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We Must Search For Something New

Red Army Faction Discussion Paper - August 1992

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“Proletarian revolutions... naturally critique themselves, they take breaks in their steps forward, they seemingly end up back where they started, they jeer at the cruelly fundamental shortcomings, weaknesses, arid miserable experiences of their first attempts. But when they seem to have thrown their opponents down, thereby sucking new life out of the earth and once again aligning themselves against the enemy, they are shocked at the new realization of the incredible degree of their own purpose, until such time as the time is right, when it's no longer possible to turn back, and the conditions cry out: Hic Rhodus; Hic Salta.” - Karl Marx

In our letter of April 10, we stated that we realized that one of our mistakes has been too little discussion of our own processes. We have been sharply criticized for this from all sides. What we offered was self-indulgence, not answers to the questions which arose from our political situation. It was unnecessary, apolitical chatter, and besides this, we failed on our promise to discuss our mistakes. Rather than have all of this get us upset, we would like to briefly go into all of this.

Today, when we take a step forward in our history, it's important to reflect also on our history, to make it useful for both ourselves and for others. Anything else would be pointless. We have a history of 22 years of struggle, and it's important in this country to learn as much as possible from the experiences of those struggles so as to move on into the future. That's why we need to discuss mistakes, so that they won't be repeated in the future. Our identity and our pride are not based on notions of infallibility, nor do we think that mistakes should call into question the legitimacy of revolutionary struggles. On the contrary: we have some things to say that we think are relevant to future struggles.

We would like to have an open discussion with all those who are struggling for changes here. Open means talking about everything which is significant, and not feeling the need to have one's own, radiant position on every issue. Comrades who go about things in that way should rid themselves of that bourgeois tendency - the bourgeois are pleasing unto themselves. The experience that such an outlook brings nothing good has been proven by the socialist States. Many liberation movements had to then adjust to this, and so did we. This is an outlook from a past epoch and won't be of any use in the future. There are

many people here who swallow up the texts of Trikont¹ liberation movements and then criticize a past phase and, from that, develop a plan for the next phase. But when we do this, there's an uproar.

The rigid tendency to cling to certain clear notions is often times a sign of a fear of criticism, and it's also often an attempt to avoid one's own uncertainties and the questions of others. If we didn't talk about our experiences, we'd have to take all the criticisms leveled against us, which we have struggled against over the last few years, and drag them through one enormous discussion. We aren't concerned with this. Taking a step forward means, to us, engaging in a deep-reaching process of discussion rather than removing ourselves from the discussions. It has become increasingly clear to us over the last few weeks that we need to be more concrete in our discussions about what we have been up to for the last few years so that people can more easily understand our recent steps. We know that some comrades see our steps not only as the result of the changed international situation, but rather one we should have taken back in '89. But the proposal to see our role of the last few years as "a form of confrontation" is also unrealistic. This can't be guerrilla politics. Guerrilla politics is a permanent process of searching for right answers within the existing, changing political situation, and also a redevelopment of one's own strength.

In our discussion process since '89/'90, it became increasingly clear within the group that we had to break off from our old clarities, directions, and orientations and make a change. We would not be able to find solutions for new situations in old goals. Now, we can only speak of our own discussions and process and not those of our imprisoned comrades. We see this text as a part of a discussion with them. In any case, they hardly have the opportunity to take full part in this discussion. That's another reason why we must fight for their freedom.

As for our history in the 1980's: not a single one of us who are in the RAF today was a member prior to 1984. That means that we did not take part in the discussions in the group in the early 80's, for example when the "Front Paper"² was issued. To come to a full understanding of our history at this time - and even more so for the history since the 70's - we need to have a discussion with our imprisoned comrades.

For those of us who joined the guerrilla in '84 and thereafter, the early 80's were a time of significant experiences, decisions, and changes in our country, and from out of these came the decision to take up armed struggle. This was a period of struggle around many issues: the anti-NATO movement; the 1981 hungerstrike of the political prisoners, during which Sigurd Debus was murdered³; anti-nuclear struggles; struggles against Startbahn

¹ Trikont refers to the 3 continents of the so-called "Third World" - Asia, Africa and Latin America.

² In May 1982, the RAF released a paper which called for the building of an anti-imperialist front in Europe with the urban guerrilla as the vanguard. This paper can be viewed at http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/82_05.html

³ Sigurd Debus was an anti-imperialist prisoner who was killed in 1981 when he went on hungerstrike in solidarity with prisoners of the RAF. His death was the result of force-feeding with a high carbohydrate solution, which, under the circumstances, there was virtually no chance his body could cope with.

West⁴; squatting actions; and of course the mass-mobilizations against the stationing of cruise missiles. We took part in these struggles ourselves and we had the same experience as everyone else: we can't breakthrough this power.

During this time, there weren't just hundreds of thousands of people on the streets, it was also about contradictions involving millions of people, and they weren't able to make the powers budge on even one demand - so it's only logical that the struggles became more radical and more militant. Many people decided to organize various militant initiatives during these years, especially for attacking the U.S./NATO military strategy. This was designed to give our struggles a new strength and vitality. Every day, the State just ignored the protests of hundreds of thousands of people in the streets, while at the same time attacking these people who took their demands to the streets harder and harder. It was only a coincidence that our side didn't suffer more deaths (Klaus Jürgen Rattay, Olaf Ritzmann⁵) and serious injuries than it did. The cruelty and brutality inflicted on the prisoners in the '81 hungerstrike and the club and gas attacks by police and paramilitary units showed that the State was prepared to cause deaths to our side. Of stationing of the cruise missiles, Kohl remarked: "They protest; we govern." This summed up the balance of power against all those who wanted something different.

These developments were also to be noticed at the international level, for example in the confrontations between liberation movements and liberated nations and imperialism. This was the time of coordinated roll-back: the cruise missiles were to hold the Soviets in check; the bombing of Libya⁶; the Malvinas war⁷; the destruction of the Palestinian refugee camps in Sabra, Shatila, Tel Zaatar⁸; against the liberation movement in El Salvador⁹; low-intensity warfare to drag out wars and wear out the population; conflict in

⁴ Startbahn West - a NATO runway in Frankfurt, West Germany. It was the site of long-term, broad-based resistance for anti-imperialist as well as ecological reasons. This long-term conflict reached a new level on November 2, 1987, when two cops were shot and killed during a clash with demonstrators. This runway is connected to Air Base bombed by the RAF- Action Directe Commando.

⁵ Olaf Ritzmann died when he was hit by a commuter train while being chased by police at a demonstration in Hamburg in 1980. In 1981 Klaus Jürgen Rattay was killed when hit by a bus while fleeing police at a demonstration in West Berlin.

⁶ On April 15th 1986, the Reagan regime carried out air strikes against a number of ground targets in Libya. These were claimed to be retaliation for a bombing in the West Berlin discotheque on April 5th which injured 200 people including 63 American soldiers (one soldier and one civilian were killed)– nevertheless, no hard evidence of Libyan involvement in the Berlin bombing was even produced.

⁷ In 1982 Argentina occupied the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands, a small archipelago 300 miles off its coast which were (and still are) controlled by Britain. This led to the Malvinas war between Argentina and Britain, in which 255 British and 649 Argentines were killed.

⁸ In 1976 Lebanese Christian militia besieged the Palestinian refugee camp of Tel Zaatar for thirty days, before overcoming its defenders with a final assault that left hundreds dead. As the last Palestinian fighters surrendered, the militiamen tied them (still alive) to the back of their cars and drove them, dragging them to the Dog river where the bodies were dumped.

From September 15th to 18th in 1982, after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Christian militiamen associated with the far-right Phalange entered the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps and went on a killing spree under the watchful eyes of the Israeli army. A body count by the International Committee of the Red Cross revealed 2750 dead, the real figure is thought to be much higher and may never be known.

⁹ Throughout the 1980s a popular left-wing guerilla force, the FMLN, was active in El Salvador. With US aid in the form of military "advisors", mercenaries and arms, the Salvadorean military and paramilitary

the lands of southern Africa; the contra war, which prevented independent development and led to deaths from war and hunger. We can only briefly sketch the developments of these years; in each case, imperialism sought to fulfill its centuries-old dream of subduing all of humanity with all forms of violence, including nuclear weapons. It sought to push through its plans and projects despite massive contradictions, and thus all forms of resistance had to be crushed and dissolved.

So it became increasingly clear to us and many others that we had to build up a strength here which could also make use of militant and militarist methods. From all our experiences of these years, it was clear that we needed a new quality of struggle if we wanted to confront this power - the only alternative was to give up and subject ourselves to this power. For ever more people, the proposal set forth by the RAF in '82 in the "Front Paper" - namely, to organize together as guerilla, militant, and resistance - seemed to fit with the consequences of people's own experiences. For some of us, it meant that in 1984, we decided to join the guerrilla.

There were many considerations which led us to believe that our struggles had to become increasingly militant in their organization if we hoped to achieve anything. That was clear during the '84/'85 hungerstrike.

During this campaign, many people from various groups carried out fire-bomb attacks and attacks with explosives to press the demand for the regroupment of the political prisoners, and this was a concrete result of the experiences of the early 80's. Many people realized that if the demands were to be pushed through, if we were to insure that that State didn't just murder the prisoners during the strike, then we would have to employ a variety of methods from demos to press conferences to struggles with a higher degree of confrontation.

It's always the same with the spiral of violence - the struggles of the left and the revolutionary forces are always made responsible. To this, what we have said briefly about the developments from the early 80's shows that it was clearly different than this. The decision to form a guerrilla and to take on armed struggle was a decision made by people all around the world in response to the ruling conditions; to the ignorance of the ruling powers in the face of peoples' demands and struggles; to the continuation of destructive developments and war despite massive resistance; to repression and exploitative relations with regard to the resistance. When you seek to change those conditions which don't allow you and others to live, the decision to take up arms is always made last - never first. You first try many other methods, and then you make the decision - ultimately a life or death decision - that it's clear or at least somewhat more clear that an armed force is necessary, because without it nothing will be achieved.

Throughout its entire 22 year history, the RAF has always been a relatively small group. During this time, the imprisonment of comrades almost wiped us out more than once, but

death squads carried out a scorched earth police against the entire peasant population and those suspected of left-wing sympathies. Fifty thousand people - the vast majority of them peasants - were murdered by government forces and their right-wing allies in this dirty war.

from the relations and contradictions in this country, there were always more comrades who took up the armed struggle and carried it forward to press for changes in these conditions. The year 1984 was such a year for us. That summer, seven comrades were imprisoned and the State again openly celebrated our total demise.

For us, the fact was that no one involved in guerrilla politics from the earlier years remained.

In '84, we made our attempt to make a common offensive by West European guerrilla groups together with the militant resistance here and we often came under heavy pressure. On the one hand, there were those that were apprehensive of imperialism achieving a total victory if we did not make a common intervention quickly. They were to develop a power force here in the metropolises which, along with the world-wide liberation movements, would prevent imperialism from turning back history. On the other hand there was us with our experiences. We were afraid that the State would once again be able to inflict heavy damage on us before we had even taken the first steps towards this common front.

The “front” concept assumed that our development of a force in the power-centers would be able to confront the development and escalation of imperialism in its attempt to roll-back the world-wide liberation movements. We didn't envision the success of any of the liberation movements. Despite this, the number of victims increased. Everywhere, the numbers of dead and wounded and displaced persons increased, with no end to the war in sight - quite the contrary, for low-intensity warfare strategy which imperialism was escalating during this period was designed to wear people down and deny them their hopes of a life of dignity, freedom, and self-determination by confronting them with the prospects of never-ending war. Our attempt was to break through the boundaries which had been imposed upon the world-wide liberation struggle and to prevent imperialism's victory by blocking its efforts in the power-centers. That was our central idea: to build the front in Europe as one part of a global liberation front.

The consequences of the unfolding of imperialism's international strategies here in the metropolises was a decline in many peoples' living conditions. The number of people no longer needed by Capital to achieve profits steadily rose, while at the same time production became increasingly focused on military production, and restructuring meant that hundreds of thousands of jobs were rationalized away. It was the time of the 2/3 society being pushed through here, in other words, the powers made it clear that 1/3 of the population were no longer needed and were superfluous - and that they should also feel as such. On account of imperialism's focus on rollback and war, the rich nations of Western Europe - especially West Germany and France - linked up their high-tech and military industries. This was designed to force the States of Western Europe into a common political trading bloc so as to match the power of Japan and the USA.

We raised these points in our common offensive with our comrades in Action Directe¹⁰

¹⁰ Action Directe was a French anti-imperialist guerrilla organization with which the RAF cooperated in the 1980s.

and militant groups here, since the fast and efficient implementation of this would determine whether the West European States would be able to fulfill their specific role in the war against the liberation struggles. We saw our central role in this as aligning with all revolutionary forces in Western Europe, wherever possible, so as to organize against this development. For us, that meant: to sharpen the international strategy in our own country through our attacks on the strategic pillars of imperialist politics.

At that time we were conscious of the fact that there were very few of us here and in all of Western Europe and we accepted that as natural. Working from this assumption, in other words, from our own weak forces, we were convinced that we could come to a sharp form of action. In this time of global escalation of war and destruction, we didn't really discuss building a relevant force to counter this development, but rather we sought to unite the various more-or-less isolated agitating revolutionary forces.

With our first steps in the development of this front proposal, we found ourselves in the middle of a historical upheaval. And even though we weren't conscious of it then, we were really running against the times. Even afterwards we thought, if we don't act fast, it'll be too late, and imperialism will have decided the entire epoch in its favor.

Our orientation towards the possibility of swift and sharp action in our initiatives had, in hindsight, catastrophic effects. This way of thinking leads automatically to militarist escalation and obscures the view of political processes and possibilities. In the various multiple struggles we didn't see any possibilities or room for ideas, rather we only saw separation, instead of searching for what linked the various consciousnesses together so as to find out together what was going on. In this limited political corner, it wasn't possible for the front concept to develop a strong political force. Our practice was primarily determined by the political explosiveness of our targets and the coordinated sharpness of our actions.

So we never saw the possibility to renew and redevelop the links to the struggles of the early 80's, the struggles which we ourselves came out of. That which arose from the consequences of the lack of results of our struggles - namely, common organizing and choice of targets - could have been an answer for others' experiences. Many people over the years just withdrew into resignation, but this shouldn't have happened. These people didn't come to grips with the system and its destructiveness, but they did resign themselves to it, because they hadn't found any answers for how to push through changes here. We had an answer, or at least a start, but we weren't able to explain how we could renew the links with the movements and the people who, for example, were struggling against the stationing of the cruise missiles and imperialist destruction, or who were struggling against projects like the Wackersdorf atomic program¹¹, and how we could make a common strength against this destruction together with these people. Our notion of a "front" was too narrow for some people, it was only designed for those in the internationalist struggle against the strategic imperialist developments. There was no room for other ideas and proposals.

¹¹ In Wackersdorf, a reprocessing plant for nuclear waste was planned, but the opposition of the local population against the project was of such strength that the construction of the plant was given up.

There were other comrades involved in the front process whose history and experiences were in the anti-NATO movement and who wanted to develop the front concept so that we seek ties to unite the struggles. But our narrow focus and that of others seemed to allow no room for the thoughts and proposals of these comrades. For these comrades, a central point was always the question of how our initiatives could help develop a broad and strong force. But we hardly touched on these points in our discussions. We were more concerned with estimating imperialist developments and advances and looking at our lines of attack against this. When other comrades wanted to develop the front into a different revolutionary strength, when they questioned our statement of the need to “wage the war here at the level of the international counter-revolution”, we often just dismissed this as signs of personal weakness and indecisiveness. This political problem of the diversity of political outlooks was often just negated and dismissed as subjectivism.

One of our fundamental thoughts during those years, namely that the level of confrontation between the revolutionary forces and imperialism here in the metropolises was to be determined by the sharpness of the international confrontation, contradicted the development of a broad revolutionary force here. We often said that such actions serve to polarize, which is true, but they also produce false divisions, rather than bringing people together.

Our actions against responsible military leaders, economic officials, and functionaries from the political apparatus were deemed effective and morally legitimate by many people. They were legitimate actions which sprang from the sharpness of our own living situation and oppression, and they made millions of people realize that the powers that be are responsible for war and global distress. This wasn't the case with the Air Base action when the GI was shot¹² Neither of these were developed from the situation here, neither had a basis in conditions here which people could identify with, rather its basis was the war being waged by imperialism and the U.S. army in other parts of the world. In terms of further developing a revolutionary struggle here and finding roots in the society, it was a big mistake.

“Our heads are round, that way we can change directions in our thought.”

In 1989, we were confronted with the legacy which the front process has left for us. There were arrests and heavy sentences handed down to comrades in the legal resistance and investigations for “membership in the RAF” against people all over Germany, and many comrades in the anti-imperialist resistance began to withdraw. At the same time, many groups fell apart. Many people who saw a role for themselves in the front process became resigned or, at least, frustrated. The foundations of the May Paper of 1982 - the

¹² On August 8th 1985 the George Jackson Commando of the RAF bombed the Rhein-Main Air Base near Frankfurt. RAF militants were able to gain entry to the Air Base using the ID card of an American GI, Edward Pimental, whom they had murdered the day before. To read the RAF's communiqué on this bombing see http://www.germanguerilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/85_08_08.html. A subsequent communiqué regarding Pimental's killing can be read http://www.germanguerilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/85_08_25.html and finally this question is discussed at length in an interview with RAF members at http://www.germanguerilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/85_09.html

common front between the guerrilla and the resistance - were a step in the right direction, but we were not successful in developing a productive link between the struggle of the guerrilla and the struggles of other comrades who had developed a praxis from other modes of life, and we were not able to revive and advance and strengthen the revolutionary process.

In capitalism, hierarchy is a part of the social structure which everyone is subjected to from day one. We didn't dissolve this structure within our own ranks. Through our strong orientation on attacks and our sole orientation towards the projects and strategies of imperialism, we reproduced this structure within our own group. These were false divisions which stood between us and other comrades, and again between them and others in the legal associations. In this structure, the guerrilla was not only a special part of the struggle, rather it was the absolute part. Waging armed struggle here and operating from a status of illegality was not seen as part of a larger whole, rather we regarded it as the highest form of struggle. Many people measured themselves according to this and were broken by it. Today we see this as the result of being too focused on attacks on the power structure. Through this concentration, armed actions were quickly regarded as the best or most important. But this form of evaluation stands in the way of revolutionary development.

At this time, we had a false orientation and we passed this on to others. Certainly, attacks on strategic projects of the ruling powers are an integral part of guerrilla politics. But it's wrong to become exclusively dedicated to this. Such an orientation doesn't aid in the question of the development of a political process. Understanding what steps to take and why the ruling powers need to be attacked should not exclude the need to discuss our own goals, which forces and struggles are near to our own, and what links can be sought out; links which are not renewed merely so that others begin to orient themselves to us.

We recognize today that one of our big mistakes was to wholly adopt the orientation of our previous comrades back in '84 without questioning it, and accepting the "Front Paper" as correct without seeing what we should change or redevelop. We only did this as the result of our actions: it became increasingly clear that Western Europe, with Germany at its head, was going to rise to become a world power.

From the experiences in Nicaragua and El Salvador in particular, a new discussion of the possibilities of armed struggle arose. The Sandinistas had shown that reality was different than they had previously assumed. The liberation struggle doesn't always play out as the theory directs; the people didn't support the guerrilla, rather the armed forces supported the people. In the last phase, the orientation became centered on the struggle of the people. From El Salvador came the discussion of the experience of double-power: the FMLN had always recognized that the organization of day-to-day life had to go hand-in-hand with the rest of the struggle.

We examined these experiences, but failed to see what they meant to us, rather we just decided that the situation in these countries was different and left it at that. These developments - just as after the Intifada in Palestine in '87 - were the beginning of new

processes of orientation of armed liberation struggles in many countries towards the idea of organizing from below. “The problem is as follows, is the guerrilla in a position to form a realistic power alternative, is it an option for the peoples’ movement; not to be an alien body which the peoples’ movement is obliged to follow, rather a project whose base and rearguard is its center of power.” (a quotation from comrades in UC-ELN¹³, Colombia)

These new orientations were also the result of changes in the international balance of power, when it became clear that success would only be achieved through a much longer struggle. We didn’t sufficiently realize this and we only escalated in response to imperialist rollback.

One result of our conduct at that time was the drying up of our discussions with many political comrades. Many people we were previously associated with, on account of the hierarchy which was the logical result of these political proposals, didn’t criticize us or push through their own contradictions, proposals, or thoughts. In many peoples’ eyes, we were The authority, and they oriented themselves to us and failed to further develop their own thoughts. We ourselves were often not open to criticism and we had no positive proposals for the variety of thoughts for the development of another side. So we lost the chance to develop a broader orientation from a living process of exchange.

In all that we are self-critiquing now, no one should forget that we also made mistakes in other realms. The world-wide counter-revolution, the Contras in Nicaragua, Angola, and Mozambique¹⁴; NATO’s arms race; the military attacks on Libya and Grenada¹⁵; the resonating increase in the distress on the Three Continents - this was the reality which we were operating within. Internally, there was the extremely high degree of repression which excluded all thoughts of a viable revolutionary development for those people put

¹³ UC-ELN: Unión Camilista-Ejército de Liberación Nacional (Camilist Union-National Liberation Army), a left-wing guerilla organization in Colombia.

¹⁴ The people of Nicaragua were the victims of a terror campaign waged by the Contras, a number of paramilitary groups armed and financed by the United States and international right-wing networks. Most Contra attacks were directed at civilian targets such as people involved with coffee plantations and farming cooperatives. In November 1984, the Nicaraguan government announced that since 1981 the contras had assassinated 910 state officials and killed 8,000 civilians. (For more see William Blum’s “Nicaragua 1981-1990 Destabilization in slow motion” from his book *Killing Hope*, or at http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Blum/Nicaragua_KH.html)

In Angola during the late 1970s and 1980s the (initially Maoist) group UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi, received South African and American financing and arms to wage war against the Soviet-backed MPLA government (on occasion, troops from the Apartheid State provided direct support during UNITA battles with the MPLA forces).

In 1976 the racist government in “Rhodesia” (later Zimbabwe) set up an anti-communist guerilla group, Renamo, in Mozambique in the hopes of preventing that newly-independent country from supporting the anti-colonial resistance in “Rhodesia”. Renamo outlived the racist Rhodesian regime, becoming one of the most violent and blood-drenched anti-communist guerilla armies in the world. In their raids on towns and villages, Renamo sometimes engaged in wholesale massacres of civilians, and by the late 1980s its war against the pro-Soviet Mozambique State had claimed over 100,000 victims, and caused 1,000,000 people to be displaced.

¹⁵ In 1983 the United States invaded the Caribbean island of Grenada to suppress its Marxist government and establish a pro-American regime. For attack on Libya, see note #6.

under heavy pressure. The years 1985/86 were also the high-point of the smear campaign against us, when TV accounts came out daily. The repression which followed the '86 Offensive¹⁶ was the State's answer to the beginnings of a commonly-acting front, which, due to its narrow orientation, was no longer able to further develop the process for us.

In this case, we let the political process slip through our hands. We never dealt with the question of becoming rooted in the society. Our reaction was to expand the confrontation from our side. In doing this, we introduced false impulses into the discussions of the resistance movement. After the '86 Offensive, we decided that the only answer to increased repression was to organize in illegality. The question of how to bring the State to its political boundaries wasn't central to our discussion. So we helped bring about a process where more and more comrades defensively withdrew from open associations and dropped out of discussions, even when they saw no perspectives for themselves and couldn't imagine adopting illegality. In many cities, this happened to such a degree that the demand for regroupment was never made in public. For a long time, people no longer struggled for an open space to make this demand. During this time, there were of course illegal leaflets and newspapers, but these can only achieve so much.

This was the background to which the State saw an opportunity to turn the screws a little tighter by hitting comrades with heavy sentences who had pushed the demand for regroupment.

Alongside this development, for us and those in political associations with us, there were other divisive political developments such as the struggle around Startbahn West which reached its peak with the shooting of the cops in November 1987. At the same time, the struggle to preserve the Hafenstrasse¹⁷ was an entirely new experience. This was a different process than our own.

This was an experience which increasingly worked its way into our consciousness. It started many discussions in our ranks and got us thinking about how those people were able to wage a committed struggle for their goal, to live according to their own perspective, and to stand up to the State apparatus with the same commitment, while successfully struggling along with thousands of different people throughout the city and elsewhere. It wasn't only this form of coalition politics in which everything functioned to push through whatever position possible, but rather the discussion of a common advance was central, while at the same time sifting through and understanding everything, despite the various histories and proposals of the people involved. They carried out this process to its conclusion out in the open. With this strength, they withstood the "hard line" politics of the State. That was the first time since 1977, when the State pushed the resistance to its absolute limits with the murders of Gudrun, Andreas, and Jan¹⁸, that there

¹⁶ The RAF carried out a number of attacks in 1986 including the assassinations of Karl-Heinz Beckurts (see http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/86_07_09.html) and Gerald von Braunmühl see http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/86_10_10.html).

¹⁷ A group of squatted buildings in Hamburg which has been the focus of strong repression by the State. The State has long maintained that the Hafenstrasse is a "RAF nest".

¹⁸ Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe were three founders of the RAF who were murdered by the State in 1977 at Stammheim prison.

was the experience of being able to push through a struggle despite the State's opposition.

The Hafen events made it possible once again for people to experience the fact that it is possible to develop another way of living. A life that is not crushed by the principles of capitalism's day-to-day reality. Because the comrades there were very clear about their goals, the struggle was able to attract a lot of people. And out of the Hafenstrasse arose many subsequent internationalist initiatives which launched discussions well beyond the Hafen's own boundaries, for example the Palestinian slogans on the outside walls, or the support which was given to the Roma being threatened with deportation. These initiatives showed how closely tied international solidarity is to peoples' conditions here and how it can be developed from a position of strength. (And we say this in opposition to the remarks made by Georg Fülberth in the August edition of *Konkret*, when he said that the struggles for living conditions and social change here had no bearing on the global situation and were, in fact, often to the benefit of the ruling powers.)

The concrete result of the struggle around the Hafenstrasse was a reversal of the defensive posture which was adopted after the State attacks on the front process and other revolutionary associations. It was a strong impulse which was taken up into our discussions. That's another reason why we more than once had taken an interest in the Hafenstrasse in recent years.

Of course we also experienced the fact that many people there today are clueless - like many others. But we think it's important in the discussions to see what was significant in their experiences, as will also be shown in the next phases of the struggle. And to you all in the Hafenstrasse: what's going on with you all? We have heard that you all rarely involve yourselves in discussions anymore. We can hardly imagine that your experiences have brought you to a position of not having anything to offer in response to the resignation and weakness which are present everywhere. How is it you all aren't able to link yourselves to anything and get on the road of the search?

The "Initiative for the Defense of the Hafenstrasse", with its call for the regroupment of our imprisoned comrades, took a big step towards fighting back against criminalization and making room for discussion. The call made possible the massive mobilization around the '89 hungerstrike. It was significant that there were people who didn't let their thoughts get directed by the expected response of the State security apparatus, but rather worked towards their own goals from their own experiences.

Another impulse which was significant in our discussions came from our imprisoned comrades. In around their hungerstrike of 1989, in their hungerstrike declaration, as well as in their letters, they made it clear that they wanted to initiate a discussion around the reorientation of the revolutionary struggle. They wanted to search and restore new links and discussions with all people who were involved in the resistance process over the years, or who were struggling for change in other sectors of society. They prisoners were very open and discussed many of their past mistakes. In doing so, they broke with a longstanding tradition which we were still stuck in, namely to quickly perceive all

criticism directed at us as negative and to therefore ignore it. This old tradition was the result of years of experience with being confronted at all levels with an agitating counter apparatus which the society utilized to wage psychological warfare and smear campaigns against us and other revolutionary forces, even in so-called leftist media such as the *TAZ*¹⁹.

This revived in us a long-dormant analysis of criticisms. An analysis which we had previously overlooked, namely of where the critiques were coming from and why, and what could be correct in all of it. Through the fact that the prisoners had taken a broader look at new developments in the resistance and in society as a whole and adopted this into their struggles, they strengthened us in our search and development.

For us, the situation in '89 put a lot of questions on the table. We had reached the limits of the front process. At the same time, new struggles had developed around us, and the entire international situation had changed as well. At first, our thoughts of a new orientation and development were very timid. At that time, it was the beginning of a process of separating ourselves from old notions - or, we could say, liberating ourselves. That meant separating ourselves from the notion, which had become increasingly prevalent in our discussions, that the strength of a revolutionary movement was determined by its ability to escalate its attacks in response to the imperialist system.

The period '89/'90 was the time for us when we began to question the last few years of our history and to test out the notions and ideas from the front discussions to see if they were correct. Whereas before we worked from the assumption that guerrilla politics should bring together all of the contradictions and attack them, we started asking ourselves whether we shouldn't instead start dealing more directly with the sharpening of peoples' living conditions and utilize our strength to push through changes in struggles already current, since neither the people of the Three Continents nor the people here have time to wait for global revolution.

In the May Paper of 82, our comrades wrote: "...our strategy is basically a strategy against their strategy..." Our implementation of this was actions which were directed at and which oriented ourselves around imperialism's plans and destructiveness.

In '89/'90, we repeatedly sought for a notion to develop as the guerrilla strategy. In our communiqué after the Herrhausen action in November '89²⁰, we said: "All of us in the entire revolutionary movement in Western Europe find ourselves before a new epoch. The entirely changed international situation and the entirely new developments here demand that the revolutionary process reorient itself and redevelop itself on new foundations...A new epoch, which for us means a new alignment of the revolutionary movement."

¹⁹ A daily "leftist" newspaper, ideologically close to the Greens, which consistently attacked the RAF and guerrilla politics.

²⁰ On November 11, 1989 the RAF's Commando Wolfgang Beer assassinated the chief executive of the Deutsche Bank, Alfred Herrhausen (see http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/89_12_02.html)

A new alignment of the revolutionary movement means, to us, searching for ties with new people who are struggling for changes in thousands of various sectors and with various demands. We were concerned with a process in which the guerrilla would have a role in searching for social change from below. We arrived at the notion of the ‘guerrilla as a weapon for the social movement’.

This notion is correct, for without a social purpose, armed struggle has no possibility for development. For us, this was not a tactical question, but rather the realization that revolutionary politics could only be further developed on a fundamentally new basis.

As late as ‘88, the politics developed up until that point were carried out by an increasingly small number of comrades and had not launched any new process of politicization or organization. True, we could inflict losses on the ruling powers, but this didn’t get us any closer to our goals. We had to break out of this stagnation. In ‘89, it was clear: we need to search for something new. At that time it was clear which new struggles could be developed and when there were concrete and attainable goals which many people could rediscover themselves in. In various cities there were struggles for self-determined spaces (not merely buildings), and there was also the struggle of the prisoners for their lives and against their destruction.

We often said that the weakness of the ‘89 hunger-strike mobilization was its inability to push through the regroupment demand. The changes of ‘89 and the collapse of the GDR²¹ and the entire State socialist system gave renewed power to the West German government. Against this background, the ruling powers decided to go hard line. The German State and German capital wielded seemingly unlimited power. In the face of such opposition, not even the strongest ever mobilization which we had ever managed in common with our imprisoned comrades could have success.

If the prisoners had not called off their strike in ‘89, and if the State had stuck to its hard line and brought about the deaths of some of the prisoners, then there would have been a further escalation on the outside. This was the opinion of many comrades, and of us as well. But the prisoners decided things differently: to stop the escalation, since it would have been pointless. Nonetheless they stuck to their goals, but insisted that the issue was their lives and that this was central. After they called off the strike, they expressed great trust in those that had taken part in the mobilization that many people would not drop this demand and that the prisoners could take part in the discussions, but also that there should be a struggle for the lives of the prisoners and against their destruction. The only weakness we see was that many people lapsed into resignation and dropped the struggle for the demand.

“We can only propose the changing of the entire conditions as a process in which we build a counter-power for the pushing through of concrete demands and goals. A counter-power which, along with the struggles of the people of the Three Continents, can push through necessary changes of the imperialist system and fight in a long lasting struggle

²¹ Formerly East Germany.

for the liberation of people.”
(from the Rohwedder communiqué²²)

After '89 and after the hungerstrike, we were convinced that the concentrated power of the West German State would push through its developments with any means available. Nonetheless, we saw our role as the guerrilla to place our weight on the scale wherever the achieving of necessary human developments was at issue, since the ruling powers need to always be opposed. One effect which we sought through our attacks in '89 was to break through the ruling powers' seemingly unlimited grasp on power and our own side's sense of powerlessness and to thereby struggle for political space.

One thought which was redeveloped in our discussions in this direction was the threatened eviction of the Mainzerstrasse²³ in Berlin. After this eviction, we were convinced that it was right to answer such an eviction immediately. This would have been of little benefit to those people, but an action from us could have influenced other struggles. The fact that we were forced to make such an answer in the Rohwedder communiqué had the function of making the State make a cost-benefit analysis in contemplating an eviction of Hafenstrasse (since that was once again an issue). 'Taking us into account' meant that the State should bear in mind that such an eviction would have directly led to a coming together of the struggle for a self-determined living space and the struggle of the guerrilla. This was politically significant, and it seems clear that it influenced their decision. What sort of dynamic this would have unleashed and whether we would have worked closely together, neither we nor that State can really say, but the danger or the possibility (depending on your bias) existed. We, of course, hoped that this threat would have gotten more people into the discussions - but we fooled ourselves once again.

We didn't propose the process of building a counter-power from below as a short-term one, rather we wanted to begin a discussion which would involve more people than we had previously dealt with. A new discussion structure was to be developed which was to have its basis in various political associations. We wanted to re-establish on a new foundation all the ties which we had previously had with comrades in our old phase and to reject our old certainties and the deadening relationship of hierarchy.

The new ties were to be such that those with whom we were associated with would develop their own initiatives and that these would become the starting point for common discussions and praxis. For us, much of this was new ground, that which we undertook and wanted to discover. We had discussions among ourselves for an entire year, during which we constantly took on new things which had to then be partially worked under so that they could be redeveloped. This all led to a re-analysis of our praxis from our

²² On April 1st, 1991, the RAF's Ulrich Wessel Commando assassinated the Detlev Korsten Rohwedder, who was president Berlin "Treuhandanstalt", the agency that privatized the East German state owned enterprises - it oversaw the restructuring and selling of about 8.500 firms with over 4 million employees. The communiqué can be read at <http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/91-04-04.html>.

²³ Squatted buildings in east Berlin which were evicted in 1990 after 3 days of heavy fighting with the police and other security forces.

previous period, in relation to the situation here and internationally, as well as what function the guerrilla can play in the process of social change.

Now we'd like to make clear why it is we think that we've reached our limits. In line with this, we'd like to comment on some of our past few actions, when we realized the problem wasn't that we had become emotionally estranged from many people. Guys like Herrhausen and Rohwedder were regarded by many people as the cause of suffering here at home as well as millions of deaths abroad. Many people were pleased by these actions.

From 1989, we operated under the assumption that Great Germany was developing into a major world power. And naturally, the break in the international balance of power meant global changes and sharpening in conditions for revolutionary movements. Against this background, it was essential to come to a new unity in the struggle, so as to find a new orientation together with others.

But this was only one side of the story. At the same time, we found many of the developments within the resistance itself to be very positive. Even though the Front-process had reached its limits, there had been new experiences and new mobilizations. Just to name a few: Wackersdorf in 86, the defence of the Hafenstrasse in 87, the mass-mobilization against the IMF in 88, and the hungerstrike campaign in 89. From our experiences and from these struggles, there was plenty of material to forge new developments.

We were convinced that it was possible for us - or anyone involved in revolutionary developments - to make some real advances based on these recent struggles and to advance and redevelop these experiences. Out of the discussions around the IMF actions in Berlin came the slogan "Attack the IMF!". There could have been a struggle for concrete demands like debt cancellation and an equitable distribution of resources, which would have to be pushed through against the wishes of international capital, so as to give oppressed people some room to carry out their own developments. That is just one example of how the discussions could have progressed so as to be able to decide on goals.

Out of the experiences around the Hafenstrasse and the hungerstrike campaign, we found that the concept "Struggle Together!" could and should have gone on to other things, if it had been used before, for example, to see who uses similar concepts. Who is also talking about revolution and change? Who is for and who is against revolutionary politics? Through this, we could have seen which people we could share concrete goals with and thereby acquire a variety of experiences out of a diverse unity of people.

These struggles showed us that notions like "revolutionary" versus "reformist", "single-issue movement", etc., need to be re-examined, since they all stand for a certain ordering of initiatives and ideas, and they produced certain relationships among one another and created tensions. Diversity can create strong movement when no one seeks to put down or dominate someone else. In a process wherein everyone is coming from different experiences, if a common goal for everyone can be found, then a whole wealth of

initiatives and a living impulse can exist - people can learn from one another. We think that an important criteria for a new starting point here is to take these experiences and transform them into new struggles.

Despite the world-wide sharpening of conditions, and although we find ourselves standing before a mountain, those things from our past and about ourselves which we wanted to change so as to find out new things we have started on with great confidence. We view this as a period of change, out of which, as we have said, should come a revolutionary movement which has developed into a counter-power from below.

For ourselves, we saw it as important that we, in the future, see ourselves as part of a common struggle and a common discussion, in which various different initiatives all have their significance. We, as the guerrilla, wanted from the beginning to be seen as a part of this, and that our praxis should give the possibility for the development of a counter-power with some relevance. From the beginning, we didn't want the discussion, which is significant now, of choosing between armed struggle or political organizing, and we wanted some common organizing to develop from the consciousness of this, something which we need at this time; an organizing of common discussion and struggle - ranging from us in illegality to those in the neighbourhoods - and the development of coming more and more to take common steps forward.

We completely underestimated the feelings of resignation and powerlessness which large numbers of people involved in the struggle back in 1989 were feeling, and which led to a collapse of resistance structures and lots of confusion. Of course we saw that many people we knocked down by all the concentrated power, which was very real, and by the continuous cries of the "final victory of the capitalist system". So for this entire period, we held onto the hope that our actions could break through this spreading powerlessness. We also wanted to say: You see, their power can be touched; and also that it's up to us to fight back and to get to the point to develop and push through our own proposals.

Already with our attack on Neusel²⁴, we realized that our initiatives would not be able to break through this powerlessness: We had, until that time, taken for granted that the hard posture and continued push from the State apparatus at the West European level could be hit back at. For us, it was a conscious decision and a new step to intervene in a struggle which had a concrete demand (with our attack on Neusel, we were supporting the hungerstrike of the GRAPO/PCE(r) prisoners in Spain²⁵).

We say: a new step - because in the years after 1977, our actions were never concerned with concrete demands, but rather with setting boundaries for imperialist politics and with organizing along strategic lines. Of course, we never had the illusion that this attack would answer all of the questions on the table. Nonetheless, we made the assessment that we were in a given situation, after the murder of Jose Sevillano, to be able to make room

²⁴ In July 1990 Hans Neusel, state secretary in the Interior Ministry and the government's leading 'terrorism' expert, survived a RAF attack.

²⁵ GRAPO-PCE(R): the military wing of the banned Reconstituted Communist Party of Spain, the First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Group (GRAPO) was an armed underground organization.

for new initiatives, after everything which had been going on in this country had been put down.

With our attack on Neusel, we aimed ourselves at the apparatus which was responsible for setting the guidelines for defeating the West European revolutionary movements. Their goal, in the wake of the collapse of State socialism, was to put an end to all forms of resistance in Western Europe. In our communiqué, we stated that the struggle of the Spanish prisoners for their regroupment was a turning point in the confrontation between imperialism and liberation. But the reality was, not much was attacked, and the previously-dominant feelings returned: If we weren't able to succeed during the 1989 hungerstrike here, then how can we possibly make any breakthroughs for Spanish comrades?

Others wanted to explain to us why the struggle for regroupment did not become a primary theme for them. But we never intended for people to put aside their continuing struggles and confrontations and to make the struggle of the Spanish prisoners central. What we meant by a "turning point" was that it had some meaning for everyone - no matter where they are - whether or not we could push back the ruling powers on this point. That's why we set about to raise consciousness about this and to develop initiatives from it - from our own praxis and special situation.

From this experience of the struggle to push through a concrete goal along with others came a much more careful look at our common situation and we decided to make a priority of linking up with more comrades. Those with whom we had been discussing things were, by themselves, already to find a common discussion and organization in their regions and to push past the boundaries where people begin to feel powerless and hardly do anything. We came to see this process more and more as a long-term development. Nonetheless, we still wanted to practically hinder the march of Great Germany. Even though we were pretty much alone and on a different process, we still had the hope that other people would soon awaken from their depression. Of course, there were various initiatives in different places. But these were all unconnected and did not seek a perspective; rather, they came from a way of life: people have to do something.

In 1990, reactionary nationalist and racist mobilizations became more intense and led to many beaten refugees lying dead in the streets. 1990, the year of Great Germany's big party (and even though we have nothing against soccer, Germany's victory in the World Cup led to celebrations of "Germany, a people united in victory").

On October 3 came the unity fest and a new day for celebrations. In the communiqué after the attack on Rohwedder, the head of the Treuhand²⁶, we stated: "We see our action as an attack against one of the architects of the new Great Germany as an attack which hit this reactionary development at its roots. It's obvious, as German history through the

²⁶ In 1990 the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany, was essentially annexed by the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany. The Treuhand was the agency that privatized the East German state owned enterprises - it oversaw the restructuring and selling of about 8.500 firms with over 4 million employees. See also note #22.

Third Reich has shown, that poverty, social decline, and massive unemployment do not, by themselves, lead to a mobilization for human causes against the rulers of the State."

We consciously planned that action against one of those responsible, not only at the political level for the development of Great Germany, but also someone who was directly responsible for orienting all of life's necessities to capitalist criteria and for the destruction of the structures of life and existence for the people of the former-GDR. We did not have the sort of ties to people there that many West German intellectuals had, who said, "They wanted capitalism, so it's their own fault, they got what they wanted." Although it did greatly affect us, as people who have been struggling here for years against this system, just how people suddenly embraced this system with open arms. But that's not the point. Most of them didn't realize what they were getting into. Intellectuals who are used to living with computers and CD players can hardly be outraged at the fact that people were seeking consumerism.

We saw it as a task for the revolutionary left in Germany to hinder this march which was rolling over people. Since we, here, knew what it meant, and the people there were beginning to get their first experiences of life under this system.

For us, the discussions of the new situation didn't just have to do with the collapse of the State socialist system, but rather that Germany had become an entirely different country. There were now 18 million extra people, with histories and experiences that were strange to us. We nonetheless tried to reach the people there with our action, but we oriented ourselves from our position, rather than from the developed relationship to the struggles or demands there. Still, the Monday Demonstrations continued for some time, something which we found good²⁷.

The attack on Rohwedder was our penultimate action. It was then that we realized that the process which is so necessary here could not be brought about at this time through our actions, even if they targeted those responsible for the world-wide suffering of millions of people. But many people in the former-GDR were pleased with our action. But it didn't expand us in any way, and it doesn't have the perspective of revolutionary politics if next to nothing results from it.

Concretely, we confronted those people in the former-GDR, who were organizing for a different form of change than that being pressed upon them by the West German State and capital, with a level of struggle which they did not know from their experience. For them, it's as if we pushed our way into their experience from the outside.

In different groups in West Germany, the action has the effect of propping up an old relationship which we no longer wanted: We noticed after the action that various people wanted to do something against the Treuhänder; for example, some wanted to blockade a

²⁷ In October 1989 people in several East German cities began holding Monday demonstrations against the government. This was a key part of the growing mass mobilization which led to the East German regime eventually toppling – and being absorbed by West Germany, which was not everyone involved in these demonstrations had been mobilizing for!

Treuhand firm and demand the regroupment of the prisoners. But these comrades never came upon the idea of beginning a discussion with people who are concretely affected by Treuhand policies and to thereby develop concrete demands. They didn't attempt to try and find any common ground or a foundation to build further common actions upon. But we would have liked to have seen this happen. One goal of the action was to launch a political discussion to arrive at an understanding with people from the former-GDR.

This contradiction made it clear to us that a lot is lacking, even in the understanding between us and those who identify with us, because they interpreted our action based on an old frame of mind and wanted, above all, to attack the same target. They had entirely different criteria than those which we had developed over the past few years. That is only one example which made it clear to us later on that we needed a break and deep-reaching discussion and communication.

As for our action against the US Embassy during the Gulf War²⁸: some people criticized our action as merely being symbolic. This was an action which we decided upon in a very short period of time. We wanted to renew the ties with all those people around the world who were struggling against this destructive war. We felt it was important to aim at those political responsible for this genocide. Of course we realized that this action would not materially affect the war in any way. By means of the Gulf War, imperialism, in the era after the collapse of State socialism in Eastern Europe, showed in a bloody manner just the "One World" of capital was to mean for people: the determination to militarily suppress any government or people that does not apply itself to the rules of the "New World Order".

We had to decide on things based on our specific situation: Either do nothing at all - something we couldn't even imagine - or organize an action relatively quickly. Our aim with the action was to strengthen the political relationship against imperialism. Of course just a single action, and even the broader mobilization, was not in any way going to stop this genocide. But everyone surely knows that Rühle and Kinkel²⁹ would have been eager to send German air force units around the globe if this mobilization had not taken place.

Even though the German State took great steps towards this and kept on with this development - it is a problem of these leftists, many intellectuals and many who call themselves revolutionary, that so little remains after such a mobilization, very little is put forward and nothing is linked to it and no new strengths arise. Even so, leftist intellectuals aren't so dumb as to start big discussions as to whether it's reprehensible when a movement against the war is partially driven by the fact that people have fear that war could also get waged from this country thus making them directly involved. We don't think this is bad, because from such a fear can come a deep solidarity with those people against whom the war is being waged, rather than from a purely intellectual view which

²⁸ During Gulf war (1991), RAF shot up US Embassy in Bonn with assault rifle rounds. There were no casualties, however.

²⁹ Volker Rühle was Germany's Christian Democrat Defence Minister at the time; Klaus Kinkel was the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

knows everything and is above human feelings and from which nothing comes.

For us, the broad mobilization against the Gulf War meant something entirely different. We were surprised and astonished that after two years of German parties and jubilees, a broad movement against imperialist war could arise. It was a sign to the ruling powers that hundreds of thousands of people were not willing to accept future German military intervention policies. We also think it's important not to lose sight of this fact: on the other side, there was a reactionary development and the fascists grew stronger.

Various things became clear to us from the reactions to the embassy action. Of course there were reactions from people who, we could tell, had understood us; these were often people who were doing as much as they could against the war. But then there others that said we should have acted against Germany's role in the war. To act against the USA, they said, was a false orientation - a counter-action, even. The action, they said, was not effective, so it couldn't have come from us - it must have been carried out by the State. It was impossible that the RAF could have oriented themselves towards people carrying out blockades against the war or conscientious objectors, instead of exclusively revolutionaries and anti-imperialists. And the action, some said, endangered those people blockading the US embassy (even though we made it quite clear in the communiqué that we made sure that the action ruled out all chance of danger).

The relative ease with which some people get behind our actions and approve of them, without even "wasting" any thought on how they themselves can act on what they demand from us, especially struck us. For example, those people who stated that we should have focused more on Germany's role in the war - we never heard of any initiatives from them in this area.

But what we want to say doesn't only concern those people who don't do anything, but nevertheless criticize the initiatives of others. Many people who are close to us were disappointed by this action, because they had hoped for something more effective. This was a point that was becoming clearer to us, namely that we had become a sort of institution. We agree with what Lutz Tafer³⁰ said in his letter to *Konkret* in August: The RAF has become a projection surface. With our action against the embassy, we disappointed many people who had hoped that someone would do something effective.

At the end of 1989, when we entered a new phase, our starting-point was that all those who were to come to the decision to struggle with us should be prepared to get involved in a situation where many open questions remain. Continuity for the RAF could no longer mean an orientation to years-old politics, but rather to speak to changing global conditions and changes in society and to develop something new based on the boundaries which our politics from the last few years had reached. And even though we are still at a boundary today, during the three years when we carried out a parallel process of re-orientation and intervention, for us and for those with us, we have had significant experiences which now constitute our foundation.

³⁰ Lutz Tafer was a member of the RAF's Commando Holger Meins who was captured following the Stockholm embassy occupation in 1975.

We aren't bothered by the opinion which one comrade expressed in Interim when he/she stated that our actions have achieved nothing. They have, of course, set boundaries to the State's march, and they have also led to a situation where it's possible to force the State into a discussion concerning freedom for political prisoners. But the actions have not achieved everything which we find necessary for the general situation. They stand alongside the processes underway in the society. Given the current situation, actions from us would bring a level of confrontation which would hinder rather than help a fundamental common search for new orientations.

It's also important that this relationship, which we wrote of after the embassy action, and which could also be used to describe any number of other confrontations, could not be broken through. By the relationship we mean the fact that many comrades delegate to us the responsibility to struggle at a certain point in the confrontation, since we are prepared to, or, as we recently heard again, because we can show the "concrete attackable goals for the future". They fail to see much of their own responsibility, and also that this has to be a common process. It is this very relationship which some prisoners have written about recently: A false division of labour which has developed over the past few years, and a false relationship, which many have developed with regards to us and which we also helped create, that there's always a guerrilla and those who find the actions either good or bad.

We know that there are people in different areas who, from their own responsibilities, have built things up. But there are few people who, along with us, are asking the question of how we can build a counter-power from below and who want to start on this process along with us.

For us, it wasn't easy to come to the decision that we needed to take a step which would entail us letting go of some things. Although over the last few years we worked on the assumption that with every action we had some answer to offer for the situation, this left us ever more on our own, so with this step we decided to embark on a very new direction. Some of our imprisoned comrades put it this way: The RAF has also abandoned its responsibility to the left. For us, that means a trust and admission to all those who we are now reaching out to, to learn from their strengths and weaknesses so as to derive some use for the future. And to all those who arisen in the new conditions over the last few years, and to those who have started new things. A trust that our step would be seen as part of a necessary process of searching for new foundations to expand the struggle. We need a movement that is in a position to come to a common decision, based on shared foundations and understandings, concerning short-term and long-term goals and to decide how the struggle should proceed.

Our step of April 10 is the most decisive step we have taken in the last three years in the process which we seek to develop at this time. On April 10, we stated: We are now making room for this process. This has meaning in two directions. Because we have lessened the level of confrontation with the State from our side, the determination of the level of confrontation is no longer to be attributed to us alone. It is to be attributed to all

those who seek to determine how a human existence can be achieved both here and world-wide. We also made room for fresh air for thought, for us and for everyone seeking to develop a new orientation, and to no longer repeat old things without reflection and to leave all questions and discussions unanswered.

"...We need to struggle anew for the social concerns of people. This is not a question of power. From there, there can be no reversal in society. Only from their relationship to our self- organization can it be determined whether that which the RAF has sought after has any relevance: To establish a level of confrontation outside of war and to again become part of the social process of discovery. If, on the other hand, things remain as they always have been, then these leftists will either have to find a way around this powerlessness or attack the exploitative relationship..." (Karl-Heinz Dellwo³¹)

When we said on 10.4³² that the Kinkel-proposal "has shown that there are fractions in the State apparatus that don't believe that the social contradictions and resistance can be kept under control with police/military means alone", we didn't intend to mistake a truism for a new development. Many people misunderstood us and said: It has always been the case that the State, alongside its police and military answers, has sought to integrate contradictions and to take things on in this manner. And they are right to say this.

Of course we never attributed human motives to either Kinkel or to the "Group for the Coordinated Fight Against Terrorism". We see things just as the prisoners in Celle³³, who said the following in *Konkret*: "...as for the prisoners, there are fractions in the apparatus who we don't over-estimate, because they... have the same goal. But Kinkel's utterances are - as ever - a political expression of this contradiction which has been around for a while. So it's very worthy of note that this is an apparatus which is capable of great inertia: the State security complex with its roots in fascism, and a relative degree of independence, and which, along with the media, has built up an image of self-legitimation. Even though it's been evident for some time now that they would not be able to break either the RAF or its prisoners, they have pressed on for years..." (towards the military defeat both outside and on the inside through torture).

As far as this was unclear in our text, we need to clear things up. Nonetheless, we think that many other people besides ourselves must be conscious of the fact that in the whole situation there is a certain politically explosive force that we can utilize to our side's

³¹ Karl-Heinz Dellwo was a member of the RAF's Commando Holger Meins who was captured following the Stockholm embassy occupation in 1975.

³² On April 10th 1992 the RAF issued its declaration "To All Who Are Looking For Ways to Organize and to Push Through a Human Life in Dignity Here and Worldwide On Really Concrete Issues" in which it announced that it would no longer be attacking representatives of capital and the State. (This can be read at http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/92_04_10.html).

³³ In June 1992 *Konkret* (a monthly magazine for left theory, discussion and culture) published an interview/discussion between RAF prisoners Karl-Heinz Dellwo, Knut Folkerts and Lutz Taufer, as well as Rosita Timm (a member of the Green Party in Hamburg and involved in the movement to free the political prisoners), Thomas Ebermann (a former member of the Green Party), and *Konkret* publisher Hermann L. Gremliza. It can be read at <http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/92-06-interview.html>

benefit. It won't get us anywhere to communicate at the same time the fact that the State's goals do not mesh with our own. It's extremely important to see that the State, at a certain point in the confrontation, understood that it had to do something which it had been trying for years to achieve through destruction. In the confrontation between the prisoners of the guerrilla/resistance and the State, the State never opted for integration, because just as with the confrontation with the guerrilla, antagonism has been the point of reference.

Today, everyone who has been involved in the struggle against torture and for the regroupment and lives of the political prisoners, can self-consciously approach this situation knowing that it is the result of this years-long process. This was important to us and led us to the question of how we could use this situation to benefit our side.

While the State's goal is to eliminate the politics of the RAF, at the moment one of our fundamental goals is to push back the State from its obliteration mind-set which it has in regard to all those struggling for a self-determined life, who won't be pressed down by the power of money, and those who formulate, change, and press through their own interests against the profit motives of capital. It all depends on whether the possibility offered to our side in this situation is taken advantage of by many people or not. Of course there's no automatic connection between the retreat of this State from its destructive position with regards to the political prisoners and to its retreating from its obliteration mind-set with regards to the fundamental opposition.

As has become increasingly clear in the last few weeks, the State wants to protract and depoliticize this process, and the question to all those who want freedom for the political prisoners and who want to struggle from below for developments here in Germany is not to let go of this.

In the struggle for the freedom of the political prisoners, the political confrontation which the State has sought to break with states of emergency and torture over the last 22 years must remain central. And the fact must remain central in this confrontation that there are prisoners from the guerrilla and the resistance for the following reason: because the German State never relaxed its posture of annihilation against the revolutionary resistance from the days of fascism. Armed struggle has always been necessary to get past this posture of annihilation - when nothing else is allowed to live outside of the reality dictated by capital, then the existence and possibility of development of a revolutionary resistance must be pushed through. That is the reason why comrades have joined and developed the guerrilla for the past 22 years. And why other comrades have withdrawn from the guerrilla.

Into this comes the explosive force which the situation since 10.4 has brought about for the State and for our side. We made certain statements on 10.4:

1. That we see it as a priority that there be room for political discussion and the organizing of a counter-power from below, and
2. That we have no interest in an escalation of the confrontation with the State, because

an action from us today, which would heighten the confrontation, would not advance the political process for our side.

For us, this was an offensive step, because we entered this phase conscious of the fact that the entire situation is presently at a break-point, and nothing can remain the same as it was before - not even for us, the RAF. Rather, we are struggling within this process in Germany to make room for the development of a counter-power from below, and for the organization of a fundamental opposition and base movements, and if the State should not retreat, then the necessary and historically logical answer would be the resumption of armed struggle, but not simply as our own decision as the RAF to resume actions, but rather as the decision of many people presently involved in the process. When many people consciously enter the discussions and ask the question, and not just to us, of what the answer must be should the State not relax its destructive stance, then we will truly have a strong political weapon that we can take in hand against the State.

It doesn't get us anywhere to say: Look, they are beating down anti-fascists in Mannheim who were demanding protection for refugees from fascist attacks; or, Look, in Munich they sought to disrupt discussion meetings for the G-7 counter-congress. We have seen those things, and many others besides. We also see that they are bringing new charges against Christian Klar, Ingrid Jakobsmeier, Sieglinde Hoffman, and Rolf-Clemens Wagner on the basis of crown-witnesses' statements, thus they are clearly still seeking destruction - just as they heightened some prisoners' isolation conditions after 10.4. They are protracting the process of winning freedom for the prisoners, since they have not yet released Bernd Rössner. And they continue to exert pressure on the prisoners and on us, thus denying themselves and history. If the State continues on in this way, then it must bear the responsibility for if the level of confrontation is against heightened.

On the other side, there's the question of what our side has been doing. A total of 2000 people went to the demo in Bonn demanding freedom for political prisoners. There have been discussion papers criticizing the notion that conditions for the entire fundamental opposition can be improved by winning freedom for the political prisoners. In actual fact, freedom for the prisoners and improved conditions can only be achieved if people from various struggles take part in these initiatives.

After the police attacks in Munich, it could be heard on the TV that: This relationship between the police and the resistance is the reason that groups like the RAF exist in Germany. It would bring more political sharpness into open discussions if many comrades would look at why this State, which is on its way to becoming a super-power, acts this way in response to the resistance. If things stay as they are now, it will be impossible to ask how we push the State to retreat. Thus the resistance will remain trapped in the logic of the ruling powers, since we won't have any goals which can be struggle after outside of this logic. Of course we can understand that many comrades have this stance, since it's not unknown to us, but we criticize it because it doesn't lead to anything and it doesn't pose the question of what we can actually achieve.

Another position which we can only criticize came up in the interview which Thomas

Ebermann and Hermann Gremliza did with the prisoners in Celle, namely advising both the prisoners and us to speak of defeat and hopelessness in order that the prisoners might have a chance of getting out. This just reduces the struggle for the prisoners' freedom to a matter of a deal between the State on the one hand and the RAF on the other.

Quite the contrary: We think that it's of great importance that both the demand for freedom for the prisoners as well as the broader political dimension that is coupled with our question of whether or not the State will retreat, and that this question not just be asked in the scene ghettos (or, for that matter, only in State security offices), but rather that a broad social mobilization for their freedom be brought about. It must be made clear to the government, to the business leaders, and to all fractions of the State apparatus that the consequences for this State, if it sticks to its destructive posture, will be the most serious it has faced, had we not taken the step we took in our history on 10.4.

We have stated that we can not be held responsible if the State seeks to smash the process that we have initiated. We don't think that it's always the right answer for us to escalate a situation with armed actions every time the State intervenes heavily against people and attempts to stop certain processes. Our orientation today, first and foremost, is to develop a social process in which the counter-power from below is organized which can set boundaries to the State's march and force it back.

If it appears that the State will not allow any space for such a thing to be organized, since, for example, it has already crushed previously struggle-after spaces, then it will be necessary to fight back against this State. Our decision to intervene at a certain point would be made as a result of the discussions in this process. It would depend upon whether it would be useful or necessary for this process. We would, then, use an armed intervention as a moment of forcing the State into retreat and not as a broader strategy. So we wouldn't just be going back to our old ways. This escalation is not in our interest. But the State needs to know that if it allows for no other means, then it is responsible for the means we have available from our experience and determination. They can't erase our experiences from 22 years of armed struggle.

What the ruling powers today call the triumph of capitalism has, in actual fact, become a global crisis. The linking of the southern hemisphere to the global market has brought explosive debts to the peoples of the Three Continents, the exploitation of natural resources, mass poverty, and millions facing starvation. After imperialism has sought for centuries to prevent and destroy the self-development of the Three Continents and to bleed the people dry, now entire populations are deemed worthless by the world market. Since 1991, more than 50,000 Somalis have died of hunger, "and a further 1.5 million Somalis have practically been sentenced to die of hunger" (U.N.); then there are the street children being murdered in Brazil; then there are the millions of homeless people, many of whom are even forced out of slums; and today, diseases associated with poverty, such as cholera, are spreading once more. Against this background, corporations such as Volkswagen respond to a strike by simply firing 15,000 employees, as recently happened in Mexico.

Under the dictates of imperialism, entire populations have little other choice but to lay down and die. Now the people of Eastern Europe are also faced with this "perspective". This crisis also long-ago took root in the primary States. The number of people in the metropolises who are no longer needed by capitalism has never been so explosively high, and the gap between rich and poor has never been so wide. Today we can see a "Third World in the First World".

The seeming triumph the capitalist market system and the global rule of money is irreversibly coupled with its all-encompassing crisis of unprecedented extent. It is impossible to solve the contradiction between competing economies, the logic of the capitalist system, global poverty, and the world-wide destruction of the environment. The destruction of food supplies and price stabilization in the EC while at the same time millions of people in the South go hungry and living conditions worsen in Eastern Europe - this situation speaks for itself. Even if it wanted to, the capitalist system could not solve these problems - solutions are only possible outside the framework of capitalist logic.

Of course the proposal that the people in the South and the East just lie down and die won't be realized, because the starving and marginalized peoples won't abide by the laws of global market strategies which have written their death sentences. All around the world, struggles of oppressed and dispossessed are being waged to win back their own self-determination in life. The global movement of refugees, which capital can scarcely control, is increasingly directing itself towards the metropolises.

Even if one could say today that the general development of capitalism could even lead to collapse of its primary States, this still would not imply any progress for humanity. The ruling powers are not in a position to maintain the old functioning of the imperialist system, whereby the peaceful metropolises lay at a great distance from the war and plundering in the Three Continents. This is particularly evident by the inability to integrate whole populations, something especially evident in the USA, but also in the former-GDR, France, and Britain. The rebellions in the city ghettos in Los Angeles, Paris, and various cities throughout Britain are the first signs of what could become a reality tomorrow in the metropolises. Even here, we haven't seen so many strikes, demonstrations, and work-site occupations in opposition to the roll-back of previously fought for social rights and gains as we have in the past two years (rapidly increasing rents in the former-GDR, plant closures, welfare cuts, the public transport strike, etc.). But these struggles are only one side of the story. The explosion of violence and person-to-person brutality and the self-collapse of the society is the other.

The war has come home to Europe. In Yugoslavia, the struggle over the division of resources and the chance to join up with the capitalist world market has escalated into a bloody nationalist war. The human suffering is beyond measure. A solution within the categories of the existing system is not possible. The policies of neither the EC nor NATO no longer have the ability to cope with such a crisis. For the ruling powers, the main question is to get things in control so that a dynamic does not develop which takes things out of their hands. The overriding interest of the German State is to have justification for the use of its military forces, and to get legitimation here at home for

such intervention, as well to start bringing about a concrete agreement on an international division of labour. They are using the suffering of the Yugoslavian people to further develop and solidify what was begun during the Gulf War. What's at issue is the "U.N.'s monopoly on violence" (Engholm), since the U.N. is controlled by the rich capitalist nations.

In Germany, we are confronted with a situation in which technological advances put ever more people out of work and which makes conditions unbearable for those still needed to work. While the permanent rise in productivity guarantees high profit rates for the elite, pressure on workers has increased. They are not only slaves to people and computers. There is also an increased pressure towards performance and flexibility - that means the willingness to subordinate the rest of one's life to functioning well at one's job - and in the former-GDR, it has led to women being forced to become sterilized in order to take on work.

There is also the pressure to no longer get sick, so that one doesn't get booted out. Thus many people have become worn out and ill. Here, the reaches of the service sectors, which at best have little to do with peoples' necessities of life, are forever being expanded. This and the useless increase in consumer production serve the interests of profit while destroying the ecological basis of life as well as persons themselves.

Although Germany is one of the wealthiest nations in the world, even here there is an increasing demand for housing, rents eat up an ever-higher portion of one's pay, and there are about one million homeless people. Ever-more people depend on welfare, and even the State has admitted the problem of poverty among the elderly. Even in the metropolises, ever-fewer people are able to join the "crazy competition of people amongst themselves" - this is how Fidel Castro described consumerism. In ever-more walks of life, the contradictions between people and the logic dictated by profit motives are breaking into view.

Particularly in the former-GDR, living conditions have become increasingly sharpened. "We doubt that there has ever been a time, except for during and just after the war, when so many people in such a short period of time have been thrust into distress, helplessness, and need."; the author of this in the former-GDR rated 5000 letters. Three were positive. One survey there showed that 60 percent of the population of the former-GDR believed that socialism provided for fundamental social justice. The vast majority, if given the option, would opt for a different type of social development which is neither the GDR-system nor capitalism. One youth said in a TV interview: "The people in the GDR were less preoccupied by the ideology of the SED and the Stasi than the people in the West are by money."

In total, the number of people who expect the State to find a solution for the problems has fallen dramatically. But the worsening of the contradictions does not automatically lead to solidarity and organizing, but rather alienation, loneliness, and competition - the collapse of the social relations between people - become the norm in the society which the system has inflicted. Capitalism has replaced social worth with the search for profit

and money. Everything should be marketable, every problem should be solved with money, and every need should be able to be fulfilled by some product. That is the ideology of capitalism and is the foundation for the continued existence of this system. Its relationship to those who break out of this and want to organize for a different reality is clear: beat down, lock up, and eradicate.

Today, when so many people have fears about their existence, the collapse of the social relations in society has taken on a new dimension: the explosion of self-destruction and person-on-person violence. Out of mangled hopes and the lack of any proposal of how to bring about positive change, many people are fleeing to alcohol and drugs, and even the suicide rate is increasing. The frustration, fear, and aggression gets directed back at the people themselves or against others who are even lower on the social hierarchy. Thus the Nazis are against those of another skin colour, nationality, against gays and lesbians, and there is an increase in violence against women, children, and elderly persons. The media's hate-campaign against refugees and the beating down of anti-fascists in the streets shows clearly that it's in the interest of State and capital to channel the rising dissatisfaction into a racist and reactionary mobilization. Against this, the possibility to organize relationships of solidarity and self-determined associations from below - that is, from the day-to-day reality of peoples' lives - to develop and push through worthwhile and just solutions, is barely visible.

Nonetheless, we today can assume that the struggles of the past 25 years, which evermore people have taken up and which were organized in leftist circles, have left definite traces in society's conscience. For example, the unwillingness to accept technology which threatens both people and nature, such as gene technology and atomic energy, the support given to squatting movements in various cities, support for people who refuse to do military service, the broad mobilization against the IMF in 1988, the hundreds of thousands of people who demonstrated against the Gulf War, or the 25,000 people at the demo against the G-7. These traces and the fact that we have been able to carry out attacks against the State for 22 years stands in direct opposition to all attempts by the State to exclude all who struggle for another way of life, and these are foundations on which to build something new.

We are concerned with a process in which it is possible to build a genuine counter-power. The global situation, both in its development in the German State and in the society, is seeking for a strength to halt the process of self-destruction and to push through worthwhile solutions. It's about a social process that encompasses different walks of life and that struggles after spaces in which to nurture "the new" - searching for radical solutions for life and common concrete questions - and which exists as an alternative to the system. This can only be a process which involves different forms of organizing the various splintered forces are searching in different places for a way to push through a humane way of life and which makes possible cooperation and which assumes a position of power in relation to the ruling powers. Solutions which orient themselves towards people and nature, and not to profit, won't be offered by the ruling powers. This is a process in which the ruling powers are pushed back and forced to allow solutions from below.

Today, it's often the case that people who, at a certain point, find their situation in life unbearable, collide with the reality that it's the entire organization of the capitalist system which makes their own situation unbearable. For example, when people oppose the increase in traffic, like on the Stresemannstrasse in Hamburg, they realize that capitalist organization, with its focus on profit, leave no space left over for them. Then the question is at hand, whose interests does an immense increase in transportation traffic serve? The interests of capital stand in opposition to the interests of people who seek an environment where children aren't threatened by huge trucks outside their front door. And the foolishness of the increase in consumer production requires the foolishness of an increase in transport traffic.

Another example: Recently there was a racist mobilization against refugees in Mannheim, before which the situation was such that in the part of the city where the refugees were coming and being attacked, youths had earlier demanded a space be allotted to them, but the city refused. This building was to be used to house the refugees. If there had been earlier discussions in the neighbourhood, then the youths could have organized with antifas in the region to help protect the refugees, then they would have had support and something in common, and then the arrival of the refugees could have started something new. Because in those areas where the refugees came, there could quickly have arisen a discussion of why they had to flee here and why they could no longer live in their country; then, the same system that is responsible for world-wide suffering also doesn't allow youths here space to live. Then there could have been a discussion of how to struggle together for a space to live.

Of course we think that organizing for the protection of refugees and for the beating back of fascists is absolutely necessary. But this example also shows that the process we need now can't take place within the safe-haven of the "scene ghettos".

The collapse of social relations is one fundamental cause of the power and longevity of the capitalist system. A counter-power from below can only come about if there are alternatives to the ruling norms in this society under this system. That means: To organize an opposition to the collapse of social relations and the all-against-all alienation and to struggle to create space in which there is real solidarity and from which springs the responsibility to take social developments in hand - we call this a process of winning over the society. From this will come the ability to win people over, for the struggle for social relations among people must provide an alternative to the alienation of the system, the despair of self-destruction, and the fascists. This will be a foundation for an internationalist consciousness, a foundation on which international solidarity can be fostered.

In these processes, the question of international solidarity comes up immediately at the start, because the population here is comprised of people of various different nationalities. The one without the other, the development of worthwhile solutions without the development of ties of solidarity amongst one another - this is inconceivable. The priority of the counter-power from below and of the revolutionary development is above

all a consciousness that makes it possible for ever-more people to come into common action.

In this process which is now so necessary, it will be shown whether Great Germany can develop a counter-power from below in a new international process of change, or if nothing here will happen except that the collapse will progress. Thus, the situation escalates: It will go in one or the other direction, nothing will stay as it is now. The crisis of capital and the crisis of the proletariat brought fascism to power in the past. It's important to see the dangers in the present sharpened situation. But it's just as important to understand the possibilities in this situation. The shrinking of thought to the general and specific crisis of many leftists has led to stagnation in the past few years and pushed each person's responsibility to the background. For many, what was said over the past few years came to pass, for others, who sought change via various initiatives, there is the position of "that nothing can make change now" - even though most of them are doing poorly - and withdrawal to the position of observer.

When we talk of the left's responsibility, we mean everyone's responsibility and initiative in this process. There is no program, no concept, not from us or from anyone else. This is not possible. This is a process of self-discovery and new foundations and discussions. The discussion that we now seek is about finding new thoughts for the process of change.

We want to find and struggle together for a social alternative rather than allow the reactionary side of this society to strengthen itself once more. Reactionary and racist mobilizations, in which peoples' social element is killed, are a means for the German State - in the competitive struggle of international capital for control of the world - to advance its destructive politics against people and to further escalate it. It is the precursor to the world-wide deployment of German troops, which they are now heading towards. It is our responsibility, and the responsibility of all leftists in this country, to build up a counter-power which is in a position to prevent this.

The path to liberation is a part of the process of winning over society, which is a part of the new international struggle for change.

Red Army Faction
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