

Thoughts On The End Of The Red Army Faction By Rolf Clemens Wagner

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Let's start from behind, first of all. I would say that revolutions do occasionally take place, but they actually speak very little. Least of all here, where they are noticeable in their absence. There was never a revolution here, there is no revolution here, and there will never be one here in the foreseeable future. That is the continuity of history, the reality which we must face and the one which we sought to attack with hard means.

But I don't wish to be like the rest of the left, pouring over the communique like vines on an old wall. It's bad enough that it has to be interpreted in a fundamentally different situation with a correspondingly different set of interests. But I can't allow us to be labelled as political idiots without responding.

Yes, we thought, in the configuration of that time, that we had a chance to start something in the metropolises, to launch a dialectical process for liberation. But we never proposed that we, as a small, clandestine group, could tear down something with armed struggle alone. The project was explicitly political-military, the armed struggle was only one element of the praxis, to move away from burdensome ideology and feelings of powerlessness towards real attacks. The concept was broad enough to allow for worthwhile agitation from within a movement.

This movement existed, both here and internationally, so I don't need to describe it once again. In the end, however, a strong fundamental interest prevailed, one which links the majority of the left to normal citizens: the desire for a relatively secure and pleasant life (the price one has to pay for this is always left in the background, however). The metropolises are, after all, warm places with many pleasant features. At that time even more so, because there was no social question in the narrow sense of the phrase. The economy was booming, there was no mass unemployment, the welfare state was still expanding, the strategic German model. But all this only lasted until the end of the bloc confrontation, then it was no longer needed and was tossed onto the trash heap of history: now there's shareholder value instead of social security.

As for linking with the social question, I remember well many wasted early mornings handing out leaflets as the shifts changed at the factories, listening to the harsh tones of rejection we were met with. These thoughts about how it's possible to wake up the desire for emancipation and liberation in people are completely useless. To say it anachronistically, it all comes down to the old problem of class in and of itself becoming class for itself. We shouldn't speak of militaristic mistakes in the concept, rather a lack of necessary conditions for any emancipatory political approach, not only armed struggle, because in the end all leftist approaches failed, not only the RAF.

OK, so in the 1970s came the slogan into private life!, into alternative forms of living, back to the universities, back to the long march through the institutions. And after a quarter century the marchers have now finally arrived at the center and may now take part in the aggressive project of repositioning Germany. Perhaps, in fact, it would have been better if the global wave of revolt, which the RAF was a part of, had been successful. Then maybe we wouldn't be in the mess we are today. But hypothetical statements are meaningless. Why bother thinking about forms of revolution and proposals from the 19th and 20th centuries when our world has so radically changed in front of our very eyes? Today, practically nothing is the same today as it was ten years ago. It reminds me of Don Quixote (and it has about as much to do with the social question as with Dulcinea).

But back to history for a moment. We mustn't forget that following the first real wave of repression in the early 1970s, the fish in the water concept was done for good. Before, the RAF could always count on finding open doors. Although there were always one or two who thought it necessary to inform the police. But now, suddenly, there were unbridgeable political-ideological differences, and someone needs to try and explain this opportunist movement of rejection, because it is one of the main reasons why almost all of the clandestine members ended up in prison. A few weeks earlier things had looked a little different, not exactly consensus, but at least no one went running to the cops. Later, people gave detailed depictions of RAF actions on the TV. Safer politics, so to speak.

Due to the rejection of the position of sympathizer (Herold), the state organs didn't need to work overtime. After this, the RAF's position was in jeopardy for a long time. The situation forced us to concentrate on building up logistics, and on the prisoners, either to protect them, or if possible to get them out, because their psycho-physical integrity in the state's custody could not be guaranteed (those who like to pass us off as the free-the-guerrilla guerrilla never seem interested in that reality, however). The results of this everyone knows. 1977. Of course, this concentration was reductive and all of the actions were aimed at the prisoners, which had a negative effect on the actions themselves, and led, among other things, to the wrong decision to hijack an airplane.

The authors of the RAF's dissolution communique now write what they suppressed for years: This reduction and the prominence of armed action continued throughout the 1980s. This prevented things being at the political level, the

social question was ignored, and this is why a social revolutionary component was lacking, and whatever the hell else they wrote. I'm sick of hearing this bullshit. The real situation was (and probably will always be, to some degree) that there were various different groups and individuals who, although not wanting to directly join the RAF, could envision political cooperation with an armed organization. As far as I could tell, that was no small number of people in the 1980s.

One thing there never was in the history of the RAF (and this came from the experiences in the 1970s) was social movements, however you choose to define them, who had an interest or, I would say, a need to possibly discuss similar political goals, because they all categorically rejected the use of political violence (a position which never helped their cause, however). So this fascination with the social element can't hide the fact that they are just complaining long and wide about their own inabilities, about no longer being able to continue on a path which they somehow recognized as false, about wanting to seek something new. The reason for this is: They would have wanted it to be the way it was. But before they admit to this, they'd rather say the mistakes were in the concept. No, they weren't militarist, the mistakes were in the concept, so you can't blame them. Truly pathetic.

It's already been said a few times, but I'll say it one final time: The fact is, that for a long time in the 1980s there were re-politicization attempts which were made, hard discussions whose initiators gave up on because they did not trust themselves to do actions. And when the Celle prisoners sought support during this exchange, there came the statement: One action, then the next one. That's how it goes.

Today, many people can sit around and complain about the hierarchical, authoritarian, militarist structures of the RAF, but the issue of turncoats is by no means a laughing matter. The fact remains that, since the end of the 1980s, armed struggle—no matter how it transforms or modifies itself—no longer makes any political sense. The conditions are all wrong, the points of reference are lacking. The epidemic use of violence at all levels makes this use of violence as a means in a political struggle ineffective. And now the final point: Following our defeat in 1993, we knew that we couldn't just keep going on as we had been. (...)

We wanted to think things over one more time with those who were in prison, and take a new step together. But in the end, the very hurtful split of one group of the prisoners from us, who declared us to be enemies, completely erased the very conditions which had given rise to the RAF in the first place—solidarity and the struggle for collectivity. What's that supposed to mean? It's important to keep some things straight. Defeats, sure, there have been more than enough of those. But why in 1993? What was special about that time? Oh yeah, the Steinmetz Unit, that always seems to be quickly forgotten.

The authors of the last RAF communique don't seem to want to discuss that with us, as far as we can tell. We were always confronted with their papers point blank. Our criticisms of this were seemingly just brushed off until the next one-sided statement appeared. We declared no one to be our enemy, we never once spoke of a split, rather we matter-of-factly separated ourselves from people who had begun to advance their particular interests against us (and who now—such a tiresome point—speak of solidarity and collectivity).

The authors of the communique seem preoccupied with finding a way out of the vacuum which they got themselves into, and they came up with nothing better than to portray our history as something which it wasn't. I think it's legitimate to refuse to allow that. And if there's anyone who's had to suffer a defeat in all of this, then surely it's us, the remaining prisoners. We started the opening, which everyone took their turns at manipulating, and now we are up to our necks in concrete thanks to the Kinkel Initiative. For 26 years, if necessary. Perhaps even a little longer.

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