not a Springer publication, but similar in style). He embraced the “anarchist destruction” of the Springer conglomerate in conjunction with the “self-organisation of our black press.” He judged the SDS anti-Springer campaign ineffective since it merely involved analysis and political education. The revolutionary task was the “exemplary busting of a large corporation” like Springer using means that

99. “Eine Fußnote vom Genossen Lenin,” *Agit 883* 41 (20 November 1969): 4; “Wie die Presse eine Bombe schärft,” *Agit 883* 41 (20 November 1969): 2.

100. *Agit 883* 41 (20 November 1969): 1. See Kraushaar, *Bombe*, 73–78. Kraushaar mistakenly attributes the cover to issue 42 of *Agit 883*. His interpretation is a bit one-sided as he emphasises the antisemitic components of the radical left-wing discourse on the failed bomb attack against the Jewish Community Centre but fails to acknowledge the Nazi past of some of the individuals *Agit 883* was attacking. He thus misses the reciprocal character of the opposing accusations of fascism and the Radical Left’s rhetorical strategy of associating Springer with figures who had documented Nazi pasts.

would materially hurt it. At the same time, he wanted to build up channels of communication with Yasser Arafat's Fatah and the Black Panthers.<sup>101</sup>

In May 1972, the Red Armee Fraktion (RAF) bombed Springer's Hamburg high-rise headquarters as part of its spring offensive. The attack on Springer was labelled Kommando 2. Juni and left thirty-six people injured, two of them severely. Despite the damage, which amounted to 336,000 deutsche marks, all of the Springer papers were published the following day, though some had reduced print runs.<sup>102</sup> The statement of responsibility attempted to shift the blame by accusing Springer of failing to evacuate the premises after receiving a warning about the bomb. The statement did not mention issues of consumption but focused on what the RAF saw as Springer's political agitation against communism, the Left, and Third World liberation movements, especially in Palestine.<sup>103</sup> However, the RAF referred very explicitly to Springer in two earlier statements.

"The Urban Guerrilla Concept" mentioned Springer twelve times and *Bild* four times. It started out confronting left-wing "comrades" who denounced the RAF as "anarchist" and simultaneously distanced themselves from the terrorists. The RAF's answer was curt: this notion of anarchism was no different from Springer journalism.<sup>104</sup> When trying to explain their use of weapons in the freeing of Andreas Baader, the fugitive radicals wrestled with the "brutalised" image the Springer press painted of them.<sup>105</sup> They praised the student movement for focusing on repression, with the "Springer campaign" as the first of six examples.<sup>106</sup> The followers of Carlos Marighella and Mao Zedong

101. Georg von Rauch, "Es lebe das Commando Schwarze Presse," quoted in Kraushaar, "Kleinkrieg gegen einen Großverleger," 2:1099–1100.

102. ID-Verlag, *Rote Armee Fraktion*, 21; Kraushaar, "Kleinkrieg gegen einen Großverleger," 2:1075–1116. Kraushaar's article provides a lengthy account of various attacks on Springer premises. His use of the terms "war" and "bomb war" (*Bombenkrieg*) to characterise the RAF attack is problematic. Kraushaar tends to avoid a close analysis of the RAF's efforts to legitimise its bombings and thus misses the rather complicated interplay between different levels of discourse on violence that drove the process of escalation. Instead, he embraces a monocausal explanation of ideas that somehow inevitably led to terrorism.

103. "Erklärung vom 20. Mai 1972 zum Sprengstoff-Anschlag auf das Springer-Hochhaus," in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 147. Andreas Elter puts the RAF in the context of Islamic terrorism and diagnoses a "symbiosis" between RAF and Springer, which assured each other's success. This leads to the question why Springer was so successful before the RAF and after its demise. Elter attempts to draw a direct link between symbolic and physical violence with reference to Holger Meins's Molotov cocktail film, which does not do justice to a much more complex development. See Elter, *Propaganda der Tat*, 103–6.

104. "Konzept Stadtguerilla," 27.

105. *Ibid.*, 30.

106. *Ibid.*, 34–35.

claimed both the anti-Springer campaign and the Frankfurt squatters' movement as direct precursors of their urban guerrilla concept, maintaining that it was "correct to link the distribution of socialist propaganda in factories with the act of preventing the distribution of *Bild*."<sup>107</sup> By recycling any awareness of the "perfidy of German life" into renewed perfidy, the Springer Corporation even appeared to be a successful competitor in the long-term project of unifying the working class.<sup>108</sup> Together with public television channels and the *Bayernkurier*, the Springer Corporation featured as representative of a "fascist mode of exercising power."<sup>109</sup> The armed fighters of the RAF rejected the project of a left-wing counterpublic, which they considered to be too much in its infancy and at the mercy of an all-powerful opponent led by Springer: "There are no means of publication that are not controlled by capital, via advertising sales, as a result of the ambitions of the writers who want to write their way into the establishment, via the broadcasting councils, and via concentration on the press market. . . . Journalism is about one thing: sales—news a commodity; information a consumer product. Whatever isn't suitable for consumption is bound to make them sick."<sup>110</sup>

A year later—about a month before the attack on Springer's Hamburg headquarters—"Serve the People" made ample reference to the anti-Springer campaign, with the critical focus on information as consumption receding. Early in the document, the RAF denounced the critics who likened the group's methods to ordinary crime as operating on the same level as "*Bild* and *BZ*."<sup>111</sup> *Bild* and the Second German Television channel (ZDF) were portrayed as turning information on poverty and misery into "fascism material" by criminalising the downtrodden.<sup>112</sup> The analysis was more compact and subsumed the student movement after 1968 under broader attacks "against capitalist ownership," which found a "point of friction in capitalist profiteering."<sup>113</sup> Anticapitalism now served as the key umbrella concept. The manifesto dedicated an entire page to "the Springer Press," quoting approvingly from two unidentified and unreferenced passages from the 1968 anti-Springer campaign. The document

107. Ibid., 36, 41. See Marcio M. Alves, Konrad Detrez, and Carlos Marighella, *Zerschlagt die Wohlstandinseln der Dritten Welt: Mit dem Handbuch der Guerilleros von Sao Paulo* (1969; Reinbek, 1971).

108. "Konzept Stadtguerilla," 37.

109. Ibid., 45.

110. Ibid., 43.

111. "Dem Volk dienen: Stadtguerilla und Klassenkampf," in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 115.

112. Ibid., 131.

113. Ibid., 132–33.



concluded that Springer forestalled the emergence of class consciousness by seemingly catering to the discontent of the masses, a strategy the RAF saw as analogous to that used by the Nazis in 1933. That Springer and *Bild* were “fascist” had become an unquestioned stereotype.<sup>114</sup>

In highlighting this attribute, the RAF found itself in good company, pointedly noting one fellow critic in particular: in January 1972, one of Germany’s foremost postwar writers, Heinrich Böll, had caused a political scandal by apparently siding with the RAF in the intellectual struggle against Springer. Writing in *Der Spiegel*, Böll sought to keep his critical distance from the ideas and methods of the militant rebels while putting their deeds into the perspective of German history and the principles of the rule of law. The RAF gleefully quoted the famous writer’s verdict on Springer’s journalistic treatment of the RAF’s December 1971 bank robbery during which a policeman had been killed: “This is no longer crypto-fascist . . . , this is naked fascism. Incitement, lies, dreck. This form of demagoguery would not even be justified if the conjectures of the . . . police were to turn out true. . . . The headline ‘Baader-Meinhof Gang Continue to Murder’ is a call for lynch law.”<sup>115</sup>

Böll was not the first eminent writer to describe Springer as fascist. Günter Grass had already referred to “truly fascist methods” and “opinion terror” in September 1967, when Springer newspapers had published a forged letter in which writer Arnold Zweig had allegedly denounced the GDR.<sup>116</sup> Before the RAF’s major May 1972 offensive, Böll interpreted the group’s struggle as an attempt to alienate West Germans from their affluence: “I consider it psychologically hopeless to talk the petty bourgeoisie, workers, employees, civil servants . . . out of their relative affluence, given their frightful experience of two cases of complete inflation.” While he was perfectly right in this assessment of the vast majority of West Germans’ consumerist preferences, his criticism of people’s tendency to aim for an uncompromising and complete dissociation of the categories “criminal” and “political” is equally noteworthy.<sup>117</sup>

From then on, Böll was branded as a fellow traveller (*Sympathisant*) of the terrorists; the national television news service, Tagesschau, called him an “advocate of anarchist gangsters.”<sup>118</sup> In his defence, Böll blamed Springer journalism for its role in escalating violence during the student movement, cit-

114. Ibid., 135–36.

115. Heinrich Böll, “‘Will Ulrike Gnad oder freies Geleit?,’” *Der Spiegel* 3 (10 January 1972): 55. See Grützbach, *Heinrich Böll*; Kepplinger, Hachenberg, and Frühauf, “Struktur und Funktion.”

116. See Stadt, Voigt, and Woll, *Feind-Bild Springer*, 117–19.

117. Böll, “‘Will Ulrike Gnad oder freies Geleit?,’” 55–56.

118. Ulrich Frank-Planitz, “Letzte Parole, verhaftet oder tot,” in *Heinrich Böll*, ed. Grützbach, 85.

ing the shootings of Ohnesorg and Dutschke.<sup>119</sup> Böll continued his critical focus on Springer's verbal violence in his 1974 novel, *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum oder: Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann* (*The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum; or, How Violence Develops and Where It Can Lead*).<sup>120</sup> Böll was not the only prominent intellectual who sought to do some moral justice to the RAF despite condemning its use of violence. Journalist Sebastian Haffner was courageous enough to point out even after the RAF's spring offensive that Springer journalism bore some responsibility for the escalation of violence: "No one has planted the seeds of violence as keenly as Springer journalism has."<sup>121</sup>

Till Meyer, a member of Movement 2 June, echoed Böll and Haffner. He saw Springer's hate campaign against the student movement—"branding them as murderers, bandits, criminals par excellence"—at the root of much wider patterns of perception. He made this point while defending himself in court on charges of attempted murder for firing a shot shortly before his arrest. He asserted that killing a human being was absolutely contrary to all his political activism and convictions, which arose from a "humane value system"; however, the court and the Springer press met this value system—and, more broadly, any political motivation—with "total negation."<sup>122</sup>

Immediately after the May 1972 offensive, the RAF added another facet to its focus on Springer's consumer journalism. Turning to the "comrades" in the K-Gruppen (avant-gardist small-scale communist organisations emanating from the dissolution of the SDS), they objected to the argument that the attack on Springer had not had the desired effect on workers, who already knew "that every day *Bild* was lying through its teeth." The RAF countered by charging those comrades with a commodity approach to political communication: "To them the problem of communication [*Vermittlung*] presents itself like the *Bild* headline to the Springer journalist, as a problem of saleability and competition—the political content as a commodity, the masses as a market. . . . They consume what they pretend to fight."<sup>123</sup> The alternative to this consumption trap was armed resistance.

119. Heinrich Böll, "Man muß zu weit gehen, um herauszufinden, wie weit man gehen kann," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29–30 January 1972, in *ibid.*, 127–33.

120. Heinrich Böll, *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum; or, How Violence Develops and Where It Can Lead*, trans. Leila Vennewitz (London, 1974). See Nigel Harris, "'Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum': The Problem of Violence," in *Narrative Fiction*, ed. Butler, 198–218.

121. Sebastian Haffner, "Blutiges Spiel," *Stern*, 4 June 1972, 114, quoted in Kraushaar, "Kleinkrieg gegen einen Großverleger," 2:1104.

122. Till Meyer, "Erklärung vor dem Schwurgericht," *Rote Hilfe Hamburg*, January 1973, 23.

123. "Tonbandprotokoll von dem Teach-in der Roten Hilfe, Frankfurt: Erklärung von 31. Mai 1972," in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 149.

The RAF's applauding statement on the Black September organisation was the last time it extensively referred to Springer. This document used the enemy image of Springer in two respects: in the construction of an alleged fascist continuity, and in the context of recurring polemics against the New Left being taken in by Springer journalism.<sup>124</sup> Hence they accused their erstwhile comrades—especially Oskar Negt—of opportunism, a petit bourgeois mentality, and, most important, loss of anti-imperialist consciousness.<sup>125</sup> In the spirit of fascist continuity, the RAF strung together *Bild* headlines on German Olympic medals, the 1972 Munich Massacre, and an allusion to Goebbels's famous speech on total war.<sup>126</sup>

Although subsequent statements did not mention Springer so directly, the problem of media concentration remained high on the RAF's anti-corporate agenda, as is demonstrated by a compilation of newspaper clippings and statistical data on West German media companies that the RAF prisoners kept in their files at Stuttgart's Stammheim Prison.<sup>127</sup>

Axel Springer, who had never been a Nazi but who employed several former high-ranking party members, was not personally targeted, although speculation about this possibility was rife, and he took ample safety precautions. He was heavily guarded at all times, and when travelling by car he was always escorted by at least two other vehicles. Paul Karl Schmidt, alias Paul Carell, whom Springer put in charge of his elaborate personal security, had been a high-ranking Nazi propagandist at Ribbentrop's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>128</sup> In August 1973, an arson attack on a stately guest house privately owned by Springer on the North Sea island of Sylt caused considerable damage but no injuries, and no culprit was ever identified.<sup>129</sup> Seventeen months later, Axel Springer's chalet in the Swiss Alps met a similar fate. In 2006, Swiss writer Daniel de Roulet confessed to having taken part in the arson in the mistaken belief that Springer had been a Nazi.<sup>130</sup>

124. "Die Aktion des »Schwarzen September« in München: Zur Strategie des antiimperialistischen Kampfes, November 1972," in *ibid.*, 152.

125. *Ibid.*, 159.

126. *Ibid.*, 167.

127. "Die Umsatzstärksten BRD-Medienkonzerne 1974," in file "Wirtschaft, Kapital, Ökonomie," Stammheim Nachlass, AHIS RAF-Sep/001.

128. Kraushaar, "Kleinkrieg gegen einen Großverleger," 2:1107–08. See Wigbert Benz, *Paul Carell: Ribbentrops Pressechef Paul Karl Schmidt vor und nach 1945* (Berlin, 2005); Christian Plöger, *Von Ribbentrop zu Springer: Zu Leben und Wirken von Paul Karl Schmidt alias Paul Carell* (Marburg, 2009).

129. Kraushaar, "Kleinkrieg gegen einen Großverleger," 2:1109.

130. *Ibid.*, 1109–10; Daniel de Roulet, *Ein Sonntag in den Bergen: Ein Bericht* (Zürich, 2006). Kraushaar makes a lot of this literary source: "Seine späte Beichte ermöglicht es, wohl besser als

Apart from these clandestine attacks on Springer's properties, no major street protest activities emerged during the remainder of the 1970s. Springer, however, remained an archenemy of the radical Left. A flyer from the early squatters' movement in Hamburg listed three main targets of political attack, with Springer preceding both the Hamburg government and the hated trade-union-owned housing society, *Neue Heimat*.<sup>131</sup> More important for popularising critiques of the media mogul was undercover journalist Günter Wallraff, who worked as an editor for *Bild* for four months in 1977 and subsequently published three widely read book-length indictments of the dubious practices he encountered.<sup>132</sup> In 1981, literary eminences Grass, Wolf Biermann, and Uwe Johnson joined an "Anti-Springer-Forum" that declared, "We don't work for Springer newspapers."<sup>133</sup>

### The Revival of Anti-Springer Activism in the Context of the Peace Movement

A blockade of Springer premises took place in October 1983 during large-scale protests across Europe against the implementation of the NATO double-track decision. An "action week" of the peace movement in Hamburg, including blockades of the American barracks at Bremerhaven, was supplemented by protesters blockading Springer's Hamburg headquarters and the Rothfos coffee company.<sup>134</sup> Action against the latter was not directly related to the issue of NATO weapons but sought to address "the blood in El Salvadorian coffee."<sup>135</sup> The blockade of coffee deliveries remained a small-scale event without disturbances, but on 22 October, after a peace demonstration with several hundred thousand participants, an evening demonstration of several thousand organised by the Grün-Alternative-Liste (GAL), Hamburg's branch of the Green Party, in conjunction with some twenty smaller organisations, including autonomist

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je zuvor Einblicke in die Anti-Springer-Psychologie eines Brandstifters zu bekommen." However, he does not really reflect on the methodological problems posed by Roulet's confession, which was written thirty years after the arson, which itself occurred almost three years after the RAF's attack on Springer.

131. *Wir greifen an: Springer, Senat, Neue Heimat: Besetzung Ekhofstr.* 39 (Hamburg, 1973), IISG Amsterdam, ID-Bro744/13 fol.

132. See Wallraff, *Aufmacher*; Wallraff, *Zeugen der Anklage*; Wallraff, *BILD-Handbuch*.

133. Seitenbecher, *Deutschen "Cäsar" bezwingen*, 100; Kruij, "Welt"-*"Bild"* des Axel Springer Verlags, 261.

134. "Perschau fordert: keine Blockaden," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 7 October 1983, 4; "Springer-Blockade—Ein Exempel," *Arbeiterkampf* 239 (31 October 1983): 14–17.

135. "Blockade bei Rothfos: Kaffeepause," *taz-Hamburg*, 19 October 1983, 16.

groups, set out to prevent the delivery of the Sunday issue of *Bild*. During the confrontation between demonstrators and police, shop windows were smashed, barricades were built, and the police were attacked with cobblestones, bottles, incendiary devices, and iron bars. An office furniture store was looted, and private cars were set afire. The police cleared the way for the Sunday newspapers using water cannons, truncheons, and plainclothes officers mingling with the demonstrators. Both police and demonstrators suffered injuries.<sup>136</sup> The Springer Company organised a cold buffet for police commanders.<sup>137</sup>

Attacks inflicting some damage on the private homes of three *Berliner Morgenpost* journalists, including chief editor Johannes Otto, during the run-up to the Hamburg blockade remained isolated and did not figure prominently in the ensuing debates. A letter claiming responsibility for the attacks on the journalists' homes invoked the concept of *Gleichschaltung* (forcible coordination in Nazi Germany) and lamented Springer's political partiality in launching "character assassination, denunciation, and smear campaigns" against anything with even the remotest appearance of originating on the political left.<sup>138</sup> These small-scale attacks on private homes resembled earlier *Revolutionäre Zellen* (RZ) campaigns. Another incident in November 1982 in which four young people set fire to newspaper delivery vans also attracted little media attention.<sup>139</sup>

An analysis of the organisation of the 1983 blockade campaign reveals that memories of 1968 and especially the issue of violence figured prominently. The idea of including Springer in blockade activities originated with the German Communist Party (DKP), which then lamented that the GAL hijacked the concept, apparently to add variation to the protest forms of the peace movement and to revive the spirit of extraparlimentary protest.<sup>140</sup> The DKP and the trade

136. "Blockadeplenum: Gemeinsam zur Kaserne," *taz-Hamburg*, 19 October 1983, 16; "Samstag war BamStag," *taz-Hamburg*, 24 October 1983, 16; "Siebentausend waren dabei. Vor Springer: Größte Blockade des Herbstes," *taz*, 24 October 1983, 3; "Erst Frieden, dann Krawall," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 24 October 1983, 1; "Die Schlacht in der Neustadt," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 24 October 1983, 3; "Die Springerblockade am 22.10.: Radikalisierung der Friedensbewegung oder Abenteuer?," *taz*, 27 October 1983, 8; "Hamburg: Springer-Blockade," *radikal* 8.122 (November 1988): 36.

137. "Nachschlag," *taz-Hamburg*, 25 October 1983, 16.

138. "Berlin: Anschlag auf 'MoPo'-Chefredakteur," *taz*, 4 October 1983, 5; "AL verurteilt Anschlag: Sprengstoffanschlag auf 'Morgenpost'-Chef," *taz-Berlin*, 4 October 1983, 15; "Bekennerrbrief eingegangen: 'Bewußtseinsmäßig gleichgeschaltet,'" *taz-Berlin*, 5 October 1983, 16; "Anschläge: Berliner Morgenpost," *radikal* 8.122 (November 1983): 4.

139. "Prozeß vor dem Jugendgericht: Springer-LKW's brennen, der Staatsschutz errötet," *taz-Hamburg*, 31 October 1983, 15.

140. "GAL-Vorstoß zu Herbstaktion: Blockiert Springer!," *taz-Hamburg*, 26 September 1983, 16; "Springer Blockade: DKP attackiert GAL—Schlepptau oder Spaltung?," *taz-Hamburg*, 3 October 1983, 16; "Aufruf der Hamburger GAL und des Komitees zur Verteidigung der Pressefrei-

unions subsequently kept their distance from the Springer blockade, as they had fifteen years earlier.<sup>141</sup> The organisers of the ensuing *Blockadeplenum* (plenary meeting on blockades) foresaw violence chiefly in the context of the campaign against Springer. Blockading American barracks was seen as a clear-cut instance of civil resistance likely to encounter politically restrained police measures. However, the scenario of Easter 1968 and the expectation that police and the drivers of delivery vans would use extreme measures to break the blockade as a result of the “high economic significance of the newspaper deliveries,” led the protesters to aim for more moderate goals—that is, to retard rather than prevent delivery of the papers. Members of the organising committee and the competing wings of the GAL differed about whether to use improvised barricades and sabotage or a classic sit-in blockade “without damage to private property.” The issue of nonviolence emerged as a central bone of contention, highlighting a rift in the protest movement. Organisers agreed, however, that they wanted to prevent fatalities and avoid fire and occupation as means of protest.

The political goal was to highlight “ideological preparations for war.”<sup>142</sup> From this perspective, Springer newspapers produced enemy images and engaged in warmongering (*Kriegshetze*). Moreover, they tried to discredit the peace movement as “Moscow’s fifth column” while glorifying various military campaigns around the world and the militarisation of domestic society via recruits’ swearing-in ceremonies or military flying displays: “Thus the real wars in the ‘Third World’—waged in the service of the moral concepts of the ‘Free West’ and the freedom of capital development—become everyday occurrences, delivered to your home.”<sup>143</sup> The leftist newspaper *taz* printed a photo montage using Joe Rosenthal’s Pulitzer Prize-winning World War II photograph *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* with the American flag replaced by a copy of *Bild*.<sup>144</sup> The appointment of Peter Boehnisch, editor in chief of *Bild* in 1968,

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heit: Springer-Blockade Samstag,” *taz-Berlin*, 18 October 1983, 1–2; “Fünfzehn Jahre nach 1968—Wie einst im Mai?,” *taz*, 19 October 1983, 3.

141. “IG Druck & Springerblockade: Gewerkschaftsängste,” *taz-Hamburg*, 21 October 1983, 15.

142. “Blockaden in Bremerhaven und bei Springer: Mit Schnellbeton und alten Autos,” *taz-Hamburg*, 5 October 1983, 15; “GAL zu Springer-Blockade: Kein Aktionismus,” *taz-Hamburg*, 6 October 1983, 20; “Turbulenzen um Springer-Blockade: Ein neuer Typ von Distanzierung?,” *taz-Hamburg*, 13 October 1983, 15; “GAL zu Hamburger Friedensaktionen: Von Bremerhaven zu Springer,” *taz-Hamburg*, 17 October 1983, 16.

143. GAL, Vorbereitungsgruppe Springer-Blockade, Blockadeplenum, Friedenskoordination, “Springer macht’s möglich: Der Krieg wird vorbereitet auch in unseren Köpfen!,” *taz-Hamburg*, 5 October 1983, 15; “Krieg in den Köpfen: Springer Macht’s möglich,” *taz*, 18 October 1983, 12.

144. “Blockadeplenum zu GAL-Herbst-Vorschlag: Für Springer-Blockade,” *taz-Hamburg*, 28 September 1983, 16.

as spokesperson for the federal government demonstrated the close ties between Helmut Kohl's government and Axel Springer.<sup>145</sup> The revival of the anti-Springer campaign was supported by Wallraff, who called Springer's newspapers "journalistic missile bases" and pointed out that more than three hundred thousand Germans had signed calls to boycott Springer.<sup>146</sup>

In comparison with the original Springer blockade fifteen years earlier, press commentary on the more localised events in Hamburg was less shrill and sensational. Opinion was also less divided: the vast majority of observers seemed agreed in their outright condemnation of violence and in their support of the abstract principle of peace. An interesting political division emerged from discussions of violence at peace demonstrations. Those who were adamant that no use of any internal violence (other than by state authorities) could be tolerated were most inclined to consider the deployment of external military means of violence (that is, midrange nuclear missiles) a legitimate measure.<sup>147</sup> Conversely, those who seemed most sceptical about the legitimacy of nuclear armament were more prone to consider the application of limited and directed violence—that is, forms of civil disobedience—as means of domestic political communication. This arrangement informed a prominent argument in strategies of legitimisation: "What is a blockade (or a stone) compared to an atomic bomb?" Opponents attempted to remove this stance from the political stage—for example, a CDU member of the Hamburg parliament declared that anyone engaging in civil disobedience "departed from the community of the democrats."<sup>148</sup>

Attempts to theorise violence did not figure prominently in the mainstream political discourse of the early 1980s. In fact, the actual motives of the militant protesters were often unclear, and they were now generically called *Chaoten*, a derogatory term deriving from "chaos" that might be translated as "lunatic fringe." Issues of press concentration or the role of Springer publishing in consumer society featured little in the public debate. Some political controversy arose over the merger of the publishing houses Springer and Burda earlier that year, which the Cartel Authority had limited to Burda acquiring 24.9 percent of Springer's limited liability capital,<sup>149</sup> but this aspect seems not

145. GAL, Vorbereitungsgruppe Springer-Blockade, Blockadeplenum, Friedenskoordination, "Springer macht's möglich: Der Krieg wird vorbereitet auch in unseren Köpfen!," *taz-Hamburg*, 5 October 1983, 15.

146. Günter Wallraff, "Publizistische Raketenstützpunkte," *taz-Hamburg*, 22 October 1983, 23.

147. See, for example, "Perschau warnt vor der Gefahr von links," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 26 October 1983, 3.

148. "'GAL soll sich von Gewalt distanzieren,'" *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 24 November 1983, 7.

149. "Springer-Burda-Fusion: Ministerium will neues Gutachten," *taz*, 5 January 1983, 2; "Burda darf nur 24,9 Prozent übernehmen," *taz*, 7 January 1983, 2.

to have had a major impact on protest activities, which were dominated by the politics of the peace movement. Overall, the second campaign was less intellectual than its precursor. Both anti-Springer campaigns enjoyed rather limited success in terms of direct impact on their foe and its commercial success. Despite some temporary declines in profits during the 1970s, Springer's tabloids continued to dominate the market. When deeming these campaigns successful, oppositional groups praised the raising of awareness, which helped to mobilise protest movements and to provoke reactions by the authorities that could be turned against them politically, not least concerning the issue of violence.

The latter can be seen in the context of two overlapping points of controversy emerging in the aftermath of the 1983 Springer blockade. The first involved the GAL's position on violence.<sup>150</sup> The party was blamed for the emergence of violence and in this respect found itself in a similar position as the SDS fifteen years earlier. However, the GAL faced a trickier situation, since its agenda was not openly revolutionary, like that of the SDS. Since June 1982, the GAL held eight seats in the Hamburg parliament, where the party's loyalty to a peaceful political process was constantly questioned. Party leaders faced a difficult balancing act between trying to unite the protest movement, including militant and autonomist groups, and defending their democratic credentials against criticism from the established parties. The established parties also increasingly constructed the autonomists, generally seen as advocating violence, as politically taboo.<sup>151</sup> In November 1983, Hamburg's minister of the interior, Alfons Pawelczyk (SPD), explicitly presented the Greens with a demand that would come to haunt them: "To distance themselves from every form of violence. The monopoly on violence lies solely with the state."<sup>152</sup>

Police and the domestic secret service (*Verfassungsschutz*), which was increasingly concerned with political demonstrations, assumed that more than one thousand of the six thousand participants in the evening demonstration were "perpetrators of violence" (*Gewalttäter*) and that four hundred of them had acted spontaneously, whilst the others had travelled to the event with the intention of inciting violence. Five protesters faced charges of severe violation of the public peace (*schwerer Landfriedensbruch*), which could result in up to ten years in jail. The *Hamburger Abendblatt* emphasised that these people did not have jobs but lived on state benefits. Since the GAL had officially registered the demonstration, the question of responsibility assumed not only political and moral dimensions but also a tangible legal dimension in terms of

150. "Welche Rolle spielte die GAL," *taz*, 7 January 1983, 4.

151. "Pawelczyk legt jetzt Beweise auf den Tisch," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 26 October 1983, 3; "Pawelczyk zur Springerblockade: Mit gebotener Härte," *taz-Hamburg*, 26 October 1983, 16.

152. "'GAL soll sich von Gewalt distanzieren,'" *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 24 November 1983, 7.



liability for damage. The manager of the looted furniture store told the *Hamburger Abendblatt* that the business was considering sending a bill of fifteen thousand deutsche marks to the GAL to cover the damage; cleanup might add another eighty-five hundred deutsche marks to the total.<sup>153</sup> A political demonstration was thus turned into a question of consumption—in this case, destruction—and its costs. The journal of the Kommunistischer Bund (KB), one of the most important K-Gruppen, which supported the GAL, ironically called the latter an “umbrella organisation for Hamburg’s looters.”<sup>154</sup>

The second important debate—partly driven by the GAL as a counteroffensive against these charges and perhaps to legitimise their role in the demonstration—involved the plainclothes police force. There were complaints about the brutality of these officers; because they were undercover, it was extremely difficult to control their conduct and to identify or prosecute them if they exceeded their authority. The KB argued that plainclothes police officers had acted with “terrorist brutality” in beating up demonstrators. The undercover officers were supposed to concentrate on demonstrators considered to be violent, giving them wide leeway in defining who met this criterion. The strategy also put pressure on protesters and critics to distance themselves from violent means and to acknowledge the state monopoly on violence.<sup>155</sup> The GAL alleged in the Hamburg parliament that plainclothes officers had thrown stones, acting as agents provocateurs, and then beating up innocent demonstrators.<sup>156</sup> The *Hamburger Abendblatt*, conversely, reported proudly that all of the officers were “trained in jiu-jitsu or karate. Many of them have the black master belt.”<sup>157</sup>

To its critics, Springer appeared to be an ideological affirmation of affluence and of West Germany’s postwar “economic miracle.” Theoretical analysis sought to unmask tabloid journalism and its control of the advertisement market as a hypercommodity serving as a necessary lubricant of the capitalist system. The concrete protests—especially those at Easter 1968 after the assassination attempt on Dutschke—blamed Springer for inciting violence against the students and their leaders, focusing on newspapers as tangible commodities

153. “Die Grünen und die Gewalt in der Innenstadt: Die Polizei erhebt schwere Vorwürfe,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 25 October 1983, 3.

154. “Springer-Blockade—Ein Exempel,” *Arbeiterkampf* 239 (31 October 1983): 14.

155. “Beispiel Hamburg: Zivilbanden bei der Springerblockade,” *Arbeiterkampf* 240 (28 November 1983): 17; “Polizei: Wie eine Klette,” *Der Spiegel* 51 (19 December 1983): 36–38.

156. “Mahnwache: Mißhandlungen nach Springer-Blockade,” *taz*, 2 November 1984, 4; “GAL soll sich von Gewalt distanzieren,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 24 November 1983, 7.

157. “Zwischen Frieden und Krawall,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 24 October 1983, 4.

and seeking to hobble their distribution network by blockading print shops and delivery vans. The critical emphasis on *Konsumjournalismus* (consumer journalism) was shared by prominent intellectuals such as Böll and Grass. Ultimately, the campaign neither seriously jeopardised its archenemy's dominance of the newspaper market nor substantially changed tabloid journalism.

The notion of manipulation was central to the anti-Springer campaign and its critique of press concentration. Much recent scholarship has moved away from simple notions of manipulation concerning the products of so-called cultural industries. Scholars have argued that consumers should not be reduced to passive victims of manipulation, and many contemporary activists embraced ideas from Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and later from the works of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies to establish the possibility of a politicised subversion of the cultural industries.<sup>158</sup> While these intellectual developments probably diminished the attraction of manipulationist positions in the larger discourse of cultural politics on the left, they did not really lessen the pertinence of critiques of media concentration and its political repercussions. Critiques of Springer's press empire emerged just as naturally as they did in the case of other press barons such as Hugenberg, Murdoch, and Berlusconi. The anti-Springer campaign went beyond crude manipulationism by embracing its own alternative or countercultural forms of media manipulation. An understanding of media manipulation as a communicative technique of favouring particular interests that can be used by any political persuasion will do more justice to the anti-Springer campaign's origins in Springer's manifest media manipulation (as, for example, in the *Blinkfürer* case) and in contemporary legal practice vis-à-vis boycotts and blockades.

More than any other issue of the student movement, the anti-Springer blockades made demands on legal scholars, lawyers' associations, and courts, which had to take a stand on questions that were far more complicated and controversial than they sometimes seem in retrospective accounts that simply dismiss the protests as violent. Before the student protests, almost no jurisprudential literature dealt with the relation between offences inflicted by crowds and the basic rights of freedom of opinion and freedom of speech. Contemporary jurisprudential comments critical of the Laepple verdict's wide concept of violence gradually influenced the legal opinions offered in commentaries, textbooks, and subsequent judgments.<sup>159</sup> The interpretation of relevant norms like

158. See Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side*, 17, 146–65, 662–65.

159. Dostal, 1968, 148, 172.

*Auflauf* (section 116 StGB, the remaining together of a crowd after the authorities thrice bid it disperse), *Landfriedensbruch* (section 125 StGB, breach of the public peace), or *Nötigung* (section 240 StGB, coercion) posed dogmatic questions and necessitated a notable reformulation of the legal notion of violence.<sup>160</sup> Consumer protest was so crucial to the controversial debates on how to treat new forms and ways of protest under existing criminal law because it touched on two potentially conflicting pillars of the law: the protection of private property and commerce, on the one hand, and the safeguarding of civil and political rights, on the other. Liberal-minded jurists considered the wording of the paragraphs *Auflauf* and *Landfriedensbruch* no longer timely in the context of the Basic Law—the *Strafgesetzbuch*, originated in 1870—for infringing too heavily on the right of assembly. While some merely wanted to change the scope of discretion, others believed that these norms ran counter to the Basic Law. Quite a few lawyers considered the protests to be new aspects of political life. In their opinion, criminal penalties would have to break new theoretical ground. New forms of protest such as sit-ins or blockades needed new legal categories. A number of lawyers considered the sit-in an exemplar of nonviolent resistance that should not under any circumstances be judged as *Landfriedensbruch*.<sup>161</sup>

In the long term, these dissenting opinions triggered a shift in legal conception that conceded a higher priority to freedom of assembly vis-à-vis state authority by no longer automatically assessing crowds and gatherings outside registered demonstrations as punishable threats to public life.<sup>162</sup> However, from the late 1960s to the mid-1990s, the higher courts stuck to a more restrictive interpretation, often overruling courts of original jurisdiction.<sup>163</sup> From this perspective, the BGH's Laepple verdict was a compromise in that it assumed the mental violence of *Nötigung* while denying the physical violence of *Landfriedensbruch*.

160. See Andreas Roth, *Kollektive Gewalt*, 204–6; Drescher, *Genese und Hintergründe*.

161. Dostal, 1968, 190.

162. Ibid., 169–70.

163. Ibid., 204.

## CHAPTER 6

# Urban Space: The Squatting Movement

“Everybody shall have the right to adequate housing.”

—The Constitution of Berlin<sup>1</sup>

In Zurich, a building that used to be a department store became the focal point of a conflict that marked the beginning of Switzerland’s 1968 protests. Young people demanded the establishment of an autonomous young people’s social centre in an edifice that the Globus Company had erected while rebuilding its headquarters, expensive retail space in the centre of Zurich that protesters wanted for nonprofit use. In the street fighting that ensued after a 29 June demonstration, bricks from the construction site for Switzerland’s first shopping mall—the subterranean Shopville, connected to Zurich’s main train station—were hurled at the police, who later faced accusations that they had used disproportionate force against the demonstrators. Several interim solutions did not settle the issue of free space for leftist young people, some of whom were homeless. In February 1971, protests again focused on Shopville, now completed, where protesters conducted daily teach-ins, using its grounds in lieu of the desired social centre. When the municipal government prohibited gatherings at the shopping centre, sixteen young people were arrested by officers in riot gear; tear gas was used for the first time in Switzerland.<sup>2</sup> While 1968 protests in Germany involved direct action against manifestations of consumer society, the Swiss case offers a good example for another constellation that involved matters of consumption in debates regarding political violence. Der-

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1. “The Constitution of Berlin,” [www.berlin.de/rbmskzl/verfassung/en\\_index.html](http://www.berlin.de/rbmskzl/verfassung/en_index.html) (accessed 29 November 2010).

2. Regula Howald, *Die Angst der Mächtigen vor der Autonomie: Aufgezeigt am Beispiel Zürich* (Horgen, 1981), 22–34. See also Katharina Bühler, *Aufbruch und Landfriedensbruch im schweizerischen Strafrecht: Eine Analyse der Literatur und Rechtsprechung zu den Massedelikten, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Urteile zum Zürcher “Globuskrawall”* (Zürich, 1976); Lindner, *Jugendprotest*, 326–30; Angelika Linke and Joachim Scharloth, *Der Zürcher Sommer 1968: Zwischen Krawall, Utopie und Bürgersinn* (Zürich, 2008).

elict buildings and urban space became contested areas, pitting young protesters against commercial interests backed by law enforcement.

In West Germany, students, homeless people, and foreign workers took to squatting in Frankfurt's Westend in the autumn of 1970. In West Berlin, the early squats, the Georg-von-Rauch-Haus (December 1971) and the Tommy-Weisbecker-Haus (March 1973), were named after two members of Movement 2 June who had been killed in shootouts with the police. A comparative analysis of the squatting movements in Frankfurt and West Berlin demonstrates that squatters could be both alternative consumers and radical activists and that they faced criminalisation by the authorities, at the same time some activists opted to use militant tactics to further their cause.

In the summer of 1980, West Berlin's squatters articulated a set of objections against their contemporary regimes of provision: "communes, workers' collectives, and communication do not prosper in concrete cells; neither does resistance against unlimited consumption. Consumption is a substitute for interpersonal relationships; it is designed by those who make money from it. Consumption makes people dependent on even more consumption; draws battle lines between owners and consumers. more and more is being produced; wars are incited to conquer new markets."<sup>3</sup> The term *Konsum* (consumption) clearly carried negative connotations, being associated with social barriers, prison cells, and even wars, while *Konsumenten* (consumers) were conceived as victims who could, however, resist. Since this statement was an aside in the internal communication of squatters focused on the more concrete aspects of their political struggle, it does not say much more about the origins, background, and implications of their anticonsumerist attitudes. Three years after these lines were written, West Berlin's squatters had been either evicted or transferred into legal tenancy agreements; the movement had come to an end without significantly altering the mechanisms of the housing market, let alone of consumer society more generally.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, estimates suggested a worldwide population of one billion squatters—that is, people dwelling in buildings without legal entitlement to use them.<sup>4</sup> Irrespective of the empirical accuracy of this figure, should we assume that all these people share some sort of discontent with consumer society or, to put it more neutrally, that they can serve as an indicator or pointer to the limits or shortcomings of consumerist housing markets? How does the phenomenon of squatting fit into our understanding of

3. *Besetzer-Rat Info* 2 (July 1980), Papiertiger: archiv und bibliothek der sozialen bewegungen, folder "Häuser 1978/Jan.–Aug. 1980."

4. Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities*.

history? It would be wrong to dismiss the socioeconomic phenomenon of squatting and the resistance to consumer society that accompanied it, as an aberration, as a mere footnote in German history, as nothing more than a political provocation by violent revolutionaries, or as simply a result of the unwillingness of nonconformist youths to work for their consumptive needs.

Social scientists have offered a number of—perhaps complementary—interpretations for the occurrence and escalation of violence during the squatters' conflicts. Some emphasise the generational experience of youth facing a gloomy future,<sup>5</sup> while others put the onus on police tactics, and escalations are seen as a result of policy intransigence.<sup>6</sup> A third view points out that perceptions of the conflict were increasingly depoliticised by conceiving the issue as a police matter rather than a political problem,<sup>7</sup> resulting in “inversionary discourses” on violence and the emergence of a militant movement, the *Autonomen*.<sup>8</sup> This chapter's combination of a historical analysis of discourses on violence in the context of the squatters' movement with discourses on consumption integrates these approaches.

## Squatting as a Socioeconomic Phenomenon

Conflict over housing issues took place in many European cities throughout the 1970s and 1980s. An intensification and politicisation of social protest paralleled slowing growth as a result of the 1973–74 recession. Social unrest thus needs to be contextualised with the follow-up costs of mass production and mass consumption. The restructuring measures embraced by politics and business in an effort to respond to economic challenges contributed to the further exclusion of certain social groups that had difficulty obtaining access to society's economic wealth. Social movements responded to the destruction of environments, cities, and quality of life.<sup>9</sup> The idea that the ruling political economy bred destruction became central to ideological justifications of protest. Urban conflicts—primarily acute housing shortages—made the destruction of housing space for economic motives a contested reality. Young people and mi-

5. Brandt, Büsser, and Rucht, *Aufbruch in eine andere Gesellschaft*, 203.

6. Lindner, *Jugendprotest*, 336–38; Karapın, *Protest Politics*, 76, 93, 109.

7. Manrique, *Marginalisierung und Militanz*, 101.

8. Freia Anders, “Wohnraum, Freiraum, Widerstand: Die Formierung der Autonomen in den Konflikten um Hausbesetzungen Anfang der achtziger Jahre,” in *Alternative Milieu*, ed. Reichardt and Siegfried, 473–98.

9. Margit Mayer, “Städtische soziale Bewegungen,” in *Sozialen Bewegungen*, ed. Roland Roth and Rucht, 299.

grants resorted to the self-help initiative of squatting: the unauthorised occupation of abandoned buildings.<sup>10</sup>

Social scientists have shown that Zurich, Frankfurt, and other cities were subject to “Fordist” paradigms of urban development: the planned separation of districts dedicated to living, consumption, industry, and services.<sup>11</sup> In the context of educational expansion and continued economic growth, large numbers of students and immigrant worker families moved into inner cities, where accommodations were affordable if a bit run-down. In many places, the increased need for housing contrasted sharply with calculated vacancies and demolition to make way for shopping centres, office blocks, or traffic junctions, while politicians tried to shift the demand for housing to newly built quarters on the periphery.

In several respects, squatting appeared to be a provocative alternative to consumer society. Young people’s flat-sharing communities were located in unrenovated old buildings designated for demolition. These were often short-term lets furnished with orange crates and mattresses on the floor and relying on multicultural provisions from local grocery shops run by immigrant families. Such makeshift accommodations became symbols of youthful autonomy, and squatting sought to defend this lifestyle. These pioneers of “autonomous lifestyles” rarely referred to theoreticians such as Herbert Marcuse but did embark on a quest for social relations that would allow for the articulation of authentic needs. The concrete swaths cut into the texture of old cities appeared to be attacks on the youth cultures settling in the brittle walls. Activists confronted a dubious system in which the state protected owners’ right to destroy their property profitably.<sup>12</sup> Real estate speculators came to epitomize the ruthless capitalist, reviving anticapitalist stereotypes. The squatter movement also faced charges of antisemitism, since a number of the disputed buildings were owned by Jews, among them Frankfurt real estate speculator Ignatz Bubis.<sup>13</sup> A brochure published by Göttingen squatters contained a cartoon that sought to

10. The literature on squatting is still in its infancy: see Stracke, *Stadtzerstörung und Stadtteilkampf*; Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*; Nitsche, *Häuserkämpfe*; Bodenschatz, Heise, and Korfmacher, *Schluß mit der Zerstörung?*; Sonnewald and Raabe-Zimmermann, “*Berliner Linie*”; Koopmans, *Democracy from Below*, 170–78; Karapin, *Protest Politics*, 61–116. Squatting is also treated in some studies on youth protest: see Lindner, *Jugendprotest*, 260–74, 331–413; Manrique, *Marginalisierung und Militanz*, 72–77, 115–25. See also studies on the *Autonomen*: Schwarzmeier, *Die Autonomen zwischen Subkultur*, 239–69; Anders, “Wohnraum,” 473–98.

11. Peter Birke, “Vom ‘Fünffingerplan’ bis zur ‘Bambule’: Stadtpolitik und Häuserkämpfe in bundesdeutschen Großstädten von 1968 bis heute” (unpublished manuscript, 2010), 5.

12. Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*, 113.

13. Koenen, *Das Rote Jahrzehnt*, 341–42. See also Hargens, Müll, *die Stadt, und der Tod*, 54–65.

address the basic interconnection between consumption and destruction by showing a corpulent speculator with bowler hat, bow tie, and a packet of money who was squeezing old buildings and letting the yield drop into his mouth while simultaneously defecating newly built structures.<sup>14</sup>

The counterconcept of squatting included a distinct emphasis on advertising the cause, resulting in some structural similarities with the commercial system it criticised: “With the attractive renovation and imaginative graffiti and banners, they converted these buildings into . . . advertisement attractions for the ‘idea of squatting’ and for self-help, for a better life in flat-sharing communities, for the motto, *We take what we need*.”<sup>15</sup> The activists felt a militant hatred for “inhuman” modern estates and their backers that was manifest in a widespread graffiti, “Schade, dass Beton nicht brennt” (Too bad concrete doesn’t burn), that eventually became the title of a documentary film on Berlin squatters in the early 1980s.<sup>16</sup>

The legal system faced the challenge of balancing the economic, social, and cultural interests of ordinary consumers of housing space and urban infrastructure against the economic interests of real estate entrepreneurs, calculations that touched on constitutional law. The squatters could legitimise their claims with reference to West Germany’s Basic Law, article 14, section 2: “Property entails obligations. Its use shall also serve the public good.” West Berlin’s Constitution went even further: according to article 28, section 1, “Everyone shall have the right to adequate housing.” The state of Berlin committed to promoting “the creation and maintenance of adequate housing, particularly for people on a low income, as well as private ownership of housing.”<sup>17</sup>

The appropriation of neglected living space practically withdrawn from the common weal was located in an area of tension between legitimacy and legality that became a question of legal interpretation. Unlike the law in Great Britain, German law did not allow for the acquisition of real property via squatting.<sup>18</sup> A minority opinion among criminal judges and lawyers, however, came close to accepting squatters’ arguments by arguing that squatting should be exempt from punishment. Critically, they referred to a “process destroying living space” and to “great profiteering.”<sup>19</sup> Most lawyers, however, clung to a

14. *Wut im Bauch!*, 4, IISG Amsterdam, ID 653, Bro 689/4 FOL.

15. *Der lange Marsch* 4 (May 1973): 8.

16. Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*, 65; Novemberfilm Kollektiv, *Schade*.

17. “Constitution of Berlin.” See also Johann Wilhelm Gerlach, “Recht auf Wohnraum und Hausbesetzung,” *Der Spiegel* 19 (4 May 1981): 56–57.

18. Schall, “Hausbesetzungen im Lichte.” On legal responses in the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Switzerland, see Blankenburg, “Thesen zur Hausbesetzerbewegung.”

19. Küchenhoff, “Zur Strafbarkeit”; Fabricius-Brand, “Instandbesetzung.”



more conventional interpretation of property. The socialist newspaper *Links* quoted a Freiburg district court judge who had authorised the eviction of a squat on the grounds that the “economic interest of the building and real estate limited liability company has to be valued over the interest of the inhabitants.”<sup>20</sup> In the early 1980s, a prevailing opinion among jurists maintained that squatting was to be punished as a breach of the domestic peace under section 123 of the criminal code (StGB). Authoritative commentaries pointed out that a “failed housing policy” could not be countered by “surrendering the legal and property order.”<sup>21</sup> The central topoi of the legal debate about squatting—the granting of domestic peace, even to illegal residents, with reference to the principle of residential property being obliged to the common good, and the consideration of commensurability in cases of eviction by the police<sup>22</sup>—still forced the legal authorities to check the legitimacy of the means used by executive forces.<sup>23</sup>

In a profound 1972 analysis, SPD politician Hans-Jochen Vogel contended that the distribution of urban space did not exactly cater to the population’s needs. He provided a clear-sighted analysis of the economic mechanism that he held responsible for the far-reaching urban crisis, which he considered a “first-rate problem of human existence.” As he was leaving office as mayor of Munich to become federal minister for regional planning, construction, and urban development, he wrote a remarkably critical assessment of contemporary capitalism: “The crisis is the crisis of an economic system mushrooming beyond its limits. . . . Most clearly this principle can be observed in the competition for different uses for the same piece of real estate. As a rule, the type of use with the highest yield . . . will prevail. . . . Therefore, in a situation of conflict, . . . it is always the department store that wins over the cultural centre, the bank over the long-established café, the office building over the beer garden. . . . It cannot be denied that this system . . . has contributed to delivering the masses from material want. But now it is turning against the people, becoming an end in itself, dispelling humanity from our cities.” With his emphasis on the “depersonalisation of cities,” Vogel anticipated a number of ideas that became crucial for the squatters’ movement over the coming decade: “Liv-

20. “Wohnungskampf und Repression,” *Links: sozialistische Zeitung* 79 (July–August 1976). For an argument in favour of increased penalties for squatting, see Rinsche, “Zur Strafwürdigkeit.”

21. Eduard Dreher and Herbert Tröndle, *Strafgesetzbuch und Nebengesetze*, 41st ed. (Munich, 1983), section 123 (5A); Lackner, *Strafgesetzbuch*, section 123 (3A). For a more in-depth treatment, see Weber, *Hausbesetzung*.

22. Blankenburg, “Thesen zur Hausbesetzerbewegung,” 41.

23. Anders, “Wohnraum,” 478–79.

ing standard does not equal quality of life. Clearly, the quality of life is actually declining with increasing consumption. The production of our system is missing the real needs. It channels our energies into areas that promise growth and quick returns whilst detracting from the public . . . investments and services on which the quality of our life really depends.”<sup>24</sup> According to Vogel, this mechanism was choking inner cities and threatening the ecological balance. Without wanting to abolish market and competition, he pleaded for the primacy of politics over economics, relegating the latter into a servile role. To realise this far-reaching vision, he suggested higher taxes, reducing growth in consumption, and adding financial strength to the community—that is, public rather than private consumption. This was to be supplemented by a reform of the laws governing ownership of urban land by introducing fixed-term usage rights, with real estate periodically falling back to the municipality.

### The Weisbecker-Haus

The early 1970s also saw rather different strategies for addressing related problems. In May 1973, the spontaneist newspaper with the aptronymic name *Wir wollen alles* (We want everything)<sup>25</sup> was looking at the consumer as an unmediated revolutionary agent when reporting a *Klauaktion* (shoplifting action) by the occupants of the Weisbecker-Haus in Berlin’s Kreuzberg district. The Weisbecker-Haus was a self-managed collective housing project for homeless young people established in an abandoned building in March 1973. It was named after a member of Movement 2 June who had been killed by police.<sup>26</sup> The project was legalised via utilisation agreement with the West Berlin government, leaving the occupants in the same formal legal category as inhabitants of state-run foster homes and thus entitled to subsistence. In this context, a very concrete conflict erupted over regimes of provision where formerly homeless young people resorted to their own way of procuring food: “15 people went into the shops, packed cans, roast meat, frozen stuff, schnapps, and ham into their bags. . . . The store manager did not want to see his tasty things depart just

24. Hans-Jochen Vogel, *Die Amtskette: Meine zwölf Münchner Jahre* (Munich, 1972), quoted in “‘Das unterirdische Grollen ist schon zu hören’: Münchens Oberbürgermeister Vogel über die Krise der Städte,” *Der Spiegel* 62 (19 June 1972): 62–63. See also Vogel, *Städte im Wandel*.

25. This was adopted from their Italian counterparts, Lotta Continua, and their slogan, “Vogliamo tutto.” Cf. Lotta Continua, *Nehmen wir uns die Stadt*.

26. *Wir vom Tommy Weisbecker Haus*, IISG Amsterdam, ID-653, Bro 780/17 FOL. See also <http://www.tommyhaus.org> (accessed 30 November 2010). On the similar Georg-von-Rauch-Haus, see *Georg v. Rauch Haus*.

like that . . . Perhaps he will have second thoughts at the hospital. . . . On the 21st of March we had negotiations with a few people from the Senat [West Berlin's government] about the daily rate we were going to get for food. We demanded 7.50 DM (other foster homes get 9 DM); however, the Senat only wanted to give us 5 DM. . . . Then in the afternoon 200 cops stood at the door. . . . Everyone is peeved at rising prices, . . . and more and more people [shoplift]."<sup>27</sup> "Stagflation," partly as a consequence of the pricing policies of large corporations and of high U.S. expenditures during the Vietnam War had already led to drastic price increases, with more on the way as a result of the oil crisis.<sup>28</sup> Members of the Weisbecker-Haus reported huge initial difficulties in organising their collective because people stole from each other or absconded with monies earmarked for communal purposes.<sup>29</sup>

The shoplifting sprees initially seem like manifestations of a crude and naive concept of politics that neglects the sphere of production, hardly differs from ordinary delinquency, and reflects a self-administered-justice mentality. Yet the example of the Weisbecker-Haus shows how the first phase of the Berlin squatters' movement crystallised around youth centres and self-help initiatives and, more broadly, illustrates questions of the use and accessibility of urban space. The desire for self-managed spaces was linked with a quest for new lifestyles and thus styles of consumption.<sup>30</sup>

## Frankfurt

In Frankfurt, the problems arising from housing shortages and urban politics were more explosive than the related issue of fare increases. The same 1973 issue of *Wir wollen alles* that reported on the Weisbecker-Haus also printed a flyer from the Frankfurt *Häuserkampf* that came back to the issue of tram fares: "[The city] is raising rents for council flats up to 55% . . . , is making the tramways—on which speculators and factory owners don't depend—more expensive, and is raising electricity and water prices at a higher rate for families than for factories. Resistance is possible."<sup>31</sup> In 1972–73, several joint-stock building

27. "Mit Säcken ins Warenhaus—Die Lebensmittel rausgeholt," *Wir wollen alles* 4 (May 1973): 12.

28. See Wolfrum, *Geglückte Demokratie*, 334.

29. *Wir vom Tommy Weisbecker Haus*, IISG, Bro 780/17 FOL: 9.

30. See Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*, 32; Willems, *Jugendunruhen und Protestbewegungen*, 270.

31. Häuserrat, AStA, Lotta Continua, Revolutionärer Kampf, et al., "Ein Gespenst geht um in Frankfurt: Wohnungskampf," *Wir wollen alles* 4 (May 1973): 13.

societies in which the city of Frankfurt held the majority of shares raised rents for more than twelve thousand small flats in old tenement buildings by 20 to 60 percent. More than four thousand tenants initially objected to the increases, and more than one thousand started legal proceedings.<sup>32</sup>

A West Berlin monthly, *Der lange March*, reported on squatters in American slums, London Islington, and Milan's Via Tibaldi.<sup>33</sup> Italy emerged as a major source of inspiration. The squats and militant tenants' rights associations (Unione Inquilini) of Northern Italy's industrial cities attracted political tourism from Germany.<sup>34</sup> The *Spontis* and the Italian far left extra-parliamentary organisation Lotta Continua<sup>35</sup> tried to transfer this experience to Frankfurt, "where the most serious efforts are made to erect the predominant trade, administration, and banking metropolis of the FRG . . . , speculation in rents and property turns hot . . . : living space in relatively cheap old buildings is destroyed and replaced by modern office buildings that multiply profits. . . . New accommodations are created with smaller rooms, lower ceilings, thinner walls, and much higher rents." The authors of these lines quickly brushed aside the new buildings' improved sanitary facilities—probably misjudging many people's preferences—and pointed to the "terror of the landlords" and to "consumption as a compensatory remedy against the woes of isolation."<sup>36</sup> Criticism of the modern high-rises departed from a forward-looking concept of a neighbourly integration of work, social institutions, consumption, and culture: "These flats do provide hypermodern sanitary arrangements for the working population, only they are not yet prepared to live in the loo. They continue to prefer flats that allow you to meet people without disturbing the neighbours; that leave you some money for the beer necessary for such meetings; that are located in areas with pubs, cinemas, kindergartens, schools, places of work within walking distance."<sup>37</sup> The *Spontis* embraced a decidedly anticapitalist approach: "Squatting means to destroy the capitalist plan in the urban quarters—means not to pay any rent, means to abolish the capitalist shoe box structure. . . . Squatting and rent strikes are the pivotal point for the fight against capital outside the factories."<sup>38</sup>

Frankfurt, one of the Federal Republic of Germany's most important busi-

32. On rent strikes, see Häuserrat Frankfurt, *Wohnungskampf*, 103–7.

33. *Der lange Marsch* 4 (May 1973): 7–8.

34. Koenen, *Das Rote Jahrzehnt*, 344.

35. Karakayali, "Lotta Continua in Frankfurt."

36. *Der lange Marsch* 4 (May 1973): 7–8.

37. *Ibid.*, 11.

38. *Proletarische Front in Wir wollen alles* 4 (May 1973), quoted in Geronimo, *Feuer und Flamme*, 39.

ness locations, became a focal point of the conflicts over squatting. In the emerging financial metropolis, municipal politicians prioritised economic growth and maximising income through the local business tax, with the idea that government spending would then trickle down to benefit ordinary people. According to a 1968 SPD election pamphlet, “in Frankfurt, the working people benefit from the development of the city. Frankfurt Social Democrats put the money where it is most needed.”<sup>39</sup> However, the desired convergence of private and public consumption did not emerge smoothly, and the politics of housing ultimately grew into a distinct chink in the armour of those responsible for urban restructuring.

Foreign workers and students began squatting in Frankfurt’s West end in the autumn of 1970. A year later, the Frankfurt city council yielded to pressure from property owners and decided not to tolerate any new squats. Police began evictions, and street fighting broke out. When it became apparent that the misuse of residential property had become an explosive problem, the ruling SPD implemented a municipal order prohibiting the misappropriation of housing space. This was aimed at large-scale real estate companies that allowed empty buildings to deteriorate in order to make money from modernisation or demolition in favour of more lucrative new developments. However, the courts declared the municipal order unconstitutional. With the ball back in the SPD’s court, the party made the issue its central plank in the 1972 municipal election campaign. Even before the situation escalated, the SPD was seeking to prevent violence: according to a campaign advertisement, “Squats are not harmless go-ins. They have led to violence. No one can wish the use of force to become a political style.” Seeking a middle ground, the ad also pointed out that “those who call for law and order and a hard line only see one side, . . . the violence of the squatters, and overlook the power and the violence of the owners.”<sup>40</sup> The government often found itself on the latter’s side of the conflict.

The interplay of different forms of violence became a highly controversial topic within the protest movement. A spokesman for the Frankfurt students’ union highlighted the tactical dimension of violence: “We want to eliminate the ostensible violence on our side to expose the violence of the other side.” Another student delegate concurred that the violence of squatting constituted “resistance against the violence of the landlords.” He assumed that most of those who supported the movement by joining demonstrations had experienced

39. SPD-Unterbezirk Frankfurt quoted in Stracke, *Stadtzerstörung und Stadtteilkampf*, 131.

40. “Eigentum verpflichtet: Adel nicht mehr,” SPD campaign advertisement, 6 October 1972, quoted in Kraushaar, “Frankfurter Sponti-Szene,” 111. On the militancy of the Frankfurt *Häuserkampf*, see Geronimo, *Feuer und Flamme*, 39–46.

“societal violence” as tenants.<sup>41</sup> Some landlords used drastic methods to dislodge tenants, including foregoing repairs. When old residents were forced out, landlords preferred foreign workers for short-term lets.<sup>42</sup> Bullies collected rents at gunpoint.<sup>43</sup> Conversely, squatters feared that violence would stand in the way of mass support: “We don’t want police operations to prevent what they are meant to prevent: solidarity among the broader population.”<sup>44</sup> In the long run, considerations regarding the counterproductive effects of violent escalations prevailed in the Frankfurt squatters’ movement. After a particularly fierce “battle” over the building Kettenhofweg 51, the action group Westend dissociated itself from all violence: “Stones are no arguments: groups who fight like this . . . isolate themselves from the rest of the population.”<sup>45</sup> A local chapter of the Arbeiterwohlfahrt (national workers’ welfare organisation) used the occasion to denounce all “signs of violence as fascist and anarchist.”<sup>46</sup> The Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) was becoming increasingly discredited, and other activists increasingly denounced violent means of political struggle.

In May 1976, two weeks after Ulrike Meinhof’s death, Joschka Fischer gave a speech on behalf of the *Sponti* collective at the Frankfurt Römerberg in which he tried to rekindle earlier forms of resistance within the parameters of everyday life. His speech is often interpreted as a plea for a renunciation of terrorism, but it also harks back to the dimension of consumption. The rebels that Fischer invoked were not the classical consumers of bread or TV sets; rather, they were looking for alternative lifestyles and were prepared to defend them by militant means: “In the past, it was the envy of the hungry that the bourgeoisie suspected below their abundantly set table; today, it is the frenzy of the losers who do not find their way in careers and consumer society.” The Frankfurt *Spontis* invoked nonmaterial values and thus new motivators for revolutionary activity: “We are no longer driven by hunger for food, we are driven by hunger for freedom, love, tenderness, . . . new forms of work and social intercourse.” An appeal “to knock off the death trip, . . . to put down the

41. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, clipping, 12 April 1973, in *Häuserrats-Archiv*, vol. 3, April 1973, IISG Amsterdam, ID 1989/380 FOL.

42. Bauaufsichtsbehörde, “Berichtszeitraum 1969–1972,” in *Frankfurt baut auf: Dokumentation zur Nachkriegszeit*, <http://aufbau-ffm.de/doku/Archiv/Bauaufsicht.html> (accessed 30 November 2010).

43. “Harte Kritik Müllers an ‘einem Herrn Schubart,’” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12 April 1973, in *Häuserrats-Archiv*, vol. 3, April 1973, IISG Amsterdam, ID 1989/380 FOL.

44. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, clipping, 12 April 1973, in *ibid*.

45. “Steine statt Argumente,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 16 April 1973, in *ibid*.

46. “Gewalt und Terror als faschistisch abgelehnt,” in *ibid*.

bombs and stones” aimed to set a new agenda for the radical left.<sup>47</sup> Fischer’s quest contained two elements: the continuing spirit of relentlessness in political conflict, and the notion of pacifying the search for new lifestyles and thereby implicitly making it more compatible with consumer society’s mechanisms of distinction. However, this statement did not change the fact that during the following decade, conflicts over housing and squatting remained intrinsically coupled with debates over violence and terrorism.

## West Berlin

In May 1977, at the height of the manhunt for the assassins of attorney general Siegfried Buback, a Christian Democratic city councillor for planning and building verbally clashed with a social worker and member of a citizens’ initiative in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg. The city councillor had signed off on the demolition of an old fire station used as a community centre. Although the social worker categorically rejected violent tactics, he could understand why others would resort to such means: “There is a relation between the bomb that is destroying these houses and the bombs that are thrown at people.”<sup>48</sup> The authorities looked for the seeds of terrorism in the squats. The demolition of the old fire station was also taken as a point of reference in a statement by the imprisoned members of Movement 2 June on the occasion of the Tunix Congress in January 1978. This major meeting of left-wing initiatives marked a milestone in the development not only of alternative projects but also of the autonomist movement that criticised the decline of militant objectives in the light of the German Autumn. The incarcerated comrades invoked old models of “everyday resistance” to the eviction of squats, suggesting that activists set “fire to Springer’s newspaper self-service boxes and delivery vans” and conduct shoplifting sprees at department stores.<sup>49</sup> The association of urban destruction with violence worked on many levels. Memorable images resulted when the U.S. Army was allowed to practice street fighting in the Kreuzberg clearance area.<sup>50</sup>

47. Frankfurter Spontis, “Uns treibt der Hunger nach Liebe, Zärtlichkeit und Freiheit . . .,” *Links* 79 (July–August 1976): 11. See also Koenen, *Das Rote Jahrzehnt*, 331–35.

48. Quoted in Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*, 66.

49. “Revolutionäre Guerilla-Opposition aus der Konkursmasse der Bewegung 2. Juni, ‘Tunix,’” [http://www.bewegung.in/mate\\_tunix.html](http://www.bewegung.in/mate_tunix.html) (accessed 24 February 2011).

50. Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*, 27; “Da packt dich irgendwann ‘ne Wut,’” *Der Spiegel* 52 (22 December 1980): 29.

In West Berlin as earlier in Frankfurt, actions by housing societies and city councillors appeared to threaten lifestyles and living space. A CDU city councillor's proposals to remodel the public spaces at Mariannenplatz and Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg generated massive protests. Much of the conflict originated in disturbances to everyday activities. Wooden fences interfered with children and their parents and with May Day festivities, and were destroyed or set alight several times: "In the end the entire area had to be guarded day and night, with spotlights and dogs."<sup>51</sup>

In 1980, a large-scale conflict over squatting, youth riots, and the use of police force unfolded in West Berlin, in many ways paralleling earlier events in Zurich and Amsterdam. West Berlin, however, was unique in several respects. As an island completely surrounded by East Germany, the city suffered from a housing shortage. It was a major migration destination not only for migrant workers but also for dropouts, draft dodgers, artists, and other members of the alternative milieu. Moreover, West Berlin was a major target of a Cold War-inspired policy of subsidies and tax allowances favouring various forms of real estate speculation.<sup>52</sup> Most crucially, Berlin had practiced *Mietpreisbindung* (rent control) since the final year of the First World War; by 1974, it was the only city in the FRG with such controls for buildings built before 1950. In 1979, the government decided to align conditions with West Germany by gradually introducing the *Weißer Kreis*, a regime of provision that allowed the market to set rents. Complete deregulation was planned for 1985, by which time rents were expected to increase by up to 200 percent.<sup>53</sup>

Squatting expanded as a culmination of a range of protest forms against housing policies—petitions, informational meetings, and legal complaints—that had been practiced by tenants' organisations and citizens' initiatives since the early 1970s.<sup>54</sup> Between 1980 and 1982, about 160 tenement houses in West Berlin were occupied by squatters, with between four and five thousand people living in those buildings and well over ten thousand willing to demonstrate on their behalf. Prior to the revival of the squatting movement in 1989–90, West Berlin's final squat was legalised in November 1984.<sup>55</sup> The squatters were supported by a number of public figures—scholars, artists, journalists, clerics, and

51. Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*, 29.

52. See Sedlmaier, "Berlin als doppeltes Schaufenster."

53. On the peculiar housing situation in West Berlin, see Gaby Morr and Bernd Seiffer, "Weisser Kreis—Heisser Kreis," *zitty* 13 (1980): 16–19; Horst Riese, "Wohnen in Berlin," in *Besetzung*, ed. Müller-Münch, Prosinger, and Rosenblatt, 94–107; Oehlert and Wild, *Mietpreisbindung*.

54. See Anders, "Wohnraum," 482.

55. Willems, *Jugendunruhen und Protestbewegungen*, 267.



politicians—who spoke up in favour of the social experiment. However, squatters were also subject to vitriolic coverage in the tabloid press. Confrontations with the police frequently turned violent, especially after evictions. Kreuzberg became the centre of the movement. The district had become a catchment area for those who could not afford the rents elsewhere—students and Turkish immigrants—or those who sought cheap space initiatives such as flat-sharing communities or alternative businesses.<sup>56</sup>

### Squatters as Alternative Consumers

In trying out new lifestyles, the Berlin squatters built on their predecessors' experience from the 1970s. The *Instandbesetzer* ("reconditioning occupiers") saw their activities as a symbol for the resistance against the existing system of property ownership: "As the name *Instandbesetzung* implies, it includes a political line to encroach upon ownership conditions in very concrete terms. Even though this is only a little kick in the shin of a capitalist . . . , the attempt is not insignificant."<sup>57</sup> Although protesters no longer explicitly hoped to abolish capitalism, the fight against consumer society, perceived as an omnipresent form of oppression, was still at the fore of their efforts. The squatters' council, K 36 outlined its self-conception in June 1980: "We don't stop at squatting. We live in communes . . . rather than in the usual tenements. We want to experience the entire context of life and do it here and now. We fight against demolition. . . . We resist consumer terror [*Konsumterror*] and any form of oppression."<sup>58</sup>

Even those who fought "consumer terror" needed some basic necessities such as electricity, water, and gas, and the economic component of these needs became a bone of contention between initially peaceful squatters and the authorities. Housing societies that owned buildings in the urban renewal areas commissioned teams of builders that came to destroy the infrastructure—electrical metres, tiled stoves, and windows—in empty as well as already squatted buildings.<sup>59</sup> A group of Göttingen squatters lamented that the public

56. Ibid., 270.

57. Jaqueline Klein and Sabine Porn, "Instandbesetzen," in *Besetzung*, ed. Müller-Münch, Prosinger, and Rosenblatt, 112.

58. Besetzerrat K 36, *Wir sind dem Staat ein Dorn im Auge!* (Berlin, 1980), IISG Amsterdam, ID-Archiv, Bro 1991/13, 2. The name of the squatters' council derived from the former postcode of the eastern part of Kreuzberg, SO 36.

59. "Die Häuser gehören uns," *taz*, 2 July 1980, 9; "Seit zwei Wochen ohne Fenster: Mieter erstattete Anzeige," *Der Tagesspiegel*, 23 August 1980, Papiertiger, folder "Häuser 1978/Jan.–Aug. 1980"; Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*, 102, 172.

prosecutor was not interested in the owner of a building who had made it uninhabitable by systematically destroying its interior, even poisoning it with a game repellent. Instead, the authorities preferred to investigate those who had painted graffiti on the shell of the building to call attention to the destruction. In another case, a group of companies from Frankfurt wanted to replace old tenements with luxury homes and business premises. Under police protection, the houses were destroyed from the inside, supply lines severed, and walls and ceilings demolished.<sup>60</sup>

The destruction of electrical metres was a particular problem for squatters, since municipal power companies refused to install metres in squats. The removal of electrical metres forced the squatters to tap into power supply lines, which constituted an offence that the police, equipped with a complaint from the municipal power company, could easily use to justify searching, arrests, and evictions. As with the blockade campaigns, therefore, squatting contained the elements for its own criminalisation via breach of domestic peace (sections 123/124 StGB) or electricity theft (section 248c StGB). At one point Berlin's minister of the interior reported that 4,954 squatters had committed 9,322 criminal offences, statistics that could be used to draw a picture of the squats as havens for criminals.<sup>61</sup> Even before the situation escalated violently on the night of 12 December 1980, the police had established a special commission to observe the squatters and perceived the squatters as a serious threat to public security.<sup>62</sup> West Berlin's chief of police, Klaus Hübner (SPD), divided the squatters into three groups: "Of good will but also a bit dim-witted" were those who wanted to address the housing problems by calculated violations of the law. Many young people who had only come to Berlin in 1979 or 80 were 'travelling rioters.' Finally, the third and most dangerous group merely wanted to use squatting for their strategy of confrontation and were animated by 'sympathies for pure terrorism.'<sup>63</sup>

That the squatters' critique hinged on a socially irreconcilable process of gentrification—apparently driven by profiteers benefitting from state

60. *Wut im Bauch!*, 4, 9, IISG Amsterdam, ID 653, Bro 689/4 FOL.

61. Willems, *Jugendunruhen und Protestbewegungen*, 268, 278; "Langer Traum vom kurzen Sommer," *taz*, 9 February 1982.

62. "CDU fordert Sonderkommission des Staatsschutzes gegen Hausbesetzer," *Der Tagesspiegel*, 3 August 1980, Papiertiger, folder "Häuser 1978/Jan.–Aug. 1980."

63. "Hauptsache Rechtsstaat: Polizeipräsident Hübner zu Instandbesetzungen," *taz*, 5 December 1980, 17; "CDU: Besetzte Häuser wurden Keimzellen rechtsfreier Räume," *Der Tagesspiegel*, 6 September 1980. See also Ortwin Kücholl, "Eindeutige Werbung für den Terror: Interview mit Polizeipräsident Hübner über Hintergründe der Hausbesetzungen," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 September 1980, in *Berliner Linie gegen Instandbesetzer*, ed. Haberbusch, 9.

subsidies—was lost in such statements. Urban sociologists have demonstrated that the processes of social restructuring that turn originally poor districts close to the city centre into affluent neighbourhoods took place in “phases of invasion.” Initially, “pioneers” willing to take risks moved into urban renewal areas, which remained marked by a high proportion of low-income households. The influx increased the range of alternative services, cultural events, and dining options, an “alternative upgrading” that drew the interest of financially stronger groups. These “gentrifiers” then crowded out the long-established, predominantly low-income population via the modernisation of flats and subsequent increases in rents and land prices. Consequently, the process of upgrading initiated by members of the alternative milieu often destroyed the local prerequisites for alternative culture.<sup>64</sup> The squatters did not remain alone in their assessment of gentrification. Urban sociologists, too, came to describe the consequences of accelerated tenure fluctuation in a negative light insofar as the individualised, consumption-intensive lifestyle of the gentrifiers disrupted the “former unity of living conditions,” pressuring traditional residents to adapt to new conditions.<sup>65</sup> The results of an ethnographic study, however, suggest that perceptions of gentrification crucially rested on a symbolic dimension. Barbara Lang’s concept of “symbolic gentrification” highlights the constructed nature of the opposition between yuppies and members of the alternative milieu. Though she does not deny the effects of gentrification on Kreuzberg, she points out that its actual level remained significantly below that of other neighbourhoods in other cities—for example, Frankfurt’s Westend or Zurich’s inner city.<sup>66</sup>

The government of West Berlin offered generous subsidies and depreciation allowances for the modernisation of housing, which in practice amounted to rewards for driving out the tenants and ultimately for demolishing run-down but cheap turn-of-the-century tenement buildings.<sup>67</sup> Critics resisted “quarters for the smart set”: “cheap shops are gradually crushed out, and increased pressure is put on the cheaper flats because in an area thus pepped up, one can rent out very expensive flats: the old population is crowded out and luxury refurbishments are impending.”<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, this critique of gentrifi-

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64. Friedrichs, *Stadtsoziologie*, 122–26; Klaus Ronneberger, “Die Stadt der ‘Wohlanständigen’ und die neuen ‘gefährlichen Klassen’: Der Umbau der Städte zu ‘Konsumfestungen,’” in *Stadt, Jugendkulturen, und Kriminalität*, ed. Breyvogel, 16–36.

65. Herlyn, *Leben in der Stadt*, 153.

66. Lang, *Mythos Kreuzberg*, 30. See also Karapın, *Protest Politics*, 69.

67. Lindner, *Jugendprotest*, 331.

68. Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*, 95.

cation led the alternative milieu to wrestle with itself, since the appropriation of substandard housing and eventually entire neighbourhoods by innovative youths and the cultural opportunities this process entailed constituted the first step on the ladder of upward revaluation. This tendency was perceived even in such squatters' bastions as Krenzberg's KuKuCK art and cultural centre: "Consumption is conquering new terrain, separating artists from audiences and leaving the latter in a state where individuals are strangers to each other."<sup>69</sup> The issue was not new to the squatters' movement and had its roots in the social divides within the alternative milieu. *Agit 883* had already advertised a March 1969 campaign under the slogan, "Break up left-wing pubs." A message "to all ideologists of the cabbage soup and the lard sandwich" called for "the nests of snug left-wing consumption to vanish into thin air. You've fallen for resourceful petty capitalists."<sup>70</sup>

Thirteen years later, an autonomous "Kommando Klaus-Jürgen Rattay" committed an attack on a branch of Deutsche Bank, causing material damage amounting to two hundred thousand deutsche marks. The operation was named after a squatter who had become a martyr of the movement when he was fatally injured by a bus during a September 1981 demonstration as a result of police driving protesters into heavy traffic. The statement of responsibility for the Deutsche Bank attack, however, highlighted a conflict within the alternative milieu. The "revolutionary forces of the Cold War front-line city" were asked to come out of the pubs: "It is not acceptable that hard-won houses . . . were misused in favour of a broader alternative consumer culture à la 68," since such a culture was far from "system change and liberation."<sup>71</sup> A similar dispute figured in a brawl that erupted during the opening party for a posh lamp store in Kreuzberg in the autumn of 1982. A group of slightly drunk *Autonomen* invited themselves to join those whom they characterised as "having a lot of dough." Their involuntary hosts seemed to come from Charlottenburg and now threatened "to spoil the quarter [*Kiez*]." The district of Charlottenburg was explicitly mentioned as an example in which in the wake of "the 1968 movement, the face of a district was changed." The lamp store, however, turned out to be a long-established local business that had moved from across the street into larger premises. The spectre of fascism came to haunt one of the intruders: was such an unpleasant encounter not essentially the same as what "the pigs" did to those who looked and lived differently? Did consumption habits really suggest

69. Cheronimo, "Eingemachtes," *radikal* 103 (April 1982): 6.

70. "Aktion 'Zerschlagt die linken Kneipen,'" *Agit 883* 6 (20 March 1969).

71. Autonome Zelle, "In Gedenken an?," *radikal* 114 (March 1983): 2. Cf. Anders, "Wohnraum," 489–90.

political position? The author ultimately pledged to work for an environment tolerant enough to accommodate a variety of cultures and consumption styles, including the more well-to-do subcultures.<sup>72</sup> This rift plagued not only the larger alternative milieu but also the *Autonomen* movement, as its more radical members continued to occasionally target the manifestations of a materially integrated alternative culture.

Militant attacks against manifestations of affluent consumption had two targets: the shops and restaurants of the “freak aristocracy,” and the institutions of mainstream consumer society. At Easter 1983, the peak of the peace movement, a Festival Committee of Vengeance for Christ gave a militant twist to the tradition of Easter marches, announcing a plan to cause “chaos . . . in department stores, other high-calorie edifices, and speculators’ strongholds” so that the police would disturb the tourist trade. At the Kempinski luxury hotel, curtains caught fire.<sup>73</sup> On New Year’s Eve 1980, a bomb threat was issued against a club in West Berlin’s Schöneberg area that was frequented by local politicians and dignitaries. A subsequent statement explained that although there was no bomb, the threat was directed against the “assembled municipality gorging and boozing.” The perpetrators then listed a number of demands taken from the squatters’ agenda, including “no luxury refurbishments” and “controlled rents.” The statement closed with a quote from Georg Büchner: “Peace to the cottages—war on the palaces!”<sup>74</sup>

By mid-1983, forty-seven squats had been cleared by the police, forty-five had been legalised via tenancy agreements, and nineteen had been voluntarily abandoned by the squatters. The question of how militant the squatters’ movement should be did not contribute to its unity. Those who sought to legalise their housing conditions via tenancy agreements<sup>75</sup>—often brokered by politicians trying to mitigate the conflict—may have criticised existing regimes of provision and the eternal obsession with growth, but they were also ready to integrate their way of life into an improved or alternative version of capitalist consumer society; more radical squatters of the emerging *Autonomen* movement, in contrast, explicitly wanted to overthrow that society.<sup>76</sup>

72. Elbe III, “Die neuen Bunten,” *radikal* 110 (November 1982): 6–7.

73. “Ostern 83: Tradition siegt?,” *radikal* 115–16 (April–May 1983).

74. “Kommando Sprechstunde,” *radikal* 86 (January 1981): 13.

75. Willems, *Jugendunruhen und Protestbewegungen*, 269–70.

76. See the cartoon “Die Stärke der Bewegung liegt in ihrer Geschlossenheit,” in Laurisch, *Kein Abriss*, 115.

## Violent Escalation

A crucial date for the escalation of the Berlin conflict was the night of 12–13 December 1980. When police prevented squatters from taking over a building at Fraenkelufer in Kreuzberg, demonstrators set up barricades and smashed windows, surprising many observers. According to an investigating committee set up by several squatters' organisations, 270 people were injured, 66 of them police officers, and 109 demonstrators were arrested. The police estimated property damage at more than three hundred thousand deutsche marks. The next day, between three and four thousand people assembled at the Kurfürstendamm to protest, again resulting in numerous injuries and arrests as well as broken windows.<sup>77</sup> *Der Spiegel* reported: While "street fighters masked with Fatah [PLO] shawls used slingshots to hurl steel balls at plastic-armoured police . . . , looters indiscriminately gathered spectacle frames, rubber boots, and sliced cheese in cracked stores." Journalists and social scientists diagnosed a new emergence of militancy, the police noted a "step change" in the "propensity for violence," and the alternative *tageszeitung* castigated the "unleashed brutality of the police."<sup>78</sup>

A statement printed in *taz* ten days before the outburst offers some insight into the rationale behind attacking shops: "Visit the department stores!" was a means "to tie up police forces and to create publicity."<sup>79</sup> Since squatters could not hope to "defeat" the police in an "open battle" over a particular building, they resorted to a more decentralised strategy, challenging the state monopoly on violence in a number of places. Road traffic and shops were the most obvious targets for such endeavours.<sup>80</sup>

The offensive against the retail sector was not an entirely spontaneous response to the police operation at Fraenkelufer, which started around 5:00 in the evening. Two obviously premeditated actions occurred against department

77. "Dezember 1980 Berlin, zusammengestellt vom 'Ermittlungsausschuss,'" <http://squat.net/archiv/berlin/12.12.80/1/IniSO36.html> (accessed 14 February 2010); KR Brandt (DirVB S III), "Zusammenfassender Erstbericht über gewalttätige Auseinandersetzungen zwischen 'Hausbesetzern' und der Polizei," 18 December 1980, Papiertiger, folder "Häuserkampf Jun.–Dez. 1980"; "Innere Unruhen: Berliner Autonome schlagen zu," *radikal* 5 (December 1980): 1–2.

78. "Da packt dich irgendwann 'ne Wut,'" *Der Spiegel* 52 (22 December 1980): 23.

79. "Zeitdokument," *taz*, 3 December 1980; KR Brandt (DirVB S III), "Zusammenfassender Erstbericht über gewalttätige Auseinandersetzungen zwischen 'Hausbesetzern' und der Polizei," 18 December 1980, 2–3, Papiertiger, folder "Häuserkampf Jun.–Dez. 1980."

80. "Berlins Leid mit den Lücken in der City: Demonstrationen mit Millionenschäden machen viele Geschäftsleute mutlos," *Die Welt*, 26 October 1982, 18.

stores on the same day. Mimicking the language used by the RAF, members of the “Kreuzberg Mouse Army Faction” admitted having released six hundred white mice at a Karstadt branch in Berlin. The statement of responsibility contained an unmistakable pointer to the recently dissolved Movement 2 June and declared: “We mice have been sick of this consumer shit for a long time. . . . We don’t want any Disneyland—Karstadt into the hands of the mice!”<sup>81</sup> At the same time, unknown persons placed incendiary devices at Hertie and Karstadt department stores in Göttingen, where a new wave of squatting protest had flared up. The sprinkler system prevented extensive damage and minimized publicity, but parallels with 1968 were noted by the few observers who commented on the incident.<sup>82</sup> The fact that negotiations between squatters and the Kreuzberg SPD took place on 12 December also weighs against the argument that the street demonstrations were a spontaneous response to the police action at Fraenkelufer, as squatters commonly contended. Authorities had decided to call on the Sozialpädagogisches Institut of the Arbeiterwohlfahrt (the social-work unit of a national workers’ welfare organisation) to mediate the conflict. Though the squatters claimed that only the police had an interest in undermining a negotiated settlement, more radical parts of the movement also had such an interest.<sup>83</sup>

In the long run, smashed shop windows generated more publicity than did isolated actions against department stores. During the night of 12–13 December 1980, a total of eighty-one shops and banks suffered broken windows, but only seven of the establishments were looted. In addition, police registered two cases of arson when stones were followed by Molotov cocktails at a Daimler-Benz office and the newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*. Damage to public property was recorded in only four instances and obviously was not the protest’s main focus. The police report shows a crucial time lag between the smashing of shop windows and the beginning of looting. The police reported at 19:07 hours that 150–200 “troublemakers” were smashing shop windows at a Kaiser’s Kaffee supermarket and at other shops and banks as well as damaging private cars. However, looting of the supermarket and a shoe shop did not begin until 21:26, and an adjacent ALDI discount supermarket was only looted beginning at

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81. AG Spass muss sein!, *Spassguerilla*, 22; “Mäuse und Mollies im Kaufhaus,” *taz*, 15 December 1980, 5. Another source states the perhaps more realistic number of 150 mice. “Chronologie Häuserkampf Berlin 1979–1980,” [http://autox.nadir.org/archiv/chrono/chro\\_haus\\_1.html](http://autox.nadir.org/archiv/chrono/chro_haus_1.html) (accessed 30 November 2010).

82. “Da packt dich irgendwann ‘ne Wut,’” *Der Spiegel* 52 (22 December 1980): 24; AG Spass muss sein!, *Spassguerilla*, 22; “Mäuse und Mollies im Kaufhaus,” *taz*, 15 December 1980, 5.

83. doku-gruppe vom mehringhof, *Dokumentation*, 5.

22:18.<sup>84</sup> The people who broke the windows, therefore, were not necessarily the same ones who could not resist the temptation of unprotected goods behind those windows. The looters seem to have behaved not unlike other consumers: some reportedly bartered with their booty whilst others returned empty-handed after failing to find what they wanted.<sup>85</sup> Others debated what could be taken: basic consumer durables and snacks seemed all right, but the appropriation of “luxury” goods might cast a damning light on the squatters’ movement.<sup>86</sup>

In another instance involving the April 1982 looting of an ALDI supermarket in Berlin’s Kottbusser Tor neighbourhood following a demonstration of support for the people of El Salvador, an activist questioned why the discount retailer had been targeted rather than a higher-end food shop; he also wanted to target stores selling televisions.<sup>87</sup> The militant newspaper *radikal*—now dubbing itself the “Newspaper of West Berlin’s Looters and Troublemakers”—was quite ready to embrace looting as a political strategy. Smashing windows “up and down the Kurfürstendamm”—especially those of the Kempinski luxury hotel—was already a “well-tried concept.” According to *radikal*, smashing the windows of a bank or looting a supermarket were “practical and radical critiques of capitalism.”<sup>88</sup> From the perspective of a homeless person, a furniture store could seem like a bastion of capitalism, a cobblestone through its window like an act of resistance.<sup>89</sup> In explaining the broken windows, another voice pointed to squatters’ rage at the population’s complacency regarding the calamities of the housing situation and the victims of violence emanating from the wrecking ball, boarded-up windows, and police batons. The 12–13 December police report provides information on the injuries policemen suffered during the incident: only three of the sixty-six injuries were serious enough to prevent the officers from continuing their mission; one policeman had to be hospitalized with a complicated leg fracture.<sup>90</sup>

84. KR Brandt (DirVB S III), “Zusammenfassender Erstbericht über gewalttätige Auseinandersetzungen zwischen ‘Hausbesetzern’ und der Polizei,” 18 December 1980, 4–6, 8, Papiertiger, folder “Häuserkampf Jun.–Dez. 1980”; “Im Schuhladen keine Schuhe mehr, beim Optiker keine Brille: Plünderer waren da,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 December 1980; “Plünderungen: Werner Orlowsky, Betroffenenvertreter im Sanierungsgebiet,” *Extrablatt Berlin* 2 (1980): 2, Papiertiger, folder “Häuserkampf Jun.–Dez. 1980.”

85. “6 Strumpfhosen gegen 10 Smarties—ein Freudegeplünder,” *taz*, 15 December 1980, 5.

86. “Gespräch mit einem Streetworker: ‘Wo Aktion ist, muß ich hin!’,” *taz*, 19 December 1980, 17.

87. Cheronimo, “Eingemachtes,” *radikal* 103 (April 1982): 6.

88. “‘Innere Unruhen,’” *radikal* 5 (December 1980): 2–3.

89. “Frühlingserwachen,” *radikal* 90–91 (April 1981): 10.

90. KR Brandt (DirVB S III), “Zusammenfassender Erstbericht über gewalttätige Auseinandersetzungen zwischen ‘Hausbesetzern’ und der Polizei,” 18 December 1980, 5, Papiertiger, folder



The squatters reported more than two hundred injuries, including skull fractures, and more than eighty arrests.

An intense public debate ensued. The number of windows being smashed during the conflict of the early 1980s greatly exceeded the number broken during the protest campaigns of a decade earlier. Boarded-up shop windows on the Kurfürstendamm and elsewhere became an omnipresent symbol of the struggle, which provoked loud cries of “terror” and calls for law and order.<sup>91</sup> However, in marked contrast to the debates of the late 1960s, the association of broken windows with Nazi violence remained marginal. One of the few statements that drew the parallel came from a Kreuzberg vigilante organisation: “We are warning the ‘red Nazis’ . . . who smash shop windows and loot like the hordes of the SA. . . . Haven’t you noticed that your kind of class struggle is as foolish as Hitler’s race struggle? . . . If you don’t stop wasting the taxes of the general public so insanely, scaring off the tourists and new citizens who are so important for Berlin, we will soon start reporting you to the police by the dozen.”<sup>92</sup> The tabloid press, however, largely refrained from the problematic Nazi analogy. Nevertheless, protesters had a clear sense that the Springer press had to be challenged in what it reported about the squatters, often reducing them to rioters, looters, or terrorists.<sup>93</sup> To make this point, the protesters issued ten thousand copies of a forty-page brochure of reply (*Gegendarstellung*).<sup>94</sup> The logo for *Bild* was frequently defaced as *Blöd* (Stupid) or *Blut* (Blood),<sup>95</sup> but no major campaign emerged from these impulses.

Even within the movement, some observers had increasing difficulty seeing the political content in the widespread opportunistic looting that ensued almost routinely after demonstrations or the eviction of squatters. Protesters

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“Häuserkampf Jun.–Dez. 1980.”

91. “Die lange Nacht der Plünderer,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 13 December 1980; “Wieder flogen Steine auf dem Kudamm,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 16 December 1980; “Gestern Nacht: Blutiger Höhepunkt in der City,” *Der Abend*, 16 December 1980; “Trotz ‘Ruhepause’: Radikale randalierten: Chaoten Weihnacht mit Brandsätzen,” *Der Abend*, 27 December 1980; “Scheiben zertrümmert, Molotow-Cocktails flogen,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 December 1980; “Hinter vernagelten Fronten gehen die Geschäfte weiter,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 31 December 1980, Papiertiger, folder “Häuserkampf Jun.–Dez. 1980.”

92. Flyer signed “Selbstschutz Kreuzberg,” in *Instand-Besetzer-Post* 7–8 (30 April 1981): 8, APO-Archiv, folder 1303.

93. “Mieterverein und AL treten für Instandbesetzer ein: Nächste Demonstration am Sonnabend,” *taz*, 18 December 1980.

94. Siefert, Rieger, and Bartoszewska, *Dokumentation*, IISG Amsterdam, Bro 1894/12; “Die Wahrheit über den Terror,” *Extrablatt Berlin*, 1980, Papiertiger, folder “Häuserkampf Jun.–Dez. 1980.”

95. “Innere Unruhen,” *radikal* 5 (December 1980): 4; *Instand-Besetzer-Post* 2 (17 March 1981): 1, APO-Archiv, folder 1303.

who claimed squatting and looting as anticapitalist actions or punks who were proud of “smashing bigwigs’ cars” met with incredulous disapproval not only from conservative observers but also from a previous generation of revolutionaries. Even after the Berlin squatters’ movement began to decline, looting remained a central topic. Some squatters who no longer wanted to live under permanent threat of police action and who were unwilling to sign tenancy agreements provoked their own evictions in a last-ditch attempt to make political capital. In this situation of weakness, when the battle for the houses seemed already lost, activists still embraced small-scale arson and other actions against banks and supermarkets. At one point, between fifty and sixty squatters went to “dispossess” a supermarket, giving out the goods to passersby,<sup>96</sup> a scenario that resembled the Weisbecker-Haus’s “shoplifting action” ten years earlier except that those activists had wanted to keep the haul for themselves. It is safe to assume that at least a few of the 1983 looters knew Dario Fo’s play, *Non Si Paga! Non Si Paga!*<sup>97</sup>

Smashed shop windows and looting were not limited to Kreuzberg. West Berlin’s commercial centre and some outer districts also saw plenty of broken glass, as did Hamburg, Hannover, Freiburg, and Göttingen, which became another focal point of the West German squatters’ movement and in 1979 hosted the first national meeting of squatters from across Germany.<sup>98</sup> The Göttingen squatters faced very real threats from retail and services development, as in the case of some buildings in the *Friedrichstraße* that were slated to be replaced by an upmarket apartment building/shopping centre.<sup>99</sup> The confrontation between opposite regimes of provision and lifestyles suggested a clear-cut division between “us and them”: “How then are we supposed to live? Buying, working, keeping one’s trap shut . . . Many people notice that television makes you stupid, that department stores and banks are temples of capital. . . And who doesn’t want to buy has to die.” The three thousand square metres that had been demolished and turned into “commercial space” could have been put to alternative use by playgroups, a workers’ self-help organisation, a carpenters’ group, and a print shop: “Films could have been shown that otherwise aren’t shown, bands could have performed even if they aren’t stars. Together we

96. “Entwo(e)hnung: Der Countdown läuft,” *radikal* 114 (March 1983): 2.

97. Fo, *Bezahlt wird nicht!*

98. See Schwarzmeier, *Die Autonomen zwischen Subkultur*, 39–69; “Hausbesetzer treffen,” *radikal* 75 (1980): 20.

99. *Wut im Bauch!*, 1, IISG Amsterdam, ID 653, Bro 689/4 FOL. See also Ermittlungsausschuss Göttingen, *Dokumentation: ein halbes Jahr Abriss- und Polizeistadt Göttingen* (Göttingen, 1981), 9.

could have built up a pub without anyone making money from it.”<sup>100</sup> These visions yielded to a political conclusion: “Anyone who responds to the desire for habitation, life, and diversity with police, defamation, wrecking ball, and dead concrete for the rich forfeits their moral legitimacy.”<sup>101</sup>

At Göttingen’s Reitstallviertel, the university’s riding stables, built in 1735, had been demolished in 1968 to make way for a new city hall despite massive citizen and student protest. The city hall subsequently was built elsewhere and the site sold to the department store company Hertie, which, as critics put it, “planted a shopping brick” that required additional “clear-cutting” in 1977. Opponents claimed that powerful economic interests had pressured the city to agree to the department store’s location.<sup>102</sup> In addition to the arson attacks at Göttingen’s Hertie and Karstadt branches on 12 December 1980, sensation was created a few weeks later with inner-city riots on New Year’s Eve during which shop windows were smashed and displays looted. The New Year’s Eve riots became an annual event.<sup>103</sup>

Contrary to 1968, violent forms of protest in the early 1980s seemed to yield tangible political results. Violent protests generated public awareness, whilst the destruction of valuable living space and the squatters’ peaceful struggle against it had not spawned much public interest.<sup>104</sup> The sacrifices of brutal street fighting finally seemed to be leading somewhere since the issue now became a major media concern, and the government offered to negotiate with squatters.<sup>105</sup> A romanticised and nostalgic ideal of authentic lifestyles in historically evolved structures stood against dystopian visions of an economised society: “For years, redevelopment measures have turned entire districts into concrete deserts; excessive greed has replaced dreamy medieval . . . streets with the grid; people have been deformed into machines of production and consumption.” There was a clear sense that resistance paid off: “When our life contexts are to be destroyed by government policies, when humanity is choked by concrete, cops, and computers, we will offer resistance. We don’t

100. *Wut im Bauch!*, 20.

101. *Ibid.*, 17.

102. *Ibid.*, 10. Hertie repeatedly became the object of gentrification critics. See Brigitte Abramowski et al., *Hertie-Center: Ottensen gehört nicht Büll und Liedtke* (Hamburg, 1990), IISG Amsterdam, ID 1342, Bro 670/21 fol.

103. “Erinnerungen an Silvester 1980—‘Silvester-Krawalle,’” Göttinger Stadtinfo, [http://www.goest.de/sylvester\\_sylvester.htm#krawalle](http://www.goest.de/sylvester_sylvester.htm#krawalle) (accessed 30 November 2010); Schwarzmeier, *Die Autonomen zwischen Subkultur*, 77.

104. “Einige Fragen an meine Mitbürger,” *radikal* 90–91 (April 1981), 28.

105. Yvonne, “. . . alle Gewalt geht vom Staate aus,” in *Sanierung*, ed. Aktionskomitee für Amnestie, 10–11, IISG Amsterdam, ID-6531 B, Bro 758/6 fol.

want to be turned into programmable humans who vegetate as eating-sleeping-and-working machines.”<sup>106</sup>

The idea that protest employing violent means had ultimately generated political results was expressed more soberly by Werner Orlowsky, the proprietor of a local chemist's shop who became a spokesperson for the Kreuzberg protest movement: “A single cobblestone yielded more than two years on the rehabilitation council.”<sup>107</sup> In June 1981, the Alternative Liste (the West Berlin branch of the Green Party) made Orlowsky a city councillor for building and planning for the district of Kreuzberg, the first time that a member of a German Green Party had filled such a position. A rhetorically talented businessman, Orlowsky had been courageous enough to support the squatters' protest. His shop was located on the Dresdener Straße, a residential shopping street that had been cut off by the brutalist Neue Kreuzberger Zentrum, a semicircular string of twelve-storey high-rises featuring 367 flats, two multistorey car parks, and fifteen thousand square metres of commercial and retail space. The project had encountered resistance from its inception, and after the financiers declared bankruptcy, the government had to step in with a sixty-five-million deutsche mark bailout.

By West Berlin standards, this was not even a major scandal. Building booms increasingly involved local party politics in dubious lending schemes, leading to the January 1981 resignation of the scandal-plagued Dietrich Stobbe as West Berlin's mayor. The governing SPD/FDP coalition was briefly continued by Hans-Jochen Vogel, who had been sent to the divided city as his party's last-ditch candidate to save a traditional stronghold. Despite his soaring career in the SPD, Vogel had never tackled the problems for which he had developed theoretical solutions as the hopeful federal minister for regional planning, construction, and urban development. Rather ironically, he now found himself on the other side of the conflict. Despite embracing a moderate compromise line on squatting, he had to authorise police operations against young protesters who subscribed to a critique of the manifestations of capitalism that was not terribly far removed from his own criticisms a decade earlier.<sup>108</sup>

The compromise, the *Berliner Linie*, was designed to transfer the conflict

106. “‘Innere Unruhen,’” *radikal* 5 (December 1980): 2–3.

107. Orlowsky quoted in Lindner, *Jugendprotest*, 332. On violence as a political catalyst, see Ermittlungsausschuß Mehringhof, *Dokumentation*; Aust and Rosenblatt, *Hausbesetzer*, 28. On Orlowsky, see “Sanierung haut den gesündesten um,” *Der Spiegel* 26 (23 June 1980): 32; Klaus Pokatzky, “Alternativ und barock: Vom Drogisten zum Baustadtrat von Kreuzberg,” *Die Zeit* 50 (7 December 1984).

108. See Anders, “Wohnraum,” 486–88; Sonnewald and Raabe-Zimmermann, “*Berliner Linie*,” 59–62.

from a criminal to a political level. Under pressure from both the CDU opposition and the squatters, the Vogel government acknowledged previous mistakes in housing policy and thus granted some of the squatters' points. The defence of squats seemed legitimate, and violent means had even proved effective since the government wanted to avoid escalation. Protesters' experiences with police brutality added to this pattern of legitimisation.<sup>109</sup> The *Berliner Linie* was gradually eroded by the police and the public prosecutor's office. It was partly abolished, though it continued to exist at least on paper in tenancy agreements with squatters, when Vogel was defeated by Richard von Weizsäcker (CDU), who took office as mayor of West Berlin in June 1980. The authorities now increasingly resorted to forceful eviction. This created a vicious circle: street fighting, smashing of shop windows, and looting became the ritualised answer to evictions, further legitimising subsequent evictions.<sup>110</sup> Justifications could be rather simple-minded: the first issue of the squatters' weekly *Instand-Besetzer-Post* reported, "we took our anger out on banks (the actual masterminds behind any policy) and on hertie who do nothing other than squeeze the hard-earned money out of the pockets of the 'little' people."<sup>111</sup> The frequent demonstrations on the Kurfürstendamm—469 in 1982—many of which entailed traffic closures and destruction, brought retailers and the Chamber of Industry and Commerce to lobby the government for restrictions on freedom of assembly. Economics minister Elmar Pieroth (CDU) declared sympathetically, "We can no longer tolerate subversive groups attacking the Kurfürstendamm—the lifeblood of a free city." The government instituted a so-called equity fund that paid for the bulk of "riot damage," but retail organisations frequently pointed out that these sums were not enough to prevent a wave of bankruptcies in the inner city.<sup>112</sup>

Similar developments were afoot in other European cities. The course of events could be strikingly similar, as squatters from Paris reported in *radikal* in September 1981: a group of about fifty people subscribing to the principle of "gratuité totale" tried to force open the blocked-off entrances of a building designated for demolition. Major conflict with the police resulted, triggering the smashing of shop windows and looting.<sup>113</sup> Also in September 1981, Berlin

109. Sonnewald and Raabe-Zimmermann, "Berliner Linie," 59–62; Willems, *Jugendunruhen und Protestbewegungen*, 279–80.

110. Willems, *Jugendunruhen und Protestbewegungen*, 269.

111. "Von der Razzia zur Räumung?," *Instand-Besetzer-Post* 1 (11 March 1981): 3, APO-Archiv, 1303.

112. "Berlins Leid mit den Lücken in der City: Demonstrationen mit Millionenschäden machen viele Geschäftsleute mutlos," *Die Welt*, 26 October 1982, 18.

113. "Häuserkampf in Paris: 'Les deux Villins' berichten," *radikal* 97 (September 1981): 31.

squatters had invited their colleagues from other Western European cities to the international Tuwat Congress, which was steeped in radical slogans. A flyer issued by the “Autonomous Republics of Neukölln and Kreuzberg” declared, “Our hostages are their windowpanes, their police cars, their wealth. *Make it expensive for them!!!* The only level on which they can understand something is money! Every day, one of our comrades sits in prison there should be 1 million DM damage! . . . For every evicted house 1 million extra! For every conviction 1 million extra!”<sup>114</sup> “One million per eviction” became a favourite slogan of the movement.<sup>115</sup> In July 1982, the clearing of two squats in Berlin resulted in an attack on a Wertheim department store in the Steglitz district: stones smashed the windows, followed by Molotov cocktails, which ignited a clothes rack. The sprinkler system then caused property damage in the millions.<sup>116</sup>

The legitimacy of militant struggle as “counterviolence” was not questioned as a matter of principle at the Tuwat Congress. What was discussed was the question of where the use of violence was “right” and where it was “unnecessary.” This differed from the Tunix Congress in 1978, which had marked the end of the *Sponti* movement because a consensus on the use of violent means of protest could no longer be reached. Unlike 1978, the movement did not uniformly discard violent means. Tuwat can be read as a distinct response to Tunix, which seemed to lead to the retreat into alternative lifestyles. The rejection of violence in 1978 must be seen in the context of the RAF and the German Autumn. Subsequently, debates about the RAF never reached the same intensity, but they continued in the early 1980s, with a number of squatters supporting the RAF’s anti-imperialist ideas and many more lumped together with terrorists in police perceptions and practice.<sup>117</sup>

Political violence related to the housing conflicts in West Germany in the 1970s and 1980s arose from a challenging search for alternative lifestyles and concepts of well-being. A comparative perspective on the Frankfurt and Berlin squatters’ movements, however, suggests a few important differences. First, authorities’ responses and their political consequences took different trajectories. Frankfurt squatters encountered an uncompromising hard line. A disintegrating movement was “conquered” by superior police forces. The SPD government

114. Quoted in Sonnewald and Raabe-Zimmermann, “*Berliner Linie*,” 69.

115. “Berlin: Keine Atempause,” *taz-Journal* 3 (1981): 152; AG Grauwacke, *Autonome in Bewegung*, 54.

116. “Reaktionen auf die Räumungen in Berlin,” *taz*, 29 July 1982, 4; “Aktion: Wertheimer Swimmingpool,” *radikal* 7 (September 1982): 5.

117. AG Grauwacke, *Autonome in Bewegung*, 54–58; Anders, “Wohnraum,” 481.

under Rudi Arndt made several false steps, and the Frankfurt CDU's surprising victory under Walter Wallmann in 1977 may have been influenced by the legacy of the *Häuserkampf*, but while the conflict lasted, the government survived the challenge to its legitimacy. Apart from some crucial corrections to the original plans for the restructuring of the financial metropolis, Frankfurt's transformation took place. Kreuzberg, conversely, remains a stronghold of alternative lifestyles and protest. West Berlin's government was far more willing to compromise. The politics of housing grew into a greater challenge to political authority, with a historically significant change of government in the middle—and partly as a result—of the conflict. The same shift of power brought about the parliamentary debut of a Green Party—the Alternative Liste—that openly pursued the squatters' agenda. Squatters thus retained substantial sympathies among the wider population and realised some of their goals both in terms of tenancy agreements and in terms of political mobilisation.

Second, the movements' positions on violence differed. Frankfurt activists perceived the end of their *Häuserkampf* in 1974 as a "military defeat," a viewpoint that contributed to the discrediting of militancy within a wider process of erosion and division among radicals. In West Berlin, however, militancy seemed to work, generating tangible political results and remaining a mobilising factor beyond the end of the squatters' movement in 1983.

Finally, differences existed in the critiques of capitalism and regimes of provision that the two movements developed and pursued. The Frankfurt squatters' movement still reflected the three classical stages of revolutionary politics, imagined as distinct with regard to contents and time: critique of the status quo; revolutionary action; new society. At least rhetorically, Frankfurt activists—mainly the *Spontis*—still embraced a revolutionary mission with the goal of system change and overcoming capitalism. They hoped to reach their goal by shifting the revolutionary subject away from the industrial workers and towards those who remained marginalised by affluent society. Political activity in the realm of consumption remained a means to larger revolutionary ends. As a reflection of their defeats, they gave important support for the emergence of a politics of the first person—a focus on the here and now—that brought together the three elements of the revolutionary triad. Revolution no longer played such an emphatic role in West Berlin a decade later, where the movement's successors also invested in a challenge of capitalism and consumer society. However, this effort was more specifically focused on particular aspects, drawing on small-scale and concrete alternative designs. The belief that the system could be overcome—that capitalism could be brought to an end—had largely evaporated.

## CHAPTER 7

# Global Responsibilities: In Search of Consumer Morality and Solidarity

“How can it be that in this world every two minutes a human being is dying from starvation while McDonald’s is dealing out one hundred million hamburgers each year?”

—Die 3 Tornados (1988)<sup>1</sup>

During the 1970s, environmentalist discourse gained strength in left-wing politics, eventually surpassing socialism—and thus questions of distribution—as the key conception of the alternative milieu. An element of continuity lay in the idea of destruction that tied both concepts to issues of consumption. In addition to posing threats to localised social contexts, regimes of provision increasingly acquired the global dimension of endangering nature as such. If ecological problems were associated with violence, it was on a more abstract level. A moderating influence came from the fusion of left-wing ideas with bourgeois scepticism of growth, especially since the computer simulations of the Club of Rome<sup>2</sup> and the oil crisis.<sup>3</sup>

This debate was popularised by a book written by Herbert Gruhl, a member of the Bundestag for the CDU and cofounder of a nongovernmental environmental organisation, the Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND). In *Ein Planet wird geplündert* (A Planet Is Being Pillaged), the conservative politician came astonishingly close to leftist ideas of neocolonial wars for economic motives. The closing passage of this 1975 book argues that “wars will approach the faster the more people want ever more goods from the same earth. Hence all ‘fanatics of growth’ are by definition ‘war mongers.’”<sup>4</sup> Four years later, when Gruhl had founded the ecological party Grüne Aktion

1. Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßuahmen, *Wut, Witz, Widerstand*, 50.

2. Meadows and Meadows, *Limits to Growth*.

3. See R. Árasch and C. Koch, “Ölkrise”—*Krise des Imperialismus* (Heidelberg, 1978).

4. Gruhl, *Ein Planet wird geplündert*, 343.



Zukunft (GAZ), a forerunner of the Green Party, the notion of destruction was much more clearly focused on nature.<sup>5</sup> In an essay with the incisive title “Consumption Is Also Destruction” for a volume on organic farming, there are no longer any mentions of forms of violence other than that against nature.<sup>6</sup>

The 1980s and especially the second half of the decade saw a massive emergence of ecological approaches to economic questions. Green entrepreneurs took up ideas from the 1970s and turned them into alternative schemes and enterprises that won market share. A comprehensive bibliography on eco-marketing compiled in 1990 illustrates the chronological development: only 7.8 percent of the listed titles were published before 1980, 28.3 percent appeared between 1981 and 1985, and the remaining 63.9 percent originated between 1986 and 1990.<sup>7</sup> A host of citizens’ initiatives pursued ecological matters from the standpoint of the consumer. The quarterly *Consum Kritik* appeared between 1983 and 1989 and mainly focused on issues of harmful substances in food and other consumer goods and on the ecological consequences of industrial agriculture, occasionally invoking solidarity with the Third World.<sup>8</sup> Questions of violence remained almost completely excluded from this discourse focused on German consumers’ health concerns.

Despite the fact that the ecological turn had, by and large, a moderating impact on more radical forms of social-revolutionary protest and facilitated their absorption by mainstream society, the emerging ecological consciousness also pioneered a new sensitivity to the destructive impact of certain consumer goods and their entanglement in complex commodity chains. Left-leaning intellectuals, political activists, and critical consumers drew on anti-imperialist antecedents and forged a political consciousness about regimes of provision on a global scale: peripheral economies tended to export low-cost primary goods—coffee, tobacco, sugar, and rubber—while importing military equipment and luxury goods for elite consumption. The mass consumer goods consumed by these elites and the inhabitants of the highly industrialised countries were produced predominantly with the latter’s capital. The environmental problems of the developed world had their structural counterparts in poverty, hunger, and unbalanced distribution in the Third World.<sup>9</sup> The political thinkers and actors analysed in this chapter raised a fundamental question: Why could

5. See Mende, “*Nicht rechts, nicht links, sondern vorn.*”

6. Gruhl, “Konsum ist auch Vernichtung.”

7. Ralf Antes and Petra Tiebler, *Bibliographie Öko-Marketing* (Oestrich-Winkel, 1990), 4–5, IISG, ID 314, BRO 708/16 FOL.

8. *Consum Kritik* was merged into *Verbraucher-Telegramm* in 1989.

9. Merchant, *Radical Ecology*, 25.

the imperative of economic growth not be replaced by a more balanced distribution of these problems via a focus on the production of certain goods that would fulfil basic needs around the world and ease industrial pressure on the environment? Many left-leaning intellectuals and political activists turned away from conventional modernisation theories and came to answer this question with the structuralist tools of some form of dependency theory, blaming the hierarchies within the world economic system for enriching industrialised countries at the expense of the continued impoverishment of developing countries.<sup>10</sup> Developing countries seemed locked in a structure that forced them to export their natural resources at relatively low prices and import consumer goods that only local elites could afford. At the same time, most Western governments clung to neoliberal concepts of modernisation, warning against alterations in power structures that would lead to slowdowns in economic activity, causing crisis and widespread unemployment.

Within the context of such debates over global regimes of provision and power, various campaigns against complex economic patterns emerged that targeted concrete service and retail outlets—such as banking facilities, supermarkets, tourist agencies, petrol stations, McDonald's branches, or coffee roasters. Since the 1970s, restaurants and luxury hotels have increasingly become the targets of urban collective action in the Middle East because “they represent visible and flagrant transgressions of culturally grounded notions of justice: international consumption styles, corruption, and gross inefficiency.”<sup>11</sup> However, campaigns against localities of consumption—and the underlying connections between protests in the developed and the developing world—remain a thoroughly underresearched dimension of political violence. According to protesters, at such localities of consumption, European customers and consumers participated in destruction, exploitation, and murder in the Third World. Violent conflict and discourse on violence found their way into political protest on several levels as a consequence of a complex process of interaction. The critical debates and protests accompanying the meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in West Berlin in September 1988 emerge as a culmination of conflicts over global regimes of provision that followed on earlier traditions of anti-imperialism, boycotts, and fair trade. They are a fascinating precursor to later manifestations of the counterglobali-

10. Dependency theory was introduced to Germany by Senghaas, *Peripherer Kapitalismus*.

11. Edmund Burke, “Towards a History of Urban Collective Action in the Middle East: Continuities and Change, 1750–1980,” in *État, Ville, et Mouvements Sociaux au Maghreb et au Moyen-Orient*, ed. Kenneth Brown, Bernard Hourcade, Michèle Jolé, Claude Liauzu, Peter Sluglett and Sami Zubaida (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), 52.

sation movement. Anti-imperialist critiques of regimes of provision that contrasted consumerist affluence with hunger and militarism in developing countries are deeply rooted in left-wing political thought.<sup>12</sup>

### International Regimes of Provision

Defying neoliberal lines of reasoning, campaigns for solidarity with liberation struggles focused on the miserable fate of producers in the so-called Third World and the destructive potential of globalised consumer capitalism. Theoretical critiques of global regimes of provision and challenges to concrete manifestations of global commodity chains formed an important driving force in the politicisation of consumption. The idea that Europeans' consumption of imported commodities went hand in hand with violent conflict in the context of imperialist exploitation formed a central backdrop to various efforts to delegitimise and alter global commodity chains. The aim was to enhance solidarity between consumers and producers. The latter were taken to be the workers who harvested or manufactured resources and products but suffered from immoral living and working conditions imposed by multinational companies, which were perceived as parasitic middlemen. The violence that political activists diagnosed in such relationships was the product of complex patterns of interaction between producers and consumers. The protesters sought to point out connections between seemingly separate and spatially far removed contexts of this interaction.

Scholarly knowledge of insurgent movements against the social repercussions of globalisation is largely focused on the period since the 1990s and on struggles in developing countries: protests against various World Bank-backed dam construction projects; fights to curb the activities of timber companies in tropical forests; movements to procure labour rights and/or women's rights in developing countries; campaigns against IMF-imposed austerity programmes; and demonstrations against corporate globalisation in Seattle (1999) and Genoa (2001).<sup>13</sup> Much less is known about the 1980s, about the repercussions of Third World struggles in highly industrialised societies, and about the amalgamation of new forms of protests with older traditions harking back to anti-imperialism and 1968.

12. See Uta G. Poiger, "Imperialism and Consumption: Two Tropes in West German Radicalism," in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola*, ed. Schildt and Siegfried, 161–72; Graf, "Vom Nein zum Ja," 153–64.

13. Harvey, *New Imperialism*, 166–67.

Especially during the second half of the 1980s, a consciousness of the destructive potential inherent in globalised consumer capitalism resulted in a wave of protest activities that were directed against multinationals and the institutions of global governance and that sought to further political consciousness. Protesters mounted fundamental challenges to local and global regimes of provision—and their interplay—when seeking to legitimise alternative economic infrastructures or concrete attacks against institutions of retail and services. Alternative scenarios of peaceful regimes of provision were pitted against images of violent consumption. Attention was drawn to the misery of low-wage labour and to the barbed wire that went along with tariff walls around free trade zones. Such arguments were part of an international movement seeking to establish solidarity with the anticolonial liberation struggles.

In July 1973, the title page of the “undogmatic” newspaper *Der Lange Marsch* (The Long March) showed a picture of three European couples in beachwear indulging in a lavish buffet below a tropical sunshade. In contrast, the bottom of the page, bore images of naked children suffering from kwashiorkor, profit forecasts for three German automobile companies, and images of heavily armed African soldiers.<sup>14</sup> The collage sought to make visible the connections that commercial product communications systematically obscured. In one instance, a German sparkling wine company withdrew its advertising business from a newspaper that had put the company’s ad next to pictures of starving African children because the “context had become too risky.”<sup>15</sup> The collage reveals the political versatility of polarising and somewhat fuzzy critiques of regimes of provision. They served as an idealistic agent that built bridges between diverse political contexts so that everyday acts of consumption could be pulled together with postcolonial wars. Such critiques of regimes of provision lend themselves to a quotidian and transnational mobilisation of solidarity networks. This was repeatedly realised in international boycott campaigns that aimed to establish a counterpublic against morally reprehensible regimes of provision.<sup>16</sup> David Harvey’s Marxist interpretation suggests that an ongoing crisis of overaccumulation led to capitalism’s increasing reliance on what he calls “accumulation by dispossession”—that is,

14. *Der lange Marsch: Zeitung für eine Neue Linke* 5 (July 1973): 1.

15. Eicke, *Werbelawine*, 126; Eva Heller, *Wie Werbung wirkt: Theorien und Tatsachen* (Frankfurt: Fischer), 168.

16. Little general research has been done on boycotts as a historical phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s, although Friedman, *Consumer Boycotts*, 213–26, provides some historical perspective for the United States. On more recent boycott campaigns, see Micheletti, *Political Virtue and Shopping*; Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle, *Politics, Products, and Markets*; Trautmann, “Pourquoi boycotter?”; Hawkins, “Boycotts, Buycotts, and Consumer Activism.”

neoliberal policies resulting in the centralisation of wealth and power in the hands of a few and the suppression of alternative forms of consumption and production, especially after 1973. This idea refers to the privatisation and commodification of public assets, the financial sector becoming a centre of redistributive activity, and the institutions of global governance exerting pressure to open up markets, all backed by state power.<sup>17</sup>

Protest against these processes did not exhaust itself in boycotts or violent attacks but also sought a more constructive stance, establishing alternative commodity chains and economic infrastructures. Such impulses fostered the fair-trade movement, which emerged from religious and charitable roots after the Second World War and during the 1980s undertook various campaigns to enhance solidarity with producers of tea, coffee, and other colonial goods in countries such as India, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.<sup>18</sup> Overall, politically coordinated consumer choices were supposed to trigger economic consequences, critical discourse, and movement mobilisation as a way to discipline, delegitimize, or overcome what were seen as morally reprehensible regimes of provision.

### Anti-Apartheid Campaigns

The most prominent campaign of systematic boycotting developed in the context of the international anti-apartheid movement. The German anti-apartheid movement emerged comparatively late. In Britain, a large-scale boycott campaign materialised in 1959–60 when a group of South African exiles called for a boycott of fruits, cigarettes, and other goods that eventually won support from the Labour, Liberal, and Communist Parties. Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell went on television to ask viewers to refrain from buying South African goods, and countless local authorities and individuals heeded this call for a moral gesture flanked by solidarity demonstrations. The African National Congress embraced economic boycott as a political weapon after the South African government's draconian measures outlawed almost all forms of conventional political activity. From a position of weakness, boycott became the chief leverage to campaign for international support. In December 1958, the All-African Peoples' Conference in Accra called on all countries to impose

17. Harvey, *New Imperialism*, 137–82.

18. See Nicholls and Opal, *Fair Trade*; Raschke, *Fairer Handel*; Schmelzer, "Marketing Morals, Moralizing Markets"; Quaas, "Selling Coffee." For an example, see Teekampagnengruppe der Indienhilfe e.V., *Teatime—für wen?* (Herrsching, [1986]), 3–4, IISG, ID 314, BRO 864/9 FOL.

economic sanctions against South Africa. This effort eventually grew into the international anti-apartheid movement, backed by churches, labour unions, and other associations along with the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations. Boycotts operated in the areas of sports, academia, and business and were fuelled by perceptions of the South African government's abuse of state violence as associated with Sharpeville and Soweto.<sup>19</sup> Consumer activities came to focus on the role of banks, arms dealers, and fruit exporters in upholding the apartheid regime.

Although there had been some critical focus on South Africa in 1960s student politics,<sup>20</sup> a more popular German anti-apartheid movement was not inaugurated until the 1970s and sprang mainly from church roots. In 1978, following the suggestions of South African women's groups but not until five years after a widespread Dutch boycott of South African oranges, the Evangelische Frauenarbeit in Deutschland started issuing brochures that urged German consumers, "Don't buy fruit from South Africa."<sup>21</sup> The German booklet took as a point of departure the words of South African prime minister J. B. Vorster, who had said in 1972, "Every time a South African product is bought, it is another brick in the wall of our continued existence."<sup>22</sup> Although the women's organisation did not gain full support from their superiors in the Evangelical Church of Germany, more than ten thousand of the booklets were printed, and the campaign had considerable resonance among the liberal bourgeoisie. For countless women, the practical activity of politicising issues of daily shopping by putting up information stands in front of local supermarkets became an emancipatory experience.<sup>23</sup>

A boycott campaign that gained partial support from trade unions and political parties only emerged in the second half of the 1980s, when German

19. Christabel Gurney, "When the Boycott Began to Bite," <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/aam/aamhist.html> (accessed 11 August 2010).

20. Cf. Slobodian, *Foreign Front*, 21–25.

21. Evangelische Frauenarbeit, *Kauft keine Früchte aus Südafrika!*, IISG, ID 314, BRO 2160/5; Hildegard Zumach, "Frauen für Südafrika! 'Kauft keine Früchte aus Südafrika,'" *Mitteilungen aus Ökumene und Auslandsarbeit* (2002), [http://www.ekd.de/ausland\\_oekumene/berichte/2002/reader\\_2002\\_28.html](http://www.ekd.de/ausland_oekumene/berichte/2002/reader_2002_28.html) (accessed 11 August 2010); Wellmer, "Deutsche Anti-Apartheidbewegung"; Stelck, *Politik mit dem Einkaufskorb*.

22. Evangelische Frauenarbeit, *Kauft keine Früchte aus Südafrika!*, 5. On the Vorster quote and the 1973 Dutch boycott, see Esau du Plessis, "Don't Squeeze a South African Dry," *Africa Today* 21.2 (1974): 59–68.

23. "Kauft keine Früchte aus Südafrika—Erfahrungen mit einer Boykott-Aktion (1981)," in *Aktionshandbuch Dritte Welt*, 6th ed., ed. Bundeskongreß entwicklungspolitischer Aktionsgruppen (Wuppertal, 1982), [http://www.friedenspaedagogik.de/themen/zivilcourage/aktionen/kauft\\_keine\\_fruechte\\_aus\\_suedafrika\\_1981](http://www.friedenspaedagogik.de/themen/zivilcourage/aktionen/kauft_keine_fruechte_aus_suedafrika_1981) (accessed 12 August 2010).

companies, especially banks, became crucial commercial partners for South Africa after the gradual withdrawal of investors from Britain and the United States. With Marxist militancy on the decline, boycotting South Africa promised a concrete project of emancipation that could be realized on a local scale. Refraining from South African consumer goods had a performative element, allowing people to mark their commitment to an issue of moral politics through individual choices of consumption. The fruit boycott was eventually effective enough that South African producers adopted a costly packaging system that systematically veiled the origin of their produce.<sup>24</sup> After the World Council of Churches called on private customers to cancel their accounts with banks that provided South Africa with loans, the German anti-apartheid movement embraced the banking campaign, and in 1987, the Evangelical Church Congress, yielding to pressure from grassroots action groups, closed its accounts with Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank, and Commerzbank. Activists declared 27 May 1988 a nationwide “day of action against banks.” Mobilising for the event, the journal *Consum Kritik* highlighted the fact that white South Africans enjoyed one of the highest living standards in the world.<sup>25</sup> A decade earlier, South African activist Brigalia Bam had already emphasised in her preface to the first German fruit-boycott brochure that white South Africans were “bathing in luxury” while black children died of malnutrition and innocent people were thrown into jail. She saw the economic boycott as a final effort to avert “a terrible race war.”<sup>26</sup>

The mainstream anti-apartheid movement, with its strong roots in church organisations, embraced a decidedly nonviolent outlook that emphasised the moral contrast between peaceful boycotts and the South African regime’s reliance on violence. However, during the second half of the 1980s, a militant branch of the movement emerged, chiefly represented by the *Revolutionäre Zellen* (RZ) and the autonomists. In the autumn of 1985, a revolutionary cell committed bomb attacks against Zahnradfabrik Friedrichshafen, a German company that exported parachutes and parts for armoured vehicles, and two branches of Daimler-Benz, which sold trucks and cross-country vehicles to the South African army. A claim of responsibility for the bombing started with the familiar battle cry, “Burn, baby, burn,” and pointed to those injured, interned, and executed by South African police forces. Applauding militant raids of white residential neighbourhoods in South Africa, the German activists hoped

24. “Verbraucher: Kap der guten Früchte,” *Der Spiegel* 49 (30 November 1987): 89–95.

25. “27. Mai 1988: Bankenaktionstag gegen Apartheid,” *Consum Kritik* 6.2 (1988): 4.

26. Brigalia Bam, preface to Evangelische Frauenarbeit, *Kauft keine Früchte aus Südafrika!*,

that the South African youth resistance movement would not contend themselves with fighting for the leftovers from the tables of the white masters but would combine criminal appropriation with militant politics.<sup>27</sup> Since German companies continued to supply crucial parts to the South African apparatus of oppression “in defiance of all talk of boycott [and] sanctions,”<sup>28</sup> the RZ wanted to go beyond mere solidarity campaigns and any “pseudo-ethical cosmetics,” such as making South African gold coins an illegal import: “Our topic is not disinvestment, minimum wages, an antiracist code of conduct, or hiding the Krugerrand in the back drawers: we don’t want to urge fair business policies on the almost 150 German multinationals linking the South African subcontinent to the exploitation and capital flows of the metropolises. As part of a worldwide imperialist structure of exploitation, they are to be attacked here as well as there. . . . This must . . . produce conflagrations in their production halls and under their consumer shit.”<sup>29</sup>

Two years later, the RZ launched a bomb attack against the food store chain REWE as part of a campaign against racism and sexism, destroying seventeen trucks and trailers in the North Rhine-Westphalian city of Wesel in November 1987.<sup>30</sup> A revolutionary cell’s statement claiming responsibility accused REWE of profiting from the suppression of African women by “bartering away” South African fruits, vegetables, and canned goods in more than seven thousand stores. The statement likened the exploitation in multinational factories and plantations to early capitalism, with female agricultural labourers working sixty to seventy hours per week, often forced to bring their children to work, and receiving much lower pay than male workers: “The fruit offered in our supermarket chains . . . is the product of women’s work under conditions that represent the entire spectrum of capitalist and sexist oppression: the mechanisation of cultivation methods and subsequent reductions in labour requirements have reduced most female workers to the status of seasonal or day labourers; at the same time they have to bear the health consequences of capitalised farming operations with pesticides and artificial fertilisers that cause diseases.” Moreover, the RZ pointed out, these women were subject to the everyday violence of white overseers: according to the group, South Africa

27. “Anschlag gegen Brüggemann & Brandt, Hagen und Mercedes Lueg, Bochum,” December 1985, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 2:532.

28. “Aktion gegen die Zahnradfabrik, Friedrichshafen, und gegen Daimler, Schwäbisch-Gmünd,” October 1985, in *ibid.*, 530–32.

29. “Anschlag gegen Brüggemann & Brandt, Hagen, und Mercedes Lueg, Bochum,” in *ibid.*, 533.

30. “Verbraucher: Kap der guten Früchte,” *Der Spiegel* 49 (30 November 1987): 92.



had the world's highest incidence of rape. In an attempt to imitate and transfer the social and political struggles of South Africa to West Germany, the RZ applauded women's roles in these struggles, in the strikes at Daimler-Benz's South African plants, and when organising resistance against rent increases, boycotts, and raids on wholesalers. In contrast to their earlier statement, the feminist branch of the RZ explicitly commended German women's church groups that had been supporting the boycott for years. The stated goal of the attack against REWE was simple: "We want the goods to disappear from the shelves."<sup>31</sup>

The RZ's anti-apartheid campaign was probably inspired by the better-known arson attacks that the Dutch group RaRa (Revolutionary Antiracist Action) carried out against the supermarket chain Makro and Shell petrol stations beginning in September 1985. RaRa's agenda was very clearly focused on the militant expression of opposition to South African apartheid. RaRa's attacks—and the militant anti-apartheid campaign more generally—reached the German autonomist scene. Shell petrol stations were ubiquitous and therefore a relatively easy target. There is little evidence that autonomists got involved in the fruit boycott campaigns: a rare poster from West Berlin shows a drawing of a crowd demolishing goods in a supermarket.<sup>32</sup> More prominent on the autonomists' agenda were German companies' South African business relations in the field of nuclear and military technology.<sup>33</sup> Autonomists interpreted apartheid as war. Protests against banks were widespread.<sup>34</sup> Commodity boycotts, however, were marginal to such direct action against multinationals carried out in the spirit of solidarity with South African workers' liberation struggle.<sup>35</sup>

### Anti-Zionist campaigns

Only a small minority of German left-wing radicals were prepared to go so far as to put Israel on a level with South Africa and to subscribe to analogous calls

31. "Aktion gegen Firma REWE," November 1987, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 2:536–37.

32. Poster (West Berlin, 1986), [http://plakat.nadir.org/plakat\\_ausgabe.php3?plakat=http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film211/211\\_10.jpg](http://plakat.nadir.org/plakat_ausgabe.php3?plakat=http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film211/211_10.jpg) (accessed 3 October 2011).

33. Poster, "Atomgeschäft: Bundesrepublik—Südafrika," [http://plakat.nadir.org/plakat\\_ausgabe.php3?plakat=http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film236/236\\_17.jpg](http://plakat.nadir.org/plakat_ausgabe.php3?plakat=http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film236/236_17.jpg) (accessed 22 January 2012).

34. Flyer, "Kein Geld für Südafrikas Rassenpolitik" (May 1987), [http://plakat.nadir.org/plakat\\_ausgabe.php3?plakat=http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film275/275\\_11.jpg](http://plakat.nadir.org/plakat_ausgabe.php3?plakat=http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film275/275_11.jpg) (accessed 22 January 2012).

35. Arbeitskreis Internationale Solidarität, *Shell raus aus Südafrika*.

to boycott Israeli products. A precursor of such campaigns occurred when the *Revolutionäre Zellen* used boycotts and incendiary attacks against a cinematic rendering of their most controversial act: a collaboration with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) that resulted in the hijacking of an Air France plane to Uganda's Entebbe Airport. The Israel Defence Forces staged a spectacular hostage rescue on 4 July 1976 that resulted in the deaths of three hostages; all of the hijackers, including two RZ members; the commander of the Israeli forces; and at least twenty Ugandan soldiers. More than one hundred hostages were rescued.<sup>36</sup> Before the end of the year, Hollywood had released *Victory at Entebbe* [*Unternehmen Entebbe*], directed by Marvin J. Chomsky and starring Elizabeth Taylor, Kirk Douglas, Anthony Hopkins, and Burt Lancaster. The film particularly highlights what has become known as the "selection," an incident in which the hijackers allegedly forced a Jewish couple holding Belgian passports to join the Israeli group, knocking the man to the ground and humiliating him on account of his Jewish-sounding name.

In January 1977, the RZ and Fighters for a Free Palestine tried to fire-bomb cinemas in Düsseldorf and Aachen where the film was being shown.<sup>37</sup> Similar attacks had taken place in Rome the previous month.<sup>38</sup> A flyer asking, "Who are the terrorists?" called on people to disturb screenings of the film.<sup>39</sup> Testifying in court, the perpetrators apprehended in Aachen, Gerhard Albartus and Enno Schwall, argued that the film legitimised "racist suppression and murder of Palestinians and Africans."<sup>40</sup> The RZ statement stressed that the incendiary devices were not meant to injure anyone, likened the film to racist Nazi propaganda, and called for the immediate withdrawal of the film and a boycott of any future films about Entebbe.<sup>41</sup>

Most accounts of the events put a distinct emphasis on the antisemitic

36. In the absence of a scholarly monograph on the topic, contemporary journalistic accounts that include transcripts of eyewitness testimony remain the most comprehensive secondary sources. See Stevenson, *90 Minutes at Entebbe*; Ben-Porat, Haber, and Schiff, *Entebbe Rescue*.

37. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Pressespiegel* 5 (10 January 1977): 3, BAK, BMJ, HG 4, B 141/62511, 4030 E-16/77, vol. 1; Generalstaatsanwaltschaft Düsseldorf, Anklageschrift, Gerhard Albartus, 5 OJs 2/77 (28 July 1977), 163, BAK, BMJ, HG 4, B 141/62511, 4030 E-16/77, vol. 1.

38. "Firebombs Hit Movie Theaters Showing Film on Entebbe Rescue," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 27 December 1976, Jewish News Archive, <http://archive.jta.org/article/1976/12/27/2977164/firebombs-hit-movie-theaters-showing-film-on-entebbe-rescue> (accessed 10 May 2012).

39. Sitting Bull, "Unternehmen-Entebbe: Wer sind die Terroristen?," anonymous flyer, n.d., author's private collection.

40. Oberlandesgericht Düsseldorf, Urteil Albartus/Schwall, IV 2/77, 5 OJs 2/77 (19 January 1979), 116, BAK, BMJ, HG 4, B 141/62511, 4030 E-16/77, vol. 2.

41. "Brandanschlag gegen die Vorführung des Entebbe-Films," January 1977, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 1:129. See also "Entebbe-Film: Wahnsinnig durchgeknallt," *Der Spiegel* 3 (10 January 1977): 62–63.

conduct of the German hijackers, an aspect that has come to dominate the debate, especially in Germany. Although the evidence is complicated by the existence of dual citizenship, evidence suggests that the “selection” at Entebbe did not take place in the way it is usually narrated. Ilan Hartuv, a former employee of the Israeli foreign ministry who was one of the hostages, stated unequivocally in a 2011 interview that the hostages were grouped “based on passports and ID cards. There was no selection of Jews versus non-Jews.”<sup>42</sup> In itself, Hartuv’s account does not say much about the existence of antisemitic motivations—or lack thereof—among the RZ and the PFLP, but it does raise questions concerning the evidence on which charges of antisemitism against the radical Left are based. It is correct that Israeli citizens were detained at Entebbe and threatened with death, but many non-Israeli Jews were released, a fact that is usually omitted in descriptions of an Auschwitz-like selection.<sup>43</sup>

Two years after the events at Entebbe, the RZ attacked the Frankfurt-based company Agrexco, owned by the state of Israel and Europe’s largest importer of Israeli fruit, causing damage to the building but no casualties. A statement tied the attack to alleged cases of Arab workers injecting mercury into Israeli oranges. Indeed, oranges injected with mercury had been found in Europe in January and February 1978, but it is doubtful that any Palestinian organisations were involved in these performative acts of poisoning. Evidence suggests that radical European solidarity groups—perhaps the RZ or similar Dutch groups—invented this form of protest. Letters threatening to poison Israeli agricultural products in the name of an otherwise obscure Arab Revolutionary Army were received in several European capitals and had been sent from Stuttgart. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the PFLP were initially not impressed with this new form of struggle because it had the potential to discredit the perpetrators and embraced it only later and on a very limited scale.<sup>44</sup>

The RZ attack and June 1978 statement appear to constitute an attempt to

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42. Yossi Melman, “Setting the Record Straight: Entebbe Was Not Auschwitz,” *Haaretz.com*, 8 July 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/week-s-end/setting-the-record-straight-entebbe-was-not-auschwitz-1.372131> (accessed 10 November 2011). Hostage Moshe Peretz wrote in his contemporary journal, “The terrorists separate us from the others: a most dramatic scene. Every person who possesses an Israeli passport is called upon to leave the central hall and move to an adjoining room. . . . People with dual nationality are also ordered into there.” Peretz’s account is printed in Stevenson, *90 Minutes at Entebbe*, 27.

43. For a detailed analysis of the contested narratives of the Entebbe hijacking, see Sedlmaier and Anders, “‘Unternehmen Entebbe’ 1976.”

44. This account follows the impressively evidenced interpretation provided by Sprinzak and Karmon, “Why So Little?”

correct the public discourse that had unfolded in response to a wave of copycat citrus fruit poisonings throughout Europe that also affected non-Israeli oranges. The RZ pointed out such attempts were sabotage rather than poisoning, since the goal was to make the oranges unusable rather than to kill people, as evidenced by the fact that warnings had been issued (though they were ignored). Indeed, elemental mercury is poorly absorbed by ingestion, and toxicity from swallowing is rare. As a result, none of the fifty oranges found contaminated with mercury in various European cities threatened anyone's life.<sup>45</sup> However, the details of mercury's health hazards are not widely known, and mercury, especially in its compounds, can have extremely toxic effects—for example, through long-term exposure to mercury vapour or consumption of contaminated fish. Thus, though the actual danger posed by mercury in citrus fruits was small, the incidents provoked a climate of fear, with detrimental effects on sales of fruit, the original intention of the perpetrators. The RZ suggested that only a lack of solidarity among the Left and a media smear campaign had raised suspicions of antisemitism, while no one had suffered any serious harm; moreover, the cell alleged, the “imperialist state” of Israel financed its army to no small degree from the export of citrus fruits. The RZ would no longer “idly watch” the “war of extermination against the Palestinians”; instead, the attack was meant as only a prelude to further measures in the commercial sphere: “boycott campaigns against Israeli goods, discussions with people doing their shopping, but also stink bombs and acid attacks against Israeli products, destroying the stocks of Israeli fruit displayed in every department store.” The RZ could not resist comparing what they perceived as the “expulsion, persecution, and extermination of an entire people” to the “blood and soil” politics of the Nazis. At the same time, they explicitly declared that their fight against Zionism was also a resolute fight against antisemitism in any form.<sup>46</sup> The debate about similarities and differences between criticisms of Israel, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism or about structural affinities between anti-imperialism and antisemitism was still in its infancy.<sup>47</sup>

The RZ continued the “campaign for the support of the Palestinian liberation struggle” a year later with a similar attack against another fruit importer,

45. Ibid.

46. “Aktion gegen die Israelische Import-Gesellschaft Agrexco, Frankfurt,” June 1978, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 1:131–32.

47. See Gerhard Hanloser, “Bundesrepublikanischer Linksradikalismus und Israel: Antifaschismus und Revolutionismus als Tragödie und als Farce,” in *Antisemitismus, Antizionismus, Israelkritik*, ed. Zuckermann, 194; Volker Weiß, “‘Volksklassenkampf’—Die antizionistische Rezeption des Nahostkonflikts in der militanten Linken der BRD,” in *Antisemitismus, Antizionismus, Israelkritik*, ed. Zuckermann, 231; Holzer, “Neue Linke,” 267–334.

Hameico. The statement of responsibility again referred to a “fascist genocide against the Palestinian people” and accused Zionist arms exports of supporting “fascist regimes” in Nicaragua, South Africa, and Argentina. The radicals again demanded that companies withdraw Israeli produce and that “antifascist” activists provoke boycotts by injecting butyric acid into “Zionist fruits.”<sup>48</sup> The RZ were early in taking up Israel as a target of their militant boycott campaigns. The British Palestine Solidarity Campaign did not embrace the Boycott Israeli Goods Campaign until 1982.<sup>49</sup>

### The Hafenstraße Mural

The precarious mixture of criticism of Israeli foreign politics, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism reemerged in the context of the First Intifada of the late 1980s when the “Antimps,” a branch of the autonomist movement that declared itself loyal to the goals of the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF), subsumed solidarity with Palestine under a rather haphazard notion of anti-imperialism. Similar to the RZ, these groups maintained contacts with the PFLP, which had belatedly embraced the boycott as a means of winning European support for its fight against the Israeli state.<sup>50</sup> In 1987, squatters from Hamburg’s Hafenstraße, where, unlike Berlin, the initial squats from 1981 remained a focal point of political conflict throughout the decade, painted a mural on the exterior wall of a tenement building dominated by the slogan, “Boycott ‘Israel’! Goods, kibbutzim, and beaches.”<sup>51</sup> Above the words was the outline of a machine gun against the background of a giant Palestinian flag. To underline the allegedly illegitimate nature of the Zionist state, the word *Israel* appeared in quotation marks, the same way the Springer press referred to the “DDR”.

Television footage of Israeli soldiers beating Palestinian children during the Intifada apparently had motivated activists to call attention to this conflict.

48. “Aktion gegen die Import-Firma Hameico Frankfurt,” June 1979, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 1:133.

49. Rosen, *Mapping the Organizational Sources*, 30.

50. According to Graf, “Vom Ja zum Nein,” 155, the Israel boycott of the radical left started in the 1980s and reached a first climax in response to the Sabra and Shatila massacre followed by a second climax in support of the First Intifada in 1987. While these dates are not implausible, Graf does not support them with any empirical evidence. According to the evidence analysed here, there is no clear connection between boycott and the massacre during the Lebanese civil war. Before 1987, calls for boycotts remained marginal. See poster “Gegen Zionismus und Rassismus: Boykottiert Israel! Unterstützt die Intifada!” (1987), [http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film230/230\\_10.jpg](http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film230/230_10.jpg) (accessed 31 January 2012).

51. Sigmund and Stroux, *Zu bunt*, 27–31; Lehne, *Konflikt um die Hafenstraße*.

The boycott explicitly sought to bridge distance: “We wanted it to relate to here, something one could do here.”<sup>52</sup> In addition to the Manichaean worldview betrayed by the sweeping condemnation of Israel, the fact that kibbutzim—collective communities rooted in utopian and socialist ideals—were targeted was especially curious. In the spring of 1988, this problematic message triggered grim controversies within and beyond the radical left about the extent to which it was antisemitic.<sup>53</sup> A discussion meeting at Hafenstraße sought to establish the right to criticise the state of Israel without immediately being accused of antisemitism. A key speaker was Israeli civil rights activist and Fatah member Uri Davis, who had written a book arguing that Israel’s policies towards Palestinians were comparable to South Africa’s apartheid policies. Davis was also member of Return, a political group that also embraced boycott slogans.<sup>54</sup>

Despite receiving immediate criticism, German activists unleashed a full-fledged campaign against Israeli goods in Hamburg and elsewhere. Orange crates were knocked over in supermarkets; at an open-air market, blood and red paint were poured over Israeli goods, actions understandably perceived as tasteless in light of the Nazis’ boycott campaigns.<sup>55</sup> The Hamburg Antiimps, who uneasily noticed applause for their action coming from the far right, displayed a rather simplistic historical understanding of National Socialism, and their clumsy quotation marks implicitly questioned the state of Israel’s right to exist, thus venturing into discursive territory with antisemitic connotations. However, one important difference between the Antiimps and Nazi storm troopers lies in the fact that the left-wing anti-Zionists symbolically attacked goods of Israeli origin from a position of relative weakness and motivated by ideas of international solidarity, but they did not physically attack Jewish vendors by means of state-sponsored or paramilitary violence and backed by a pervasive eliminatory ideology. The same held true for the RZ’s April 1988 bomb attack on the administrative hub of the Hamburg transport and fruit import company Olf & Sohn. Ten years after the attack on Agrexco, the RZ combined boycott rhetoric directed against South Africa with that directed against Israel, branding Hamburg fruit merchants the accomplices of these regimes.<sup>56</sup>

52. Sigmund and Stroux, *Zu bunt*, 27.

53. Reemtsma, “Andere Wand.”

54. Sigmund and Stroux, *Zu bunt*, 28–29; Davis, *Israel*.

55. *Materialien zur Kampagne*; “‘Das Gut-Böse-Raster’: Zur Auseinandersetzung um das Wandbild in der Hamburger Hafenstraße,” *calciùl* 6 (1999), <http://www.conne-island.de/nf/72/24.html#01> (accessed 11 April 2011).

56. “Aktion gegen die Transportfirma Olf & Sohn, Hamburg,” April 1988, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 2:537–38.

The Hamburg government had the mural painted over and threatened to evict the squatters should they resist. Activists only attached banners to the scaffolding, which opened another avenue of legitimisation in defence of the original message. Large letters painted on bedsheets quoted from United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379, adopted by a majority of Arab, Third World, and Eastern bloc countries on 10 November 1975, which determined that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination” and thus put Israel on a par with the apartheid states of South Africa and Rhodesia.<sup>57</sup> The image of the Hafenstraße mural continued appearing on anti-Zionist posters and flyers. Other smaller murals with a similar message were also quickly painted over: a mural in St. Pauli’s Paul-Roosen-Straße showed an open mouth about to bite into a piece of “Jaffa” fruit, which mirrored a soldier with a machine gun standing in front of a doorway from which flowed blood.<sup>58</sup> A copy of the Hafenstraße image was also painted on the walls of Göttingen’s autonomist centre, Juzi. The boycott campaign triggered by the Hafenstraße mural undoubtedly was a prominent part in German autonomist groups’ political repertoire, but a perusal of their journals and posters shows that more conventional protests against aspects of Israeli foreign policy—for example, the 1982 Lebanon War—were far more frequent.

### Boycotts of Multinational Companies

Despite the prominence of the South African and, to a lesser extent, the Israeli case, the protest focus on multinational companies proved to be the more significant long-term effect in the politicisation of consumption. A pioneering case was the struggle against the questionable marketing of milk powder in less developed countries by the Swiss company Nestlé—one of the world’s largest food and nutrition corporations. A booklet called *The Baby Killer* published by the British aid organisation War on Want in 1974 and a slightly changed German translation opened an international campaign that sought to address the harmful consequences of breast milk substitutes under conditions of poverty.<sup>59</sup> The campaign initially targeted several baby food companies, but increasingly

57. Sigmund and Stroux, *Zu bunt*, 29–31; United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/000/92/IMG/NR000092.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 23 May 2011).

58. Sigmund and Stroux, *Zu bunt*, 31.

59. Muller, *Baby Killer*; Duve, *Exportinteressen gegen Muttermilch*. See Sethi, “Multinational Corporations”; Kalt, *Tiersmondismus*, 400–489.

focused on Nestlé since the Third World Action Group from Bern, which had undertaken the German translation, had chosen “Nestlé tötet Babies [Nestlé kills babies]” for a title, which provoked the incriminated company to sue for libel. An internationally highly publicised two-year trial ended with the court deciding in favour of Nestlé because they could not be held responsible for infant deaths in terms of criminal law. However, the outcome was widely seen as a moral victory for the defendants not only because of the rather mild fine, but due to the fact that they had succeeded in bringing across their moral and political arguments, which eventually triggered a long-lasting international boycott campaign.

These arguments were harking back to critiques of regimes of provision that the protest movements had pioneered since the late 1960s. Under the heading “Opium for babies,” the newspaper of the Offenbach Sozialistisches Büro assembled quotes from the trial: Nestlé’s chairman, who called his company the “most multinational of all multinational companies,” was likened to a heroin dealer who gave away the first shot for free calculating on the addiction that would set in. In the opinion of the *Basler Nationalzeitung*, Nestlé’s denial of any responsibility for the effects of feeding bottles was not unlike an arsonist blaming the matches.<sup>60</sup> The journalist and SPD politician Freimut Duve highlighted a new group of victims and a “final and decisive step in the colonisation of consciousness” via advertisement: “a European export giant tries to market what has hitherto been closed off from the market: the giving relationship between mother and baby.”<sup>61</sup>

The argument that the marketing of artificial substitutes for natural products created disastrous dependencies in less developed countries also featured in the early phase of protest against genetic engineering. In November 1984, a butyric acid attack against the office of two architects involved in the building of a research laboratory for the pharmaceutical company Schering in conjunction with Freie Universität Berlin was justified by pointing out that sterile wheat that did not produce seeds would help create monopolies putting Third World consumers at the mercy of American and European companies. In the eyes of the protesters this was a conscious strategy to put companies in a position “to decide on the existence or starvation of entire populations.”<sup>62</sup>

In 1981, several groups advocating solidarity with El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua inaugurated a nation-wide boycott campaign against cof-

60. “Opium für Babies,” *links* 81 (October 1976).

61. Duve, *Exportinteressen gegen Muttermilch*, 7.

62. “Gentechnologie Buttersäureanschlag auf das Architektenbüro Kiemle & Keidt, das das neue Genforschungsinstitut von FU und Schering baut,” *Anagan* 5 (1985): 21.



fee companies. A flyer pointed out that while Germans enjoyed coffee as a matter of course, those who cultivated it could not even afford the drink: "Each attempt of the agricultural labourers to fight social injustice gets violently suppressed. [. . .] We, as consumers, are implicated in this system."<sup>63</sup> An autonomist group looted—or "dispossessed" as the activists put it—a Göttingen branch of the coffee roaster Eduscho: "This coffee is on its way back to El Salvador where it was stolen from its owners—the workers and Indios—for the price of poverty." A commentary in the autonomist paper *radikal* praised the act for combining the liberation struggle of the Salvadorian guerrilla with resistance in Germany.<sup>64</sup> It was the ability to connect seemingly far removed conflicts that made boycotts of multinational companies an attractive resource of mobilisation.

### Feminist Solidarity

Rote Zora, a branch of the *Revolutionäre Zellen* embracing a more independent platform in the 1980s, stressed the feminist dimension of the fight against exploitation and violence in the global economy. Rote Zora formulated its critique of the interplay of regimes of provision and regimes of violence in a June 1984 interview for the feminist journal *Emma*: "When traffickers buy our sisters in the 3rd World and then sell them to German petit bourgeois, that's legal. When women have to do the most monotonous work for subsistence level and thereby ruin their health, that's legal. These are relations of violence that we are no longer prepared to accept. . . . Denouncing them will not . . . abolish them. . . . This is why we sabotage, boycott, damage, avenge the violence and humiliation." While fighting the "exploitation of women as commodities," the militant women of Rote Zora described themselves as shopping in "disgusting supermarkets" and living in "ugly buildings" while they "liked to go for a walk or to the cinema, theatre or disco and enjoyed parties and the cultivation of idleness."<sup>65</sup>

Putting their focus on labour disputes, a classic topic of the Old Left, and thus reviving radical traditions on a global scale, Rote Zora committed a fire-

63. Mittelamerika-Komitees in der BRD u. West Berlin, "Boykottiert die Kaffeeekonzerne," [http://plakat.nadir.org/plakat\\_ausgabe.php3?plakat=http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film264/264\\_21.jpg](http://plakat.nadir.org/plakat_ausgabe.php3?plakat=http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film264/264_21.jpg) (accessed 30 September 2011).

64. "Göttingen: Eduscho enteignet," *radikal* 103 (April 1982): 27.

65. "Interview mit der Roten Zora," June 1984, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 2:598–605.

bomb attack against the Berlin branch office of the textile manufacturer Adler on 11 September 1986, triggering a sea change in a labour dispute some eight thousand kilometres to the east. The management of the Adler subcontractor Flair-Fashion agreed to respond to some of the demands made by striking female textile workers at its plant in a South Korean free-trade zone. The industrial action initially had been put down violently. Complaints focused on over-long hours of work, low pay, the prevention of free unions and thus of protest and strike, and sexual harassment. Rote Zora's militant attempt to radicalise a solidarity campaign for Third World low-wage workers immediately encountered criticism: a Berlin-based Korean women's group and the human rights organisation Terre des Femmes feared the consequences of resorting to violent means.<sup>66</sup> In June and August 1987, Rote Zora struck again: incendiary devices devastated ten Adler branch offices throughout West Germany. The statement of responsibility mocked Adler's slogan, "Life with quality," by asking whose quality of life was meant and arrived at a two-pronged critique: "The brittle peace between the classes in the metropole is only upheld via cheap consumer products. . . . Our privileges, of which consumption is one, are based on the exploitation, utilisation, and extermination of people on three continents. Consumption is foisted on us as a replacement for real life." Adler's cheap textiles were depicted as a shrewd strategy for giving even German welfare recipients the feeling of buying colourful and fashionable clothes, of having a place in consumer society, while in reality they destroyed subsistence economies in countries like Korea, leaving young women with a choice between prostitution—Rote Zora noted the forty thousand U.S. servicemen stationed in South Korea—and the starvation wages of world-market factories. This charge was woven into more general observations concerning capitalism's commodification of all aspects of human life.<sup>67</sup>

On International Women's Day 1983, Rote Zora attacked the car of a so-called marriage broker and the Philippine consulate in Bonn to make trafficking in women publicly visible. A statement traced the "sex boom" back to the U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia, where military bases attracted sex workers whose living conditions had been decimated by war. This was eventu-

66. Hoor, "Dritte Welt kleidet uns ein," 98–99; Koczy, Stolle, and Pak, *Made in Korea*. On female workers in Korea more generally, see Hagan Koo, "From Farm to Factory: Proletarianization in Korea," *American Sociological Review* 55.5 (1990): 669–81; Kyung Ae Park, "Women and Development: The Case of South Korea," *Comparative Politics* 25.2 (1993): 127–45; Seung-Kyung Kim, "'Big Companies Don't Hire Us, Married Women': Exploitation and Empowerment among Women Workers in South Korea," *Feminist Studies* 22.3 (1996): 555–71.

67. "Anschlag gegen Adler," June 1987, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 2:628–31.

ally transformed into the global business of sex tourism and trafficking in Asian women. But the root of the problem ultimately lay in impoverishment and indebtedness caused by imperialism. The militant German women declared their solidarity with the Philippine Far Left and accused agromultinationals like Del Monte and Dole of relying on rapes and murders committed by paramilitary units that cleared tropical forests and delivered the survivors to the world market. Rote Zora assumed that more than two hundred West German enterprises were taking part in trafficking, advertising, and selling Asian women like merchandise. Hotels, airlines, and travel agents profited from the women's economic distress. Rote Zora accused the Marcos regime in the Philippines of "selling out the country and people to make money out of it."<sup>68</sup> A similar attack against an airport shuttle bus operated by a trafficker in Münster followed in August 1983. The statement again focused on the degrading commodification of women, which was tolerated within the confines of German society's relations of violence. Rote Zora contended that the enterprise that had been attacked even featured beds so that customers could "try out" the women. The radical feminists did not trust the declarations of German and Philippine authorities that illegal traffickers would face criminal prosecution since both governments contributed to what Rote Zora saw as the root causes of the problem.<sup>69</sup>

### The IMF and World Bank

The feminist plank was an important element in the broader criticism of the global economic order and the structure of global markets, which, by the late 1980s, had been condensed in a shared framing of diverse global problems among multifarious protest groups that social scientists have labelled the global justice movement.<sup>70</sup> Protest against economic summit meetings was crucial to this process. The first important countersummit confronted the World Economic Summit at Bonn in May 1985. Approximately twenty-five thousand demonstrators, including members of various autonomist groups, sought to challenge those deemed responsible for "starvation, exploitation, and imperialism."<sup>71</sup> The emerging political focus on the global economy became

68. "Aktion gegen den Frauenhändler Kirschner, Köln und das Philippinische Konsulat, Bonn," March 1983, in *ibid.*, 608–10.

69. "Aktion gegen den Frauenhändler Günter Menger, Münster," August 1983, in *ibid.*, 610–11.

70. Rucht, Teune, and Yang, "Global Justice Movement," 161.

71. Protest manifesto, May 1985, quoted in *ibid.* See also Holzapfel and König, "Chronik," 25.

more powerfully manifest when representatives of the World Bank and of the IMF met in West Berlin in September 1988. Critics of these institutions—some 150 ideologically diverse groups including environmental, autonomist, and Third World activists—organised a wealth of counterevents in West Berlin and other German cities, including a demonstration that drew eighty thousand people. During the protests, a significant number of attacks took place against shops and branch offices of international businesses, among them further attacks against Adler retailers that denounced the exploitation of female workers in South Korea.<sup>72</sup> This time, an entire demonstration against low-cost production focused on an Adler outlet in a shopping arcade on the Kurfürstendamm.<sup>73</sup> The autonomist women's movement attacked pornographic movie theatres and travel agents that facilitated sex tourism. These forms of protest receive at most brief mention in the scarce literature on this remarkable anticipation of later patterns of globalisation protest.<sup>74</sup> The ensuing debates featured rhetorical strategies that amplified the violence and moral infringement of the opposing side, coupled with arguments that justified and neutralised one's own use of force. This reciprocal constellation between activists and security forces—operating with associations and comparisons on a global scale—was partly responsible for escalating developments.

The Third World debt crisis, which originated in the 1970s and erupted in 1982, gave the IMF and World Bank enormous power, enabling them to impose controversial free-market conditions on their loans to poor countries and on repayments. So-called structural-adjustment loans were meant to address developing countries' lack of control over their budgets when printing money for government spending. The World Bank optimistically declared that such adjustments would take no longer than five years. The idea was that liberalised prices would attract private investments, which, in turn, would trigger growth and thus combat poverty.<sup>75</sup> Conditions for these short-term adjustments in-

72. "Diesen Kampf werden wir gewinnen. Koreanische Arbeiterinnen: erfolgreiche Kämpfe unter härtesten Bedingungen," *Zahltag: Tägliche Massenzeitung gegen IWF und Weltbank* 2 (26 September 1988): 2, WZB-IWF. This is a collection of source materials on the West Berlin meeting of the IMF and World Bank compiled at Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung. Thanks to Dieter Rucht for allowing me to use this material.

73. IWF/Weltbank-Kampagne, *Rundbrief* 4, IISG, ID, ZK 48937.

74. See Gerhards, *Neue Konfliktlinien*; Gerhards, "Mobilisierung gegen die IWF- und Weltbanktagung"; Gerhards and Rucht, "Mesomobilization." A standard work on developmental policy wrongly claims that mass demonstrations and violent protests against summit and IMF/World Bank meetings only emerged in the late 1990s: see Nuscheler, *Lern- und Arbeitsbuch Entwicklungspolitik*, 51.

75. See Mallaby, *World's Banker*, 45–46. See also Kapur, Lewis and Webb, *World Bank*, 1:595–96.

volved reducing consumption, especially public consumption. IMF-induced currency devaluation led to the “dollarization” of domestic prices, which then triggered abrupt price hikes in basic commodities, including food, durables, and fuel. More direct repayment conditions curtailed governmental subsidies for basic foodstuffs and other vital goods. This tightening of the belt was supposed to ensure debt repayment. On the ground, however, these measures usually led to price increases for health care, education, public transport, and other public goods and consequently to sharp declines in most people’s use of these services. At the same time, the IMF failed to insist on higher taxes for those segments of the population that were in a position to tighten the belt. Moreover, the IMF favoured exports because consumer demand in rich countries promised higher revenues, but this approach stifled demand in less developed countries. Pockets of high-income consumption encompassed small segments of society, while the brunt of the IMF measures was borne by the weakest, who were least responsible for the debt crisis. Crime rates grew, and raids on supermarkets increased, often resulting in “austerity riots” or “IMF riots.” Protest waves occurred in at least thirty-nine of the roughly eighty debtor countries between 1976 and 1992.<sup>76</sup> Walton and Seddon point out that acute starvation was less of a factor in causing these riots than was awareness of the international origins of austerity and indignation about the elimination of “paternalistic consumer protections,” which beneficiaries viewed and defended as their legitimate rights.<sup>77</sup>

That severe structural problems existed in the global financial system of the 1970s and 1980s has been acknowledged by a number of experts, both at the time and subsequently. Even UNICEF and the WTO accused the IMF of massive abuses of social human rights.<sup>78</sup> Critics pointed out that the financial system amounted to a large-scale “transfer of economic resources” from debtor to creditor countries.<sup>79</sup> In the eyes of their critics, IMF bureaucrats illegitimately presumed to determine food prices, bus fares, and school fees in far-away countries. The consequences of repayment conditions became the focal point of a far-reaching critique that sought to point out violations of human rights and thus give the lie to the benign intentions to which the leaders of the richest countries solemnly confessed at their meetings.

76. Gailus, *Contentious Food Politics*, 53.

77. Walton and Seddon, *Free Markets and Food Riots*, 50–52.

78. See Körner et al., *Im Teufelskreis der Verschuldung*; Schubert, *Internationale Verschuldung*; Nuscheler, *Lern- und Arbeitsbuch Entwicklungspolitik*, 367–70; Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York, 2002).

79. Chossudovsky, *Globalisation of Poverty*, 78.

At the second G7 summit meeting, held in Puerto Rico in June 1976, leaders declared that they sought “sustained economic expansion and the resultant increase in individual wellbeing” with the “long-term goal of a maximum expansion of trade.” The question was whose wellbeing they had in mind. At least rhetorically, the free-trade message applied to all countries, as any shrinkage of world trade was deemed to hurt all countries.<sup>80</sup> This mind-set, together with the relative strength of the developing countries after the oil crisis, led the IMF and World Bank to hand out generous loans to southern countries during the 1970s, involving them in the global financial economy to an unprecedented extent.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s speech at the opening of the West Berlin IMF and World Bank meeting in 1988 touched only very indirectly on critiques or protest, citing only the risk of the destruction of nature: “It would certainly be a Pyrrhic victory if an increase in prosperity was only to be achieved at the cost of destroying nature.” The chancellor then paid lip service to a goal that allegedly united all delegates: “to make living conditions possible all over the world that can actually be called humane.”<sup>81</sup> He said nothing about living conditions during the process that was supposed to enable prosperity for all. Mauricio Rosencof, a member of the Uruguayan Tupamaros, accused the Western industrial nations of turning “Latin America into a factory for bananas, coffee, and beef, killing more people than smallpox.”<sup>82</sup> However, criticism was not limited to radical forces. Hans Matthöfer (SPD), the German federal minister of finance between 1978 and 1982, warned that “capital flight, corruption, and consumption of imported luxuries by the upper classes constituted a Bermuda triangle that would drain any capital injection however large.”<sup>83</sup>

## Autonomists against Global Governance

German autonomist groups started their explicit analysis of IMF policies in 1985, when West Berlin was first mentioned as a candidate to host the 1988 meeting. A brochure subtitled “There is method to this destruction” provided

80. “Joint Declaration of the International Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 28, 1976,” <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/1976sanjuan/communique.html> (accessed 16 August 2011).

81. Helmut Kohl, “Jahresversammlung des IWF und der Weltbank in Berlin, Eröffnungsrede” (27 September 1988), *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamts der Bundesregierung* 119 (29 September 1988): 1091–92.

82. “Castro schickte Grußadresse,” *Volksblatt*, 24 September 1988, 10.

83. Martina Ohm, “Mammutmesse der Finanzen: Zur Tagung des Internationalen Währungsfonds und der Weltbank in Berlin,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, 4 September 1988, Sunday supp. *Weltspiegel*, 1.

an interpretation of the mechanisms behind the debt crisis, highlighting the fact that military purchases and imports of luxury goods for the rich were usually exempt from IMF savings measures. National elites and the maintenance of their power enjoyed priority.<sup>84</sup> The authors could have carried this point even further by pointing out that IMF loans were frequently used to purchase arms that were then employed against protesters and the domestic opposition.<sup>85</sup> At the lower end of the social spectrum, price increases entailed a drastic decline in standards of living, to the point of starvation, the spread of diseases, and high infant mortality. The mandated wage freezes and currency devaluation as well as the preferential treatment accorded to export industries further widened social inequalities. These measures frequently encountered resistance and were forced through by authoritarian local elites leaning on police and military. The authors listed a series of “IMF revolts”: Peru, Egypt (1977); Sudan, Liberia (1979); Bolivia, Turkey (1980); Morocco (1981); Ecuador, Sudan, Bolivia (1982); Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador (1983); Tunisia, Morocco, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Peru (1984); Bolivia, Sudan, Dominican Republic, Ecuador (1985).<sup>86</sup> A detailed report described the events in Brazil in 1983, where the looting of hundreds of supermarkets and the building of barricades against the police were interpreted as resistance to the IMF and its henchmen in the Brazilian elite.<sup>87</sup> The analysis given is informative and sober-minded, though it does not disguise the authors’ political views. The victims of the IMF are measured in the thousands. This differed starkly from the concluding remarks of the brochure, whose authors believed that “hunger crises are strategically and soberly contrived by office-chair killers [*Schreibtischtäter*]; hundreds of thousands of victims are calculated at the conference table.”<sup>88</sup>

The diffuse notion of the global financial system’s responsibility for unfathomable depths of suffering was carried into the actual protest campaign. The call for an “International Counter-Congress,” signed by a wide range of opposition groups including the Green Party, compared the calamity of the international debt crisis with the historical event that epitomised human loss and

84. “IWF und Widerstand,” in *Der Internationale Währungsfond oder Die Vernichtung hat Methode* (1985), 18–19, IISG, ID, Bro 603/11 fol.

85. “IWF und Weltbank Angeklagte vor dem Basso-Tribunal: Urteilsspruch als Aufforderung zum Neubeginn,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30 September 1988, 14.

86. “IWF und Widerstand,” in *Der Internationale Währungsfond oder Die Vernichtung hat Methode* (1985), 18–19, IISG, ID, Bro 603/11 fol; Ahlrich Meyer, “Massenarmut und Existenzrecht,” *Autonomie: Neue Folge* 14 (1985): 16–17.

87. “Brasilien—Bambule gegen Hunger und Verschuldung,” *Autonomie: Neue Folge* 14 (1985): 22.

88. “Statt eines Fazits: Was es uns gebracht hat,” *Autonomie: Neue Folge* 14 (1985): 39.

suffering of the highest magnitude: “Each year the silent dying in the ‘Third World’ claims as many victims as the Second World War.”<sup>89</sup> However, no statistics were cited to back up this claim.

A year and a half before the congress, a pamphlet by an autonomist group interpreted the capitalist penetration of preindustrial regions as an act of destruction and extermination comparable to National Socialism: “Millions are . . . driven into starvation. This is no different from genocide.”<sup>90</sup> Another pamphlet of the West Berlin *Autonomen* pointed out that global capital had disengaged from the legal constraints of the nation-state. The 15.5 million tons of soya that Brazil exported might eliminate malnutrition in that country if it were not exported to rich nations to be processed into animal feed. At the same time, the *Autonomen* likened the American-dominated institutions of global governance to Nazi plans for a New Order of Europe. The Bretton Woods Agreement, which had established the IMF and World Bank, sought to outdo the Nazis’ plans for an economic empire that would have guaranteed the German people “maximum consumption of goods” by exterminating all “unprofitable eaters.” Lines of continuity were insinuated via leading German businessmen who had played key roles in the economic design of both Nazism and postwar reconstruction (for example, Hermann Josef Abs and Friedrich Flick) and via American companies such as IBM, ITT, and General Motors that were involved in the technological equipment of the German war machinery. This amalgamation of valid observations, half-truths, and airy conclusions by analogy with Nazi Germany produced a rallying cry: “The enforced starvation and the worldwide genocide in the regions stricken by famine is the intentional result of an economy of destruction! When it is expected that the people’s misery is threatening to erupt in rebellion, arms, police equipment and counterinsurgency specialists will be sent into the country! This is yet another source of profit for arms producers in the U.S. and their Israeli and West German cronies.”<sup>91</sup>

Against this backdrop, activists accused the IMF and World Bank of systematically “organising the poverty” of developing countries. The title page of

89. “Für die Überwindung der Schuldenkrise: Für eine gerechte Weltwirtschaftsordnung,” *Dritte Welt* 7 (1988): 45.

90. Autonome Gruppen Westberlin, “Verhindern wir den Kongreß,” *Unzertrennlich* 4 (4 March 1987), <http://autox.nadir.org/archiv/iwfw/aufruf.html> (accessed 15 August 2011). See also Schwarzmeier, *Die Autonomen*, 134–42.

91. Autonome aus Rest-Berlin, *IWF und Weltbank—Was ist das?*, February 1988, 8, IISG, ID, Bro 602/5 fol. For a more detailed argument assuming lines of continuity between the Neue Ordnung and Bretton Woods, see Detlef Hartmann, “Völkermord gegen soziale Revolution: Das US-imperialistische System von Bretton Woods als Vollstrecker der nationalsozialistischen Neuen Ordnung,” *Autonomie* 14 (1985): 217–87; Hartmann, “IWF.”



a brochure for the protest campaign showed a clenched fist breaking off a profit curve.<sup>92</sup> Another title page showed the skyline of New York with the Empire State Building and Chrysler Building—not the World Trade Centre—engulfed by giant waterfalls.<sup>93</sup> Activists highlighted the dimension of legitimisation as central for their endeavour, which identified the customers of banks as a large target group: “Banks are particularly reliant on customer trust, and they conduct elaborate advertisement and legitimisation campaigns. We can challenge them on this level.” The role model was the anti-apartheid campaign.<sup>94</sup> Although autonomist groups and more moderate parts of the opposition disputed the expediency of certain forms of protest, especially violence, a certain consensus ensured a good deal of cooperation in the planning of protest activities that were, by and large, perceived as coming from a more or less united front of IMF/World Bank opponents.<sup>95</sup>

The protests explicitly sought to have a “broad democratic public” withdraw its support from the IMF and World Bank. Contrasting regimes of provision were part and parcel of the imagery the protesters invoked: “Protest must reveal the misery that is hiding behind the balance sheets and statistics: . . . poverty in the ‘Third World,’ increasing unemployment and new poverty in the industrial countries are the basis for their overloaded tables at the gala dinners.”<sup>96</sup> An example sought to make the consequences of repayment arrangements tangible in terms of household statistics: an average Peruvian working-class family would consume 225 bread rolls per month, down from 448, and 4.1 kilograms of pasta instead of 6.8, a decrease of 690 kcal and 30 g of protein per person per day.<sup>97</sup> Addressing imbalances in global distribution, the journal of the Alternative Liste, West Berlin’s Green Party, which had entered parliament in 1981 and held 10.6 percent of the seats at the time of the IMF meeting, employed images of prostitution to note the presence of Asian sex workers in the streets and nightclubs of West Berlin: “Who are the gentlemen who will fill the brothels and other entertainment venues in late Septem-

92. IWF/Weltbank-Kampagne, *Rundbrief* 4, IISG, ID, ZK 48937.

93. IWF/Weltbank-Kampagne, *Rundbrief* 3, IISG, ID, ZK 48937.

94. AG Aktionswoche, “Diskussionsvorlage: Zur Begründung von Bankenaktionen,” 2 June 1988, WZB-IWF.

95. Katsiaficas draws a rather brief picture of the 1988 anti-IMF campaign. He takes the *Autonomen* to be the main force in organising protest events and underestimates their broader nature. His source is “‘Wir sind der Motor gewesen’: Die Reorganisation der Autonomen im Protest gegen Weltbank und IWF,” *Der Spiegel* 40 (3 October 1988): 132–33. See Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics*, 109.

96. IWF/Weltbank-Kampagne, *Rundbrief* 4:16.

97. “Schuldentilgung wird vom Tisch weggespart,” *Stachel: Zeitung der Alternativen Liste für Demokratie und Umweltschutz* 80 (May 1988): 6, WZB-IWF.

ber?" Some of them would be "parasitic elites" from debtor countries that benefitted from IMF and World Bank loans.<sup>98</sup> Economic analysis sought to address the violence inherent in the monetary system: "These two most powerful institutions . . . proved that money in the sense of capital profits could not only be the carrot but also the deadly stick; . . . they cannily organised the murderous effects of their policy, the poverty and the hunger, death and ecological destruction behind the debit and credit of the balance sheet and thus made them anonymous."<sup>99</sup> In this reading, the enormous security measures taken in West Berlin during the meeting testified to the need to suppress the realities and to stage an impression of popular consent.<sup>100</sup>

The ecological dimension of global trade patterns, especially the destruction of tropical rain forests, played a prominent role in the criticism that politicians from the Green Party and representatives of other ecological initiatives lodged against the IMF and German consumers. The latter's demand for hamburgers, instant beef stock, canned animal food, pineapple, cocoa, bananas, rubber, furniture, and paper were driving the destruction of this ecosystem. Fast-food chains appeared to be responsible for overexploitation. The IMF's debt policy reinforced southern governments' commercial destruction of rain forests from access roads to large-scale dam projects. Taken together, these practices threatened not only biodiversity but also the livelihood of populations increasingly robbed of traditional sources of income, as local economies became increasingly dependent on export cash crops to generate profits that went largely to companies in highly industrialised countries.<sup>101</sup> With a dose of idealism, the traditional lifestyles of indigenous populations appeared to be superior regimes of provision that if undisturbed were capable of upholding a sustainable symbiosis between humans and rain forests. Economic development favoured large landowners, wood export companies, and gold miners, preventing indigenous tribes from cultivating what they wanted to consume and forcing them to grow what the populations of industrialised countries wanted to consume. In 1987–88 the Penan and Punan people of the Malaysian state of Sarawak in northern Borneo fought the wood companies with sit-in blockades of access roads. Greenpeace distributed their appeal to consumers in industrial countries: "Stop buying tropical woods from our forest and from the lands of other forest peoples."<sup>102</sup> Protesters called on consumers to exert political pres-

98. "Sie kommen!," *Stachel* 82 (September 1988): 1, WZB-IWF.

99. Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßnahmen, *Wut, Witz, Widerstand*, 5.

100. IWF/Weltbank-Kampagne, *Rundbrief* 4:16.

101. Barbara Unmüßig, "Traurige Tropen," *Stachelige Argumente* 51 (July 1988): 50–53.

102. Marianne Kröger, *Die grüne Hölle: Der Garten der Erde* (Kiel, 1989), 38.

sure on the German government, which supported the IMF/World Bank debt policy, to boycott international companies implicated in this business and to abstain from products that originated from commodity chains based on the problematic felling and farming.<sup>103</sup> Ecologists criticised the old Socialist Left for clinging to the historical workers' movement, which "seems easier than changing one's own habits of consumption."<sup>104</sup>

## The RAF against Global Governance

A week before the opening of the West Berlin meeting, the third generation of the RAF attempted an attack on the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Hans Tietmeyer, who was responsible for international monetary policy and the organisation of economic summits. The machine gun jammed, and the car carrying the future president of the Deutsche Bundesbank was hit only by a few cartridge cases.

The RAF had first mentioned the IMF and World Bank in their lengthy statement at the January 1976 Stammheim trial. Well before the actual debt crisis, the first generation of the RAF invoked "the resistance of the . . . third world against being plundered by world bank loans." They regarded the institutions of global governance as tools in an American-ruled global economic system whose dictates the developing countries could not evade.<sup>105</sup> In 1984, a hunger strike statement by RAF inmates advanced a rather compact analysis of the debt crisis, arguing that societies of developing countries were being organised "between barracks, the IMF, and ultimately the use of hunger as a weapon against millions of people so that they won't pose a threat to plans for world domination."<sup>106</sup> The French revolutionary guerrilla group Action Directe (AD), allied with the RAF in 1985, targeted the World Bank's European headquarters and IMF offices in Paris in June 1982 and again in April 1985. AD also bombed companies with commercial links to South Africa and the Citrus Marketing

103. Unmüßig, "Traurige Tropen," 50–53.

104. Roland Bunzenthall, "Nie schuldeten so viele so wenigen soviel," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 26 September 1988, WZB-IWF.

105. Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, and Jan-Carl Raspe, "Erklärung zur Sache," 13 January 1976, 13, [http://labourhistory.net/raf/documents/0019760100\\_04.pdf](http://labourhistory.net/raf/documents/0019760100_04.pdf) (accessed 29 June 2011).

106. "Hungerstreikerklärung vom 4. Dezember 1984," in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 326. For a similar argument, see "Anschlag auf Gerold von Braunmühl: Erklärung vom 10. Oktober 1986," in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 378.

Board of Israel.<sup>107</sup> The RAF's French comrades sought a theoretical grasp of the dimensions of consumption in contemporary imperialism, assuming a "system of determinants centred on technological power and the deculturation of the dominated through a Westernized model of production and consumption. . . . when Western cultural norms have succeeded in crushing all resistance, the popular classes will accede to it while sacrificing their entire lives to the dream: the residents of Latin American shantytowns often possess a TV and a pickup . . . ; at the same time, their children die of hunger and adolescents turn to prostitution."<sup>108</sup>

The RAF's statement on the assassination attempt on Tietmeyer accused him of being "responsible for genocide and widespread poverty in the 3rd world." As an organiser of IMF and economic summit meetings, he was held responsible for an "imperialist policy of destruction via hunger and counterinsurgency" for the sake of profit and power. This policy meant death and misery for the majority of the people living in southern countries. The statement offered little analysis but tried-and-tested enemy images. In an attempt to bridge the old gap between metropole and Third World, the RAF was ready to lump together everything from the economic crisis in Ireland to genocide in the developing world as destroying "the livelihood of millions of people."<sup>109</sup> Ultimately, the activists sought to blame Tietmeyer and other leaders for all of the world's economic misery. Remarkably, the statement made no reference to the impending West Berlin meeting.

## The RZ against Global Governance

The *Revolutionäre Zellen* focused more extensively than the RAF on the IMF and the rich countries' role in the global economy. Well before their militant attacks against fruit imports from South Africa and Israel, the RZ identified the IMF and World Bank as key enemies: "The centralisation of political and economic power doesn't happen at a European Council or a European Parliament . . . but within the framework of new transnational sovereignties . . . like

107. Dartnell, *Ultra-Left Terrorism*, 80, 83, 117, 150, 153, 159.

108. Action Directe International, "Pour un projet communiste," March 1982, quoted in *ibid.*, 107–8.

109. "Anschlag auf Staatssekretär Hans Tietmeyer: Erklärung vom 20./21. September 1988," in *ibid.*, 387–88.

the International Monetary Fund . . . or the Trilateral Commission.”<sup>110</sup> Like the RAF, the Revolutionary Cells identified *Konsum*—that is, Western affluence—as something to be overcome by entering a revolutionary struggle.<sup>111</sup> Like the RAF, the revolutionary cells had their own interpretation of the history of West German consumer society, though it was less theory-loaded. They interpreted the high profit rates of the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s as the origin of a “societal consensus,” especially among skilled workers and employees. They considered the consumer needs of the middle classes oversatisfied, but more important, their critique focused on the economic sectors involving “governmental consumption”—that is, the armaments and building industries.<sup>112</sup>

Ever since their emergence in the 1970s, the RZ focused on the economic crisis in an attempt to foster a revolutionary situation. According to their analysis, young people, workers, employees, women, foreigners, and the proverbial “Auntie Emma,” the owner of an old-fashioned small corner shop, had to pay the bill for scheming capitalists.<sup>113</sup> The RZ saw their 1974 incendiary attacks on various trade associations as attempts “to keep up the crisis, build up an alternative, and transform the economic crisis into a political one.”<sup>114</sup> This approach produced a critique of the RAF’s notion of a pervasive embourgeoisement of the masses. Reminiscent of Ulrike Meinhof, the RZ argued in December 1976 that society had not succeeded in “bribing the masses,” as evidenced by the wave of militant acts in various contexts, including fare increase protests and squatting. In the spirit of solidarity, the RZ acknowledged that important impulses for this development originated with the RAF.<sup>115</sup>

In January 1978, a revolutionary cell diagnosed a shift in the economic policies among the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, away from the consumer-oriented growth of the postwar period and towards securing the Western industrial countries’ dominance. This went hand in hand with high unemployment, sinking real wages, and decreasing living standards: “Overproduction and underconsumption appeared simultaneously.”<sup>116</sup> Seeking to justify a June 1978 bomb attack on the U.S. Army’s Officers’ Mess at the Rhein-Main Airbase that injured seven peo-

110. “Revolutionärer Zorn 4,” January 1978, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 1:242.

111. “Anschlag auf die ITT-Tochter SEL, Düsseldorf,” February 1983, in *ibid.*, 377.

112. “Die Bewegung gegen die Startbahn West,” August 1983, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 2:399.

113. “Aktionen gegen BDI, BDA, IHK, Ausländerpolizei,” May 1974, in *ibid.*, 1:177–78.

114. “Revolutionärer Zorn 1,” May 1975, in *ibid.*, 95.

115. “Brief an alle Genossen aus der RAF,” December 1976, in *ibid.*, 175.

116. “Revolutionärer Zorn Nr. 4,” January 1978, in *ibid.*, 226–28.

ple, the RZ explained that the Carter administration had used new weapons of economic warfare: “The world market that no one can avoid, the credits of the International Monetary Fund that no one can repay. This way, dependencies are created that are much more effective and destructive than military subjugation.”<sup>117</sup> The worldwide capitalisation of agriculture destroyed the remaining areas of subsistence economy, driving the rural proletariat to the cities and creating 250 million homeless people in the Third World. Drawing on Cheryl Payer’s critical book about the IMF, the RZ concluded that the IMF’s power even surpassed that of the United States.<sup>118</sup>

In the early 1980s, members of the RZ saw the IMF and international finance more generally as the actual superpower, dominated by the United States but with growing influence by West Germany and France.<sup>119</sup> Ultimately, this economic analogue to NATO dwarfed and controlled not only national parliaments but also the eastern Cold War camp, thus fatally undermining any claims for a communist alternative: “Today the board of directors of Deutsche Bank or IMF takes part in deciding whether or not a five-year plan can be accomplished. The economic policy of the Comecon countries has degenerated from the balancing of shortages between planned and demand economy to mere competition for Western credits.”<sup>120</sup> In the developing world, indigenous elites were complicit in this global conspiracy. The latter’s complaints about the IMF needed to be seen critically, since they intended to remove “themselves from the line of fire as they participate in and benefit from the ruination of their people.”<sup>121</sup> The RZ blamed the International Development Association—the World Bank’s special branch for lending to the world’s poorest countries—for the 1973 famine in Ethiopia that killed one hundred thousand people and asked why the news that 450 million people were permanently starving did not trigger the same kind of resistance as brought on by the Vietnam War. The RZ’s answer: a loss of tradition, partly as a result of a historiographical tendency that “posthumously turned the student movement into a movement of cultural revolution,” neglecting its anti-imperialism. Long before such reasoning became a standard facet of critical consumer thinking, the RZ imagined a shirt that could speak, telling its wearer about its own “history”—the conditions that had gone

117. “Anschlag auf das US-Offizierscasino, Wiesbaden,” June 1978, in *ibid.*, 371–72.

118. “Revolutionärer Zorn Nr. 4,” January 1978, in *ibid.*, 230–31. See Payer, *Debt Trap*.

119. “Revolutionärer Zorn Nr. 6,” January 1981, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 1: 293–98.

120. “Krieg—Krise—Friedensbewegung: In Gefahr und höchster Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod,” December 1983), in *ibid.*, 2:482.

121. *Ibid.*, 476.

into its making, which normally remained obscure at the consumers' end. Such conditions included the low wages of the Korean seamstresses who produced it and the discrepancy between the German retail price and the price that the multinational company paid to Indian farmers for the raw materials.<sup>122</sup>

The RZ sought to address the members of the West German population, including leftists, who profited from the worldwide imperialist power structures and the exploitation of the developing world. In a rare reference to Herbert Marcuse, they claimed that "social relations of bourgeois society . . . are so saturated with commodity relations as to rule out any compromise."<sup>123</sup> Consumption and careers were temptations that chained people to the global debt nexus "based on wars of extermination, famines, and unspeakable poverty." At the same time, the RZ explicitly rejected "the anticipated realm of freedom" desired by the guerrillas of the RAF. Instead, the RZ envisioned a "long way of subversion, of destruction, of a real break with society."<sup>124</sup> In March 1984, a revolutionary cell attacked what it saw as West German capital's analogue to the IMF, the Deutsche Entwicklungsgesellschaft in Cologne, an arm of the federal government that financed private companies' investments in developing economies.<sup>125</sup>

Hermann Feiling, one of the very few members of the revolutionary cells brought to trial, declared in court that the bloody persecution of the opposition in Latin American countries was intrinsically linked to "an economic policy that means economic genocide for large segments of the population, opening the door for the corporations. This policy is enforced by the World Monetary Fund [*sic*], which ties the crisis to political conditions that, for example, in Peru lead to 109 out of 1,000 children dying before they are able to walk."<sup>126</sup> This observation had a rather delicate subtext since Feiling himself was unable to walk, having lost both his legs and his eyes during the accidental detonation of an explosive device he had intended to place at the Argentine consulate in Munich during the 1978 FIFA World Cup. Despite his severe injuries, the prosecuting authorities subjected him—heavily doped with painkillers and without legal assistance—to a legally questionable interrogation, obtaining more than a thousand pages of information. His testimony provided authorities with their

122. "Revolutionärer Zorn Nr. 6," January 1981, in *ibid.*, 1:294–95. A more recent variant of this perspective is Korn, *Weltreise einer Fleeceweste*.

123. "Revolutionärer Zorn Nr. 6," January 1981, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 1:, 268.

124. *Ibid.*, 272–73.

125. "Anschlag gegen die Deutsche Gesellschaft für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit, Köln," March 1984, in *ibid.*, 1:325–26.

126. "Prozeßklärung Hermann Feilings," September 1980, in *ibid.*, 2:677–79.

first real insight into the Revolutionary Cells' internal structures and enabled the sentencing of the RZ members who had been arrested in the aftermath of the attacks against cinemas showing the Entebbe film. This was the first time section 129a of the Criminal Code (Forming terrorist organisations), introduced in August 1976, had effectively been applied. This legal construction allowed the authorities to hold the defendants responsible for other acts of the RZ well beyond the evidence that proved their individual involvement in the firebombing of cinemas.<sup>127</sup>

Members of the RZ were very careful to point out that their political anti-imperialism against U.S. targets should not be mistaken for cultural anti-Americanism, explaining that they attacked the Officers' Mess rather than ordinary soldiers or supermarkets, undertaking "campaigns aimed at military fuel depots, but not petrol stations in American residential neighbourhoods. After all we had good reason to take Reagan's visit to Europe and the NATO summit as occasions of a series of militant action, and not a concert by Sammy Davis jr or the continued screening of [the television show] Dallas. . . . It makes an enormous difference whether we understand MacDonald [*sic*] as a U.S. nutrition company that has pioneered intensive low-salary labour and worldwide agro-business or as an expression of . . . Yankee culture." The RZ distanced themselves from the "demonisation of blue jeans or Negro music," preemptively answering the sort of charges of anti-Americanism that were regularly levelled against the left.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, the RZ maintained in 1978 that "U.S. imperialism" provided the backbone for the IMF's ruinous policies towards developing countries, highlighting the point that Robert McNamara, the former U.S. secretary of defense, who had played a large role in escalating U.S. involvement in Vietnam before he became president of the World Bank in 1968, served as a "guarantor of continuity in a strategy of destruction at all costs."<sup>129</sup> This revolutionary perspective did not acknowledge that McNamara had shifted the World Bank's focus towards targeted poverty reduction.

A critical focus on McNamara as a representative of the World Bank had been established many years earlier. In June 1970, his participation at a confer-

127. See "Isolationshaft und 129a," *ID* 161 (22 January 1977), BAK, BMJ, HG 4, B 141/62511, 4030 E-16/77, vol. 1; Oberlandesgericht Düsseldorf, Urteil Albartus/Schwall, IV 2/77, 5 OJs 2/77 (19 January 1979), BAK, BMJ, HG 4, B 141/62511, 4030 E-16/77, vol. 2; "Voll unter Fittichen: Ein Mann ohne Beine und Augen als Angeklagter vor Gericht," *Der Spiegel* 48 (24 November 1980): 136–37; *die legalisierung der rechtlosigkeit* (1977), Archiv für soziale Bewegungen, Freiburg, Bro 1701201.

128. "Beethoven gegen MacDonald," April 1983, in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, I:364–67.

129. "Revolutionärer Zorn Nr. 4," January 1978, in *ibid.*, 233.



ence on development aid at Heidelberg—alongside militant criticism of the large-scale hydroelectric generating station at Cahora Bassa in Portuguese Mozambique—provoked violent skirmishes between police and demonstrators. Between six hundred and two thousand protesters faced off against five hundred police officers in a street battle pitting tear gas, water cannons, and batons against paint bombs, wooden slats, iron rods, and cobblestones leaving seventy-seven officers and fifty demonstrators injured. When the dust settled, a second battle broke out in the media, as each side used the vocabulary of “terror” and “civil war” in blaming the other for the conflict’s escalation. As a result of this violent demonstration, the Interior Ministry of Baden-Württemberg banned the Heidelberg unit of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, which had outlasted the federal organisation, dissolved in March 1970. Controversy arose about whether the fact that members of an organisation committed criminal offences implied that the entire organisation’s purpose was illegal. In drawn-out criminal proceedings five protesters were sentenced to between five and twelve months in prison.<sup>130</sup> The RAF’s “Urban Guerrilla Concept” explicitly applauded the Heidelberg demonstration’s anticolonial focus.<sup>131</sup>

### West Berlin, September 1988

The RAF’s attack on Tietmeyer triggered a further step in the mobilisation of the security forces before and during the September 1988 West Berlin IMF/World Bank meeting, leading to what the spokesperson for the city’s police called its largest operation since the war, with more than ten thousand policemen from throughout West Germany on duty. Although numerous skirmishes broke out between police and protesters, the large-scale riots and bomb attacks that press and police had envisioned did not materialise. Journalists had been quick to put protest into the context of terrorism. The liberal newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* reported in May 1988 that radicals planned arson and bomb attacks on hotels, public buildings, and banks.<sup>132</sup> A spokesperson for the Federal Criminal Police Office declared that “terrorist circles” had “a strong interest in calling attention to the alleged exploitation of the Third World by the rich in-

130. “Studenten SDS-Verbot: Schlichter Schluß,” *Der Spiegel* 27 (29 June 1970): 73. See Anders, “Juristische ‘Gegenöffentlichkeit’ zwischen Standespolitik”; Schröder, “Heidelberg.”

131. “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” in *Rote Armee Fraktion*, ed. ID-Verlag, 41.

132. *Der Tagesspiegel*, 3 May 1988, quoted in “IWF-Nachlese: ‘Der größte Polizeieinsatz der Berliner Nachkriegsgeschichte,’” *Bürgerrechte & Polizei* 31.3 (1988): 86.

dustrial nations.”<sup>133</sup> Police searched several houses on the basis of section 129a StGB, which allowed the authorities to prosecute political activists who supported and advertised terrorist organisations even if they had committed no other offence. Another controversial legal framework (section 111 StPO) allowed police to erect so-called control points anywhere in the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin, subjecting people to personal security checks and storing any personal data thus obtained. Officially, this measure was meant to support the search for members of the RAF. However, the exceptional arrangement lasted from 24 May until 2 October—when the IMF meeting was over. This particular measure was applicable only in conjunction with sections 129a or 89a StGB (preparation of a serious violent offence endangering the state)—that is, with the most severe political offences.<sup>134</sup> During the protests, police initially arrested 624 people, 501 of whom were taken into custody under police law. Of the 123 individuals whom the police then officially suspected of crimes, only 7 received a warrant of arrest from a criminal court.<sup>135</sup> The high numbers of initial arrest were immediately publicised in the press leaving the impression that a lot of criminals had been caught. Much less publicity was given to the aftermath when it turned out that only a small fraction of those arrested had actually committed something that a criminal court thought worth pursuing further.

From the protesters’ perspective, the real violence took place elsewhere. Activists interpreted food riots and looting in developing countries as evidence of resistance to IMF policies. In an effort to create a “new internationalism,” the protesters’ campaign against the IMF, which in some respects mimicked these forms of protest, was intended to overcome the old divisions between revolutionary campaigns in the metropole and on the periphery, especially since capitalism’s methods increasingly circumvented such distinctions.<sup>136</sup> The *Autonomen* emphasised individual liberation, not some abstract principle of international solidarity: “We are part of the exploitative relations here and are thus fighting here with the claim to our own liberation.”<sup>137</sup> As a consequence, activists sought to attach their protest against this abstract nexus to tangible objects of everyday experience: “The murderous international monetary system . . . is manifesting itself everywhere—i.e., also everywhere in Berlin

133. “Terror-Anschläge auf Berliner IWF-Treffen befürchtet,” *Handelsblatt*, 2 May 1988, WZB-IWF.

134. Lena Schraut, “IWF-Tagung: ‘Die größte Datenaktion der Polizei,’” *Bürgerrechte & Polizei* 31.3 (1988): 99–104; “Die total kontrollierte Stadt: Berlins Schlupflöcher werden IWF-mäßig abgeschottet,” *taz*, 22 September 1988, 8.

135. “IWF-Nachlese,” *Cilip, Bürgerrechte, und Polizei* 31.3 (1988): 96.

136. “Berliner Überblick,” *Unzertrennlich* 6 (September–October 1987): 16.

137. “Neuer/Alter Imperialismus,” *Unzertrennlich* 6 (September–October 1987): 16.

(West) . . . and . . . Berlin is open around the clock. This means sufficient space and time to make this system visible, smellable, closable, blockable. For 4 days, in all ends and corners, spanners into the works of capitalist everyday life.”<sup>138</sup> An autonomist group planning protest activities deemed the slogan “Profit, misery, resistance” too abstract and quickly substituted “Attack imperialism in everyday life.” This change allowed them to embrace six somewhat more concrete action points, of which four were clearly directed at commercial contexts. The first one invoked “collective appropriation—‘let’s take what belongs to us anyway.’” Second, they wanted to disrupt the operations of “the system.” The remaining four points named tangible objects of protest: Siemens, police and immigration authorities, department stores, and public transport fare dodging.<sup>139</sup>

The next step in the autonomist protest strategy was to familiarise people with concrete addresses of multinational corporations by means of what they called “anti-imperialist city tours.” These four-hour coach trips were directed against “white-collar murderers” and went by a number of branch offices, among them Siemens and AEG. They pointed out the lesser-known production plants of Philip Morris and Jacobs Suchard and asked where the tobacco and coffee originated. The police subjected these tours to regular security checks, claiming that they helped in preparing criminal acts.<sup>140</sup>

Protest action against Siemens built an important bridge to the anti-nuclear-power movement. A perspective on issues of consumption played a crucial role. Siemens was seen to produce goods “that are of no use to us and threaten our livelihood” (that is, nuclear and military technology), while the company’s electronic articles of daily use were believed to lead to a “further alienation of our lives.” These allegations rested on export deals and the exploitation of low-wage labour in developing countries. Pointers to Latin American dictatorships and South Africa brought in the dimension of abusive state violence.<sup>141</sup> Autonomist antinuclear groups attached a very broad meaning to the concept of energy, as can be obtained from a call for protest action on the occasion of the IMF meeting: “On the one hand, energy is our own labour, our fantasy, our agility, which capital seeks to commercialise; on the other hand,

138. “Grobraster für die Aktionstage,” in IWF/Weltbank-Kampagne, *Rundbrief* 4:17.

139. IWF/Weltbank-Kampagne (Berlin), “Fazit der Diskussion um die Aktionstage,” July 1988, 5, IISG, ID 892, BRO 1307/10 fol (b).

140. IWF-Kampagne, “Antiimperialistische Stadtrundfahrt,” July 1988, IISG, ID 892, BRO 1307/10 fol (c). Similar for Hamburg: Gruppe “Hamburger Antiimperialistische Stadtrundfahrt,” *Anti-Imperialistische Stadtrundfahrt: IWF in Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1988), ID 892, BRO 620/18 fol.

141. Siemenskoordination, “Was tun mit IWF?,” July 1988, IISG, ID 892, BRO 1307/10 fol (b).

energy is a commodity that we have to buy so that we don't freeze off our ass in winter. But energy is also our love of life, our refusal, our resisting power against the high-performance society that devours ever more energy to assemble their junk like tanks, microchips, plastic bags, genetically engineered plant varieties, turbo cows, nuclear power stations."<sup>142</sup>

During the protest weeks in September 1988, retail and commerce again became the focus. Demonstrations and happenings took place in or in front of supermarkets, department stores, shopping centres, clothes shops, amusement arcades, pornographic movie theatres, travel agents, airline offices, banks, insurance offices, coffee roasters, fast food restaurants, and petrol stations.<sup>143</sup> Windows were smashed at the high-end Hotel Interconti, which hosted convention delegates, apparently in retaliation for the arrest of some protesters.<sup>144</sup> Branch offices of banks and the Europa Center were attacked with stink bombs. Expensive-looking cars were vandalised or set alight.<sup>145</sup> Hundreds of policemen in riot gear shielded the windows along shopping streets. The organisers of demonstrations complained that they were marching through "deserted streets, along barricaded shops."<sup>146</sup>

KaDeWe, like many other stores, barred its windows with wooden panels, some of which displayed signs that read "We decorate." A happening with pig's blood and fake dollar bills in front of KaDeWe sought to symbolise the blood allegedly stuck to the goods offered within. Department store employees decided who could enter the building, banning about one hundred individuals, while police filmed the event as evidence. Police ultimately surrounded the protesters and, with some use of the baton, escorted them away from the department store. In the following days, a picture circulated that created the impression of a burning KaDeWe. In reality, however, a burning waste container had been photographed from the opposite side of the street to suggest a department store engulfed with flames. Through the clouds of smoke one could see a row of security personnel on the roof of the department store.<sup>147</sup> Another provocative photograph—playing on the double meaning of *Bulle* as a pejorative

142. "Keine Energie für den Kongreß," *Interim* 16 (1988), quoted in Geronimo, *Feuer und Flamme*, 187.

143. Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßuahmen, *Wut, Witz, Widerstand*, 17, 32, 36, 42; Bernd Maywald, "Auflistung der Veranstaltungshinweise der 'Tageszeitung' mit Bezug auf die Tagung von IWF und WB im September 1988 in Berlin," WZB-IWF.

144. "Wessen Straße ist die Straße . . .," *Zahltag* 5 (29 September 1988): 1.

145. "2:0—Ku'damm bleibt die richtige Adresse," *Zahltag* 4 (28 September 1988): 2.

146. *Ibid.*, 32.

147. "Konsumrausch ausgesetzt," *Zahltag* 5 (29 September 1988); Büro für ungewöhnliche, *Wut, Witz, Widerstand*, 44–45.

term for policeman—showed an officer in riot gear in front of a supermarket's shop window, where a poster advertised an exceptional offer of meat “frisch aus der Bullenkeule” (fresh from the bull's shank).<sup>148</sup>

During one demonstration, the windows of a McDonald's were smashed. A request to hold a rally in front of McDonald's to protest the company's role in destroying tropical rain forests had been turned down, so a “puke-in” had been staged in front of the fast food restaurant.<sup>149</sup> Two years earlier, a London group had released a critical pamphlet that became famous and eventually led to the monumental “McLibel case.”<sup>150</sup> The anarchist cabaret group Die 3 Tornados sarcastically addressed different levels of consumption: “Dear creditors! . . . How can it be that in this world every two minutes a human being is dying from starvation, while McDonald's is dealing out one hundred million hamburgers each year? Don't these people know the way to the McDonald's that would save them? . . . Appalled, we are confronted with the bullet-riddled bodies of those lost souls who, in the face of hunger, took up the gun instead of the saving plough.”<sup>151</sup> Improvised theatre in front of banks and department stores sought to relate everyday purchases such as cheap T-shirts from South Korea to conditions in the developing world.<sup>152</sup> People distributing the protest campaign's daily newspaper, *Zahltag* (Payday), were arrested because of an announcement that read, “We want to meet at KaDeWe, Wertheim, and Bilka . . . for a department store inspection. . . . E.g.: spray paint goods from South Africa and Israel, distribute flyers, perform invisible theatre, annoy detectives, use the chaos to line our pockets, sabotage cash registers.”<sup>153</sup>

A rally of 250 lesbians left broken windows at numerous porn shops, marking sex work and sex tourism as important topics in critiques of regimes of provision.<sup>154</sup> One slogan proclaimed, “Thailand's contribution to the global market: 1,000,000 prostitutes.”<sup>155</sup> A carefully documented brochure recycled some material from Rote Zora's earlier statements. World Bank money was

148. Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßuahmen, *Wut, Witz, Widerstand*, 119.

149. *Ibid.*, 42.

150. Greenpeace (London), *What's Wrong with McDonald's?* See also John Vidal, *McLibel: Burger Culture on Trial* (London, 1997).

151. Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßuahmen, *Wut, Witz, Widerstand*, 50.

152. “Money Makes the World Go Round,” *Zahltag* 5 (29 September 1988): 2.

153. “Festnahmen von ‘Zahltag’ VerteilerInnen,” *Zahltag* 4 (28 September 1988): 1.

154. Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßuahmen, *Wut, Witz, Widerstand*, 36.

155. “Prostitution als Dienst am Volk: Hintergründe zu Sextourismus und Frauenhandel in Thailand,” *Zahltag* 2 (26 September 1988): 2. See Westberliner IWF/Weltbank Frauenplenum, *Ohne uns Frauen läuft nix; Frauen gegen Imperialismus, Sextourismus und Frauenhandel*; Elvira Niesner, *Prostitution auf den Philippinen* (Berlin, 1988); Philippinen Koordination Frauengruppe, *Frauenkampf; Renschler, Ware Liebe*.

depicted as a necessary ingredient in large-scale sexual exploitation, with foreign investment pumped into hotels, bars, discos, and brothels. The authors calculated that of the seventy U.S. dollars a tourist paid for a night with a sex worker, fifty-nine dollars flowed into the hands of foreign entrepreneurs and thus partially back to the rich countries. They also pointed out that large-scale demonstrations against sex tourism had taken place in the Philippines and Thailand during the early 1980s.<sup>156</sup>

On 16 September 1988, a rally on “women’s work and the department store” took place in front of a Hertie branch in the working-class district of Neukölln. Half an hour later, the crowd reassembled in front of McDonald’s to protest low-wage labour. Flyers emphasised that saleswomen working in German retail suffered from the same rationalisation drive that inspired global financial politics, creating “flexible” forms of employment with higher performance pressure and lower social security. The newly introduced bar-code cash registers served as a tangible example of technological innovation that threatened jobs while making work more monotonous.<sup>157</sup> The Revolutionary Cells had already highlighted this dimension in a 1985 statement concerning their nighttime bomb attack against the offices of two software consulting companies in Hamburg and Dortmund: “Plans for the information-technology-led restructuring of department store companies are engineered, . . . confronting the workforce, mainly women, in the form of precarious employment, perfected surveillance equipment, and the intensified exploitation of labour.”<sup>158</sup>

West Berlin experienced a wave of firebombings. An autonomist group left an incendiary device at a Bolle supermarket in the Zehlendorf district. Police deactivated the device, and the group’s statement explained that the store had been targeted because it was located in a particularly well-to-do area and continued to sell products from South Africa, Israel, Chile, and El Salvador.<sup>159</sup> A REWE supermarket in the southern part of the city and a Shell petrol station were also firebombed.<sup>160</sup> On 27 September, the sprinkler system extin-

156. Nora, Dora, Zora, et al., *Ansätze zum zusetzen*, IISG, BRO 531/16 fol.

157. “Unsere Arbeitsbedingungen werden immer mieser” (flyer), “Kaufhaus” (flyer), “Kampf dem Zwang zur Arbeit!” (flyer), September 1988, WZB-IWF.

158. “Angriff gegen Scientific Control Systems (SCS), Hamburg und den Mathematischen Programmier- und Beratungsdienst (MPB), Dortmund” (September 1985), in *Früchte des Zorns*, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 1:326–28.

159. “Bombe bei ‘Bolle II’: In Zehlendorfer Bolle Filiale wurde Profi-Brandsatz gefunden,” *taz*, Berlin, 23 September 1988, 17.

160. “Mit einem Brandsatz wurde die Einrichtung eines Rewe-Geschäfts in der Marienfelder Chaussee zerstört: Polizeibeamte mußten Masken tragen,” *Spandauer Volksblatt*, 30 September 1988, WZB-IWF.

guished fires on three floors of a Karstadt department store in Charlottenburg caused by small-scale incendiary devices that caused only minor damage to property. An admission statement signed “Autonomous Cell, dept. Consumer Protection” protested *Konsumterror* and the “stupefaction of the masses,” calling the department store a “symbol of this beat-up two-thirds society [*Zweidrittelgesellschaft*].” The term had emerged in discussions regarding a new type of poverty: the proportion of permanently un- and underemployed people increased despite the fact that statistics showed that affluence was on the rise. As a result, about two-thirds of the population had secure jobs, while the remainder had no or precarious employment and remained more or less excluded from economic growth. The brief statement also pointed to the “permanent repression of elementary needs” when cashiers were toiling while store detectives received bonuses for catching people who were only taking what was rightfully theirs. A very brief news item covering the arson reported only the anti-imperialist part of the statement, which claimed that Karstadt was a “guarantor of dirty export business with Chile, South Africa, Israel” and called for a boycott of goods from those countries.<sup>161</sup>

It is remarkable how little public attention department store arson generated in 1988, especially compared to 1968. Perpetrators probably picked smaller devices to avoid the “malicious and life-threatening arson” charges that had been levelled at the Frankfurt arsonists. However, journalists and perhaps even law enforcement officers seem to have had a tacit understanding that arsonists should not receive a public platform to share their views lest they attract copycats and create bad publicity for the host city of the IMF meeting or discredit more moderate forms of protest. Nevertheless, the day after the incendiary attack on Karstadt, there were thirteen bomb threats against pornographic movie theatres and the Europa Center, which was evacuated and cordoned off. An anonymous statement protested sexism and the exploitation of women. Police closed in on a feminist demonstration and arrested dozens of protesters, keeping them in custody overnight.<sup>162</sup>

The inversionary nature of legitimising enemy images can be obtained from a statement by the West Berlin Association of Merchants and Industrial-

161. “IWF-Blues: Heidelberg/Berlin/Göttingen/Bamberg,” *taz*, 28 September 1988, 5; “Stimmung wird immer gereizter,” *Volksblatt*, 28 September 1988; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, untitled clipping, 28 September 1988, WZB-IWF. The statement is printed in *radikal* 135 (October 1988): 24.

162. “Kewenig in Bombenstimmung: Vorletzter IWF-Aktionstag wieder mit Protestaktionen, Demonstrationen, Festnahmen, und Polizeikessel,” *taz*, Berlin, 29 September 1988, 17; Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßnahmen, *Wut, Witz, Widerstand*, 42.

ists: “Who are these travelling ruffians whose brutality is incredible and who are no different from violent criminals—Who is funding these people? On closer inspection, we see that they, too, live on the social blessings of our state.”<sup>163</sup> A much-publicised picture of a masked autonomist pushing a shopping trolley converted into a mobile container for dozens of cobblestone projectiles testifies to a far-reaching inversion of values.<sup>164</sup> While protesters shouted the rhyming slogan “IWF—Mördertreff!” (IMF—meeting of murderers!), the merchants and industrialists reciprocated their challengers’ accusations: each depicted the opposing side as mere criminals profiting via illicit channels. Both perspectives sought to deny the other’s actions any political character and thus legitimacy. For some autonomist activists, rampages and rioting became a ritual, a permanent component of an identity-generating lifestyle that was easily refreshed on an everyday basis by smashing shop windows or looting supermarkets. If this was the case—as during countless May Day demonstrations in Berlin—the communicative nexus between different levels of violence receded into the background, and observers found it exceedingly difficult to identify any political message in what seemed mere indulgence in violence.

In September 1988, the international nature of the debt crisis provided for countless regional and national scenarios where a critical economic and political analysis could address connections between regimes of violence and regimes of provision. As a consequence of the large number of Turkish and Kurdish immigrants in West Germany, developments in Turkey were a particularly interesting case. Left-wing critics charged that the IMF’s familiar demands for cuts in public expenditures had negative consequences for social, health, and educational services. At the same time, it seemed to be in the IMF’s interest to increase government spending on military and police forces to fight internal unrest—especially the insurgency of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, which had begun in 1984—and the arms buildup in NATO’s strategically important easternmost member state. Critics pointed to the stark contrast between this military wealth and weak infrastructures: several towns had running water only at night or once a week, and mortality rates for both the general public and infants in particular were high as a consequence of the lack of physicians and hospitals. German companies such as Siemens, AEG, Mannesmann, Daimler-Benz, Hoechst, and Bayer made large profits in Turkey and were held respon-

163. “Stellungnahme des Vereins zur IWF-Tagung,” *Mitteilungen des Vereins Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller* 152.38 (1988), quoted in Gerhards, *Neue Konfliktlinien*, 147–48.

164. “Gegenaktivitäten,” *blätter des iz3w* 151 (1988): 31.



sible for “mass poverty, extreme exploitation, and oppression.”<sup>165</sup> In hindsight, it appears that the liberalisation of the Turkish economy during the 1980s ultimately led the country to enjoy stronger economic growth and greater political stability. At the time, however, the critical argument was that development went hand in hand with violence. A rougher and catchier rendering of this idea found expression in a widespread rallying cry of the protest movement: “Deutsche Waffen, deutsches Geld morden mit in aller Welt!” (German arms, German money join murder around the world!).

This slogan was not intended to apply to address German leftists collecting money under the slogan “Weapons for El Salvador.” Side by side with the article castigating conditions in Turkey, an appeal for donations reported that more than four million deutsche marks had been collected to support the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front.<sup>166</sup> Seven years earlier, Movement 2 June member Klaus Viehmann had self-confidently explained the difference, referring to the consumer and to global regimes of provision: “some people . . . even reject fund-raising campaigns for the liberation movement in El Salvador with the argument that this money supported violence, breeding new violence. There is a certain cynicism behind this since everyone who pays taxes here, or even drinks a cup of coffee—imported from el salvador—supports the war of the junta against the people of el salvador. . . . concerns about the use of violence only set in when it comes to arming the people against their murderers, not at the point when the murderers slaughter the unarmed people.”<sup>167</sup>

Militant protest against the IMF and World Bank received notice in developing countries. The *New Nigerian* wrote somewhat optimistically, “Perhaps the conscience of the international bankers will respond faster to the bombs and guns of European leftist radicals than to the wailing of impoverished and dying African children.” Refuting the widespread argument of economic mismanagement as the cause of the debt crisis, the article pointed to “decades of economic parasitism.”<sup>168</sup> A Pakistani commentator underlined that debt management forced alien regimes of provision on societies that had become addicted to aid. This entailed “the obligation to import military hardware, goods and commodities from the same source . . . promoting false standards of living and perverse values.”<sup>169</sup> The *International Herald Tribune* highlighted the re-

165. “Die Türkei—Ein faschistischer Staat im Sinne des IWF,” *Zahltag* 5 (29 September 1988): 3.

166. Freunde der alternativen Tageszeitung e.V., “Spendenaktion: Waffen für El Salvador,” *Zahltag* 5 (29 September 1988): 3.

167. Klaus Viehmann, “Prozessklärung” (February 1981), *radikal* 98 (November 1981), [http://autox.nadir.org/archiv/auto/81\\_radi\\_98f.html](http://autox.nadir.org/archiv/auto/81_radi_98f.html) (accessed 12 August 2010).

168. Clipping from *New Nigerian* 7005 (6 October 1988), WZB-IWF.

169. Bashir Ahmed, “Aid for Pakistan,” *Pakistan Times*, 9 October 1988, WZB-IWF.

ciprocal effect in highly industrialised countries: according to this interpretation of Ronald Reagan's supply-side economics, controlled debt made them ever richer.<sup>170</sup> The *Herald* from Harare, Zimbabwe, put the two developments into one disturbing argument: "There is something seriously wrong with a world economy, in which most of the world's inhabitants face poverty, starvation, and general deprivation while the minority sit on food mountains and more expensive consumer goodies than they know what to do with."<sup>171</sup> This uneasiness surfaced in Berlin when critics reported on lavish banquets for IMF delegates protected by large numbers of security forces.<sup>172</sup>

During and after the IMF meeting, controversies regarding the handling of the security authorities emerged. Many small-scale protest events had been prohibited via traffic laws, and even liberal commentators questioned whether West Berlin's minister of the interior, Wilhelm Kewenig (CDU), had been right to subordinate the right to demonstrate to the right to conduct unobstructed commerce at the Kurfürstendamm.<sup>173</sup> Minister of finance Günter Rexrodt (FDP) calculated that the twelve thousand people who came to West Berlin for the IMF meeting spent between forty and fifty million deutsche marks. And politicians did their best to use the occasion to advertise West Berlin as a business location.<sup>174</sup> A special investigative unit of the West Berlin police, the Einheit für besondere Lagen und einsatzbezogenes Training, added to its robust reputation for brutal conduct during demonstrations. Undercover members of the unit had penetrated the autonomist scene, a practice that operated in a legal grey zone, since such investigations of "extremist" groups had hitherto been the prerogative of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Verfassungsschutz*), which was required by law to limit itself to observation and could not use physical force.<sup>175</sup> In several cases, journalists were maltreated by police, triggering indignant complaints by the Deutsche Presse Agentur, As-

170. "Bankers in Berlin," *International Herald Tribune*, 28 September 1988, WZB-IWF.

171. "West Berlin Cash Talks," *Herald*, Harare, 23 September 1988, WZB-IWF.

172. Vera Gaserow, "Wenn es Nacht wird und die Banker singen: Champagner, 'deutsch Snaps' und Gesang," *taz*, 29 September 1988; "Die heile Welt des IWF: Propaganda-Veranstaltung des Wirtschaftssenators zum Internationalen Währungsfond in Luxushotel," *taz*, 11 June 1988.

173. "Behinderung und Gefährdung," *Der Tagesspiegel*, 29 September 1988, WZB-IWF.

174. Martina Ohm, "Mammutmesse der Finanzen," *Der Tagesspiegel*, 4 September 1988, Sunday supp. *Weltspiegel*, 1; "Gäste ließen viel Geld in Berlin," *Volksblatt*, 1 October 1988, WZB-IWF.

175. "IWF-Nachlese," 88–89. This article downplays militant forms of protest during the IMF meeting, claiming that they amounted only to a few smashed windows and bent car aerials (91). See also "Polizei: Knochen in Gips," *Der Spiegel* 42 (17 October 1988): 42–44; Wolfgang Gast, "Skandaleinheit der Berliner Polizei spielt 007: Sondereinheit EbLT infiltrierte illegal autonome Szene," *taz*, 17 October 1988, 1–2; Alternative Liste, *Freiheit im Würgegriff*, IISG, ID 892, BRO 1623/12.

sociated Press, Reuters, and others.<sup>176</sup> Following a citizen's complaint, the Federal Court of Justice retrospectively declared illegal the special control points that police had erected throughout the Federal Government and West Berlin before and during the IMF meeting. The court ruled that the Federal Criminal Police Office's reading of sections 129s StGB and 111 StPO had unduly stretched the laws.<sup>177</sup>

Anti-apartheid protest in the commercial sphere did not subside when the IMF/World Bank meeting ended. In December 1988, protesters released dozens of mice—some of them marked “RSA”—in the food hall of a Karstadt department store. After the management of Bolle supermarkets had become subject to a preliminary investigation for having advertised and labelled asparagus from South Africa as originating in Argentina, the windows of a branch in Berlin's Tempelhof district were smashed.<sup>178</sup>

While these skirmishes continued, one of the most striking examples of the problematic consequences of IMF-imposed neoliberal reforms unfolded in Venezuela with the Caracazo, a wave of protests, riots, and looting that culminated in a February 1989 massacre in the country's capital. As many as three thousand people were killed, mostly by security forces. In his populist presidential election campaign, Social Democrat Carlos Andrés Pérez had denounced the IMF for practising “an economic totalitarianism which kills not with bullets but with famine.” In February 1989, the victorious Pérez accepted an IMF proposal along the lines of the Washington Consensus in return for a loan of 4.5 billion U.S. dollars. The agreement required increases in petrol prices, which also caused rises in public transport fares, triggering massive popular protests.<sup>179</sup> These events and the fact that Pérez continued to blame the IMF and the rich industrial countries for the violent escalation were noticed in the German press, but no further protest activities ensued.<sup>180</sup>

176. “Farbe des Geldes: Das Spitzentreffen von Währungsfons und Weltbank mißbriet zum Polizeispektakel,” *Der Spiegel* 40 (3 October 1988): 130–33.

177. Jürgen Gottschlich, “BGH rügt Rebmans ‘Ausnahmestand,’” *taz*, 22 November 1988, 1–2.

178. “Getarnter Spargel: Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Coop-Bolle wg. ‘Spargeltarnaktion,’” *taz*, Berlin 4 November 1988: 15; “Protest tiefgekühlt: Bei Karstadt fand man tote Mäuse mit dem Aufdruck ‘R.S.A.’,” *taz*, Berlin, 12 December 1988, 17.

179. Pérez quoted in Chossudovsky, *Globalization of Poverty*, 36; “Alles ist möglich, alles ist nötig,” *Der Spiegel* 39 (26 September 1988): 29. See Margarita López Maya, “The Venezuelan Caracazo of 1989: Popular Protest and Institutional Weakness,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 35.1 (2003): 117–37.

180. See “Hunderte von Toten in Venezuela,” *taz*, 2 March 1989; “Krankenhäuser melden 500 Tote bei den Unruhen in Venezuela,” *taz*, 4 March 1989.

Boycott and fair trade campaigns served activists as a performative signifier of commitment. Especially in comparison with earlier anti-imperialist campaigns, which had been more clearly motivated by socialist or communist ideals, these campaigns mirrored the growing sense of individualism espoused by contemporary neoliberalism. Ultimately, fair trade and ethical marketing did not pose a fundamental threat to the capitalist system. The fact that consumers were willing to pay more for products manufactured and distributed under conditions complying with their moral convictions provided a business model that contributed to the dynamism of the capitalist diversification of markets.<sup>181</sup>

At the same time, militant groups wanted to go beyond such ethically reflective consumerism, which they saw as politically limited. The legitimising narrative of the early critics of globalisation aimed at the responsibility of political and economic decision makers and their institutions of global governance, whose base motives allegedly turned them into exploiters and murderers. Some of these arguments operated at a high level of abstraction. In the process, recourse to interpretive elites—critical scholars and experts—offered the possibility of investing the “frame” of the social movements that criticised regimes of provision with a particular legitimacy. The argumentative potential of this precursor to later global justice movements and critiques of “globalisation”—the term appeared only very sporadically in 1988—was used to rationalise illegal protest acts and symbolic violence against what were perceived as tangible manifestations of questionable global regimes of provision. Ideological justifications for throwing stones through shop windows or placing incendiary devices in department stores maintained a difficult balancing act between friendly and hostile consumption. The morally questionable and arguably parasitic consumption of the global system of capitalism was supposed to be attacked and overcome in favour of the legitimate consumption interests of the inhabitants of developing countries or of consumers of alternative products based on fair trade practices and international solidarity. Under international pressure, IMF repayment conditions indeed changed during the 1990s to take into account the social interests of receiving societies.<sup>182</sup>

The militant protest action of the Revolutionary Cells mirrored a paradigm shift away from a classical anti-imperialism based on Third World liberation movements and towards a global perspective on the injustices of the economic process that focused on social struggles and the institutions of global

181. See Stehr, *Moralisierung der Märkte*. Stehr’s account does not investigate the dimension of violence in the moralisation of the markets. He attributes it to increased incomes and more comprehensive knowledge and information on available commodities.

182. Nuscheler, *Lern- und Arbeitsbuch Entwicklungspolitik*, 368–70.

governance. Campaigns against the industrial economies of South Africa and Israel reflected the development of solidarity between the German activists and the African National Congress and the PFLP, on the one hand, and the emerging focus on IMF and World Bank, on the other. The strategy of militant boycott campaigns represented a move away from large-scale terrorist acts on the international stage following the public relations disaster of the Entebbe hijacking. From then on, the RZ concentrated on a global process of economic restructuring that was manifested in the creeping financial erosion of the Eastern Bloc, the forced capitalisation of agriculture, and the far-reaching uncoupling of the African continent from the profits of world trade. Within this context, the victims of apartheid and racism, especially women, became the subjects of revolutionary struggle. The RZ sought to bring these conflicts home to West Germany, increasingly attacking German institutions to point out their international entanglement and the role of “governmental consumption”—for example, in armament industries. The Israeli economy remained a target for the RZ, but it was just one of many targets: overall, less than 5 percent of the RZ’s militant attacks were directed against Israel. The United States played a major role in their critical worldview, but the RZ deliberately steered clear of any cultural anti-Americanism not firmly established in a critique of global economic structures. The Rote Zora, concentrating on women’s working conditions in the global economy—from factory seamstresses to sex workers—introduced the important feminist plank to the radical mobilisation of discontent among West German consumers.

Attacks against retail and service institutions sought to make a moral comparison between violence against things in a rich industrial country and the violence that reigned in developing countries, assuming that both contexts were tied into global economic networks. The strategy of legitimisation was to let the attack on a supermarket or a petrol station appear negligible in comparison to global injustices such as war and genocide. Pointers to misery, uproar, and food riots in the Third World were supposed to excuse violence against global corporations. The strategy of legitimisation thus rested on shifting attention away from violent forms of protest and towards the conduct of global economic and governmental institutions. This approach was intended to shake a narrow definition of violence resting on national, governmental, and criminological foundations. Moreover, militant protest highlighted the lack of an effective monopoly on violence in large parts of the world, especially concerning the global economic process. In a certain sense, such reasoning also shook an influential theoretical critique of violence—as put forward by Hannah Arendt in the tradition of Thomas Hobbes—that rested on a theory of the

state that made an effective enforcement of governmental power, a lasting peace, and legal norms the precondition for the excision of violence from the political space.<sup>183</sup> Such, however, was not the case in the sphere of action of a spatially unbound global economy.

For the most part, the legitimisation of violent protest against a global economic nexus was not a question of a fundamental justification of political violence or terrorism. It was, rather, the fragmentary legitimisation that could be gained from pointers to the violence of the opposing side and from appeals to the guilty consciences of affluent consumers, which were effective in mobilising the movement and in propagating alternative regimes of provision. Attacks on global regimes of provision and their moral deficits shifted the onus of legitimisation onto the opposing side. The boycott campaigns followed a pattern of calling attention to the destruction and violence that went hand in hand with the production or marketing of consumer goods in faraway countries. Violence against objects emerged as a militant variation of this type of protest.

In another protest scenario, not explicitly discussed in this chapter despite its many bridges to the protests against the global economic order, the trajectory went the opposite way: consumer boycotts were instituted only in response to violence that threatened to make protest impossible. The earliest antinuclear energy protests hardly adopted the viewpoint of the consumer, since lobbyists for the energy industry had claimed the consumers' perspective in the early 1970s debates about nuclear energy. Shortages and rising prices in the wake of the oil crisis allowed industry proponents to present nuclear energy as the cleaner and cheaper alternative, entirely in consumers' interests. A challenge to this position was mounted only in response to the major violent confrontations that occurred in November 1976 between police and protesters at the site where the Brokdorf nuclear power plant was under construction. The idea of boycotting electricity companies was developed with the explicit aim of finding ways to continue nonviolent protest after the failure of violent confrontation. The main goal was public visibility rather than economic pressure. In some respects, this strategy pointed the way to a practice that became commonplace with the liberalisation of the energy market: consumers could simply subscribe to delivery packages from companies that did not use nuclear power. Up to that point, German consumers had been bound to their local provider, one of the eight oligopolistic consortia of the West German energy industry that enjoyed comfortable market conditions based on the Energy Industry Act of 1935. The

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183. See Arendt, *On Violence*.

example of electricity boycotts not only highlights the difficulties consumer protest faced in this situation but also provides an interesting case where the trajectory went the other way: violence was not the product of an eventual radicalisation of protest; rather, boycotts were embraced only in response to violence that threatened to make protest impossible.

Although radical and militant groups eventually lost influence on the global justice movements, they played a large role in the unprecedented major mobilisations of the 1980s.<sup>184</sup> The discourse on global distributive justice went hand in hand with transnational advocacy and a “postnational” understanding of politics. Such patterns of perception had been pioneered by the radical Left since the late 1960s. Their spread into the wider political spectrum made human catastrophes that occurred in developing countries more visible and amplified their impact on domestic politics. At the heart of this process lay a transmission of political consciousness from critical intellectuals via political activists to ethically motivated consumers. The process was thus a quantitative widening and proliferation of critiques of regimes of provision that accompanied a qualitative dilution of more radical alternative regimes of provision. As in most other highly industrialised countries, West Germany saw increasing percentages of consumers participating or expressing a willingness to participate in boycotts, from just under a third of the population in 1974 to almost half in 1990.<sup>185</sup> The anti-apartheid, anti-Nestlé, and anti-IMF campaigns were important steps in this popularisation of “moral economies” via purchase decisions based on ethical criteria, preparing the way for a new type of capitalism in which the image of politically and ecologically responsible production became ever more important.<sup>186</sup>

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184. See Rucht, Teune, and Yang, “Global Justice Movement,” 162; Hierlmeier, *Internationalismus*, 112.

185. Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization*, 312–13.

186. See *Ethical Consumer*, ed. Harrison, Newholm, and Shaw; Heidbrink and Schmidt, “Neue Verantwortung.”

## Conclusion

In October 1990, the editors of the newly founded journal *Clash*, an international joint venture of autonomist activists from seven European countries, published an article on what they called the “annexation of the GDR”: “The commodity won out over an independent development by the people in the GDR. . . . The *commodity* is violence! It is the capitalist tool for the colonisation of consciousness that surpasses all previous violent means of capitalism.”<sup>1</sup> The language and content of this analysis were not new, but the demise of the East German state changed an important parameter of the consumption debates analysed in this book: the implosion of a tangible other regime of provision. The GDR had hardly functioned as a model for the radical left over the preceding thirty years, but its existence—despite the increasing influx of Western consumer culture—had demonstrated the possibility of a different organisation of production and consumption. The idea of Western capitalism creating for itself a “low-wage country on ‘German soil’”<sup>2</sup> conjured up the perspective that a single all-embracing regime of provision would henceforth eliminate or subdue all alternatives. The larger kitchen debate seemed to have come to an end. When analysing the causes of the GDR’s failure, the autonomist authors diagnosed the fault in the shortcomings of socialist practice, which created a “political vacuum allowing the ‘desire’ for commodities to thrive.”<sup>3</sup> The GDR’s petit bourgeois planned economy, coupled with political repression, had long since squandered the opportunity for an authentic and autonomous articulation of needs and political positions. Given the sorry state of the socialist project, this task fell to the new social movements and their radical vanguard, which, according to the authors, included the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) and other “guerrillas,” the revolutionary feminist movement, squatters, and other movements against urban renewal.

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1. “Alptraum Kapitalismus: Über die Annexion der DDR,” *Clash: Zeitung für/vom Widerstand in Europa* 1 (October 1990): 50.

2. *Ibid.*, 46.

3. *Ibid.*, 50.



## Social Change and Social Movements

Much like Herbert Marcuse, philosopher and social theorist Oskar Negt addressed the new social movements of the late 1960s, in which he participated, and their challenge to existing regimes of provision under the formula *anti-kapitalistische Bedürfnisrevolte* (anticapitalist revolt of the needs).<sup>4</sup> Such politics of needs involved a comprehensive concept of the political that, unlike narrower liberal concepts of politics, did not relegate needs into a pre-political private sphere. Traditional politics treat the human needs behind political demands on a highly mediated and abstract level. On this level, a demand for lower rents or higher social benefits can be articulated, implying that needs for food, shelter, and clothing have to be met. However, the details and implications of such human needs and their psychological dimension—for example, the despair that grips someone who cannot pay the rent—remain anterior to policy formation. They seldom appear in the classical formation of the political will, and if they do, it is only in a marginal or illustrative way.<sup>5</sup> The social movements addressed in this book sought to bring such needs back into the political. They tried to establish legitimate ways of political communication that would address consumers' experiences and make their social and moral concerns heard. Commonly used concepts of anticonsumerism prove inappropriate: notwithstanding certain rhetorical figures, their critiques of consumer society or of specific regimes of provision were not fundamentally anticonsumerist. Usually it was not a question of *not* consuming, of embracing radically ascetic ideals, but of consuming *differently*, of attaching alternative social or moral values to consumption, and of inflicting less destruction. The accelerated development of affluent society, however, seemed to destroy social fabrics, to rob things and lifestyles of their authenticity and legitimacy. To those who perceived this phenomenon, it became a significant source of existential disillusion and disenchantment with conventional politics.

This book shows that radical aspects and offshoots of the new social movements engaged in various struggles over particular regimes of provision in West Germany against the backdrop of the overarching Cold War system confrontation. These struggles ranged from quotidian articulations of moral or political concerns about seemingly trivial issues—for example, relatively minor fare increases—to militant resistance to international or global regimes of provision. A central result is that political violence arose from conflict over

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4. Schütte, *Revolte und Verweigerung*, 40.

5. *Ibid.*, 125.

public commodities, such as transport, media, or housing, and from the political metadiscourse attached to commodity purchasing. While activists rarely realised their utopian goals, they had tangible effects on the way capitalist regimes of provision organised and presented themselves, from alternative approaches to urban communities to new strategies embraced by the institutions of global governance.

The politicisation of consumption—for example, via boycotting—is a communicative technique of favouring and/or discrediting particular interests that can be used by any political persuasion. The postwar period was dominated by politicisation impulses *from above* that emanated from various political and commercial institutions in Washington, Moscow, Bonn, Berlin, and elsewhere before eventually trickling down to (but not determining) the experiences and attitudes of individuals. Project ‘economic miracle’<sup>6</sup> attempted to depoliticise consumption domestically and harness its political potential to the outwardly oriented thrust of Cold War competition. Politically motivated boycott campaigns were first embraced and staged by strong players in the political contest (the state, large corporations, sizable parts of the population) before the extraparliamentary opposition and the new social movements seized the method to articulate and mobilise critical minority views: Springer used boycott flanked by economic pressure against *Blinkfüer* and the GDR long before the students boycotted Springer; Willy Brandt and the Confederation of German Trade Unions called for a boycott of the East German-run Berlin S-Bahn prior to students protesting public transport fare increases; and the CIA-sponsored Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit (Combat Group against Inhumanity) committed stink bomb and incendiary attacks against East German department stores long before any left-wing protesters launched arson attacks.<sup>7</sup> The Combat Group against Inhumanity, cofounded in 1948 by CDU politician Ernst Benda, who became interior minister in 1968 and a judge on the Federal Constitutional Court in 1969, committed sabotage against the GDR’s distributive system: counterfeit administrative directives misrouted food deliveries and ordered retail price reductions, products and foodstuffs were destroyed, bomb attacks against power poles were planned, attacks against roads and railways took human lives.<sup>8</sup> This case illustrates vividly how judgments about the legitimacy of boycotts, militancy, or terror in

6. See S. Jonathan Wiesen, “Miracles for Sale: Consumer Displays and Advertising in Postwar West Germany,” in *Consuming Cold War Germany*, ed. Crew, 151–78.

7. For arson attacks on three department stores during the Leipzig Autumn Trade Fair of 1951, see Enrico Heitzer, “*Affäre Walter*”: *Die vergessene Verhaftungswelle* (Berlin, 2008), 191–93.

8. *Ibid.*, 59, 107.

the realm of consumption were and are bound up with the political positions of both perpetrators and commentators.

Politicisation impulses from above continued throughout the Cold War but increasingly faced competition from impulses *from below*—from the social movements, which sought a third way between the blocs and faulted established modes of politicisation. The social movements aimed to expose the moral and political problems of the domestic and global dimensions of consumption, which had long-term effects that eventually influenced majority society and state institutions. Overall, it does not seem helpful to assume the existence of a historical threshold separating an earlier period where matters of consumption were somehow less morally or politically charged from a later period of politicised consumption. What was new since the late 1960s was the plurality of competing moral economies from above and from below. Forms and practices of protest pioneered in the 1960s and early 1970s were adopted and adapted according to changed circumstances, resulting in a proliferation of localised campaigns that tended to be more anonymous and less spectacular but perhaps more successful in raising public awareness. Such applied critiques of regimes of provision meant less abstract theory but more direct action as well as a professionalisation of protest in the 1980s. An accompanying decrease in the size and diversity of social support for protest activities made way for smaller but more radical groups. Political communication that addressed the moral dimensions of globalised economic structures contributed to a novel spatialisation of politics that was manifested in the increased transnational organisation of protest movements that sought to mirror the intensified connectivity of the global economy.

In this context, one might ask in how far the approaches analysed in this book were specifically German reactions to consumer society. Given that comparable analyses for France, Italy, Britain, and Denmark simply do not yet exist, this volume offers a point of departure for future research into the question of whether the West German trajectory of radicalisation resulted from stronger critical attitudes towards mass consumption or perhaps less developed organisations pursuing the peaceful organisation of consumers. However, the material presented here does not seem to suggest a German *Sonderweg* in radicalism but points to rather similar developments regarding squatting movements, autonomist groups, and globalisation critics elsewhere. In explaining the intensity of conflict in Germany, the material highlights the potentially explosive nature of the legacy of the Nazi past and of the Cold War—system confrontation rather than peculiarities of ill-developed institutions of civil society or alleged continuities in antidemocratic extremism.

Strong continuities existed over time as anti-IMF action at department stores in 1988 came full circle with earlier campaigns: the KaDeWe remained a powerful political symbol, incendiary devices went off on store shelves, and even the agitation among those working at the department store resembled what Rudi Dutschke and his comrades pursued at KaDeWe in August 1967. Contrary to the popular belief that the 1968 movement disintegrated quickly, leaving little protest potential, it had clear developmental trajectories that led to various protest movements. The overall number of “protest events” in the Federal Republic of Germany was higher in the period after 1968 than during the 1950s and 1960s,<sup>9</sup> when demonstrations and collective political pursuits were more likely to go alongside Cold War–inspired governmental activities. In many ways, the economic aspect of opposition grew more prominent. Youth, as a socioculturally determined period of life, grew ever longer, which, coupled with economic downturn, created the “superfluous” youth that found it difficult to pursue the trajectories conventional social models held in stock for them. Compared to the experience of the boom years of the 1960s, which saw the massive expansion of tertiary education opportunities, the 1970s offered a decidedly bleaker picture of the economic future. Educated young people joining socially vulnerable groups leading a precarious existence became a widespread and tangible phenomenon. Protest was a possible source of orientation and remedy.

The moral and political content of attacks on manifestations of consumer society aside, they were ineffective insofar as they hardly impeded the commercial success of the targeted businesses or economic growth based on consumer goods more generally. The campaign against Springer journalism neither seriously jeopardised its target’s dominance of the newspaper market nor substantially changed tabloid journalism, and the few tangible successes of the protests against public transport fare increases did not survive the inevitable next price hike. The squatters’ movement likewise neither managed to dispose of real estate speculation nor change the existing system of property ownership. The squatters of the early 1980s might at least claim a role in a wider process that ushered in alternatives to existing regimes of provision in the realms of housing and the distribution of urban space. Moreover, squatters

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9. Dieter Rucht and Roland Roth, “Soziale Bewegungen und Protest—eine theoretische und empirische Bilanz,” in *Sozialen Bewegungen*, ed. Roland Roth and Rucht, 646. Strangely, Rucht and Roth claim a “significant protest wave” for 1968–69 even though their own data show clear peaks in protest activity in 1967, 1972, and 1983. Numbers for 1968–69 are roughly equivalent to 1963–64 and 1977–78. Their categorisation of concerns and grievances that led to protest activities does not include the dimension of consumer or consumption-related protest.

were instrumental in establishing informal infrastructures that continued to enable projects of self-help, protest, and participation.

What did emerge were alternative economies. By the early 1980s, a “countermilieu” had developed in a sense not entirely foreseen by Dutschke or Marcuse. The alternative milieu had grown into a relevant section of the economy in some cities, but this phenomenon was firmly grounded in services and consumption and had only a limited basis in production. An analysis of an alternative address book for West Berlin (*Stattbuch 2*) lists twelve hundred projects, of which 71 percent were in the services sector (transport, retail, bookstores, pubs, cinemas, media, child care, social work, culture); the remainder involved political work (23 percent) and production (6 percent).<sup>10</sup> However, to retrospectively reduce the protests treated in this book to their tangible yield in terms of economic or symbolic capital would not do justice to the meaning of their intentions. They questioned the abstract reasoning of the bottom line by appealing to moral imperatives and by invoking responses to injustices and abuses of power, especially in a global context.

The focus on the global consumption nexus sheds new light on the increasing internationalism of the different segments of the radical left since the 1970s. Recent scholarship under the label “transnational history” has interpreted the work of nongovernmental organisations and social movements as a decisive contribution to the emergence of a global civil society that has reduced the potential of conflict between states.<sup>11</sup> By exploring hitherto neglected precursors of the global justice movement, this book adds an exploration of agents of transnationalisation that operated below and often in opposition to the established governmental and nongovernmental international organizations, giving due weight to the dimension of militancy in response to the apparent failures and shortcomings of the globalising process during the crises of the 1970s and 1980s. The theoretical critiques and political activism of West German radical leftists mark both an intriguing contrast and an instructive complement to what they would have perceived as exceedingly positive accounts of the highly ambivalent globalisation of consumer capitalism, such as Harvard business professor Rosabeth M. Kanter’s definition of globalisation as “the world . . . be-

10. Kolenberger and Schwarz, *Zum Problem einer “Zweiten Kultur,”* 25.

11. Iriye, “Transnational History.” See also Iriye, *Global Community*; Iriye, “Century of NGOs”; Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*. For an almost exclusively positive interpretation of transnationalisation as a legacy of 1968, see Klimke, *Other Alliance*; Klimke and Scharloth, *1968 in Europe*. For a critical assessment of the transnational turn and its normative implications, see Goltz and Mark, “Encounters.”

coming a global shopping mall in which ideas and products are available everywhere at the same time.”<sup>12</sup>

### Intellectual Reflections of Regimes of Provision

An economic system based on trust in the civilising properties of economic progress and thus of the emergence of consumer societies (harking back to August Comte and Adam Smith) was challenged by critics who saw this connection more pessimistically and considered violence and destruction correlates of spatially confined affluent societies. Individuals and their needs were imagined as revolutionary subjects or as fighters for more limited forms of liberation. Their utopias—or their countercultures—crucially contained visions of alternative regimes of provision. However, squatters who sought to legalise their living conditions via politically negotiated leases continued to criticise the existing variant of consumer society, but they ultimately were prepared to integrate their lifestyles into an improved or alternative version of affluent society. In some respects, the loss of utopia over time—the gradual embracing of more limited counterdrafts, which were then integrated into improved variants of affluent society—could be read to confirm Marcuse’s dystopian vision of a one-dimensional society where critiques and utopian scenarios are bound to collapse into a vast realm of commodification. Some of the trajectories of radicalisation analysed in this book were attempts to break the cycle of modern capitalism, which adopted criticism and opposition and in turn served them up as commodities.

Radical concepts of consumption emerged from social movements that responded to social change. They reflected changing regimes of provision. The analytical approach pursued in this book thus combines socioeconomic developments with political and artistic responses to the development of modern society. Intellectual constructions both built on and entailed social practices and political actions and were thus as much part of reality as economic or institutional conditions. This book demonstrates that intellectual constructions such as manipulation or depoliticisation were very closely linked with very real socioeconomic developments—for example, retail or media concentration, fare increases, housing shortages, and the Third World debt crisis. Radical

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12. Rosabeth M. Kanter, *World Class: Thriving Locally in the Global Economy* (New York, 1995), quoted in Nuscheler, *Lern- und Arbeitsbuch Entwicklungspolitik*, 53.

and even militant concepts had a rational core that responded to tangible socio-economic developments and were thus not so far removed from what artists, intellectuals, more moderate contemporaries, and more recent scholars have thought and discovered about the developments and contradictions of consumer societies.

An erosion of revolutionary visions over time and a loss of theoretical sophistication might be obtained from a comparison of Jörg Huffschmid's Habermasian analysis of the Springer press with an autonomist pamphlet that reduces all evil to the machinations of banks and department stores and otherwise displays postmodern indifference. Conversely, the squatters' establishment of more limited free spaces and formation of challenges to governmental policies that were sustainable at least in the medium term also points to a more rational analysis of society that overcame the verbose and unrealistic revolutionary fantasies of earlier generations. Both the activists of the 1960s and of the 1980s wrestled with the legacy of a century-and-a-half of left-wing revolutionary traditions, ideas, and utopias.<sup>13</sup> Their ideology and practice displayed a tendency to draw the good life—traditionally held out as a carrot of the future—into their present. In this respect, they also stood at the end of a 150-year political learning process. This perspective helps to integrate opposite interpretations—loss of utopian potential versus gain in tangible success—into a dialectical step: they had arrived in a political space less riven between utopian visions belonging to different levels of historical time. They were facing the inconsistencies of the economic process and of various approaches to political economy that tried to explain and influence this process. They were partially conscious of two centuries of intellectual traditions trying to govern and moralise the economic process. They saw their own projects as continuations of or alternatives to existing interpretive patterns, which in some respects came to an impasse in the 1980s. It became clear that a historical philosophy that would have fully explained and controlled the economic process did not exist and that any venture into the territory of political economy—of critiques of regimes of provision—was fraught with difficulties and inconsistencies. Ultimately, the ideas and actions treated in this book were attempts at political orientation in highly complex systems of provision. They reflected a quest for moral integrity amidst the irresolvable contradictions of the economic process. They were bound to meet their own limits—for example, in embracing means that really did not lend themselves to curing the dilemmas they sought to address. The contradictory nature of gentrification

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13. Eley, *Forging Democracy*.

leading the movement to wrestle with itself—as both originator and critic of the process—is a good example for such irresolvable inconsistencies that did not allow for an easy way out.

In the final analysis, protesters shared such dilemmas with all other economic and political actors because no one has a universal formula for generating well-being for all. Consequently, everyone must weigh the beneficial and destructive potentials of the regimes of provision they partake in, support, or disapprove of. This implies that, *nolens volens*, all historical actors are involved in the competition between different regimes of provision—not only for practical implementation but also for political legitimacy—and thus need to position themselves *vis-à-vis* the violence resulting from the friction between such competing regimes on various levels.

## Consumption and Violence

During the decades after SDS activists Peter Neitzke and Christian Semler developed their theory of political action with regard to the distribution sector in 1969, their three types of political campaigns (the burning of commodities, the appropriation of goods by the masses, and the smashing of shop windows) remained in the repertoire of actions adopted by the more militant branches of the new social movements. Systematic attacks on shop windows with paving stones had become a well-established practice. Despite Neitzke and Semler's scepticism regarding this type of protest, it eventually emerged as the most prominent. Given their Marxist perspective, they were missing an ideological message that would emanate from broken windows and could be conveyed to the masses. Though the militant squatters of the early 1980s did not go to the same theoretical lengths as their Marxist forebears, they experienced the smashing of windows during confrontations with authorities as combining existentialist self-liberation with critiques of tangible regimes of provision, which could even amount to political leverage in their struggle with the authorities.

In analogy to the dilemmas and diversities of affluent society, the historical actors examined in this volume were confronted with a wide range of different concepts and interpretations of violence and counterviolence. Activists consciously chose violence against objects to propagate their political ideas and lifestyles. The rationalised, depersonalised, and latent violence of the powerful was supposed to be pulled out from the “setting of everyday life” (*Kulisse des Alltags*), in which, according to Norbert Elias, it disappeared in the civilis-



ing process.<sup>14</sup> Central to ideological justifications of protest was the idea of destruction caused by the prevailing political economy. The labels “violent” and “destructive” were essential to this mode of legitimisation, which helped to intellectually integrate threatening developments on various levels: the destruction of neighbourhoods and their social milieus by speculative builders and gentrification; the destruction of livelihoods by tropical deforestation and debt crisis; and the destruction of nature by pollution and growth ideology. All of these entangled processes seemed to be driven by Western consumers and the greed of the rich. Again, a silver bullet that would have solved the larger dilemmas between complete nonviolence and political militancy did not exist either for the social movements or for the larger debates about the legitimacy of various forms of historical violence. The forms of political violence treated in the previous chapters—from Cologne students blockading tramway tracks in 1966 to the unknown persons placing incendiary devices in Berlin department stores in September 1988—were usually accompanied by explicit or implicit scruples and considerations regarding the use of violence. An upper limit on the forms of violence employed and the nature of the damage inflicted was for the most part integrated into the planning and justification of such acts. One might strongly disagree with the perpetrators’ assessments of legitimacy, but violence was almost never embraced for its own sake but rather consciously intended as a politically calculated means of communication. This also holds true for instances when leftist activists embraced anti-Zionist campaigns—for historical reasons a particularly difficult field of political communication—where their political calculations usually backfired, as was the case with the pro-Palestinian boycott campaign triggered by the Hafenstraße mural.

A central message of the analysis presented in this book is that violence resulted from complex interactions among several actors (protesters, authorities, media, and intellectuals) and that protest was by no means violent from the outset. Violent conflict and discourse on violence found their way into the protest scenarios analysed in this book via four avenues: (1) the verbal and symbolic violence that was meant to call attention to the factual violence (for example, in the Third World); (2) the militant or openly violent tactics embraced by specialists in violence (such as the RAF or RZ) but also imagined in the press; (3) the often controversial actions of government security forces shielding urban retail and commerce from protest activities; and (4) the political and legal controversies triggered by the protests, focusing on definitions of violence and the legitimisation and delegitimisation of particular forms of po-

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14. Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, 2:325.

litical communication. In all of these contexts, violence was a product of interaction and a means of communication. Both sides worked with rhetorical strategies that amplified the opposing side's violence and moral transgressions while seeking to neutralise and justify their own use of force.

Militant protest led to adjustments and changes in authorities' theoretical and practical understanding of violence. Some of the protest activities triggered complex legal debates that went all the way up to the Federal Court of Justice (BGH) or the Federal Constitutional Court, with significant consequences for German legal history. The social movements' discourse on violence prompted an inverse discourse on violence among the legal authorities. A central bone of contention was whether certain protest activities were to be seen as illicit or even criminal offences or rather as political articulations covered by constitutional basic rights, especially freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. This pertained to linguistic and intellectual speech acts (for example, the leaflets of Kommune I) as well as to performative and physical articulations (for example, blockades), while many protest activities combined both aspects (for example, boycott campaigns). With its 1969 Laepple verdict concerning protests against fare increases and its 1972 verdict upholding the civil law claims against the "ringleaders" of the Springer blockade, the BGH established a legal framework that under the concept of "mental coercion" interpreted the mere intention of obstructing or blockading something as violent activity regardless of the actual means employed. This legal framework was not effectively rescinded by the Federal Constitutional Court until 1995. Concerning the liability of "ringleaders," the BGH had already reversed its interpretation in 1984, ruling that only active perpetrators of physical violence could be held liable. On the level below these high court decisions, the protest activities of the new social movements occupied grey areas of legal discourse, forcing lawyers to come to grips with more or less unprecedented challenges. This was the case for *Landfriedensbruch* (breach of the public peace) in the context of the demonstrations of the late 1960s and *Hausfriedensbruch* (breach of the domestic peace), which became controversial during the squatting movement of the early 1980s. Legal opinion was initially far from fixed in both cases, and several years passed before a certain variance among lower court judgments made way for a prevailing opinion. More generally, debates over legal conflicts tended to shift towards questions of law and order and away from the controversial contents concerning regimes of provision that had triggered the issue. Since 1976, the legal expansion of imputability under section 129a of the Criminal Code (Forming terrorist organisations) accelerated this development.

Protesters' attitudes towards law and justice varied. A point of departure

was the impression that it was impossible to effect the desired changes by appealing to a point of law. Petitions and legal proceedings in favour of protest agendas had usually proved fruitless. References to fundamental rights or to a right to resist under natural law were made with the claim that the disputed speech acts or performative acts were covered by a higher level of justice than that embodied by the courts of West Germany. This distrust was nourished by Marxist critiques of the bourgeois legal system, by pointers to German lawyers' Nazi pasts, and eventually by the insight that the forces of global capital were increasingly uncoupled from the legality of the national state. The more or less limited performative breaking of rules and laws served as a strategy of mobilisation, which quickly brought protesters into prolonged conflicts with the authorities. While the illegal act was initially conceived as a means of making visible other forms of violence, the authorities' counterstrategy of highlighting the criminality of disputed acts could appear to the perpetrators like a large-scale conspiracy designed to cover up injustices that could only be brought to light via illegal acts. All of these perspectives tended to situate the protesters' violence—conceived as communicative and limited—relative to other forms of violence that were seen as ubiquitous and unrestrained. From this perspective, even the phenomenon commonly labelled “terrorism” appears to result not primarily from individual shortcomings such as psychological deficiencies, violence fetishism, or antisemitism but from a radical response to major societal changes—that is, the unprecedented growth and diversification of the realm of consumption, a dimension neglected by existing research.

On a more abstract level, this analysis shows that the discursive amalgamation of different forms of violence was indispensable to the legitimisation of political violence on both sides. An essential aspect of the communicative strategies that challenged dominant regimes of provision via boycotting or other forms of mobilization was to bridge distance—both spatially and historically—to connect seemingly far-removed political struggles. Specific forms of protest or violence assumed to be legitimate were justified with reference to other forms of past or present violence deemed illegitimate. Challenging forms of political violence (emanating from social movements) and preserving forms of institutional violence (executed by the authorities) were interlocked in discourses that sought to invert their respective legitimisations while amplifying each other in the process. Challengers accused the authorities wielding state violence of sharing responsibility for violations of human rights, war, and genocide in the contexts of decolonisation (South African apartheid) or alleged continuity with National Socialist Germany. The application of state monopoly violence was in turn justified by associating the challengers with the violence of

past and present revolutions and terrorism or with the state violence of the GDR and Soviet Union. Analogies with National Socialism usually pointed to the *Kampfzeit* of the NSDAP up to 1934 when shops owned by Jews were attacked.

In this context, the question arises whether anti-Zionist or anti-Israeli boycotts and protests differed fundamentally from other protests in Cold War West Germany. On balance, the radical left did not target Israel more than other targets, but protests against Israel were more intense. Given the unique historical past of the Holocaust and the Arab-Israeli conflict, more explosive matter on both sides of the debate went into the discursive amalgamation of judgments concerning different aspects and periods of Jewish and Israeli history. Antisemitic statements—or accusations of antisemitism—sometimes resulted from this process. However, judging from the primary sources analysed during the research for this book, antisemitism was not a precondition or motivation for activism for the majority of radical left-wing activists in Cold War West Germany, another important difference from the self-avowed and pervasive antisemitism of the Nazis and neo-Nazis to whom the radical Left was often likened.

Restrictive definitions of political violence that exclude certain manifestations of violence—for example, state violence—are bound to obscure views of the legitimisation of political violence, a topic that should be studied more explicitly in other historical contexts. Discursive amalgamations of different forms of political violence were part of broader strategies of legitimisation and delegitimisation. Acceptance and success were decisive for these constructions' plausibility and ultimately for their continuity or erosion. The continued legitimacy of the West German authorities banked on the almost mythical reputation of economic success that the Federal Republic acquired as well as on the criminalisation of the more radical parts of the new social movements, a strategy that dovetailed with the depoliticisation of their agenda. At the same time, authorities made their use of violence appear legitimate and infinitely preferable to that of the undemocratic regimes of Germany's past. Ultimately, West German state legitimacy rested on the political attitudes and opinions of the vast majority of the population who did not share the socialist ideals animating the critiques of the challengers. This did not mean that the challengers went entirely without acceptance or success. Quite the contrary, they could have maintained their multitude of interrelated protest campaigns over several decades only by virtue of scoring repeated successes in setting political agendas and politicising of regimes of provision in response to crisis; bringing public attention to abusive or problematic uses of state power; and mobilising a sizeable minority of the population to devote at least some political resources to the promotion of alternative moral economies.



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