

Two Letters To Hanna Krabbe

Krabbe, along with the other members of the Holger Meins Commando, was to go on trial in May 1976 on charges relating to the Stockholm action. (M. & S.)

FIRST LETTER (MARCH 19, 1976)

The politicians' drivel is not what the people think, but what the politicians need them to think. And when they say "we," they are only trying with their drivel to mold what the people think and how they think it. The state wouldn't need opinion polls, nor would it need the *Verfassungsschutz*, if indoctrination by psychological warfare was as simple as that.

As Gramsci said, the legal country is not the real country; or more plainly stated: the dominant opinion is not the opinion of the dominated. What you say is bullshit. You reason in the realm of the imaginary, as if the enemy is the ideology which he sputters, the drivel, the platitudes that they've drummed into you from their bag of tricks with the politicians' cadence of consensus, as if the media and the people whom they pour all this shit on were one and the same thing. It is not real; it is the product of the counterinsurgency machine constructed by the BKA, the BAW, the *Verfassungsschutz*, the government, the media, the secret services, etc.

Just as the enemy is non-material, rather than material.

You don't ask yourself what the condition that Brandt calls "normal" really is—and you don't recognize in Buback's statement that he has determined the conflict—war and its dimensions—to be international, and that he speaks as a representative of U.S. capital's international interests. You only find it "absurd," and instead of analyzing it, you offer a single word—"CIA"—which is a metaphor for Buback's morally decadent policy—and which is gratuitous. You thereby incriminate yourself, because, in practice, you whine about the fact that this is war, after having clearly stood on our side in this war and having begun to struggle.

Your text resembles that of the legal American civil rights movement, which begs the question, if that is how you see things, why are you in here and not out there?

In any event, you are here.

The internationalism that you have struggled for and which the RAF represents is not that of international, inter-state organizations like the United Nations or Geneva; it is the internationalism of the war against imperialism being waged by the liberation movements in the Third World and in the metropole.

War—that is all. You won't find your bearings here by relying on rumors, but only by studying the facts and their connection to the class struggle.

If in isolation you do not make an effort to persistently and continuously analyze reality by understanding it on a material basis, in the context of the struggle—class struggle understood as war—it is because you've lost touch, you're coming apart, you are sick, which means you are starting to have a sick relationship with reality. That constitutes a betrayal in the face of the reality of torture and the effort that resistance demands if it is to be more than just a word.

It is not acceptable—in isolation you can't permit yourself, on top of everything else, to torment yourself. That, as Andreas has said, doesn't mean that you can avoid certain experiences in the process of liberation from alienation. But it is one thing to be destroyed because of trying to understand politics, the facts and how they relate to each other, to understand the group so as to act—and quite another to be destroyed because isolation strips you of all illusions about yourself, which can be a very hard pill to swallow.

And if it is the case that your capacity to act is based on socialization through fear and despair, then struggle on the basis of that.

Eventually you may understand—I can't say for sure—that we can only achieve something with words if they lead to a correct understanding of the situation in which each of us finds ourselves under imperialism, that it is senseless to want to fight with words, when one can only fight with clarity and truth.

Given the environment in which we are struggling—the postfascist state, consumer culture, metropolitan chauvinism, media manipulation of the masses, psychological warfare, and social democracy—and faced with the repression that confronts us here, indignation is not a weapon. It is pointless and empty. Whoever is truly indignant, that is to say, is concerned and engaged, does not scream, but instead reflects on what can be done.

That's the SPK—replacing the struggle with screams. It is not simply distasteful: in isolation it will destroy you, because it means opposing brutal, material repression with nothing more than ideology, instead of

opposing it with a psychological effort, which also implies a physical effort.

Arm the masses—even now, capital is doing this much more quickly: the cops, the army, and the radical right. So before you give up on the West German masses, or “the masses” in general, think about what it’s really like here. Ho¹ wrote in *l’Humanité*,² in 1922, “The masses are fundamentally ready for rebellion, but completely ignorant. They want to liberate themselves, but they don’t know how to begin.”

That is not our situation.

In our situation here and now, the most pressing issue we must address is how to explain the at times gruesome experiences we have had in isolation—which are intended to foster betrayal, capitulation, self-destruction, and de-politicization—so that you will not have to experience them any more. For if it is true that in the guerilla each individual can learn from every other individual, then it must be possible to communicate our experiences—the condition for which is understanding the collective as a process—a process for which the institutionalization of people in authoritarian boxes is anathema.

Understanding the collective as a process means struggling together against the system, which is very real and not at all imaginary.

Ulrike Meinhof
March 19, 1976

1 Ho Chi Minh was a founder and the leading figure in the Vietnamese Communist Party from 1941 until his death in 1969 at the age of seventy-nine.

2 *l’Humanité* is the newspaper of the French Communist Party.

SECOND LETTER (MARCH 23, 1976)

It's bullshit: the "psychiatric" section.

The objective at Ossendorf, like everywhere else, is extermination, and the psychiatrists participate, developing the methods which are applied by state security—psychiatry as a thoroughly imperialist science is a means, not an end.

Psychiatric treatment is a front in the psychological war; it is intended to persuade broken fighters of the absurdity of revolutionary politics, to deprive the fighters of their convictions. It is also a police tactic for destruction through "forced liberation," as Buback calls it, and its military interest is in recruitment—establishing control.

What Bückner³ does isn't psychiatric treatment—it's terror. He wants to wear you down. Using terms like therapy, brainwashing leaves you absolutely twisted. You must raise a shield against this frontal assault.

The Ossendorf method is the typical prison method, but at Ossendorf its design and application have been perfected, and are epitomized by Bückner and Lodt.⁴ It is aseptic and total. They deprive the prisoner of air until he finally loses his dignity, all sense of self, and all perception of what terror is. The goal is extermination. Psychiatric treatment is only one aspect, only one instrument among others. If you allow yourself to be paralyzed by it, like a deer in the headlights, if you fail to resist it, what else can be expected.

"No windows"—obviously. But there are even more unimaginable things about isolation—the sadism with which it is developed, the perfection of its application, the totality of the extermination pursued by the Security Group, and the shock we experience when we realize the intensity of the antagonism within which we have chosen to struggle, and when we recognize the nature of the fascism that rules here. This is not simply rhetoric that we are using, but is in fact an accurate description of the repression one encounters if one starts to engage in revolutionary politics in this country.

They cannot use psychiatry against someone who doesn't accept or want it. Your shrieks about psychiatry mystify the realities of isolation. It is effective—it must be struggled against, and, naturally, you must engage in war against Bückner's bullying.

So demand an end to acoustic surveillance; accept only visual surveillance, like in Stammheim. Naturally, it was also a struggle here to get

³ Georg Bückner was, at this time, the warden at Ossendorf penitentiary.

⁴ Lodt was, at this time, the Inspector for Security at Ossendorf penitentiary.

rid of the cop who came to listen to us, to be allowed to sit on the floor, etc. For you, only repression exists. That's perfectly clear.

Also, you are a pig. You pull the demand for association and the line on "prisoners of war" out of your bag of tricks, as if they are a threat—against Müller.¹ That is nonsense. We must have association and the application of the Geneva Convention, but what do you expect from Müller?

We struggle against them and the struggle never ends, and they won't make the struggle any easier for us. Obviously, if you only think in terms of bourgeois morality, you will soon run out of ammunition. It's idiotic. So, take care of yourself, because nobody else can do it for you in isolation.

Not even Bernd.²

Ulrike Meinhof
March 23, 1976

1 Herman-Josef Müller was the chief judge in the trial of the Holger Meins Commando.

2 Bernd Rössner, another member of the Holger Meins Commando.