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Interview with Comrades from the RAF

April 1985

Q. *The discussion that we wish to have with you is truly a new experience for all of us. We hope to obtain answers to questions that we and, certainly, others are asking ourselves. The principle points are the political developments during and after the prisoners' hunger strike and, specifically, the steps taken towards the development of the European front. To start immediately with concrete matters: the attacks against Audran and Zimmermann, which translated the ideas developed in your common statement with AD¹ into reality - could you again say something about what was behind this?*

A. For AD and ourselves it was necessary to attack the driving force for the European imperialist project through these actions: the Paris-Bonn axis. The essentials regarding this can be found in our joint text and in the communiqués. The actions were building blocks for the West European revolutionary strategy - as is also crucial for us now - to directly begin to build the political and military base for the West European front, for the strategic unity of revolutionaries in West Europe. In the joint text, we have spelled out the fundamental determining factors. To push this process forward, to transform our resolve into action in a directed and organized way, is what we have begun with Audran and Zimmermann, and this will be our orientation in the future, following this first successful breakthrough.

Q. *What was the function of these two figures, that is Audran and Zimmermann? There isn't much information in the communiqués.*

A. Both were key links in the military-economic structure of West Europe, Audran as head of International Affairs for the Minister of Defense², Zimmermann as the president of the *Bundesverband der Deutschen Luft-, Raumfahrt-, and Ausrüstungsindustrie* (BDLI)³. The BDLI is the political organization of the military-industrial complex in the FRG⁴. All of the arms manufacturers are members - to mention only the most important: MBB, Kraus-Maffei, Dornier, MTU – as are the electronics companies, such as Siemens, AEG, Philips, and the steel and chemical corporations. The association is financed by the large German banks and the Alliance. The BDLI collaborates directly with NATO as a

¹ Action. Directe, French anti-imperialist guerrilla group.

² In January 85, the RAF and AD released a common statement announcing their strategic and tactical unity, after which they carried out several common actions. This statement can be read at http://www.germanguerrilla.com/raf/documents/85_01.html

³ BDLI - Federal Union of German Aerospace and Heavy Industries.

⁴ FRG - Federal Republic of Germany, West Germany.

member of the Industrial Councilors Group (NIAG) and in the European Armament Industries Group (EDIG), which are part of IEPG (Independent European Program Group). This is where the most important arms manufacturers in the US, Canada and West Europe participate directly in military planning. In practice, they combine military strategy with the strategy of multinational capital, planning the research and development of new conventional, electronic and nuclear weapons, and discussing industrial transformation.

In the FRG itself, the BDLI works with the Ministers of Defense, of Research and of Economics, and with the Office of Arms Technology and Development (BWB) of the *Bundeswehr*⁵.

Zimmermann also sat on the Armaments Economic Work Group, where leaders of the German corporations meet regularly with representatives of the Ministers of Defense and the Generals of the *Bundeswehr*.

At the same time he was Vice-President of AECMA, that is the European Association of Aerospace and Aviation Industries, in which the arms manufacturers cooperate. Zimmermann represented the type of businessman who "thinks and acts transnationally." *Welt*⁶ wrote on this subject on February 2nd: "The head of the MTU is said to favour a tighter Franco-German and European aerospace cooperation on both the technical and the technological levels." And *Figaro*⁷, on February 6th wrote: "For the Paris-Bonn axis, pivot of a strong West Europe, based on strategic defense and the growth of the armaments industry, Zimmermann was the privileged interlocutor of the Minister of Defense for Franco-German military cooperation and was involved in the corresponding technologies."

Q. *"Privileged interlocutor;" he was probably principally this in his function as the head of the BDLI, and because he sat on many important European institutions. It remains the case that one can obtain very little information from the media. Part of the excitement after the action took the form of claiming he was a "simple" arms dealer, like a thousand others, so as to make the action seem to be just an "undirected emergency response." Tell us again precisely what the BDLI, IEPG, etc. are?*

A. We have here quotes from a "memorandum on the future of aeronautics in the FRG," published by the BDLI in 1984. The demands of capital are formulated exactly as they are now supported by Kohl⁸ and Mitterand⁹. The BDLI clearly states that they demand a "European security policy," increased cooperation with France, and, starting from there, with other European countries, and they demand from the Federal Government "significant budget increases". They want to share the dominant position with the US,

⁵ *Bundeswehr* - West German Army.

⁶ *Welt* - West German bourgeois news daily.

⁷ *Figaro* - French bourgeois news daily.

⁸ Helmut Kohl - West German Chancellor and head of the CDU, the Christian Democratic Party at the time.

⁹ François Mitterand - French Prime Minister and head of the Socialist Party at the time.

but, at the same time, European cooperation is the precondition for a technological advantage in the world market. Again two quotes: "German cooperation must be increased to achieve transnational cooperation and a stronger meshing in Europe" and "As well, such cooperation drives political integration."

We won't enumerate all of the projects, satellites, helicopters, etc.; everyone knows perfectly well about them; the newspapers are full of such details.

As for France, Audran was the one at the Ministry of Defense who pulled all of the strings for the cooperation and export of arms, whereas it was Zimmerman who fulfilled this function in the FRG, as the representative of the Military-Industrial Complex.

Military cooperation is a road along which the European project is driven.

Again, some information about the IEPG; in general, its function is to bring about West European weapons integration, with the goal of military integration and politico-military coordination. Its extraordinary significance comes from the fact that France participated from the beginning, even though it wasn't officially integrated into the structure of NATO. Since its foundation in 1975, the IEPG has worked to standardize the arms systems of the NATO states, which is the condition for other common armaments projects, and for a tighter politico-military integration. It is within this project that European cooperation is determined.

So again, Audran and Zimmermann represent the process of concentration of the capitalist commandos towards strategic-military ends. As we said in the communiqué, they must concentrate on pushing a common strategy for the solution of the economic crisis and on safeguarding their military domination. That is to say, they must centre their planning on war.

Q. *What were the reactions in the French media to your common actions with Action Directe?*

A. Well, the newspapers and the news were full of coverage. What they said in a completely heavy-handed way was all this bullshit; that we lead Action Directe, that there simply are no authentic revolutionary politics in France, but that everything is directed from outside. The same as with the CCC¹⁰ in Belgium. That was the line from the beginning; especially in *Libération*¹¹. They say that formerly AD was a militant antifascist group, which was okay, but now they are like us, they talk like us, have been consumed by us. Therefore, it's all over. It is clear why it is like that. They wish to avoid a political discussion. There is nothing left, no arguments, only this feeble propaganda. Another thing that they said was that all the armed groups are so weak and defeated that they must unify their logistics and commandos, but nobody really believes this. They were blown away everywhere when the joint text was published. In France, they quoted

¹⁰ CCC - Cellules Communistes Combattantes (Fighting Communist Cells), Belgian Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group.

¹¹ *Libération* - French Social Democratic news daily.

much of the text, at first without commentary. From mid-January, there were daily reports about the hunger strike and the actions in the FRG and other European countries and, we have heard, new BKA¹² posters on TV each night. After the action against Audran, it was widely published that we had done it and AD had only claimed it, and other things of that sort. They rationalized this by the fact that the commando was called Elisabeth von Dyck¹³ and that the statement was sent to DPA¹⁴ in two languages. Come on!

Q. You said at the beginning that the Paris-Bonn axis is the driving force of the imperialist project in Europe. What exactly do you mean by that?

A. When we say the European project and its military nucleus, that is to say, constructing the West European project as the strategic centre for imperialist reconstruction, two points are important.

They have been trying to unite Europe as a politico-economic nucleus for thirty years now. *Today*, the situation is such that there are, in essence, two issues for them. One is the military structure directed towards the exterior, that is to say, the placing of medium range missiles. It is all of the military projects, as they are enumerated in the joint text and the communiqués from AD and ourselves. All of these projects exist as a result of the politico-military cooperation between the FRG and France. The other issue is the unified campaign of war, under the leadership of the USA, which now proceeds and is visible at a new level. We will come back to that later.

Military policy is the driving force for the economy and for politics, for European integration; one can also see this in other areas. All of their efforts to arrive at a solution to the economic crises - unemployment, etc. - at the heart of the European community and formulate an "autonomous European policy" have failed, as have all of their efforts to mobilize people here for their project. What remains and what continues to function is the military cooperation within NATO and the concentration of capital on weapons production and new technologies, and on expanding the police and secret service structures, the coordination of the war against the revolutionary struggle or, to put it differently, the "internal line of defense." They are now at a decisive point, and that creates a significant opening for the anti-imperialist struggle, an opening from which, given the developments of the recent months, we can act. The question we face is whether they will succeed in pushing through their military strategy. They know full well that they have lost support for their aggressive policy and that their cover is more and more damaged with each revolutionary action. What's more, they fear not being able to get a handle on the growing crises within the metropolises themselves. There are already twenty million unemployed today, and in January, in two weeks, more than two hundred men froze to death in West Europe. They are now increasingly destroying the "social safety net" with which they have until now controlled the tendency towards poverty,

¹² BKA - West German Federal Criminal Bureau. The BKA produces regularly updated poster with photos of suspected RAF members. These posters are hung in banks, post offices, train stations, etc.

¹³ Elisabeth von Dyck - RAF member shot by police in 1979.

¹⁴ DPA - news wire service.

above all here in the FRG. They are destroying it for the benefit of their military project, because they can't finance it in any other way. In other words, we face the militarization of society, control and manipulation throughout Europe. The structuring of publicity, for example, via the "new media" can bring the dominant ideology to even the smallest Greek village, where people may have no work and little to eat, but they do have televisions with 12 channels. In other words, the bourgeoisie's ideal fantasy is unemployed people, "retired people," who are tied to their cable TV and chained to their beer. This simply expresses all of the contempt of this class.

These are just a few examples of the different centres where the contradictions will worsen. Our current breakthrough came just in time.

Q. *Would you also say that about the hunger strike? For many people it looked like this: the action followed by the end of the hunger strike¹⁵.*

A. Shit, no. We didn't do the action to "stop" the hunger strike. It was the practical step for the West European front. This is what we have worked for and why we have carried out the actions. We have achieved everything. In 81, we said the guerrilla, the struggle of the prisoners from the guerrilla and the struggle of the anti-imperialist militants are lines that shape, or will shape, the unity of the revolutionary front in West Europe. We have integrated the political effect, the mobilization begun by the prisoners' struggle, into our actions and have developed this dynamic into a breakthrough for the West European guerrilla. This has nothing to do with the campaign of psychological warfare lies repeated throughout the hunger strike; the prisoners directing the outside, or, more clearly, directing the actions from their cells. On this subject, the BAW¹⁶ and the BKA have always cited a "Strategy Paper" that they found in an apartment in Frankfurt. From us, there was no 84 Strategy Paper. What they found was a discussion paper of some militants, in which they developed their own ideas about their practice and the struggle of the prisoners and how they could unite the two. The purpose of this campaign of psychological warfare is clear; they now want to push to the limit their strategy to annihilate the prisoners, and to legally establish the existence of a "united RAF" so as to be able to further isolate the prisoners. But on this subject the prisoners have already said everything that needs to be said. We won't repeat it here.

Q. *In their statement ending the hunger strike, the prisoners said, "the breakthrough in the direction of the West European dimension of revolutionary practice necessarily provokes a united 'strategic', firm reaction from the entire chain of imperialist states."*

Yes, this is important. We know this from Belgian newspaper articles, from at least mid-January. And it was in this situation - the hunger strike, the failed action in

¹⁵ On December 1, 1984, the prisoners of the RAF began a hunger strike for association. On February 1, 1985, the Commando Patsy O'Hara of the RAF executed Ernst Zimmermann, head of the BDLI and board member for many arms manufacturers. On February 2, the prisoners broke their hunger strike, feeling they had succeeded in encouraging the development of the West European front and, hence, had nothing more to gain.

¹⁶ BAW - Federal Prosecutors Office.

Oberammergua¹⁷, the Belgian actions, the militant campaign during the Christmas-New Year period, the text from AD and ourselves - that the NATO Security Committee involved themselves directly. In this context the secret service organizations and the "anti-terrorist specialists" of the NATO states work together. They plan and coordinate measures against the revolutionary struggle here. They have been permanently in session from that time on, and for the first time the French Secret Services are officially involved because of "the increase of terrorist attacks against the institutions of West European defense and the joint text of the terrorist groups AD and the RAF have caused great anxiety" (*Le Soir*, Belgium). Parallel to this, the statement of the US government, of the State Department, that they fear more attacks and request that the western states "unite in the struggle against international terrorism." With regard to that, we should go over what has happened over the past year in this regard. Reagan's "Anti-Terror Directive" raised preventive and retaliatory strikes against guerrillas throughout the world to the level of a State doctrine. And for the first time, the coordination of counterinsurgency was made subordinate to a Military High Command. What's more, special squads were established, trained and prepared for action on all continents. Over the past year, the US Minister of Foreign Affairs Schultz, has described West Europe, the Middle East and Latin America as the three fronts - centers of revolutionary struggle - and we have a situation where the West European guerilla is on the offensive. By the reaction of the West European governments now, it has become clear that the line of conducting a unified war has become the global logic of the chain of imperialist states. The question of how the European governments can act against our breakthrough is now discussed at all of the international meetings - the Ministers of Foreign Affairs for NATO, for example, or the secret meetings of the Military Supreme Commanders of NATO, such as the one in Copenhagen... everywhere, even at the managers symposium in Davos. Mainly, what this means is the creation of a common political line. After the Audran action, occurring at the same time as the FP-25 attacks¹⁸ in Portugal, the relationship between the United states and Europe became obvious when Schultz intervened, yet again, directly in European politics; a logical reaction, because for them it is war. That was the cutoff point. The confrontation was suddenly on a new level; the West European guerrilla versus the entire imperialist *raison d'etre*. At that point, it was no longer a question of whether to satisfy the demands of the prisoners or not. Their decision was to push back our breakthrough by murdering the prisoners. One must be clear that they had decided to allow the prisoners to die. For the Federal Government, it was no longer a question of whether to accept the political price, the price for them if they liquidated the prisoners, but whether the imperialist chain, specifically the West European governments, should combine their efforts against the guerrilla here. And that means militarily, because they have already lost politically against the armed struggle here, as all of their illusions of an end to the guerrilla struggle here have been destroyed. Regarding this it is necessary to understand the bomb at the large, crowded department store in Dortmund. As long as we've existed, and now against the entire resistance, the Secret Service has organized such actions, has used them, has carried them out themselves. Today, they are less certain

¹⁷ The RAF attempted to bomb the NATO training school in Oberammergua in January 1985. The bomb was discovered and defused.

¹⁸ The FP-25 was a guerrilla group that came into existence in response to the military smashing of the 1975 revolution in Portugal.

that there are not more and more people who find our actions and those of the militants just. As such, no options remain for them except to wage their violent psychological war against the people, who must be made to fear *us*. In this same regard, they offer a reward of a million DM to those who collaborate with the cops.

If US representative Schultz says, frankly, "Innocent people may also die in the struggle against terrorism," that implies exactly such counter-actions. Dortmund was directed against the mobilization during the hunger strike, against the political nature and the clarity of the actions¹⁹. It is clear beyond a doubt that it was the cops themselves who claimed it as "Action Christian Klar."²⁰ Even *TAZ*²¹ played a leading role.

And another thing in this context; when the airplane hijacking happened in Tehran in December, the US government concentrated their navy and put the RDF²² in position. The Iranian government was threatened with direct intervention if they didn't put an end to the hijacking. This was the context in which the US State Department announced that the US would henceforth carry out retaliatory actions in the Middle and Far East. We stress this, because it shows how intense the current situation is. They have brought the war to a new level, and this is a condition that we must take into account, that is to say, that we must anticipate in practice.

The decision of the prisoners was perfectly just.

Q. *You also say that for the imperialist states it was a decision with regards to implantation.*

A. That is a phrase from the statement breaking off the hunger strike, which the guy from the *TAZ* got so worked up about, because he hoped to score some political points from the prisoners' struggle. After everything we've said, this should be clear. There exists, for the imperialist states, which are in substantial crisis, only one strategy and only one objective, stopping the world revolutionary process. This strategic military objective is directed both internally and externally, and they must carry it through even at the cost of sharpening the contradictions between the state and society and taking another step towards fascism.

Q. *You haven't said anything about the Oberammergau action.*

A. For us, it is clear that the need to attack NATO and American military strategy must cut across our entire revolutionary process. It must always be a cornerstone of revolutionary strategy. The first step towards the unification of the anti-imperialist struggle in Western Europe was the series of attacks against the NATO-US war strategy. Many people are now aware of what NATO policy means. We wanted to continue in this

¹⁹ Refers to clandestine actions of aboveground militants.

²⁰ Christian Klar - RAF prisoner.

²¹ *TAZ* - left of center news daily in West Germany. Printed RAF communiqués and statements, but was scathingly critical of the RAF in its editorials.

²² RDF - Rapid Deployment Forces.

vein with the attack against the SHAPE School. We wanted to bring the struggle to a new level, as we have said, to the real level of the war. In this school, directly subordinate to the Headquarters in Brussels, the cadre of the integrated leadership of NATO are trained, amongst other things, in how to carry out conventional and nuclear war. These are the superior officers; most from the US and other NATO states. To hit them directly was the goal of the action.

Q. *Why do you think it is that the action did not succeed?*

A. We planned it like this: somebody drove in a car and parked it next to the school in the parking lot. The SHAPE School is isolated on a section of *Bundeswehr* Administrative School property.

We did not think that the Bundeswehr soldiers would know which US soldiers belonged there and which did not, so there would be no problem leaving once inside. The issue was getting past the door, and this was the reason for the chosen cover. If something went wrong, we needed to be able to protect the person driving the car. To drive a car in, park, return; all of that was no problem. But as we later learnt, just when one of us passed the door an officer of the *Bundeswehr*, the replacement chief at the SHAPE School arrived. He, of course, knew all of the soldiers and must have noticed something immediately. After that, they had one and a half hours to find the car and defuse the bomb. In any event, we didn't intend to say much about the action, because shortly after that our common text with AD was published, and the action would have been clearly understood in the light of Haig²³, Ramstein²⁴, Kroesen²⁵ and the entire mobilization against NATO in West Europe.

Q. *There was a strong national and international mobilization during the hunger strike. What do you think about this?*

A. We have not yet had time to evaluate everything that happened, but we can certainly say that there is now a stable base from which we can act. What is so impressive is that so many groups and individuals from different resistance movements – this was true in other European countries as well — joined in a common struggle with the prisoners.

This was the first offensive of the prisoners, the resistance and the West European guerrilla.

These experiences must now be built upon as a conscious beginning in the direction of

²³ The RAF attacked and narrowly missed killing US General and then NATO Head of Staff, Alexander Haig, on June 25, 1979. The communiqué for this action can be read at http://www.germanguerilla.com/raf/documents/79_06_25.html

²⁴ The RAF attacked the Headquarters of the US Air Force in Europe, in Ramstein, on August 31, 1981. The communiqué for this action can be read at http://www.germanguerilla.com/raf/documents/81_08_31.html

²⁵ The RAF attacked and injured the Commanding General of the US Army and Head of NATO's Middle East Section, General Kroesen, on September 13, 1981. The communiqué for this action can be read at http://www.germanguerilla.com/raf/documents/81_09_15.html

the West European front.

Q. And what does this mean concretely? How will it continue?

A. With regards to reflections about "how it will continue," we can only speak in general terms. These are concrete political and, above all, practical questions, which can only be answered and resolved in practice. But this isn't a discussion for a newspaper, which takes place under the eyes of the cops. One can go into the political questions, but one cannot go into the more important issues, the questions of practice. What can be developed from this new base? As the prisoners have said, we must develop the unity of the resistance as the practical and political expression of what we have won together, and as the qualitative leap forward in the revolutionary struggles within the NATO states, the leap towards a West European dimension. Build the contacts and the structures that each individual and the entire resistance need, structures which set subjectivity free, in which the practical steps to build a real base are taken together by those who now have a common conception and a common desire oriented toward the attack. Build a base beyond the reach of the secret services, one which they have no chance of infiltrating - meaning: build the illegal organization of the front autonomously from within the resistance.

Q. That is to say then that it is possible for people to organize themselves illegally in an autonomous way so as to struggle along with you in the front, as is indicated in the communiqué from the comrades who carried out the action in Bonn against the "Technical Mission." They signed themselves "Illegal Militants."

A. No, it means more than that. What you are describing is only part of it. The entire idea of the front is based on self-determination, on the force of independent political and practical organization by groups that carry out attacks to achieve their own goals. From our point of view, the activity and the growth of the front must occur in the illegal context. There is no blueprint or "master plan," because the front is only possible as an open practical process. Those who struggle in the context of the front, or who want to, must organize themselves appropriately, oriented towards the practice which they desire, and as a function of that practice and of nothing else, and that must be done at all levels. It requires a commitment from each particular individual. In the case of the comrades who carried out the action in Bonn, that was the correct development from their subjective process and their practical conception. We can't discuss this in general terms; abstract debates about "illegality" make no sense. If it is possible for some "Illegal Militants," that will make the possibility clear for others who want this sort of practice for themselves.

**Members of the Red Army Faction
April 85**