From *Spassguerilla* to *Stadtguerilla*:
The Theory and Praxis
of the West German Student Movement

by

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Abbreviations

CDU – Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (Christian Democratic Union of Germany)

DM – Deutsche Mark

FRG – Federal Republic of Germany

GDR – German Democratic Republic

RAF – Rote Armee Fraktion

SDS – Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (Socialist German Student Union)

SPD – Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)

Trans. – Translation (All translations are my own unless otherwise noted)
Introduction

“Wir sind nicht hoffnungslose Idioten der Geschichte, die unfähig sind, ihr eigenes Schicksal in die Hand zu nehmen... Wir können eine Welt gestalten, wie sie die Welt noch nie gesehen hat, eine Welt, die sich auszeichnet, keinen Krieg mehr zu kennen, keinen Hunger mehr zu haben, und zwar in der ganzen Welt. Das ist unsere geschichtliche Möglichkeit... darum werden wir kämpfen.”

– Rudi Dutschke, December 1967

The West German student movement of the 1960s began in the universities but spilled into the streets, made headlines around the world, and soon became associated with the international movement for peace, freedom, sexual liberation, and racial and social equality. There was no single cause of the student movement, but rather an array of complex issues that led the students to the conclusion that society could and must be changed. The students thus turned to Critical Theory because it provided an interdisciplinary analysis of contemporary society and encouraged the creation of an alternative existence through political action.

Critical Theory, as developed by the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, was a combination of philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, political economy, and psychology with the purpose of assisting in a social transformation. The Institute’s critical theorists, including Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and in particular

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1 Trans. “We are not the hopeless idiots of history who are unable to take their destiny into their own hands... we can create a world that the world has never seen before, a world that knows no wars and no hunger, all across the globe. This is our historical opportunity... that is why we will struggle.”

Herbert Marcuse, developed the concept of a “one-dimensional society,” which was an advanced industrial society that eliminated individual freedom, reduced culture to an industry, and alienated all individuals. The university students were understandably attracted to Critical Theory because it not only legitimized their distrust of consumerist society and social norms, but also inspired the students to realize an alternative society through praxis.

Praxis is defined as a conscious action that transforms theory and philosophy into practical social activity.\(^3\) Stemming from neo-Marxist Critical Theory, praxis is a political action that is not only informed by theory, but also in turn influences critical analysis of society. The students looked to Critical Theory to analyze their society and attempt to create a new socialist society through praxis. Both the Kommune I and the Rote Armee Fraktion, two groups that grew out of the student movement, sought to combine their political action with Critical Theory in order to change West German society, although in very different ways; the Kommune I relied on peaceful theatrical protests while the RAF resorted to a violence form of praxis.

The student movement began in the early 1960s when students realized that the universities and other state institutions still contained remnants of fascism. Many university administrators and faculty members were former Nazis, some had even held high positions.\(^4\) The government, which funded the public universities, was also partially comprised of former Nazi members, including judges and state attorneys. The students were outraged that the FRG, a nominally democratic state, allowed


former Nazi party members to maintain positions of authority within the government. This historical-generational aspect of the West German student movement differentiated them from other student movements forming abroad in the United States and France. In West Germany, the progressive university students blamed their parents’ generation for failing to stifle the rise of fascism in 1933. The students claimed that West Germany was regressing back into its fascist history, and once again, the older generation did not actively try to prevent the state’s increased power.

The students, who themselves had not experienced the horrors of German fascism, still felt a sense of guilt regarding their recent history. As Adorno stated, the students felt a moral and political obligation to atone for the silence of their parents’ generation. The students decided to reconstruct society as a way to repay civilization for their country’s destructive history. Adorno stated “that Auschwitz be never again…this is the very first demand of education.” In this statement, Adorno claimed that the students’ rebellious praxis was justified if it meant to prevent the horrors of fascism from ever occurring again. As a prominent member of the Frankfurt Institute, Adorno supported student protests as a way to protect society from fascism, but he did not approve of their use of force towards the end of the 1960s. This demonstrated the generational gap between the intellectuals, who had witnessed the atrocities of National Socialism, and the students who looked to them for guidance. While Adorno and Marcuse, as Jewish Marxist intellectuals, served as authority figures for the

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5 Hockenos, Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany 58.
students, they were also part of the generation that were silent witnesses to the horrors of fascism.

With the realization that fascism was still imbedded in the institutions of the FRG, student demonstrations began to not only target the restrictive policies of the universities, but also the oppressive and violent aspects of society as a whole. Because the students focused on issues that concerned all citizens of the FRG, they were able to attract sympathizers not associated with academic institutions and their movement grew. The students became part of a larger movement described as the New Left, which separated itself from orthodox Marxism, criticized authoritarian aspects of society, no longer relied on established political parties, and demanded radical social change.⁶

The student movement focused on two main issues: the local threat of the Notstandsgesetze, which was seen as evidence of lingering fascism in the FRG, and the greater threat of the American war in Vietnam. The Notstandsgesetze, Emergency Laws, would empower the government to assume absolute control over the FRG by rendering the German parliament powerless during a state of emergency or natural disaster. The students saw this constitutional amendment as a way for the government to circumvent democracy, drawing parallels once again to fascism under Hitler, who was granted emergency powers that he used to create his totalitarian regime.⁷

The Emergency Laws proposed in 1966 had been suggested three times prior, but were never passed. However, the formation of the Große Koalition, Grand Coalition,

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between the two main political parties in West Germany—the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD)—in 1966 eliminated any opposition in the government, thus guaranteeing the required two-thirds vote to pass the Emergency Laws. University students rationalized that they needed to create an extra-parliamentary opposition to prevent the formation of an authoritarian government.

The students not only feared the increasing authoritarian policies of their own government, but also the Vietnam War. The students drew analogies between the Massenmord (mass murder) in Vietnam and the Völkermord (genocide) of World War II. Therefore, the American war in Vietnam became an important issue for the students; the United States was once the model for democracy but with the escalation in Northern Vietnam in January 1966, America became the aggressive imperialists. Students protested the war and held demonstrations when American officials visited the FRG, which the wider German public misinterpreted as anti-American rather than anti-war protests. The West German media, and thus the general public, misunderstood and often feared the student movement from its inception, which fostered a tense relationship between the students rallying for change and the establishment trying to maintain order.

The student movement in the United States inspired the German students to use new American protest tactics of civil disobedience. Street marches and sit-ins became regular forms of protest in the FRG, but they were deemed as rather

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8 Hockenos, Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany 58.
ineffective at instigating a radical change in society. The new forms of praxis exhibited by the Kommune I and the RAF were a response to what they claimed were ineffective means of protest within the student movement itself, as well as a direct response to the West German state and media. Both groups believed that a practical application of revolutionary theory was essential to encourage German citizens to think critically about their authoritarian government, which would lead to a necessary change in society.

The relationship between theory and action is crucial for the understanding of the student movement and its progression from a peaceful movement of protests to mass resistance and counter violence. I will demonstrate that there is a connection, although complex, between the theories behind the movement and the political actions that impacted West German society. There is no way to directly translate theory into practice because certain elements of theory are lost or modified in the process. Theory and practice inform one other; political actions are influenced by theories just as ideas change based on the results created by political action. Critical Theory certainly influenced activism in 1960s West Germany just as activism in turn influenced the public to think critically about society.
I first became interested in the West German student movement while I was studying abroad in Regensburg, where my tutor, Veronika Hofstaetter, introduced me to the history of the Rote Armee Fraktion. The idea of domestic terrorism in a developed country like Germany intrigued me. I began studying the RAF and worked backwards to the start of the student movement to get a better sense of how and why this group came into existence. My thesis advisor, Ulrich Plass, encouraged me to look at dominant social theories in the 1960s rather than focus solely on the historical events as a way to better understand the complexity of the student movement. This thesis, while tackling the expansive subject of the West German student movement, offers but a brief survey of the beginning of the movement, the use of playful protests, and the eventual progression into counter violence. I am analyzing the movement from three different perspectives, that of the intellectual Herbert Marcuse, the theatrical Kommune I student group, and the violent RAF terrorist group, which all require extensive historical context in each chapter. While the history of the movement itself is fascinating, I hope to demonstrate that although the Kommune I and the RAF differed in political tactics, they both embodied the essence of praxis that was derived from Critical Theory.
Chapter I
Herbert Marcuse and Critical Theory

“The philosopher is not a physician; his job is not to cure individuals but to comprehend the world in which they live – to understand it in terms of what it has done to man, and what it can do to man.”

– Herbert Marcuse

The West German and American student movements of the 1960s protested against their oppressive and violent governments in favor of a society that would ensure freedom and equality for all. In order to better understand the capitalist system against which they fought, university students turned to professors and revolutionary theories for guidance. Herbert Marcuse, as a German-American philosopher and professor, provided students with alternative ways of thinking about their society and encouraged them to actively change the system. Marcuse’s analysis of advanced industrial society applied to America and West Germany because both countries had capitalist “one-dimensional” societies. Marcuse advocated a Critical Theory of society that would use practice to strengthen and affirm theoretical analysis. His writings and lectures highlighted many of the problems that the student movements addressed, which provided a form of justification for their protests and made Marcuse an important figure for understanding the changing political and social climate during the 1960s. Marcuse was quite a remarkable intellectual because he embraced the idea of revolution, encouraged political activism, aligned himself early on with the New Left, and influenced students in America, West Germany, France, and other countries. While most of his contemporary intellectuals may have been politically inclined
towards the Left in theory and supported the need for change, they did not approve of disruptive or aggressive student protests.

After years of writing and lecturing about his critiques of “one-dimensional” society, Marcuse finally found his audience in the European and American students of the 1960s who agreed with the need for a radical change in society. The students admired Marcuse as a professor and philosopher and used his writings to legitimize their feeling of discontent with society. The media labeled him the “father” of the New Left, forever associating his name with the student movement, but Marcuse never embraced this title because he did not consider himself responsible for the movement. While his theories were highly influential, they did not provide guidelines on how to effectively change society but rather analyzed the issues of the advanced industrial society and left the students with the task of changing it.

In order to better understand how Herbert Marcuse came to be associated with the student movement and a proponent of political activism, his early political activities in Germany in relation to his study of Marxism should be taken into consideration. The historical and personal events he experienced early in his life may help shed some light as to why he became interested in social philosophy and how his ideas were shaped and changed throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s.

2 Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism, 13-14. Kellner warns that although it is tempting to analyze Marcuse’s biography, Marcuse himself stated that “Marxism is not family research” and that artists break through the limitations of class and family background. While I understand how one may transcend one’s early situations in life, I still believe that a person is shaped, in some way, by early life experiences even if they cause this person to choose a completely different lifestyle than the one they were initially exposed to. One cannot deny that Marcuse’s involvement in WWI, the German Revolution of 1918, WWII, and numerous other important political and historical events may have had a significant impact on his worldview and thus his theoretical writings. For this reason, I have chosen to include such biographical information.
was born into an upper-middle class family in Berlin in 1898, was well educated in his youth, and was comfortably part of bourgeois Germany society. His studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War I when he was drafted in 1916 and stationed in Berlin after training in Frankfurt. The horrors of World War I had a tremendous effect on the young and impressionable Marcuse, who for the first time became interested in politics and society in the hopes of finding reason behind the atrocities of war. While he was stationed in Berlin, revolts and strikes broke out due to the mistreatment of the working class and soldiers. The feeling of disillusionment spread but a workers’ revolution failed to evolve from isolated strikes.

Marcuse joined the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in 1917 as his own protest against the war, but was not politically conscious enough at the time to assess the political opinions of more radical parties, such as the Spartacus faction. The German Revolution of 1918, sparked by union strikes and sailor rebellions, was comprised of soldier and worker insurrections throughout Germany and led to the eventual resignation of the Kaiser. In November 1918, Marcuse joined a council for soldiers in the Reinickendorf borough of Berlin, but instead of serving the interests of its members as Marcuse had imagined, the soldiers continuously reelected their previous officers as authority figures. He felt then that any changes that would occur through these existing structures would not be significant enough to radically change society. His first experiences with political activities during these few years influenced his decision to align himself with the Spartacus position and to attend the rallies of Rosa

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4 Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism, 14.
Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. He quit the SPD in 1918 due to their increasing favoritism towards the German bourgeois and became interested in the revolutionary politics of the left, especially after Luxemburg and Liebknecht were both arrested and murdered.\(^5\)

Marcuse began to study Marx once he was discharged from the army in December 1918. He stated that he was attracted to the study of Marxism as a result of his personal experiences in World War I and the German Revolution of 1918. He needed to understand why the German revolution had failed and why he felt unable to identify with the Social Democrats, the Communists, or any organized political party. Although the Russian Revolution intrigued him, his upper-middle class background left him unable to identify with the Communist Part in Germany (KPD), composed largely of the working class. Although he viewed himself as politically left and voted Communist as an act of protest, he did not align himself with any one party. Now that World War I had come to an end, Marcuse resorted to his comfortable life as a scholar and continued his studies, bringing to a close his few years of political activity.\(^6\)

Marcuse’s retreat from political activity allowed him to attend graduate school, but his studies were not confined to the university system. He met frequently with friends from a left wing literary group, namely Walter Benjamin, Walter Hasenclaver, Adrian Turel and occasionally even Georg Lukács, who had recently

\(^{5}\) Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, 14-17. See Kellner’s section 1.1 “Marcuse’s road to Marx,” pages 14-17 for a more detailed biographical outline of Marcuse’s early political life.

become a Communist.\(^7\) After receiving his Ph.D. in 1922, he returned to Berlin where he worked in a bookstore and hosted informal meetings about Marxist theory, abstract paintings, psychology, and contemporary German philosophy. Between 1922 and 1928 Marcuse edited a Berlin monthly, *Das Dreieck*, with his friend Walter Gutkelch that consisted of a review of cultural and political criticism, poetry and prose, and commentaries.\(^8\) Marcuse came into contact with many of the monthly’s contributors: Siegfried Jocabsohn, Alfred Döblin, and Leo Lania, among many others.\(^9\) Even though Marcuse was no longer in the midst of worker rebellions in Berlin, he found an outlet for his discontent with society through his discussions with other prominent artists and social critics.

After a few years of working as a bookseller and attending these leftist discussions in Berlin, Marcuse moved back to Freiburg in 1928 to study under Martin Heidegger whose 1927 book, *Being and Time*, profoundly impacted Marcuse’s life and thought. Heidegger used Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological method to investigate basic human experiences. Husserl broke with philosophical tradition by pursuing a more concrete approach to life and advocated a philosophy of immediate experience. Heidegger’s book presented Marcuse with a new way of regarding revolution without the constraints of traditional Marxist theory.\(^10\) Marcuse published his first essay in 1928, “Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism,” which outlined his understanding of Marxism as a “theory of

revolutionary practice”\textsuperscript{11} and therefore should be the theory of the proletarian revolution. Marcuse, using Lukács’ theory of reification, explained that capitalist society alienates the worker and suppresses freedom, thus inviting a countermovement of radical action to change not only the self, but society. A class-conscious proletariat was necessary for a revolution that would create new forms of human existence within society. This is where Marcuse fundamentally differed from his teacher Heidegger: Heidegger did not envision the current system being overthrown, but rather focused on the non-radical individual. Marcuse, however, believed that society as well as the individual must be transformed. From the beginning of his philosophical career, Marcuse was separated from other German intellectuals who did not ascribe their theory to practical life and society as a whole.\textsuperscript{12} While Marcuse’s ideas changed in reaction to the new political and social events as he wrote, one aspect of his philosophy remained constant: the idea that theory and practice were inseparable.

In 1933, Marcuse joined the Frankfurt Institute for Social research as National Socialism arose in Germany. The Institute was forced to relocate because many of its Marxist intellectuals, including Marcuse, were of Jewish descent. They were welcomed at Columbia University in New York, where Marcuse collaborated with the Institute in developing their new Critical Theory of society. In 1937, the Institute adopted the term “Critical Theory of society” to describe their distinct version of

\textsuperscript{11} Kellner, \textit{Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism}, 39.
\textsuperscript{12} Kellner, \textit{Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism}, 38-49. See Kellner’s chapter “Phenomenological Marxism?” for more information on Marcuse’s theories of Marxism.
Hegelian Marxism.\textsuperscript{13} Writing in America during the onset of World War II caused the Institute to choose the language of their theory with caution. Marcuse and Horkheimer did not explicitly mention Marx in their essays but it is clear that Critical Theory was grounded in Marxism.\textsuperscript{14} Critical Theory attempts to synthesize philosophy and social sciences to formulate a social critique advocating radical social change. Marcuse and Horkheimer tried to define Critical Theory through a series of essays published in the Institute’s house journal, \textit{Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung}, in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{15} In his essay entitled “Traditional and Critical Theory,” Horkheimer argued that Critical Theory was concerned with better life conditions, condemned existing social institutions, and attempted to change society as whole.\textsuperscript{16} Marcuse published an essay, “Philosophy and Critical Theory,” where he emphasized that Critical Theory was concerned with the conviction that human happiness can only be attained through the transformation of the current conditions of existence. The Critical Theory that Marcuse espoused was laced with utopian ideas, such that man’s real potential and individual freedom could be realized if the current social institutions were changed. After World War II, Horkheimer abandoned any hopes for a utopian society, signifying one of the many ways in which Marcuse began to drift apart from the Frankfurt Institute: he never gave up hope.\textsuperscript{17}

After working with the Institute at Columbia to develop Critical Theory between 1934-1939, Marcuse became a U.S. citizen and began working with the

\textsuperscript{13} Kellner, \textit{Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism}, 115.
\textsuperscript{14} Kellner, \textit{Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism}, 119-26. For more information on Marcuse’s definition of Critical Theory, see pages 112-129.
\textsuperscript{15} Kellner, \textit{Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism}, 116.
\textsuperscript{16} Feenberg, \textit{The Essential Marcuse}, xx.
\textsuperscript{17} Feenberg, \textit{The Essential Marcuse}, xxi-xxvi.
government. It seems rather contradictory for a leftist intellectual to work with the very institutions he advocated changing, but Marcuse claimed his work with the government was motivated by his will to combat fascism. He joined the Office of War Information in 1942 as a researcher and German translator. From April 1943 to September 1945, he worked with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency, as a senior intelligence analyst. He then rose up in the ranks, and by 1948, became the Chief of Central European Branch of the Division of European Research for the State Department. Marcuse worked as an analyst on the denazification program during the two years following the war.\(^\text{18}\) His work with the government was not totally devoid of intellectual labor, for he was able to analyze German society and assess contemporary trends that he would use in formulating his later theories.

During his work with the U.S. government, his loyalty was questioned from the beginning and he was under constant FBI surveillance. In the 1940s, the FBI was suspicious about his involvement with the Institute and his connection to intellectual Marxists. In the 1950s, his connection to suspected communists and Marxists coupled with his study of Marxist philosophy brought him negative attention.\(^\text{19}\) Marcuse was treated as guilty by association, but it was never confirmed that he was actually involved with any Communist organization. In the 1960s, the FBI would begin systematic surveillance of Marcuse because they were concerned about his

\(^18\) Katz, Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation: An Intellectual Biography. For more information concerning Marcuse’s involvement with the U.S. government, see pages 111-120.

involvement with the student movement and the New Left, particularly with his connection to Angela Davis and Rudi Dutschke.\textsuperscript{20}

In 1951, Marcuse resigned from his position in the U.S. government to pursue his academic interests once again, devoting himself to research at the Russian Institute at Columbia and at the Russian Research Center at Harvard University until 1955. The results were expressed in his 1958 \textit{Soviet Marxism}, where he claimed that the Soviet Union was not, contrary to popular belief, the epitome of Marxist theory because it was too orthodox in structure and stifled individual freedoms. Here one can see that Marcuse defined a break between the Old Left, which embraced the orthodox Marxism of the Soviet Union and the New Left, which fought for freedom and social justice.\textsuperscript{21} He took a professorship at Brandeis University in 1954 and began lecturing and writing about his rather radical ideas concerning U.S. policies and foreign affairs. During the turmoil in America in the 1960s consisting of the Civil Rights Movement, the Soviet Union, the Cuban crisis and the Vietnam War, Marcuse became politically active not only through his writings and lectures, but also alongside his students. While teaching at Brandeis, Marcuse participated in an organized protest against the U.S. involvement in the Cuban Revolution, stating that U.S military force to protect Cubans from Castro was hypocritical because the U.S. supported violent takeovers in other countries.\textsuperscript{22} That same year, he signed an open letter to President Kennedy, along with his students, criticizing the U.S. foreign policy in Cuba. In 1965, he signed two more open letters to President Johnson urging for peaceful negotiations in

\textsuperscript{20} Kellner, "Under Surveillance: Herbert Marcuse and the FBI," 284, 86.
\textsuperscript{22} Kellner, "Under Surveillance: Herbert Marcuse and the FBI," 295.
Vietnam, not escalations. His political participation no doubt inspired his students, but it was in Marcuse’s essays, lectures and books that his students found meaning and inspiration for their own political activism.

In 1964, Marcuse published One-Dimensional Man, which influenced the student movement because it clearly articulated reasons for the students’ discontent with society. Marcuse argued that the capitalist system in advanced industrial society was eliminating all traces of the individual. This society created the one-dimensional man, devoid of any individual thought or feeling so that he may remain subdued by socially dominant trends. Because “mechanization is increasingly reducing the quantity and intensity of physical energy expended in labor,” the working class, now able to enjoy leisure time and equal access to consumer commodities due to their wage increases, became integrated into capitalist society. They were led to believe that technology increased their standard of living and thus had no right or need to complain about their present situations. Marcuse argued that people became distracted by advertised needs, such as that of a new automobile, the typical split-level home, or the latest kitchen equipment, which they could all now afford because of increased wages and extended payment plans. Society even found a way to make man think his sexual needs were being satisfied by incorporating sex appeal into work and public relations with the help of advertising and beauty products. A man who believes that his sexuality is liberated by society allows himself to be subdued by his

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24 Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism 236-7).
26 Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, 9.
contentment. By subduing the working class and convincing them that they are equal members of society, the advanced industrial society eliminated Marx’s revolutionary proletariat.

Marcuse expressed his frustration at the lack of a revolutionary class, but there was a glimmer of hope amongst this pessimism for those who “exist outside the democratic process” to rise up in revolt. They would benefit most from changing conditions and institutions because they were the ones being persecuted by the advanced industrial society that thrives on their repression. Marcuse encouraged these young rebels to participate in “the Great Refusal—the protest against that which is.” He emphasized individual revolt as a way to reject the capitalist society because man must liberate himself if he is to liberate and change society. Their very act of refusing to play society’s game signifies “the beginning of the end of a period.” The students and the oppressed might not cause the revolution to succeed on their own, but they could definitely serve as a catalyst.

Marcuse’s theory about the advanced industrial society and his revolutionary neo-Marxist twist on orthodox Marxism was praised by the students, who were already displeased with the current structure of society and dominant academic theories of the time. German students in the 1960s wanted to reform the educational system to allow for the study and discussion of current issues and politics, but many professors clung to the academic code of neutrality. Marcuse argued that intellectuals should not only analyze contemporary issues, but also be able to communicate their

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27 Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, 74-5.
28 Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, 256.
29 Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, 63.
31 Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, 257.
ideas so that people could actually comprehend them, returning once again to Critical Theory’s push for practical theory.32 One-Dimensional Man served as an important tool for the young radicals’ political education and showed that the problems of society were embedded in the system itself, which required total social reconstruction of the advanced industrial society.33

While Marcuse analyzed the faults of advanced industrial society and called for the Great Refusal in One-Dimensional Man, he did not provide detailed revolutionary strategies or spell out agents of social change. He spent the rest of his intellectual career searching for different forms of radical politics, which led him to defend confrontational politics and the use of revolutionary violence. 34 In 1965, Marcuse dedicated his “Repressive Tolerance” essay to his students at Brandeis University, where he explained why revolutionary violence was sometimes necessary. His main argument was that pure tolerance, such as freedom of speech in America, fosters hate and discrimination because all ideas, no matter how hateful, have the right to be expressed. “Tolerance is extended to policies, conditions, and modes of behavior which should not be tolerated because they are impending, if not destroying, the chances of creating an existence without fear or misery.”35 His argument seems logical for its context, which was the U.S. during the 1960s when society was ravaged by violence, the lynching of blacks in America, the increasing violence in Vietnam, and the seemingly regressive features of the advanced industrial society he had laid

32 Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, 192-93.
33 Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism, 242.
Marcuse argued that if the leaders who had initially espoused these hateful ideas were silenced before they were into practice, then millions of lives could have been saved. He provided a very strong example when he stated, “If democratic tolerance had been withdrawn when the future leaders started their campaign, mankind would have had a chance of avoiding Auschwitz and a World War.” Eliminating violence and repression in American society seems as though it would have been a just cause to support; however, Marcuse regretfully added that this must be done with rather undemocratic means. Toleration of speech and organization from groups that promoted hateful or discriminatory policies would have to be revoked, and society would need to rely on the rationality and autonomy of human beings to decide which ideas and practices were liberal or repressive.

There was naturally public outrage against Marcuse’s notion of repressive tolerance because it would require that freedom of speech be revoked. Marcuse preemptively responded to this point by stating that restrictions on freedom of speech were justified during times of extreme danger, and since post-fascist society presented clear and present danger to the point where it became the norm, the emergency state of the U.S justified the withdrawal of tolerance. He recognized the fear associated with the word “intolerance,” for historically it led to repression and systematic slaughter in WWII. Of course one would choose democratic tolerance over institutionalized intolerance, but Marcuse argued that these might not be the only two

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38 Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance,” 100, 06.
39 Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance,” 109, 10.
options. Refusal of tolerance could be expressed by boycotts, demonstrations, civil disobedience, and occupations, thus inviting a dialogue between the oppressors and the oppressed. The people needed to be made aware of the pattern of violence in the advanced industrial society that only bred more violence. Pacifism as a means of protest against a far more advanced and systematic violence of society did not aid the cause of revolution.

In “Repressive Tolerance,” Marcuse differentiated structural violence of advanced industrial society and revolutionary violence. Structural violence consisted of: physical violence in the form of police brutality and the militaristic violence in Vietnam; and a more subtle violence of the establishment, which was not commonly seen as violent because it was integrated into every day life, in the form of a media monopoly that excluded alternative views and a dominant consumerist culture that forced people to live a certain way. Marcuse supported revolutionary violence if its goal was to end the horrendous systematic violence. Some members of the New Left used Marcuse’s defense of confrontational politics and revolutionary violence to justify their violent oppositional tactics. In his later works, Marcuse redefined his position on violence after the outbreak of terrorism, but for the chaotic and dangerous political climate of 1965, he deemed confrontational politics necessary.

Marcuse’s essay, “Repressive Tolerance,” outraged not only Americans afraid of losing their right to free speech, but also intellectuals in Germany. This essay was

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heavily criticized because it violated the academic code of neutrality.\textsuperscript{43} Intellectuals often wrote in an ambiguous style to maintain a level of neutrality, which was attacked when Marcuse claimed that one must choose sides in this revolutionary battle: either with the establishment or with the opposition. Marcuse reminded the intellectuals in this essay that it was their duty to expose the truths of society, suggesting that they should side with the opposition in this case. German and American students agreed with Marcuse and presented their professors with a choice to either join them in their revolution or side with the establishment and work against the movement for change. Marcuse was criticized for corrupting the impressionable minds of the youth. Many intellectuals, such as his former colleagues Adorno and Horkheimer, decided to distance themselves from the radical student movement.\textsuperscript{44}

Marcuse further demonstrated his sympathy and alliance with the student movement in “Political Preface, 1966,” published as a preface to the new edition of \textit{Eros and Civilization}, one of Marcuse’s books from 1955. This preface expressed an optimistic view of the student revolt and the possibility of change, quite contrary to the pessimistic realizations demonstrated in \textit{One-Dimensional Man}, published only two years earlier.\textsuperscript{45} The student movement was progressing and Marcuse was inspired by the opposition’s reactions to the tense political situations in America and Germany. As in \textit{Eros and Civilization} and \textit{One-Dimensional Man}, Marcuse critically analyzed the destructive nature of the affluent society in his preface, stating that people were being manipulated by the authorities into believing that they were free,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Kellner, \textit{The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse}, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Kellner, \textit{The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse}, 15.
\end{itemize}
but really they were subconsciously subdued and remained ignorant to the truths of their society.\textsuperscript{46} Marcuse argued that even though there were rebels who stood up against the destructive system of society, they alone could not bring about a revolution. He once again stressed that it was the political responsibility of intellectuals to provide the “armor from the outside” and to be the initial catalyst in combating injustice.\textsuperscript{47} This initial refusal should serve as a justification for the rebellious young people to protest because their lives and mental health were at stake in this revolution.\textsuperscript{48}

In this preface, Marcuse focused on the preservation of life and on the importance of the human body as a weapon against the constructed mechanisms of society.\textsuperscript{49} Marcuse stressed the capability of the system to “overburn and overkill,” alluding to the escalating destructive warfare in Vietnam and demonstrating that the affluent society had become a society at war.\textsuperscript{50} Despite the technological advantages of the capitalist society, Marcuse mentioned that guerilla warfare in Vietnam was utilized against it as a symbolic gesture that the human body was willing to stand against the machines of repression. It was a powerful image of violence, body against machine in defense of life itself. This violent clash was necessary between the individual and society; perhaps this could be the act of violence to break the chain of violence.\textsuperscript{51} In 1966, Marcuse still believed that revolutionary violence was a means to end systematic violence and bring about a revolution. He actively supported his

\textsuperscript{47} Marcuse, "Political Preface, 1966," 100.
\textsuperscript{49} Marcuse, "Political Preface, 1966," 100.
\textsuperscript{50} Marcuse, "Political Preface, 1966," 101.
university students in the U.S., as well as students and protesters around the world. From his home in California, he traveled to Europe and around the United States to give lectures and participate in conferences sponsored by the New Left.

In a lecture given at the Free University in Berlin in 1967, entitled “The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition,” Marcuse clarified his position on the student opposition and defined the New Left. In his opening statements, he confirmed that the students were thought to be a “decisive factor of transformation” but not “an immediate revolutionary force,” contrary to what some opponents of the movement and even some students might have believed at the time.\(^\text{52}\) As to not weaken the spirits of his young listeners, he quickly followed with the reassurance that the student opposition, if steadfast in its movement, might one day become a revolutionary force for change. He urged that in order to progress, German students must reach out to their fellow rebels and form a type of cross-cultural cooperation with countries like the U.S., whose student opposition lacked a strong central organization.

Marcuse then tried to define the New Left: they were neo-Marxist in that they did not follow orthodox Marxism but instead were influenced by the revolutionary movements of the Third World; they deeply mistrusted old leftist ideologies and were not bound to the proletariat as the sole agent of revolution. His main argument was that the New Left could no longer be defined by class because it consisted of diverse

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smaller groups of civil rights advocates, intellectuals, hippies and students.\textsuperscript{53} These intellectuals of the New Left served as spokesmen for the movement, with the rebellious opposition concentrated among “outsiders within the established order.”\textsuperscript{54} Even though these two groups were from the opposites of society, their goals were similar. The underprivileged were left wanting in this advanced industrial society because it could not and would not satisfy their vital needs. Because they remained largely unorganized, the underprivileged did not possess the necessary skills to become a revolutionary force without help. This was where the second part of the movement came in. The privileged of society, namely intellectuals and middle class university students in both America and Germany who joined the movement, possessed a consciousness that has been able to escape the grasps of social control and thus were awakened to the true needs of society. The combination of these two forces had revolutionary potential. Now that the forces of the revolution had been decided, they must now decipher the target of their opposition, a step of great importance because they were rebelling against the majority of a largely functioning democratic society that would not be so destructive under normal circumstances.\textsuperscript{55}

The opposition began to fight the system first during the Civil Rights Movement in America, then by protesting the Vietnam War in America and Germany. When American students from the North traveled to the South to help blacks register to vote, they experienced how deeply racism was embedded in the democratic system and further questioned America’s commitment to true democratic

\textsuperscript{54} Marcuse, "The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition," 58.  
freedom. The brutality of the war in Vietnam revealed that the established society was not fighting to preserve democracy, but was rather obsessed with expansion and aggression.\textsuperscript{56} The opposition was against the false democratic system, which was in great need of change on the societal level. Marcuse once again championed the image of the body against the political machines of society, stressing that human will and body were able to check “the most efficient system of destruction of all times.”\textsuperscript{57}

Marcuse ended his lecture on the “The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition” by demonstrating different types of resistance and justifying the right to resist. As the student movement progressed in the late 1960s, protest against an unjust government transitioned into resistance against a violent system. Marcuse’s discourse on the right to resist influenced many students, as well as the left-wing journalist Ulrike Meinhof, who became involved in an underground terrorist group in 1970. The student opposition in the U.S. demanded a reform of university curricula because they believed that the university should support intellectual discussions, not hinder forms of critical thought and knowledge.\textsuperscript{58} It is important to note that the student opposition in Germany also fought for the reform of the university system, suggesting that the need for change was felt on a global scale. In addition to the teach-ins and sit-ins demanding university reforms, love-ins also took place, which were the fusion of political and sexual-moral rebellion. These public acts of free love during unarmed political demonstrations openly showed the system that the students were starting to resist societal control. The right to resist, which aided in the historical development of

\textsuperscript{57} Marcuse, "The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition," 60.
\textsuperscript{58} Marcuse, "The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition," 61.
freedom, was sanctioned in the oldest elements of Western civilization and thus should be deemed necessary in reaction to the attacks on freedom and life itself. While Marcuse noted that progress had been made for the New Left, which was once suspicious of ideology but now looked to the guidance of theoretical leadership, he emphasized that more work needed to be done and more people must join the resistance.\(^{59}\)

1968 proved to be the most intense year for the student movement overall, particularly in the month of April: Rudi Dutschke, the charismatic leader of the student opposition in Germany, was the target of an assassination attempt; the Easter Riots that followed brought out thousands of protesters in Berlin, which led to violent police confrontations; and two Frankfurt department stores were bombed by Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, the future leaders of the RAF German terrorist group. In Marcuse’s lecture, “Beyond One-Dimensional Man,” given at UCLA in October 1968, he focused not on the chaotic culmination of events in Germany, but rather on the successful revolutionary events in France that occurred in May and June, perhaps as an indirect result of the escalating violence in Germany. Marcuse used the events in France to demonstrate that a movement for radical change could originate outside of the working class if the forces still part of the institutions became active and served as a guiding force for the proletariat. These protesters used new strategies and goals, which indicated that a new consciousness was emerging and possible.\(^{60}\)


With the alliance of the student opposition and the workers in France, Marcuse was filled with a renewed sense of hope for revolutionary change in America, Germany, and in other advanced industrial societies worldwide. He referred to the slogan written on the Sorbonne University in Paris, “all power to the imagination” to demonstrate that imagination could be a productive and useful tool for the student opposition. Marcuse argued that imagination was beyond the rules of reason yet still grounded in realistic possibilities. Imagination served as a meeting place for “sensibility and understanding, percept and concept, body and mind…it is playful, free, and yet bound by its material, and rooted in the historical continuum.”

Imagination expressed a newly developed consciousness capable of breaking the bonds of an oppressive society and achieving new political goals. Through imagination, students were able to clearly see the crimes of society and new possibilities of freedom. Because the oppressive and violent aspects of society were now made clear, university professors could no longer remain guarded by neutrality and were thus forced to take sides. Marcuse believed that if the philosopher was truly committed to his task of enlightenment, he would find himself on the side of the students who wanted to give meaning to the ideas they had learned from him, not only “academic meanings but a meaning to be fought for, a meaning to be lived for.”

An Essay on Liberation was written during the period of student radicalization in 1968 and was published in 1969. Marcuse’s essay espoused a type of revolutionary utopianism made possible by the intensification of the student movement in the late

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61 Marcuse, "Beyond One-Dimensional Man," 117.
62 Marcuse, "Beyond One-Dimensional Man," 119.
1960s. Marcuse championed the student movement as responsible for the “new sensibility,” which was invested in

“praxis: it emerges in the new struggle against violence and exploitation…for essentially new ways and forms of life: negation of the entire Establishment, its morality, culture; affirmation of the right to build a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil terminates in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the Form of the society itself.”

Even though the counterculture and new sensibility were making progress in the fight against the system, they still were not a revolutionary force; this position remained with the marginalized and oppressed people of the advanced industrial society. But all progress was beneficial because it signified a break with a repressive and controlling society and demonstrated that there were cracks in the system’s defense. Marcuse’s essay was written when students worldwide were occupying universities, demonstrating against the war in Vietnam, and even driving Lyndon Johnson from reelection, giving hope to a possible socialist revolution. The aggressive and spectacular actions of the students alluded that a revolutionary force was forming, which provided Marcuse with hope that a revolution just might be possible if the movement continued to grow.

In America and Germany, Marcuse’s Essay on Liberation was well received by the student movements who believed it to be an affirmation that a total revolution was indeed in the making. Student groups and members of the New Left continued to practice the Great Refusal espoused in One-Dimensional Man on a grand scale,

refusing completely dominant consumerist needs and values spoon-fed to them by the system, the hierarchy of the institutions that dictated how they should learn and work, and the collective culture of the capitalist society that tried to subdue any source of a threat to the system. Marcuse once again championed the importance of education by stating that “the period of enlightenment prior to material change—a period of education, but education which turns into praxis: demonstration, confrontation, rebellion” was necessary for successful revolutionary change.

In his correspondence with Adorno in 1969, Marcuse further articulated his reasons for allying with the student opposition and his support of revolutionary violence. Marcuse and Adorno discussed the events of the student opposition and their conflicting positions on theory and practice in relation to the escalation within the student movement. The situation in Germany was rather chaotic due to the April 1968 attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke, the bombing of the Frankfurt department stores, and the numerous protests and boycotts on university campuses that began in December 1968. On January 31, 1969, a group of students chose to occupy the Institute for Social Research to plan their protest activities, but instead of being welcomed by the Institute that developed the essence of Critical Theory, Adorno called the police, who arrested seventy-six students. This event outraged not only the students who looked to Adorno’s teachings for inspiration and legitimization, but also Marcuse who openly presented Adorno with his reasons for siding with the students. In one of his letters, Marcuse states:

70 Marcuse, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," 120.
“if the alternative is the police or the left-wing students, then I am with the students—with one crucial exception, namely if my life is threatened or if violence is threatened against my person and my friends, and that threat is a serious one. Occupation of rooms (apart from my own apartment) without such threat of violence would not be a reason for me to call the police...I still believe that our cause (which is not entirely ours) is better taken up by the rebellious students than by the police.”

Marcuse argued that since the students posed no threat to Adorno, he should have allowed them to use the Institute’s building to coordinate their activities. Marcuse justified his argument by reminding Adorno that “theory is pushed on further by practice.”

Adorno countered with, “I have to look out for the interests of the Institute—our old Institute, Herbert—and these interests would be directly endangered by such a circus...since the Institute is an independent foundation and is not under the protection of the university, responsibility for everything that goes on here resides with...me.” Adorno confirmed that his loyalty remained with the Frankfurt Institution and not with the disruptive students. Because Adorno seemed to have betrayed his students when he called the police, students then began to disrupt his lectures; the most outrageous disruption took place on April 22, 1969. Students interrupted his lecture with shouting, three female students threw flowers at him, exposed their breasts and tried to kiss him, and one student wrote “Wer nur den lieben Adorno lässt walten, der wird den Kapitalismus sein Leben lang bewalten” on the

71 Marcuse, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," 125.
72 Marcuse, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," 125.
73 Marcuse, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," 126-27.
blackboard. Adorno could not take these attacks any longer and cancelled his lecture series for the rest of the year.\textsuperscript{74}

Adorno used situations such as these as his justification for not supporting the aggressive student acts. As a Jewish intellectual forced into exile by the Nazi regime and a part of the generation that had witnessed Auschwitz, Adorno refused to acknowledge force as a necessary component of protest. He had a personal experience with violence that was utterly unknown among the student protesters, except in the form of police brutality during street demonstrations. Adorno continued to support the student movement’s goal of change, as long as it did not involve violence, but the students felt betrayed by Adorno when he called the police on them. The students saw themselves as victims of society and rationalized that an oppressive government justified their use of forceful protests. Marcuse, while of the same generation as Adorno, reacted differently to his personal experiences with violence. He sympathized with the students and accepted revolutionary violence if it meant to overthrow systematic state violence. When Marcuse felt that his students were acting “stupid,” he discussed the situation and even chastised them if their actions were detrimental to the movement; he did not, like Adorno, turn to the police.\textsuperscript{75} Marcuse wrote that “the students know all too well the limits of their protest—they do not need us to point it out to them, but perhaps they need us to help them get beyond these limits.”\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} Marcuse, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," 121. Translation: “Whoever gives dear Adorno control will preserve capitalism for the rest of his life.”
\textsuperscript{75} Marcuse, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," 125-26.
\textsuperscript{76} Marcuse, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," 134.
In his 1972 book *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Marcuse no longer supported confrontational politics and revolutionary violence; instead he called for a United Front approach that involved many independent groups organized around a common goal.\(^7^7\) The capitalist system was “reorganizing itself to meet the threat of a revolution”\(^7^8\) and the only way to effectively combat this increase in power of a destructive system was to organize the New Left and appoint them to the task of political education.\(^7^9\) When the Left and their radical opposition emerged in the 1960s, the establishment was not prepared to handle their demands and cultural revolution. But ten years later in the 1970s, the system was well prepared and with the radical opposition weakened by the state’s control, the Left’s only option left was to organize and counteract with education.\(^8^0\) Marcuse admired Rudi Dutschke, who had

> “proposed the strategy of the *long march through the institutions*: working against the established institutions while working in them, but not simply by ‘boring from within,’ rather by ‘doing the job,’ learning (how to program and read computers, how to teach at all levels of education, how to use the mass media, how to organize production, how to recognize and eschew planned obsolescence, how to design, et cetera), and at the same time preserving one’s own consciousness in working with others.”\(^8^1\)

The goals and means of the New Left had transformed tremendously from their radical opposition during the 1960s, but due to the new stage of development of the advanced industrial society, the shift towards education and creating

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\(^7^8\) Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972) 2.
\(^7^9\) Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 28.
\(^8^0\) Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 35-36.
\(^8^1\) Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 55.
“counterinstitutions” was the most effective way to combat the system.82 Counterinstitutions, such as “free media” and “free universities” to compete with establishment education, had long been the goal of the movement, but a severe lack of financial means hindered their construction.

The 1970s seemed an appropriate time for Marcuse to alter his theory with regards to the changing circumstances of the New Left. Once seen as a revolutionary catalyst, the New Left destroyed itself when it failed to organize its groups; instead, the internal splits continued to spread to the point where groups broke off entirely, abandoning the collective goal of revolution in favor of more personal goals and more specific protests.83 Splinter groups began to form in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including the most radical of them, the RAF terrorist group. Marcuse directly responded to the use of terrorism as a revolutionary means for change in a 1977 article, “Murder is not a Political Weapon.” While Marcuse did support confrontational politics, he did not support “the physical liquidation of single individuals” because it “does not undermine the normal functioning of the capitalist system itself.”84 Revolutionary groups searching for their own forms of struggle advocated an open struggle and invited dialogue. These terrorist attacks were sneaky and did not contribute to the revolutionary cause, thus the terrorists should be prosecuted for their immoral actions.85 Marcuse argued that the terrorist activities

82 Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, 55.
should not be considered a continuation of the student movement, but rather a split from the New Left that was detrimental to the revolutionary cause as a whole.

Throughout his intellectual career, Marcuse promoted a practical philosophy that could be applied to contemporary society and that advocated Critical Theory, which could and should evolve as social conditions change. Marcuse helped formulate the Frankfurt Institute’s notion of Critical Theory and used it to reveal the destructive effects that an advanced industrial society could have on the individual in *One-Dimensional Man*. In his 1965 essay on “Repressive Tolerance,” he justified confrontational politics, “Political Preface, 1966” demonstrated his growing optimism with the revolutionary potentials, and in “The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition,” Marcuse began to emphasize that the student movement was an important source of social transformation, if not a revolutionary force. In Marcuse’s letters to Adorno in 1969, he reaffirmed his alliance with the student opposition and encouraged these students to move from theory into practice. *An Essay on Liberation*, written in 1968, exemplified the feeling of hope brought on by the growing student movement and successful revolutionary events around the world.86 In *Counterrevolution and Revolt* from 1972, he resigned from supporting confrontational politics in light of the growing violent opposition and counterrevolutionary forces created by the system; instead he called for an organized United Front and the long peaceful march through the institutions. Marcuse’s teachings, lectures, and written works influenced and educated the student opposition who were in need of theoretical leadership during their struggle for change.

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Chapter II
The Kommune I: Theory to Theatrical Praxis

“Every joke is a tiny revolution.”
– George Orwell

“The power of protest lies neither in its numbers...nor in its level of violence...but in its threat to burst through the boundaries of the accepted limits of social behavior.”
– Sidney Tarrow

The Kommune I, a student group founded in West Germany in 1967, embodied Herbert Marcuse’s concept of the Great Refusal, which advocated individual rebellion against the establishment, artistic revolts that promoted alternative culture forms, and new schools of thought that opposed dominant behaviors in society.\(^1\) Herbert Marcuse may have provided the theoretical platform for the new ideologies espoused by the student movement, but they formulated their own means of realizing these new theories about society. This unique group of students known as the Kommune I emerged from a combination of ideas from the Subversive Aktion group and the SDS in Berlin. They wanted to test the boundaries of political protest and take their discussions, teach-ins, sit-ins and flyers to another level that would attract more attention to their causes. With the memory of the innovative Tshombe protest that utilized tomatoes as projectiles in 1964, the egging of the American Embassy by students in February 1966, and the December 1966

street demonstrators that sang Christmas carols criticizing the United States’ aggression in Vietnam, members of Subversive Aktion decided that SDS conferences and legal but rather mundane street protests were neither effective nor exciting enough.

Rudi Dutschke, a member of both Subversive Aktion and the SDS, and Dieter Kunzelmann of Subversive Aktion initiated the concept of the Kommune I, but Dutschke decided that he was more committed to the SDS cause and his wife and decided not to join the group he helped create. The Kommune I did not simply want to ruminate on the idea of an alternative way of living but rather wanted to prove that their new ideas could be practically established, and decided to live in accordance with these alternatives. The Kommune I was formed on February 19, 1967. Dieter Kunzelmann, Fritz Teufel, Hans-Joachim Hameister, Ulrich Enzensberger, Volker Gebbert, Dorothea Ridder, Detlef Michel, Dagmar Seehuber, Dagrun Enzensberger and her daughter Tanaquil moved into the vacant house of Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Rainer Langhans joined them in March 1967 and the experiment began.

Kommune I members emulated characteristics of the American youth movement of the 1960s: they washed their hair sparingly and listened to the Beatles as a rebellion against their parents’ generation and societal norms. Some members had menial jobs to support their communal living, but thievery was the preferred means of procuring the necessities because it also served as a personal protest against the establishment. As one member, Ulrich Enzensberger, clarified, “Klauen war für uns nicht nur erlaubt, es war geradezu geboten, eine praktische Demonstration gegen
These young people, men and women, shared rooms, beds, and practiced free love in hopes of breaking the taboos surrounding sexuality in a rather conservative society. They attempted to establish alternative ways of living that did not revolve around the traditional family unit and nine-to-five workday.

The Kommune’s ideas regarding the role of family in a technologically advanced society stemmed from the writings of Herbert Marcuse. In his 1955 book, *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse argued that technology was abolishing the individual by means of decreasing the social function of the family unit. The family had been responsible for instilling manners and morals, for better or worse, in younger generations. A personalized upbringing ensured that each person entered society with a unique ideas and impulses, which was essential to the formation of individuals. The role of the family, Marcuse argued, had been replaced by the eruption of mass media, causing the formation of a collective identity rather than individuality. The Kommune I thus saw the family unit rendered useless by mass media, which was responsible for the degradation of the individual in society. They imagined a living situation that no longer depended on either established institution and instead focused on a communal setting that would help foster individual thought, because, according to Marcuse’s concept of the Great Refusal, individuality was essential in establishing an alternative social reality.

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2 Ulrich Enzensberger, *Die Jahre der Kommune I Berlin 1967-1969* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004) 107. Trans. “For us, stealing was not only allowed, it was downright required as a practical demonstration against private property.”

With its roots in the Situationist International and Subversive Aktion, Kommune I focused on provocation and spectacle in hopes of raising awareness concerning the unfortunate truths of their society: the West German judicial system was bureaucratic instead of just and comprised of former Nazi jurists; their “democratic” society was laced with the fascism of the Third Reich; the popular media was biased towards a conservative and pro-American opinion; and the capitalist consumer society kept the public too preoccupied with unnecessary goods to notice that West Germany supported the American war in Vietnam and the authority’s suppression of a student movement that meant to expose these injustices. The Kommune’s early forms of protests consisted of distributing pamphlets that were not merely critically informative, but often shockingly satirical. Their actions were meant to provoke a response from the public and the Kommune was willing to transgress laws and social norms in order to ensure that their points were made and not forgotten.

The Kommune referred to their protests as political happenings, which sought to convey criticisms through artistic elements like satirical pamphlets and theatrical protests. The purpose of satire as a literary genre has historically been to convey the need for social and intellectual reform, which demonstrates why the Kommune chose it as their medium of expression. Along with the elements of humor and fantasy, an attack embedded in satire established clear opposition, in the case of the Kommune I, between the intentions of the student movement to change society and the oppressive actions of the established society and its institutions. Satire has long been known to depict, in an ironic and humorous way, what society does not want to know about
itself.\textsuperscript{4} This literary form, applied in the Kommune’s pamphlets, allowed the group to convey their criticisms artistically and provocatively enough to attract media attention.

The Kommune’s mission to use theatricality as a means of protest stemmed from the satirical Dadaists of Berlin in the 1920s, the emergence of artistic happenings in America, and the Situationist International group that was one of the first major proponents of employing artistic acts as protests in post-war Europe. As one of the main figures of the Kommune I, Fritz Teufel was responsible for many of the Kommune’s political pamphlets in addition to staging dramatic protests. He proclaimed that politics had taken on the characteristics of a circus and the public had become a mere audience, but because they were an audience of a theatrical performance, they had the right to throw tomatoes if they did not like the play.\textsuperscript{5} He thought of society as a stage where criticisms could be conveyed through theatrical protests. The artistic happenings in America, which consisted of unique events that often required audience participation, influenced the creation of the political happening for the Kommune. They envisioned their spectacular protests to encourage the participation of bystanders and thus guide them into thinking critically about society. The Kommune I embodied the \textit{Spassguerilla}, a term coined by Teufel

meaning “fun guerrilla,” as a way to create protests that would mock the routines of society and criticize the establishment.\(^6\)

Although the Kommune I members had been politically active independently for years, their first protest as a group was during the Ostermarsch on March 26, 1967 in West Berlin, which was a demonstration of thousands of young people against the placement of nuclear bombs in the FRG, the Vietnam War, the Grand Coalition in Bonn, and the 600,000 unemployed in January 1967. Teufel wrote his first leaflet for this demonstration, which drew attention to “die Bombe” for the first time during the student movement, an obvious reference to the heightened discussion of nuclear weapons.\(^7\) Teufel mentioned that those who were marching were protesting “die Bombe,” meaning the Vietnam War, but those same people followed the law of paying for goods and services. He suggested a relationship between the Vietnam War and consumerism, conveying that larceny was another way one could demonstrate that West Germany’s support of America’s war in Vietnam was unacceptable. The Kommune advocated larceny as a way to break through the confines of a consumerist society that preferred to concentrate on meaningless products rather than on more important matters like preventing atrocities of war.

The Vietnam War was especially difficult for the West German students to comprehend because Germany had all too recently experienced the horrors of war on its own soil. During the occupation of West Germany after World War II, America

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was seen as the protector from Communism. While the students began to critique the American influence on West German society in the 1960s, the German people still cultivated the image of a heroic America that brought freedom and democracy to Germany. For the United States to promise peace and freedom in West Germany yet wage a brutal war in Vietnam was disappointing and hypocritical. Herbert Marcuse, in his “Political Preface, 1966,” explained that the deaths in Vietnam reminded the Germans of the Holocaust victims. He described photographs of nearly naked corpses on display as symbols of the victorious American soldier in relation to the emaciated corpses of the Nazi concentration camps. In the eyes of many young people in Germany, America had betrayed its ideals of freedom and democracy and had become the fascist enemy that they had once sought to eliminate. America’s promotion of consumerism and violence thus became prominent targets for the Kommune’s protests.

The Kommune’s second major event, later known as the Pudding-Attentat (Pudding Attack), made them quite popular with the media even though the plan was never actually carried out. In March 1967, the Kommune decided that they must create a fun political happening for United States Vice President Hubert Humphrey’s visit to Berlin in April. On April 2, they learned of the Vice President’s route from a writer friend, Reinhard Lettau, and planned their attack. They created harmless smoke bombs, “super balls” filled with pudding and flour mixtures, and had containers of whipped cream for projectiles. The attack, if one could even classify it as that, would

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have been silly enough to be laughed at but severe enough to prove a point: a representative of a country that supports the mass murder of innocents in Vietnam was not welcomed in Berlin. It would not be a violent attack, but serve instead as a means to humiliate the Vice President and incite momentary chaos along his route, thus creating a memorable yet harmless political happening. The Kommune had hoped that this event would be interesting enough to perhaps recruit apolitical youth and appeal to those dissatisfied with conventional means of protest.\(^9\)

Unfortunately for the Kommune, the authorities were tipped off that this group sought to disrupt the Vice President’s visit and intervened before their elaborate happening could take place. On April 5, half of the members were arrested at a train station after testing smoke bombs in the woods, while the others were arrested during a police invasion of their commune. The next day, the press reported that the Kommune had planned to attack the Vice President with “Bomben und hochexplosiven Chemikalien, mit Sprengstoff gefüllten Plastikbeutel – von Terroristen ‘Mao-Cocktail’ genannt.”\(^10\) This was a classic example of how the press misconstrued and vilified the goals of the students and their new protest tactics without documenting their side of the story. There was no evidence of explosive chemicals other than the harmless smoke bombs in the Kommune’s apartment. Even when the Kommune members were given the chance to clarify their actions, the damage had already been done. Kunzelmann claimed that they just wanted to engulf

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the Vice President’s entourage with foul smelling smoke and throw food without actually harming him. Hameister attested that the smoke bombs would have only burned for ten seconds and Teufel stressed that they burned poorly but released a foul stench. They emphasized that the attack was meant to be a joke and not to be understood as an act of violence.11

The authorities did not have enough evidence to hold the members when they found that the substances in their house were not dangerous, and were forced to release them, but not before demanding that the Free University discipline them for their unruly actions. A sit-in regarding the portrayal of the Kommune in the media was held on April 19 at the Free University. Reinhard Lettau emphasized that the media twisted the truth and could not always be taken at face value. This proved to be a recurring theme throughout the political career of the Kommune I who seemed to remain in disagreement with the alleged facts presented by the print media. Although the members of the Kommune planned their political happening and carefully chose the statements in the pamphlets, their messages were often deliberately misinterpreted by the media, which then misinformed and manipulated the public. With the media propagating a negative image of the Kommune I and the student movement as a whole, it was difficult for the Kommune to gain popular support. The Kommune criticized mass media as responsible for the degradation of individuality, but they relied heavily on media coverage to create more attention for their political happenings. Although the Kommune did not attain widespread support, their media

attention was successful in attracting small groups of sympathizers and support from apolitical youth drawn in by the spectacle of their protests.

Shortly after the April sit-in at the Free University, Fritz Teufel wrote another pamphlet that mocked academic regulations and the Springer Press, alluded that political silence equates stupidity, and emphasized the fascist past of Germany and suggested its continuation in present society. The critique that fascism was still alive in German politics was a recent phenomenon of the 1960s. Discussing the National Socialist regime in post-war Germany was a huge social taboo, one that the Kommune I and the student movement attempted to break. The rebellious generation of the 1960s decided it was time to not only admit that fascism once flourished in Germany, but also that politicians who had served during the Nazi regime still held their positions in the new West German democracy.

Instead of leaving this pamphlet unsigned as he did his previous one, Teufel scribbled “SDS” at the bottom without their permission. The leaders of the SDS viewed the Kommune’s actions as misrepresentative of the student movement and decided that their latest pamphlet was too provocative to be associated with the SDS. The Kommune was expelled from the SDS on May 12, 1967. In the typical Kommune fashion, they responded appropriately with “Die Kommune ist tot – es lebe der SDS!” Their satirical retort implied that their expulsion was not the end but perhaps a new beginning for the Kommune as they no longer had to be concerned with upsetting the SDS. Even though the SDS supported revolutionary discussions

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13 Trans. “The Kommune is dead – Long live the SDS!”
and encouraged demonstrations, the Kommune viewed the organization as too conservative in their tactics to understand that their shared ideas needed to be expressed through more than just sit-ins and organized protests.

On May 22, 1967, the Warenhaus L’Innovation department store in Brussels, one of the largest in the world, burned to the ground during the crowded lunch hour rush. The German press not only quickly reported the tragedy of over three hundred deaths the next morning, but also used this catastrophic event to vilify the anti-war New Left movement in Europe. In the May 23rd edition of the Bild newspaper, the department store director, Willy Bernheim, explained that he believed extremists set the blaze because the store advertised American products and was thus a target for communists, who earlier in the week left fireworks to be set off inside. Upon reading this, the Kommune I knew the damage to the ideals of the New Left had already been done. Every politician, every German, read the newspaper at the breakfast table. The Bild was able to reach a wide audience in a short amount of time, guaranteeing that first reactions to the horrors of the fire would be associated with anti-war demonstrators. The Bild was also the same newspaper that printed the headlines after the “Pudding Attack” that claimed an assassination attempt was made on the Vice President of the United States. The newspaper was not interested in the facts, but rather in discrediting the student movement and deterring sympathizers.

The Kommune I knew that the articles contained false reports. Ulrich Enzensberger explained why:

“Die europäische Linke war damals pazifistisch bis auf die Knochen. Die kommunistischen Parteien predigten den friedlichen Übergang zum Sozialismus...Nichtstaatliche Gewalt war ausschließlich eine Sache der Rechten. Noch nie war ein Molotow-Cocktail in der BRD geflogen.”  

There was no reason for the media to suggest that a pacifist movement would resort to an arson attack that killed over three hundred people, other than to defame and devalue the protest movement as a whole. One May 24, 1967, the Kommune responded to these allegations by distributing four satirical pamphlets at the Free University’s cafeteria. Even though the Kommune was against the use of violence, their satirical rhetoric in the pamphlets included applauding the arson in Brussels as a work of art. Their pamphlets, works of fiction written merely to provoke a response from the media and the public, were largely misinterpreted by the media as unsympathetic towards the victims and as an attempt to incite violence.

The first pamphlet, “Neue Demonstrationsformen in Brüssel erstmals erprobt,” satirically stated that the department store fire in Brussels was a large political happening meant to simulate war-like conditions in the city. To reduce the deaths of hundreds of people to a work of art was appalling, as the media understood it. However, the purpose of this pamphlet was not to belittle the tragedy, but to emphasize by use of satire the unlikelihood that a peaceful group should use such drastic measures. The pamphlet contained an interview with a member of the pro-

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15 Enzensberger, Die Jahre der Kommune I Berlin 1967-1969, 138. Trans. “The European Left was pacifist to the bone. The Communist political parties preached the peaceful transition to socialism. Non-government violence was exclusively a matter of the Right. A Molotow-Cocktail had not yet been thrown in the FRG.”  
China group, “Aktion für Frieden und Völkerfreundschaft.”\textsuperscript{17} It became obvious that attributing an arson attack to a group with such a pacifist name was a comment on the press labeling anti-war youths as terrorists. It was rather inappropriate to automatically assume that anti-Vietnam protesters were responsible for the fire, especially when there had been no evidence to suggest the connection, other than anti-war flyers that the Frieden group handed out at the department store the day before the fire.

In this pamphlet, the Frieden group sarcastically explained that they did not want to violently enforce their opinions on the public regarding the Vietnam War, but since the media had not been exposing the true brutalities of war, the group decided to expose the truth about the American bombing in Hanoi with a carefully planned happening of their own. The Kommune explained in their pamphlet that in order to throw off suspicion, the Frieden group distributed anti-war flyers at the department store the day before the arson. While the Frieden group did distribute the flyers, they were not, of course, responsible for the arson attack. Note the blatant sarcasm in the logic of this statement, as a group responsible for a heinous attack would not likely draw attention to themselves the day before. The Kommune ended with one more retaliation against the allegations: if the police have all the evidence that an anti-war group committed the arson, then why do they not release this information and make an arrest? The entire pamphlet was designed to highlight the absurdity of the press allegations and to help restore the image of a peaceful student movement.

\textsuperscript{17} Trans. “Action for Peace and Friendship between Nations”
The Kommune’s second pamphlet began with “NEU! UNCONVENTIONELL! Warum brennst du, Konsument? NEU! ATEMBERAUBEND!”18 The opening lines were meant to resemble advertising slogans that reeled in consumers with new and “breathtaking” products. Invoking a similarity between advertisements and the pamphlet demonstrated a direct attack on not just consumerism, but America specifically, as if America stood for consumerism as a whole. The Kommune explained in the pamphlet that America’s excellent advertising campaigns were responsible for the successes of Coca Cola, Hiroshima, the German Wirtschaftswunder, and the Vietnam War among many others.19 Juxtaposing economic successes alongside catastrophes of humanity, the Kommune demonstrated that America’s talent for advertising was used to persuade the public into thinking war was a necessary, positive move for America. The press coverage of the Vietnam War was as easy to swallow as Coca Cola advertisements.

Continuing with the theme of consumerism and advertising, the Kommune mentioned a new “ungewöhnliches Schauspiel”20 from America. The Brussels department store had been hosting an American Week advertising campaign that was meant to persuade shoppers to buy American products and emulate American values, but the rare play mentioned by the Kommune was not the advertising campaign, but the department store fire itself. The Kommune described the new American campaign as “Ein brennendes Kaufhaus mit brennenden Menschen vermittelte zum ersten mal

20 Trans. “rare play”
in einer europäischen Grossstadt jenes knisternde Vietnamgefühl...das wir in Berlin bislang noch missen müssen.”

The comparison of the tragic fire with the Vietnam War was an inherent critique of the American involvement with and politics of the war. On May 22, Brussels experienced what the people in Vietnam were exposed to everyday because of the war: fire, panic, and death. Americans facilitated the destruction of innocent people for years in Vietnam, but because of the selective press coverage, they were seen as heroes of democracy. The Kommune grappled with the idea that America remained blameless in they eyes of many while dropping napalm in Vietnam, but the anti-war movement was immediately labeled as terrorists without any hard evidence after the destructive fire.

There was no justice in either situation when it came to the press.

“Wann brennen die Berliner Kaufhäuser?” was the Kommune’s fourth provocative piece that became known as the “Burn ware-house, burn!” pamphlet. This piece seemed to attract the most media attention because it appeared to advocate the use of violence. The pamphlet began with: “Bisher krepierten die Amis in Vietnam für Berlin. Uns gefiel es nicht, dass diese armen Schweine ihr Cocacolablut in vietnamischen Dchungel verspritzen mussten.”

Because the chaos in Vietnam was no longer satisfactory, the pamphlet continued, the protesters wanted more

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21 Trans. “A burning department store and burning people created, for the first time in a major European city, the feeling of war-torn Vietnam, that we in Berlin as of yet must tragically miss out on.”


24 Provokationen: Die Studenten- und Judendrevolte in Ihren Flugblättern 1965- 1971, 28. Trans. “Until now Americans in Vietnam have died for Berlin. It is no longer pleasing that these poor American swine spilled their Coca-Cola-blood in the jungles of Vietnam.”
disorder and violence closer to home and so they ran rampant through the city, throwing eggs at the American Embassy in Berlin and attempting to drown the American Vice President in pudding. The best retaliation, they wrote, was performed by their friends in Brussels who were able to participate in the hilarious events experienced in Vietnam by burning down the department store. The Kommune encouraged people to throw lit cigarettes into Berlin department store dressing rooms and to shed no more tears for the poor Vietnamese while reading their newspapers during breakfast because they will soon have victims closer to home to mourn. They ended with “Burn ware-house, burn!” which was often quoted in the newspapers as justification when implicating the Kommune in future violent acts.

The Kommune itself did not believe that anyone would take their pamphlets seriously, but the newspapers did not, or pretended not to understand their political satire and interpreted these pamphlets as serious violent threats. The Kommune wrote these pamphlets in reaction to the unprecedented claim that anti-war protesters were responsible for the arson attack in Brussels. They used satire and exaggerated, fictitious stories in their pamphlets to highlight their pacifism while testifying that the real criminals were those responsible for the atrocities in Vietnam, namely America and its supporters. After the day of headlines on May 23 regarding the arson attack in Brussels, the Kommune was stunned to find a follow-up story on May 25 not on the front page of the Bild, but on the very last page in small print: “Noch immer gibt es keine Bestätigung für ein Attentat. Die Ursache ist unklar.”25 An investigation had

concluded that no signs of arson were present and that the blaze was most likely started by an electrical fire. The fire spread quickly due to the unique wooden architecture, which created a chimney-like path for the flames to travel directly up the middle of the department store to the top floor. The Bild realized that they had made a mistake, but they were too proud and set on defaming the student movement to make a headline out of the recent discovery that would have cleared the negative image of the student movement.

Not long after the department store fire in Brussels faded to the back page of the newspaper, the student movement became the subject of another headline. On June 2, 1967, the Shah of Iran visited Berlin and was greeted with a warm welcome by the FRG government. The students, however, saw him as a murderer and greeted him and his wife with a demonstration of over 1,500 people in front of the Berlin Opera House. The Kommune I joined protesting Iranian exchange students in wearing paper bags on their heads; a humorous sight indeed but necessary for protection against the Iranian secret service who would have surely used extreme measures against any Iranians caught protesting against their Shah. The students brought with them paint, tomatoes, and eggs to use as projectiles but did not anticipate the chaos that would ensue.

Along with a strong police presence in front of the opera, over one hundred Iranian secret service agents stood against the fences that contained the students. Protesters began chanting and throwing paint, garbage, and tomatoes. In response, Police Chief Duesing gave the command to vacate the sidewalks around the opera house, but when the students refused to disperse, the police began attacking the
protesters that were sitting on the fences. Once the violence started, the Shah’s secret service joined in beating the protesters and a full-fledged attack on the demonstrators began. Most protesters either tried to run away or sat on the ground like Teufel, signifying that they were not a threat, but as a result, they made themselves easy targets for police batons. Numerous students were attacked without provocation and then arrested.

Benno Ohnesorg, a peaceful demonstrator participating in his first protest, was shot in the head by police officer Karl-Heinz Kurras. Ohnesorg was a university student and his wife was pregnant with their first child. The course of the student movement was said to have changed that very day. The students and sympathizers were outraged and saddened that by this senseless, unprovoked act of violence against Ohnesorg, an innocent protester. The situation was made even more unbearable when the press blamed the students for the death of one of their own: “ER WURDE OPFER VON KRAWALLEN, DIE POLITISCH HALBSTARKE INSZENIERTEN.”

26 This was the first truly violent act against the student movement and impacted countless individuals and the course of future events. Teufel later remarked that with Ohnesorg’s murder on June 2, 1967, “a system had established its essence.”

27 The essence, alluded Teufel, was that of violence deemed necessary by the institutions in their struggle against the peace movement. The slaying of Ohnesorg was one of the most important events for the movement because it created solidarity between groups within the student movement, attracted more sympathizers, which caused the

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26 Enzensberger, Die Jahre der Kommune I Berlin 1967-1969, 154. Trans. “He was the victim of riots orchestrated by the political hooligans!”
movement to grow and make international headlines, and ushered certain student
groups down the path of radicalization.²⁸

Amongst the chaos of June 2, Fritz Teufel was arrested for allegedly throwing
a stone and inciting a riot. During his court appearance, Teufel made a statement
explaining his personal views on violence, the Kommune’s reasons for the Pudding
Attack, his role in the demonstrations against the Shah, and his treatment during his
arrest on June 2. After a brief mention of biographical information, Teufel explained
that the goal of the Kommune I as a whole was to transform their theory for a better
society into practice. Although their actions may have been rather unconventional
according to societal norms, they never agreed on a spectacle unless every member
understood the details and was prepared to accept all possible consequences. He also
stressed that the Kommune never used violence and would not advocate the use of
violence. Instead, their weapons of choice were wit and humor because by ridiculing
the establishment, they proved that the people were not always powerless. This was
the point the Kommune had attempted to make during their foiled Pudding Attack on
Vice President Hubert Humphrey, but they were arrested before being given the
chance to explain their actions. Teufel stressed that the Kommune had carefully
planned their happening so that it would not be interpreted as an aggressive act, but
rather as a humorous situation inspired by American comedy films. They thought that
this would be an appropriate way to welcome the visiting Vice President. All of the
participants in the Pudding Attack were willing to be charged for offending

²⁸Teune, "Humor as a Guerrilla Tactic: The West German Student Movement's Mockery of the
Establishment," 124.
America’s Vice President and for being a nuisance, but being accused of an attempted assassination was entirely unexpected.

The last part of Teufel’s statement was spent discussing the demonstration against the Shah and the tragic death of Benno Ohnesorg. The protest was organized to demonstrate that the young people of Berlin did not approve of the poor conditions of exploitation, hunger, and disease suffered by the Iranians under the Shah. Teufel described the events of the riots that started when police advanced on the demonstrators who were sitting on fences dividing the police and the students. The physical confrontations began at 7:45pm. Once Teufel witnessed the police beating the students, he and the demonstrators next to him sat peacefully with their backs to the advancing policemen. The police pulled his hair, beat him with their truncheons, kicked him, and even broke his glasses. One policeman remarked that this man was Teufel, the one who planned to assassinate the Vice President of the United States; clearly a result of the media’s portrayal of the Pudding Attack. The beatings continued in the police car as he was driven to the station. The arresting officers claimed that nothing worth noting took place during his transportation. During the violent chaos that ensued, Teufel proved that he remained passive even when his own life was threatened at the hands of the officers.29

Fritz Teufel not only attempted to clarify his principles during his allotted time to make a statement, but he also engaged in humorous displays of defiance in the courtroom. He believed that the judicial system was more concerned with outdated rituals than with establishing the truth behind the case at hand. One could argue that

Teufel was falsely accused simply because he was a popular figure of the student movement and was used as an example of how demonstrators should be treated. Karl-Heinz Kurras, the police officer who shot Benno Ohnesorg, had been acquitted before Teufel even went to trial.³⁰ Kurras’ trial for the murder of Ohnesorg was processed faster than Teufel’s trial for inciting a riot, which demonstrated that the judicial system implicitly supported Kurras’ violent action against the student protester. To highlight how arbitrary certain rituals of the court were, Teufel refused to rise when the judge entered the room. After being ordered to do so many times, he slowly arose with the remark “Wenn’s der Wahrheitsfindung dient.”³¹ This act of defiance was recorded by print and television media and became a symbol of the anti-authoritarian student movement.³²

While Teufel was imprisoned and clarifying the Kommune’s theories and his personal beliefs in court, the Kommune I published a brochure containing their recent pamphlets. The cover of this brochure became especially popular due to its provocative nature. Displaying the naked bodies of the Kommune members against a barren wall as if preparing for a strip search, the photograph was commonly referred to as the “Polizeirazzia.”³³ The members of the Kommune saw themselves as innocent victims of unnecessary police proceedings: their apartment had been raided in April because of rumors of a threat against the American Vice President, members were tried for allegedly inciting violence through pamphlets, others were arrested for

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³¹ Teune, "Humor as a Guerrilla Tactic: The West German Student Movement’s Mockery of the Establishment," 125. Trans. “If it helps to establish the truth.”
³³ Trans. “police raid”
participating in peaceful demonstrations. Their pose was meant to prove that they had nothing to hide; they were completely naked and thus vulnerable to search or attack with their backs turned to welcome the gaze of the audience. The exclamation “Das Private ist politisch!”\textsuperscript{34} coupled with the striking photograph represented the beliefs of the Kommune. They saw themselves as victims of an aggressive establishment. They believed in non-violent protests and rebelled against conservatism in society, as expressed by the nudity in the photograph. Sexuality was considered a private matter and was scarcely discussed in the FRG. By displaying their bodies for the public, the Kommune I members forced the viewer to confront and think about sexuality.

More provocative than the exhibitionism was the allusion in the photograph to the bodies of Holocaust victims. Rudi Dutschke, in an interview with Der Spiegel, explained that behind the bare shock of nudity was a visual allusion to the gas chambers during the Third Reich: helplessness, fear, and terror. This photo demonstrated that the Kommune I members viewed themselves as the oppressed outcasts of society.\textsuperscript{35} The association of the Kommune with the Holocaust victims\textsuperscript{36} could have proven to be quite controversial since Germany’s Nazi past was seldom addressed in post-war West Germany. The comparison was understood but perhaps either greatly exaggerated the oppression of the Kommune and other societal

\textsuperscript{34} Trans. “The private is political”
\textsuperscript{36} The Kommune I identified with the Holocaust victims during the early to mid 1960s, but around 1969 when the student movement became radicalized, their views had changed. Israel was now a war nation responsible for the deaths of many Egyptians and Palestinians. In the minds of Kommune members like Kunzelmann and Teufel, the Jews were no longer victims but aggressors. Kunzelmann traveled to Jordan to train with terrorists and his first violent act in November 1969 was an attempt to blow up a Jewish community center in Berlin. Teufel also formed a group with similar views in Munich in 1969.
minorities, or was insensitive to the recent crime against humanity that was the Holocaust. Since the Kommune rarely acted without careful consideration of the consequences, it is safe to assume that they fully understood the types of reactions provoked by this photograph. They wanted to shock society and force them to think about this photograph and hopefully reach some greater understanding regarding Germany’s Nazi past in relation to the oppression of the current society.

The Kommune I switched from a shocking and critical tone back to humor and spectacle August 10, 1967 when Teufel was finally released from prison after his arrest on June 2, 1967. The Ku’damm-Happening took place on August 12, 1967 to celebrate Teufel’s freedom. The demonstrators danced, sang, and distributed pamphlets ridiculing the judicial process and criticizing the police for the brutal treatment of students during the June 2 demonstration. Although this event was a celebration of freedom, it was also used as an opportunity to make a political statement about the continuation of fascism in the government. The Kommune I members, a group that never missed an opportunity to make their criticisms of the establishment known, once again took it upon themselves to provoke their audience, those who happened to witness this impromptu event, with extremely offensive yet ironic claims. In the beginning of the Ku’damm pamphlet, the Kommune remarked that the workers seemed stupid and saddened that they had no reason to celebrate. The pamphlet intended to provoke a dialogue with the workers:
“Schaut doch nich so saublöd – Mund zu!!
Ober brüllt ein bisschen rum:…
unter Hitler wäre das nicht…”37

During the rise of the student movement in the early 1960s, the working class often complained that the students were mere elitist intellectuals who did not adequately represent their interests. In this pamphlet, the Kommune accused the workers of being stupid because they refused to mobilize and help themselves. The Kommune suggested that the workers complained without any intention of instigating change, but the biggest criticism was relating the passive working class to the Nazi regime. It was well known that many unemployed and working class people were attracted to the National Socialist Party in 1933, and the Kommune wanted to establish that connection. Of course, many workers most likely would not have run around shouting that they missed the good days of the Third Reich, but the Kommune wanted to emphasize that if the people wanted change, they needed to personally instigate it.

Another key rhetorical strategy of the Ku’damm pamphlet involved a play on words with “Teufel,” which was the name of one the Kommune’s famous members, but also means devil in German. The Kommune wrote, “Der Teufel hat den Polizisten Ohnesorg erschossen,”38 referring to the media’s headline that Ohnesorg was killed because the students started to riot. The media blamed the student movement, as symbolized by Teufel in the pamphlet’s line, for the death of one of their own. Teufel was a prominent figure of the student movement singled out by the media and

37 Enzensberger, Die Jahre der Kommune I Berlin 1967-1969, 195-96. Trans. “Don’t look so damn stupid – Shut up!! Or shout that it would not be like this under Hitler.”
targeted as an instigator of violence. The double meaning of the word Teufel also implies that the devil, or rather absolute evil, coerced the police office into killing an innocent protester. For the Kommune, the establishment represented the great evil because it opposed the peaceful student movement and was responsible for the escalation of police brutality against the students. The pamphlet ended with the cry, “MAN MUSS DEN TEUFEL FEIERN, SOLANGE ER LOS IST.”39 The demonstrators were again playing with the meaning of Teufel’s name. The Kommune alluded to the media’s portrayal of the demonstrators as violent hooligans that incited riots with Teufel as a devilish leader who was responsible for the corruption of the students. So during this happening, Teufel’s supporters celebrated the devil Teufel because he was once again set loose to roam the streets. The Ku’damm pamphlets used irony to convey the absurdity of the media’s allegations that Teufel was a corrupter of the youth. The happening demonstrated that Teufel, contrary to the meaning of his name, was simply a fun-loving pacifist whose image was tainted by the media.40

The celebration was short lived because Teufel and fellow Kommune I member Rainer Langhans were charged on June 9, 1967 by the district attorney’s office in West Berlin for the outrage created by their “Burn ware-house, burn!” pamphlet. Their trial began July 6, 1967 and was soon referred to as the “Moabit Soap Opera” because of the dramatic courtroom antics orchestrated by Teufel and

39 Enzensberger, Die Jahre der Kommune I Berlin 1967-1969, 197. Trans. “One must celebrate the devil (Fritz Teufel) as long as he is free!”
40 Teufel was wholly committed to the pacifist peace movement until July 1968 when he moved to Munich, where began participating in more violent acts of protest.
Langhans. They were convinced that the trial presented them with a stage upon which their witty criticisms of the judicial system could be enacted. Teufel and Langhans undermined the integrity of the entire court system when refusing to act like typical defendants by engaging the audience, questioning the judge and prosecutor, and behaving as if the entire process was a tedious chore.⁴¹

Even though a panel of external experts such as Günter Grass⁴² deemed the pamphlets void of rhetoric that would encourage a violent act and classified them merely as political satire, the court decided to proceed with the trial regardless of their testimonies.⁴³ The court, in an attempt to buy more time to strengthen their case against Teufel and Langhans, ordered a psychiatric examination. The Kommune’s attorney, Horst Mahler, moved to have the request dismissed, but Teufel agreed to the examination as long as the court members and district attorney agreed to one as well. The audience showed their support by clapping frantically, so the judge cleared the courtroom.⁴⁴ Teufel implied that it was the authoritative institutions, such as the judicial system, that were mentally unstable rather than the students that demonstrated for change. To make such an accusation was disrespectful to the court members, who were accustomed to the unconditional respect demanded by the courtroom proceedings.

When the trial resumed in March 1968, the court increased the police presence in the new courtroom, which also seated fewer audience members, now that they

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⁴¹ Martin Klimke, "'We Are Not Going to Defend Ourselves Before Such a Justice System!' - 1968 and the Courts," German Law Journal 10.03 (2009): 266.
⁴² Günter Grass is a prominent German author, who, during the 1960s, was a member of the SPD and critical of the radical Left and rebellious students.
⁴³ Klimke, "'We Are Not Going to Defend Ourselves Before Such a Justice System!'" 266.
⁴⁴ Klimke, "'We Are Not Going to Defend Ourselves Before Such a Justice System!'" 266.
knew what to expect from Teufel and Langhans. When asked about the purpose behind making the flyers, Langhans responded that the Kommune never expected anyone to regard their satirical pieces as a call to action. He then asked how the judge came to the conclusion that their pamphlets were meant to incite violence when he was interrupted mid sentence by the judge. Langhans yelled that he could not even finish a sentence without being interrupted and ordered the judge to remain silent until he finished talking. Langhans claimed that anyone who came to the conclusion that the Kommune advocated arson was simply stupid, as was the court. As the audience began to react in support of his claim, Langhans urged them to quiet down as to not force the judge into clearing the courtroom, as he had done previously when Teufel accused the court of needing a psychological evaluation.45

Langhans questioned, insulted, and interrupted the judge during this widely publicized trial. Teufel and Langhans had made a mockery of the judicial system from within the courtroom itself. As testament to the Kommune’s previous statements about not acting without careful planning, Langhans, in his closing statement, thanked the court for the opportunity to present this theatrical play, meaning the trial.46 Although their actions may have appeared spontaneous, they had carefully staged their court outbursts to resemble a soap opera. Despite their courtroom antics and the determination of the prosecution to convict the Kommune members, Teufel and Langhans were acquitted on March 22, 1968.

45 Klimke, “‘We Are Not Going to Defend Ourselves Before Such a Justice System!’” 267-68.
46 Klimke, “‘We Are Not Going to Defend Ourselves Before Such a Justice System!’” 268.
Shortly after the antics of the Moabit Soap Opera, the mood of the student movement quickly became somber. April was a memorable and devastating month for the peace movement. On April 3, 1968 Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Thorwald Proll, and Horst Söhnlein set fire to two department stores in Frankfurt. The media was quick to implicate the Kommune’s pamphlets as responsible for encouraging the arson. They responded in an article in Der Spiegel, explaining that although they knew three of the four arsonists and sympathized with their message, the Kommune’s pamphlets should not be cited as the motivation for the fires. The Kommune emphasized, as they did when their pamphlets caused the media to panic the first time, that they were written as fiction and should not have been taken as an encouragement for arson. The Kommune also highlighted that those two department stores, Kaufhaus Schneider and Kaufhof, were specifically chosen so that no lives would have been in jeopardy. The arsonists were responsible for 700,000 Deutsche Marks worth of damage, but no injuries or deaths resulted from their arson attacks on consumerism.

On April 4, 1968, the international peace movement received another major blow when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. The Kommune responded with a somber pamphlet, completely different than their usual satirical flyers.

47 Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin formed the RAF terrorist group in Germany in 1970.
“Der Friedensnobelpreisträger ist tot. Er hatte einen Preis dafür bekommen, dass er Frieden gemacht hat, wo er einen Krieg führen sollte, den Krieg der Schwarzen gegen die Weißen, einer Minderheit gegen die vielen Reichen….Heute soll vorm Rathaus Schönberg der Regierende Pogromknüppel weinen…In Frankfurt haben zwei Kaufhäuser gebrannt - In Amerika brennen Städte, die Linken distanzieren sich von Frankfurt, wer distanziert sich von black power?”

In this pamphlet of grief, the Kommune recognized that war seemed to be the most logical and easiest way to resolve differences: Martin Luther King could have easily chosen to encourage African Americans to rally violently against their oppressors; instead, he chose the more difficult route of civil disobedience. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his great deeds, but one man’s violent action deprived the Civil Rights Movement of its great leader. The Kommune demonstrated their solidarity with King and his methods of civil disobedience by mourning his death with other German students in front of the city hall. It appeared that the peace movement for a more democratic world was crumbling against the escalation of violence of the establishment.

Although Martin Luther King’s assassination sent a tremor through the core of the international peace movement, the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke had practically shattered the German student movement. On April 11, Josef Bachmann, an unskilled laborer from Saxony, shot Dutschke three times at point blank range.

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“The Nobel Peace Prize Laureate is dead. He received the award for making peace when he should have led a war, a war with Blacks against Whites, one minority against the wealthy….Today we mourn in front of the Schönberg City Hall…In Frankfurt, two department stores burned – In America, the cities burn, the Left distanced itself from Frankfurt, who would distance themselves from black power?”
Bachmann called Dutschke a “Kommunistenschwein” before the shooting and believed he was a threat to German society. Although Dutschke survived, he suffered brain damage from his head wound and withdrew from political life to recuperate with his wife and children. He died on December 24, 1979 from health problems related to those injuries.

The student movement lost Dutschke, its charismatic leader, and their passion began to wane. The peace movement in West Germany began to doubt that they could have instigated any more change after this great loss. The students blamed the Springer Press for influencing Bachmann, who wanted to eliminate the growing communist threat to society: Dutschke. The Springer Press, owned by Axel Springer, propagated the image of Dutschke as a communist in many of their issues and nicknamed him “Red Rudi.” The right-wing Munich weekly newspaper, Deutschen National- und Soldatenzeitung, published an article entitled “STOPPT DUTSCHKE JETZT!” on March 22, 1968. Outraged students and sympathizers yelled out “Mörder, Mörder!” and set fire to Springer delivery trucks as a way to prevent their magazines and newspapers from spreading on April 11, 1968. Students in Hamburg, Munich, Berkeley, Prague, and from many other cities around the world protested in solidarity with the German student movement’s great loss.

This tragic event reminded many demonstrators of June 2, 1967 when Benno Ohnesorg was shot and killed without provocation. Many students became disillusioned, others became angry. If violence was going to continuously be used

50 Trans. “Communist Pig”
51 Trans. “Stop Dutschke Now!”
52 Trans. “Murderer, Murderer!”
against a peaceful movement, then the movement would have to counteract that violence. Satirical pamphlets and theatrical protests could no longer compete against the escalating violence of the counter-revolution. The time of the Kommune I and Spassguerilla was over. Fritz Teufel left Berlin in June 1968 for Munich while the other members slowly drifted away from the Kommune, some remained peacefully political, others returned to their studies, and a few joined the newly emerging terrorist groups in Germany. The shower of bullets from assassination attempts and the bombs of arson retaliations began to drown out the laughter of the Kommune I.

The Kommune I was active for just over a year and a half. Their style of protest was new and provocative enough to result in vast media attention. The goal of the Kommune was to provoke the public, ultimately through the media, to encourage alternative ways of thinking about society. Encouragement came in the form of theatrical spectacles and satirical pamphlets meant to bring comedy into the political realm, and thus make politics more appealing. Humor as a social protest was not entirely new; satirical writers and court jesters had used humor to convey sharp criticisms about society in subtle ways. However, humor as a social protest in the context of post-war Germany and within the student movement was extremely unconventional though thought to be necessary for the Kommune I.

Although the field of humor studies is relatively new, only around three decades old, studies have analyzed the conditions, means, and effects of humor as a social protest, which can be applied to the Kommune I in Germany. Humor entered the political realm when students, like Kunzelmann in Subversive Aktion, began to
combine neo-Marxism with the art form of the happening. The political opportunities provided by an already present threat against the establishment, namely the students, demonstrated the weakness of a politically unstable post-war West Germany. One of the main conditions for humorous protests relies on a pre-existing collective identity that would understand the message behind the humor, thus giving legitimacy and power to the criticisms. The German student movement and its sympathizers had already expressed their grievances against the establishment, which provided the Kommune I with a base for their own protests.

While the Kommune’s criticism against the establishment and protests against the Vietnam War were similar to those of the larger student movement, their methods were entirely different. The Kommune I was largely effective in establishing unconventional forms of protest, which captivated not only the media’s attention, but also the interests of non-academic young adults and drew them into the movement. Studies today demonstrate that jokes are a type of communication strategy focused on the use of ambiguous humor. The Kommune’s pamphlets provide a good example of the use of ambiguity. They were pieces of political satire that did not directly convey the Kommune’s criticism, but rather relied heavily on the imagination of the audience to draw their own conclusions. Despite requiring audience participation to fully understand the pamphlets, the Kommune made the interpretations easy by

53 Teune, "Humor as a Guerrilla Tactic: The West German Student Movement's Mockery of the Establishment," 118.
55 Teune, "Humor as a Guerrilla Tactic: The West German Student Movement's Mockery of the Establishment," 130.
addressing important issues that made media headlines. Humor made difficult or sometimes unpopular topics easier to understand and often attracted more sympathizers to the movement.57

Humor as a social protest can be beneficial in conveying complex thoughts about society, but it can also be rather detrimental to a cause. The SDS leaders did not agree with the protest tactics of the Kommune I and expelled them from the group in May 1967, which weakened not only the support for the Kommune, but also the SDS as many of its members did not agree with the decision. Ambiguous humor could often be misunderstood, as it was by the media who quoted the Kommune out of context. The media painted a violent image of the peaceful Kommune, which misrepresented their ideology and deterred sympathizers. Many members of the Kommune, in particular Fritz Teufel, were arrested during playful acts or because of misunderstood satirical pamphlets.

The humorous tactics of the Kommune I brought necessary attention to the student movement from 1967 to 1968. Once violence had been used to combat peaceful protests, humor ceased to be an effective tactic. The necessary conditions of a supportive student movement and a government unaccustomed to dealing with humorous protests and political happenings were no longer available to the Kommune. The conditions of society had changed and had thus forced the movement to change in reaction. Humor no longer had the same effect and seemed almost inappropriate once violence escalated in West Germany. Theatrical non-violent protests were replaced by Dutschke’s “long march” through the institutions, the belief

that a more democratic government was forming under West Germany’s Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1969, and, simultaneously, the belief that violence was now necessary since peace had failed to usher in any substantial changes to the establishment. According to certain radical groups like the RAF, violence had become necessary to end the establishment’s systematic use of violence against those who wanted a free society.

The idea of violence as a means of protest during the student movement was not entirely new; the Kommune I had aestheticized the concept of violence in their political pamphlets. The early German Dadaists emphasized chaos as a means to assault and critique bourgeois society, as well as attack the established concept of art itself. The Kommune I continued this tradition of using violence in art to raise awareness about the violence in society and to elicit an enlightened response from the audience. At the Kommune’s inception, however, they did not plan to incorporate physical violence as a component of their protest; they originally wanted to challenge societal norms by living communally, breaking the laws of a consumerist society, and protesting the undemocratic elements of West German politics. Although they were satirical and not meant to incite acts of violence, the Kommune’s pamphlets certainly discussed aggressive actions and what it would mean to become violent against the establishment. The artistic depiction of violence in the Kommune’s pamphlets only occurred after the media labeled the peaceful student movement as dangerous. The Kommune’s first pamphlets that depicted violence were in response to the media’s

implication that anti-war protesters were responsible for the Brussels department store fire.

Mass media in West Germany, the majority owned by Axel Springer, seemed to have a personal vendetta against the student movement from the beginning. Springer’s anti-Communist magazines and newspapers portrayed the news with a conservative bias that automatically made any threat to the established order into a danger to society itself. The media used aggressive language in their headlines to characterize the student protests well before the student movement transitioned into its violent stage: the Pudding Attack was an assassination attempt, the Brussels department store fire was an arson attack by an anti-war group, the Kommune satirical pamphlets were meant to incite violent acts in West Germany, the students started the riots on June 2, 1967 that led to the murder of Benno Ohnesorg. The media made the student movement into dangerous mob in the eyes of their readers—the majority of the West German public. The biased media created the idea of the terrorist long before the radicalization of the movement.

The Kommune’s use of rhetorical violence depicted in their pamphlets reflected the manifestations of violence in West German society: the aggressive language of the media, the use of police brutality against pacifist student protesters, and the oppressive judicial and university institutions. The Kommune meant for their audience to draw parallels between their fictitious violence in their pamphlets and the historically repressed Nazi violence that was rearticulated in every aspect of the aggressive establishment. The artistic portrayal of violence, according to the Kommune, should have been enough to provoke the public to think about the concept
of violence and how it was being used by their own society. After the radicalization of the student movement, the simple concept of violence was not enough to encourage reflection and eventual change by the general public. The RAF believed that because the extraparliamentary opposition began to rejoin the system and that the monopoly on information prevented the spread of truth, physical acts of violence were now necessary to combat the establishment. The state had failed the public, the student opposition rejoined the system to slowly change institutions form within, and others were content with moderate liberalization that accompanied Willy Brandt’s regime. The RAF was not satisfied by the minimal changes of society because the system that propagated violence and oppression was still as strong as ever. There was no other way to combat the fascist system except to go underground and become completely detached from the system of established rules.
Chapter III
The Armed Struggle of the RAF

“In the current phase of history no one can any longer deny that an armed group, however small it may be, has more of a chance of becoming a people’s army than a group that has been reduced to spouting revolutionary rhetoric.”

— 30 Questions to a Tupamaro

The explosion of the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) onto the West German political scene in 1970 was not without warning. The escalation of the media’s violent language, the prevalence of police brutality, and reactionary student aggression in the 1960s set the stage for the RAF’s violent political protests. The main catalyst for the formation of this group was the death of Benno Ohnesorg on June 2, 1967 during a demonstration against the Shah of Iran. Protesters and those that sympathized with the student movement were outraged by this unprovoked display of police violence not only against Ohnesorg, but also against all of the demonstrators. Police used water cannons and beat students with truncheons even as they attempted to flee the area. The use of police brutality on such a mass scale against demonstrators had surpassed any previous displays of police force against the student movement.

Amidst this chaotic scene of demonstrators fleeing for their own safety, officer Karl-Heinz Kurras shot Benno Ohnesorg in the back of the head. Kurras claimed he fired in self-defense, but the students believed that this was a calculated murder meant to weaken the student movement. At a meeting at the Free University in Berlin the next day, Gurdrun Ensslin exclaimed, “Mit denen kann man nicht
Ensslin, one of the founding members of the RAF, expressed the students’ growing fear that the state would resort to its “fascist” roots to stifle any threat to the status quo. Some students believed that the police’s intentional use of violence meant that their peaceful protest tactics of street marches, pamphlets, and discussions were no longer effective tools for change.

In January 2012, new evidence regarding the shooting of Benno Ohnesorg was discovered, which affirmed the students’ initial claims that his death was part of a police conspiracy. Photographic evidence countered the self-defense claims made by officer Kurras during both his 1967 and 1970 trials, where he was acquitted twice. Kurras claimed that demonstrators attacked him, threatened him with knives, tried to wrestle his gun away from him, and that he had fired two warning shots, one of which accidentally killed Benno Ohnesorg. These new photographs demonstrate that this was not an act of self-defense but rather a carefully planned execution. In one photograph, Kurras steadied his left hand on a colleague’s shoulder and shot Ohnesorg in the back of the head with the gun in his right hand. Neither photographic evidence nor witnesses corroborated Kurras’ claim that a dozen students attacked him, but these newly discovered photos prove that Kurras was not under duress at the time of the shooting, which supports the argument that the Berlin police intentionally used violence against a non-violent student demonstrator.

The West Berlin police immediately tried to cover up the murder and chose to protect the interests of the police department rather than ensure that justice was served for Ohnesorg. The ambulance was held at the crime scene for forty-five

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1 Trans. “You cannot argue with them…they are the Auschwitz generation!”
minutes until it was allowed to proceed to the hospital. Ohnesorg was already dead when his body was x-rayed at the hospital. Doctors were instructed to place his body on the operating table and to remove the piece of his skull with the entrance wound, discard it, and sew his scalp back together with the bullet still inside. The death certificate read “Tod durch Schädelverletzung durch stumpfe Gewalteinwirkung.”3 The entire incident was covered up to protect Kurras, but the demonstrators at the time rightly believed that Ohnesorg was a victim of police violence and the radicalization of the movement had begun.

Ulrike Meinhof, a journalist who later joined the RAF in 1970, documented the progressive radicalism of the student movement in relation to the escalation of violence in the left-wing journal konkret.4 The theoretical analysis in her articles (clearly indebted to the Frankfurt Institute) demonstrated how the RAF and other militant groups, in response to Ohnesorg’s death and other acts of violence, justified their use of violent praxis as the only means to combat the escalating state aggression. Once she joined the RAF in 1970, the group’s theoretical manifestos continued to criticize society but returned to the Marxist idea of a revolutionary working class, demonstrating a break with Critical Theory.

The RAF published these manifestos, signed with “RAF” and a picture of a submachine gun, to explain their intentions to unite the people5 in an armed struggled against the system and to justify their actions to the people on the Left who may have

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3 Trans. “Death from blunt force trauma to the skull.”
5 “the people” refers to the RAF’s term “das Volk”
initially disapproved of their violent means. In these manifestos, the RAF separated itself from the student movement and saw armed struggle as the only way to change the “fascist” and oppressive ways of West German society. The RAF argued that the media, still largely dominated by the anti-communist Springer Press, greatly exaggerated events in order to portray the RAF as terrorists. The state used the media coverage to justify its growing control over the people. Violence only begat more violence as the state and the RAF engaged in a dangerous game of action and reaction.

Ulrike Meinhof articles from the 1960s documented the events that influenced the emergence of the RAF and discussed how the media misconstrued student protests as violent acts well before the movement became violent. When the Kommune’s Pudding Attack made headlines in 1967, she published an article, “Napalm and Pudding,” which criticized the Kommune for failing to use their sudden media attention to provide the public with much needed facts and policies of the Vietnam War. She did, however, applaud their idea of a unique protest that managed to break the press’s conspiracy of silence and irritate the police, press, and politicians. The Kommune brought an important issue, the Vietnam War, to the attention of the public by targeting the visiting U.S Vice President. The media, instead of explaining the intended action as a protest against U.S. escalation in Vietnam, stated that the Kommune had planned a bomb attack on the Vice President. The bombs in question were mere plastic bags filled with cream cheese, flour, and other harmless food products.

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6 Aust, Baader-Meinhof: The Inside Story of the RAF, 116-117. Baader and Meinhof discussed and argued about the manifestos; Baader often criticised Meinhof’s writing but admitted that he did not know how to convey his ideas as well as Meinhof could, and encouraged her to write the manifestos.
Meinhof demonstrated the hypocrisy of the media’s overreaction, which was an extension of the state’s opinions, through her descriptive comparison between the violence in Vietnam and the non-violent protest actions of the student movement. Her rhetoric was sarcastic yet poignant enough for people who were not regular readers of konkret to understand.

“Nicht Napalmbomben auf Frauen, Kinder und Greise abzuwerfen, ist demnach Kriminell, sondern dagegen zu protestieren...Es gilt als unfein mit Pudding und Quark auf Politiker zu zielen, nicht aber, Politiker zu empfangen, die Dörfer ausradieren lassen und Städte bombardieren...Napalm ja, Pudding nein.”

A plan to throw pudding at a politician was categorized as a violent act and yet West Germany was willing to support a war that annihilated innocents. “Napalm ja, Pudding nein” was the most memorable line from this article because it not only summarized her argument, but was also simple yet powerful: the West German state supported American violence in Vietnam but punished harmless protests against the use of violence. The Pudding Attack was portrayed as an assassination attempt in order to vilify the student movement and legitimize the state’s hasty response to arrest the Kommune members, which Meinhof warned was an implication of what would become the norm with the Emergency Laws, which would grant the government unchallenged authority during a state of emergency. False accusations and swift arrests were only the beginning.

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7 Ulrike Meinhof, "Napalm und Pudding," Dokumente einer Rebellion: 10 Jahre Konkret-Kolumnen, ed. Klaus Rainer Röhl (Hamburg: konkret Buchverlag, 1972) 72. Trans. “It is not a criminal act to drop napalm on women, children, and the elderly, but it is criminal to protest against this act...It is deemed rude to throw pudding and curd at politicians, but it is okay to welcome politicians that eradicate villages and bomb cities...Yes to napalm, no to pudding.”
In “Gegen-Gewalt,” published in early 1968, Meinhof stated that the students had a right to challenge their university professors if they returned assignments without comments and offered up dogma and ideology instead of critical methods and knowledge. Another example of students being cheated by these so-called authority figures took place at the opening ceremony at the University of Hamburg in November 1967. SDS students interrupted the rector’s speech, but quieted down once the head of the General Students’ Committee said that the only way to facilitate discussion was to let the rector finish speaking and ask questions after. The students obliged, but the rector quickly left the hall as soon as he was finished speaking.

Meinhof argued that the students were not protesting to terrorize their university authority figures, but because they felt that they were being treated unfairly. She stressed that the student actions were self-defense against the increasing hostility of the establishment. “Die Studenten haben freilich durch bittere Erfahrungen...daß sie das nicht leise und vornehm durchsetzen können, sondern nur lärmend und rigoros.” This was part of the new counter-violence stage of the student movement, which at this point did not involve much physical violence but rather defiant behavior with a disregard for the boundaries of legality. The state had established its willingness to act violently with the killing of Benno Ohnesorg on June 2, 1967 and the students were beginning to realize that they could not counter this violence if they remained silent.

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9 Meinhof, "Gegen-Gewalt." Trans. “Students have learned through bitter experiences that they cannot achieve their goals by being quiet and polite; they must be loud and drastic.”
“Vom Protest zum Widerstand”\textsuperscript{10} was published after the Easter Riots in 1968, which responded to the assassination attempt on student leader Rudi Dutschke by throwing Molotov cocktails, shattering windows, disrupting traffic, and slashing delivery truck tires. The students blamed the assassination attempt on the Springer Press, which depicted Dutschke as a Communist threat to social order and made him a target of right wing fanatics. This tragic event was the second major act of violence against the student movement, the first being Ohnesorg’s death in 1967. The ever-increasing violence of the establishment forced the students to transition from protest to resistance. The students had a right to resist, Marcuse had explained in 1967, because the established order threatened their freedom and lives. Meinhof continued that resistance was a justifiable reaction to state violence. Meinhof described the difference between protest and resistance as,

\begin{quote}
“Protest ist, wenn ich sage, das und das paßt mir nicht. Widerstand ist, wenn ich dafür sorge, daß das, was mir nicht paßt, nicht länger geschieht. Protest ist, wenn ich sage, ich mache nicht mehr mit. Widerstand ist, wenn ich dafür sorge, daß alle andern auch nicht mehr mit machen.”\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

Meinhof’s rhetoric was once again simple and powerful in that it clearly demonstrated the shift in thinking that transitioned the student movement from smaller protests to mass resistance. If young leftists were no longer content with society, then they should organize on a mass basis to change it.


\textsuperscript{11} Meinhof, "Vom Protest zum Widerstand," 81. Trans. “Protest is when I say I don’t like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don’t like. Protest is when I say I will no longer take part in this. Resistance is when I make sure everyone else stops taking part in this as well.”
The Easter Riots demonstrated that students had the ability to resist the violence of the system with their own form of counter-violence. While the students committed violent acts, they were justified as self-defense and only directed at the objects that represented the institutions that they so desperately sought to change. Meinhof emphasized “daß ein Menschenleben eine andere Qualität als Fensterscheiben [ist].”\textsuperscript{12} The systematic violence of the establishment, mainly in the form of police violence, destroyed human life and was therefore unjustifiable. The counter-violence exhibited during the East Riots was directed against objects, which were easily replaced by the Springer Press’ insurance companies.

A key component of Meinhof’s rhetoric was to emphasize the hypocrisy of the establishment by comparing state crimes to justifiable student crimes: “Diejenigen, die von politischen Machtpositionen aus Steinwürfe und Brandstiftung hier verurteilen, nicht aber die Hetze des Hauses Springer, nicht die Bomben auf Vietnam, nicht Terror in Persien...Engagement für Gewaltlosigkeit ist heuchlerisch.”\textsuperscript{13} The establishment supported violence when it was on their terms but suddenly condemned counter-violence when it was used against the state. It is important to underscore that the small acts of counter-violence of the student movement up until 1968 were directed at objects, unlike the larger scale of established violence, which targeted innocent protesters. While Meinhof warned that counter-violence risked turning into violence, the fact that the state had introduced violence into the equation made it a

\textsuperscript{12} Meinhof, ”Vom Protest zum Widerstand,” 81. Trans. “A human life has a differen quality than a windowpane.”

\textsuperscript{13} Meinhof, ”Vom Protest zum Widerstand,” 81 Trans. “For all those who condemn stone-throwing and arson but say nothing against the hate crimes of the Springer Press, the bombs in Vietnam, or the terror in Persia…their commitment to non-violence is hypocritical.”
necessary topic for discussion. The students learned that the new methods of counter-violence and resistance had the potential to be an effective means of protest.

Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Thorwald Proll, and Horst Söhnlein took the concept of counter-violence to the next level when they bombed two Frankfurt department stores on April 3, 1968. No one was injured, but the damages amounted to 700,000 DM. They were arrested on April 5 and charged with arson. Ensslin claimed that the bombings were “in protest against people’s indifference to the murder of the Vietnamese” and that they “found that words are useless without actions.”

Thorwald Proll explained that they refused to provide an adequate defense of their actions as a criticism of the judicial system in his closing statement:

“Faced with a justice system that prosecutes the minor murderers of Jews and lets the major murderers of Jews run around free…that in 1933 shamelessly plunged into fascism and in 1945 just as shamelessly deserted it…that never dismantled its authoritarian structure, but constantly renews it, we can’t be bothered defending ourselves.”

Thorwald Proll established that he, along with his fellow arsonists, did not want to be part of the unjust system anymore. There was no reason for protesters to individually defend themselves if the justice system had continuously been ignoring the student movement’s rally for change.

Meinhof promptly responded to this horrific display of counter-violence in her article, “Warenhausbrandstiftung.” While the arsonists could have argued that they meant to attack consumerism, Meinhof stated that their action was actually counter-
revolutionary because even though the goods were damaged, the department store owners could simply collect profits from the insurance companies. She did, however, applaud the progressive aspect of the criminal act of breaking a law. The arson attacks broke the law that was meant to protect capitalists and their products, not the people who suffered under capitalism. Setting fire to a department store broke a law that protects lawbreakers, but did very little to educate the public about the oppressive nature of capitalism and consumerism. Bombing a department store was therefore not recommended as an effective means of protest not only because it lacked an educational element, but also because of the dangerous risks to innocents and threats of incarceration to the perpetrators.

Up until 1968, Meinhof encouraged the discourse on counter-violence and understood the need for students to actively respond to the state’s escalation of violence and oppression. Blowing up buildings without effectively changing the system or teaching the public was not considered a justifiable manifestation of political practice. Her opinion on the matter changed rapidly when she became involved with the Frankfurt department store arsonists and crossed the boundary between protest and resistance herself. The four arsonists were released on June 1969 until the courts decided on their appeal. Only Söhnlein surrendered himself when the courts decided to refuse their appeal in November 1969. Baader and Ensslin decided to go underground, soon abandoning Thorwald Proll, who was not wholly committed to the idea of underground resistance. Andreas Baader was arrested in West Berlin on April 3, 1970, set up by police informant Peter Urbach.17

The Rote Armee Fraktion was born on May 14, 1970, the day Andreas Baader escaped from police custody. Ulrike Meinhof was essential in planning his escape; she used her status as a well-known journalist to meet with Baader at the Institute for Social Issues Library in West Berlin to allegedly plan a book about his life. While Baader and Meinhof were in the library, Irene Goergen, Ingrid Schubert, Gudrun Ensslin and an armed man entered the building. An elderly librarian by the name of George Linke tried to intervene and was shot by the armed man, but luckily survived. Everyone escaped into the getaway car driven by Astrid Proll. This escape took courage and careful planning, but the group was relatively inexperienced with violence and nervous throughout the entire ordeal. At this time, they were not high profile criminals and did not know much about guns, which is why they brought along a “so-called” criminal who was so nervous that he accidentally shot George Linke. This accident put the group on wanted lists and accelerated their movement into underground life. Meinhof, who had merely been a resource for the group, was forced into being a part of the underground RAF the moment she chose to escape with them.

The state used the terror produced by the media coverage of the prison break to pass the Hand Grenade Law, which equipped West Berlin police officers with grenades, semiautomatic weapons, and submachine guns. The formation of the police state that the students had feared became visible throughout the city streets. Members of the New Left debated the violence and consequences of Baader’s prison break extensively. The RAF felt compelled to explain their actions and goals with

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“Die Rote Armee aufbauen!,”21 the first public document from the guerilla group published in the radical newspaper 883. In their manifesto, the RAF criticized the intellectuals of the movement, appealed to the outcasts of society to join the revolutionary struggle, and targeted the police as the main enemy of the people all in order to justify the need for the Rote Armee.

The manifesto began with an explanation that the “intellektuellen Schwätzern”22 were not part of the revolutionary struggle because they were committed to discussion, not to action. The intellectuals remained part of the system, which is why police were able to confiscate their political papers before they were even distributed.23 Their words were meaningless without action and pointless when they could not even be published. The RAF stressed that the revolution would not be an “Osterspaziergang,”24 a criticism levied at students who believed that they could incite change by marching through the streets. The RAF was frustrated by what they perceived as the lack of commitment to the revolutionary struggle exhibited by the intellectuals.

The RAF appealed to the disenfranchised and outcasts of society to unite and join the armed struggle against the system. They were the revolutionary potential that must be able to understand “die Baader-Befreiungs-Aktion”25 because they themselves were prisoners of society. These outcasts included young workers, families in neighborhoods that were being gentrified, young people in group homes,

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21 Trans. “Build the Red Army!”
22 Trans. “blabbing intellectuals”
24 Trans. “Easter March” was a peace march held every year in West Germany since 1960.
25 Trans. “The action to free Baader”
and anyone else who suffered exploitation at the hands of capitalist society.\textsuperscript{26} The RAF argued that young, marginalized people of society could be part of the revolution if they realized that the future promised to them by authority figures such as professors, supervisors, and social workers was a lie. Baader and Ensslin often recruited from group homes; the RAF made these social outcasts feel like they could be part of something larger than themselves and gave them a target for their frustration—the police. “Die Befreiung Baaders [ist] nur der Anfang! Ein Ende der Bullenherrschaft [ist] abzusehen!”\textsuperscript{27} With the hope of recruiting more people to their cause, the RAF stated that police domination would soon end. However, the RAF needed to clarify why the police were a threat to the working class people.

“The Rote Armee aufzubauen, können die Schweine alles machen, können die Schweine weitermachen: einsperren, entlassen, pfänden, Kinder stehlen, einschüchtern, schießen, herrschen. Die Konflikte auf die Spitze treiben heißt: Daß die nicht mehr können, was die wollen, sondern machen müssen, was wir wollen.”\textsuperscript{28} The police were the enemy. The state made them the dominant force of oppression of the people. The police should not only be stopped, but they should be forced to serve the people. The police were being used to silence protesters and oppress the people. Prison sentences for political activists had been increased and police brutality against protesters had escalated.\textsuperscript{29} The RAF referred to the West German police as “Bullen” and “Schweine,” both pejorative terms meaning “pigs,” as a way to dehumanize the enemy, which highlighted the police’s brutal tactics and made them easier targets of

\textsuperscript{26} “Die Rote Armee aufbauen!,” 24.
\textsuperscript{27} “Die Rote Armee aufbauen!,” 24. Trans. “Baader’s escape was only the beginning. The end to police domination is in sight!”
\textsuperscript{28} “Die Rote Armee aufbauen!,” 26. Trans. “Without the Red Army, the pigs can do as they please and continue to imprison, dismiss, seize, snatch children, intimidate, shoot, and dominate. To bring the conflict to the extreme means that they can no longer do what they want, but must do what we want.”
\textsuperscript{29} “Die Rote Armee aufbauen!,” 25.
counter-violence. The only way to defeat the enemy was to unite and build the Rote Armee, which could effectively aid in the revolution to overthrow the police state. For those concerned about violence as a means of protest, the RAF reminded its readers that the escalation of violence for the revolution beginning to unfold in West Germany had been happening for years in Third World countries. The RAF claimed that violence in the context of anti-imperialist struggle was not new; it was only new in West Germany and was the movement’s last resort.30

Shortly after the publication of “Die Rote Armee aufbauen!” the group fled to Jordan to train with Palestinian terrorist groups. Another source of foreign aid came from the GDR, which knowingly allowed the fugitives to fly to the Middle East from their territory.31 After a few months of training, the RAF returned to West Berlin via the GDR in August 1970 and concentrated on acquiring cars, establishing safe houses, making new contacts and recruiting new members. They needed funding to establish their underground organization and decided that bank robberies were an ideal way to procure them.32 Banks represented the capitalist institutions, which made the act of stealing from them not only a practical way to procure large sums of money in a short amount of time, but also a political statement against the oppressive capitalist state.

On September 29, 1970, the RAF hit three banks in West Berlin within ten minutes and made off with 220,000 DM. Their glory was short lived as police received an anonymous tip on October 8 that led to the discovery of two safe houses in West Berlin and the arrest of Horst Mahler, Monika Berberich, Ingrid Schubert and

Irene Goergens. Karl Heinz-Ruhland was arrested on December 20, 1970 and cooperated with police, revealing crucial information regarding safe houses and later testified in court against other RAF members. February 10, 1971 Astrid Proll and Manfred Grashof were spotted in Frankfurt, where police immediately opened fire on the unarmed fugitives as they fled the scene. This proved to the RAF that the police meant to murder them, not prosecute them according to the justice system.\textsuperscript{33} The fact that the police initiated the violent confrontations implied the state wanted to eliminate the potential threat posed by the RAF, which only strengthened the RAF’s justification for an armed struggle against the police state.

The police reported that the fugitives shot first. News of a firefight between the police and RAF members flooded the media, which attempted to vilify the RAF and stifle any public sympathy for the group. The Federal Minister of the Interior, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, declared the RAF to be “Public Enemy Number One” based on the images propagated in the media. The alleged firefight was merely one of many stories circulating that the state used to justify their increasing police control and nation wide search to bring down the RAF.\textsuperscript{34} In February 1971, police announced that the RAF had planned to kidnap Chancellor Willy Brandt in order to free Horst Mahler. The combined efforts of the media and the police intended to vilify the RAF. Even though the RAF denied any involvement, the media already tainted their image.\textsuperscript{35}

In response to these lies, unprovoked police violence, and the growing public fascination with the guerilla group, the RAF released their second manifesto at the

\textsuperscript{34} Moncourt, The Red Army Faction: A Documentary History, 60.
end of April 1971. “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla”\textsuperscript{36} was published in 883, but the RAF also gave\textit{Der Spiegel} the rights to publish it once they agreed to donate 20,000 DM to youth shelters, which were important recruiting grounds for the RAF.\textsuperscript{37} This manifesto, their first theoretical statement, directly responded to the media and police, stressed the reasons for an armed struggle, and explained the necessity of the \textit{Stadtguerilla}.

The RAF claimed that everything written in the media was a lie meant to characterize them as stupid, immoral criminals. The media hoped that this unsavory image would stifle support for the group, but the RAF said that they did not even want the support of those that listened to the media; they knew that the fed up outcasts would understand their actions.\textsuperscript{38} However, the majority of the people they classified as the revolutionary potential \textit{did} pay attention to the mass media. The average worker was more likely to pick up \textit{Bild} or \textit{BZ} during their lunch break rather than a long RAF manifesto with laced with revolutionary rhetoric. Regardless of the fact that many of these marginalized people did not relate to or understand the RAF manifestos, the underground group needed to maintain this disconnect from reality in order to legitimize its very existence. Without the belief that the people would understand and eventually join the revolutionary cause, the RAF would have had no audience and thus no hope for its movement to succeed.

The RAF addressed the question of whether or not they would have still chosen to free Baader on May 14, 1970 had they known that George Linke would be

\textsuperscript{36} Trans. “The Urban Guerilla Concept”


shot; their consistent answer was no and it seems likely that this was the truth. People only asked this to determine if the RAF was as brutal as the Springer Press reported, which trivialized the question of revolutionary violence. The RAF explained that even though they were fully armed, as any smart person would be for a jailbreak, they never imagined that the librarian would try to intervene. They were surprised and an accidental shooting occurred; they had not intended to hurt anyone. The RAF tried to explain that they were not ruthless, trigger-happy terrorists and clarified their position on the use of violence in relation to police violence:

“Die Bullen haben jedesmal gezielte Schüsse abgegeben. Wir haben überhaupt nicht geschossen, und wenn, dann nicht gezielt… Wir schießen, wenn auf uns geschossen wird. Den Bullen, der uns laufen läßt, lassen wir auch laufen.”

The RAF stressed that their group was not as brutal as the media and thus the public perceived. The nationwide hunt for RAF members, the group argued, must have been directed at the socialist Left in the FRG because the they did not believe that the insignificant amount of damages they caused by stealing money and a few cars or the accidental shooting of Linke warranted the massive hunt that the state had instigated. The RAF interpreted the state’s overreaction as a sign that the ruling class feared that they might be losing control, which was an opportune time for the RAF to wage their armed struggle.

The reasons for armed struggle were now greater than ever: the system oppressed the workers, the student movement had crumbled, and proletarian

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39 ”Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 30.
40 ”Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 30. Trans. “The pigs shot to kill every time. We generally did not shoot, but if we did, it is not with the intent to kill… We shoot when someone shoots at us. The pigs that let us walk away will also walk away.”
41 ”Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 30.
organizations were failing. The RAF claimed that in the name of the *Gemeinwohl*,
union bureaucracy was governed by the state, wages were far from increasing, and
the unemployment rate was up to 10%. The students relied on the media to distribute
their ideas and cared more about obeying the law than achieving their goals. Proletarian organizations were not efficient enough because they did not pose the
question of armed struggle, cared mostly about popularity, and functioned at the mere
level of civil rights. They seldom encouraged their members and when they did, it
was for a struggle that left them defeated and disillusioned. The establishment was
scared of losing control, the outcasts were suffering, and the legal organizations, such
as these proletarian organizations and political student groups, could not change the
system alone. The RAF did not suggest that armed struggles should replace these
legal organizations, but that it was necessary for organized resistance to succeed.

Those who had taken up the armed struggle, like the RAF, had taken on the
role of the *Stadtguerilla*. The concept came from Latin America, where weak
revolutionary forces, which the RAF argued was similar in the FRG, must resort to
violent intervention for the sake of the revolution. The *Stadtguerilla*, the RAF
rationalized, was needed now because if they waited for the right revolutionary
conditions for armed struggle, it would be too late to organize it. The *Stadtguerilla*
was seen as the inevitable response to the Emergency Laws and the Hand Grenade
Laws and was considered the necessary weapon of class struggle.47

42 Trans. “common good”
43 “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 33.
44 “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 34-36.
47 “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 41.
“Stadtguerilla ist bewaffneter Kampf, insofern es die Polizei ist, die rücksichtslos von der Schußwaffe Gebrauch macht, und die Klassenjustiz, die Kurras freispricht und die Genossen lebendig begräbt, wenn wir sie nicht daran hindern. Stadtguerilla heißt, sich von der Gewalt des Systems nicht demoralisieren zu lassen.”

The RAF hoped that by reminding their readers of these recent injustices, they would come to understand the necessity of violent tactics. The people could no longer rely on the system for justice and instead should turn to the armed struggle of the Stadtguerilla. The media portrayed the RAF as “Antisemitismus-Kriminellen-Untermenschen-Mord & Brand,” but the people should not be discouraged from creating a revolution of the people. The RAF believed that there was no other option but an armed struggle to combat the violent system and prepare for a revolution.

The RAF and the Stadtguerilla were the only faction and practice that was clearly separated from the enemy because they were no longer allowing themselves to be controlled by the system. The RAF derived its Manichean mentality from Mao, who is cited at the beginning of “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla:”

“Wenn uns der Feind energisch entgegentritt, uns in den schwärzesten Farben malt und gar nichts bei uns gelten läßt, dann ist das noch besser; denn es zeugt davon, daß wir nicht nur zwischen uns und dem Feind eine klare Trennungsline gezeigt haben, sondern daß unsere Arbeit auch glänzende Erfolge gezügt hat.”

There were only two sides in the revolutionary struggle: with the RAF, who fought for freedom; or with the enemy, which was the police state that represented absolute evil from the RAF’s perspective. Any aggressive state reaction to the RAF’s praxis

48 “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 42. Trans. “The urban guerilla is the armed struggle against both the police force’s reckless use of weapons and the class justice that acquits Kurras and buries comrades alive if we don’t stop them. The urban guerilla would not be demoralized by the system of violence.”
50 “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 42.
51 “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 27. Trans. “When the enemy vigorously attacks us and paints us black without virtue, it is better; it not only shows a clear dividing line between the enemy and ourselves, but also that our work has been a success.”
only further underscored that the group’s actions were justified. Rhetorically, RAF manifests set up an intransigent *us versus them* binary according to which *every* action of the capitalist state and its institutions only reinforced the groups justification that armed struggle was the *only* available option left. Because the RAF operated completely outside the system, with complete disregard to existing law, they deemed themselves able to serve as the necessary conduit between national and international, legal and illegal, and political and armed struggles. The RAF was merely one component of the struggle to change the system, but considered itself as the most important because it was outside the system.\(^{52}\)

After the publication of “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” the West German state initiated *Aktion Kobra*, which meant three thousand police officers patrolling the cities heavily armed and checkpoints throughout northern West Germany. The visible growth of the police state was in the name of keeping the people safe from the terrorist threat. The escalation of violence foretold in Meinhof’s 1960s *konkret* articles and the two published RAF manifests soon became a reality. On July 15, 1971, police stopped Werner Hoppe and Petra Schelm, gunfire was exchanged, Hoppe surrendered, but police shot and killed RAF member Petra Schelm. Widespread outrage ensued over this incident and many students supported the RAF, although secretly, to the point where they opened their homes to the underground members.\(^{53}\) Three RAF members, fleeing from police on October 22, killed officer Norbert Schmidt. On December 4, police stopped a car carrying Georg von Rauch, who was immediately shot and killed by police. Many people understood this act as a

\(^{52}\) “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” 47.  
testament to the police mentality of shoot first and ask questions later. Thousands of young people protested and occupied an abandoned nurses’ residence and renamed it Georg von Rauch House. On December 22, officer Herbert Schoner was shot three times as he approached a getaway van parked around the corner during an RAF bank robbery.

On January 28, 1972, the Radikalenerlass,\(^{54}\) known by its opponents as the Berufsverbör\(^{55}\) came into effect with the support of all three major political parties in the FRG. This decree prevented anyone with a leftist background from working in any public position. The Verfassungsschutz\(^{56}\) political police screened every application for positions in the government, post office, hospitals, universities and high schools. The government officials justified passing this law by claiming it was to protect the public from people with the same mentality as the RAF. By this point, very few people actually shared the ideologies of the RAF, but the law still discriminated against anyone with views that challenged the authority of the state, which indiscriminately classified many outspoken activists on the left as terrorist sympathizers. The FRG had entered a new stage in their control over the people, which brought to mind the National Socialist regime in 1933. A Berufsbeamtengesetz in 1933 prevented Jewish people and political opponents from maintaining certain positions in the government. It should also be noted that the Verfassungsschutz’s president, Huber Schrubbers, was a former Nazi prosecutor who had sent many

\(^{54}\) Trans. “Anti-Radical Act”
\(^{55}\) Trans. “Profession Ban”
\(^{56}\) Literally translated as “constitution protection,” it was an intelligence agency set up to monitor any threats to the government.
antifascists to concentration camps.\textsuperscript{57} The analogy between the 1972 \textit{Berufsverbot} and the 1933 \textit{Berufsbeamtenesetz} validated the student movement and RAF claims that the FRG, with its ex-Nazi government officials and increased state control, was regressing back into a fascist state.

The escalation of state violence continued into 1972 with the murder of an innocent victim unaffiliated with the RAF. On March 1, Richard Epple drove through a police checkpoint in Tübingen and was killed by a police officer with a submachine gun during a car chase. Only after the fact did the police realize he was a seventeen year old who had only skipped the police checkpoint because he was driving without a license. The police were so obsessed with finding RAF members that they inadvertently killed the people they claimed to protect.

On March 2, 1972, police gunned down RAF member Thomas Weissbecker in Augsburg without giving him the opportunity to surrender. It was later released that the police had actually rented the apartment above Weissbecker and had him under surveillance since February, demonstrating that there was no reason for his death other than a police planned murder. The young people of the FRG reacted to this senseless killing by occupying an empty building in West Berlin and renaming it the Tommy Weissbecker House. Although most young people in West Germany did not agree with police violence, the murder of RAF members did not cause the majority of political active leftists to join the armed struggle. The death toll in the FRG rose due to the police practice of shooting first without question. The RAF responded to this intense situation with their second theoretical manifesto and followed with a few violent actions of their own.

\textsuperscript{57} Moncourt, \textit{The Red Army Faction: A Documentary History}, 116.
The RAF published “Den Volk dienen: Stadtguerilla und Klassenkampf” in April 1972, which criticized the state for favoring capitalism over the well-being of its workers, discussed German imperialism, and encouraged the militarization of the class struggle. The opening sentences revealed statistics on how many people died each year because the state was more focused on increasing profits than increasing safety standards: 20,000 from safety issues of automobiles and road construction, 5,000 accidental deaths at the workplace, 12,000 suicides, and 1,000 children murdered as a result of living in low quality housing. Beginning with these daunting statistics exemplified how greatly the state’s pursuit of profits directly affected the lives of the people. The opening statistics set the tone for the rest of the RAF arguments: The state was responsible for the lives of all its inhabitants and yet both its negligence and oppressive laws had contributed to the deaths of thousands.

The RAF claimed that deaths in the service of the exploiter occurred so often that it became a normal occurrence. Petra Schelm, Georg von Rauch, and Thomas Weissbecker, all members of the RAF killed by police, should not be cast aside as statistics; the police state murdered them to crush any hopes that the situation could be changed, “aber der Kampf hat erst begonnen!” The state had sensed the potential threat that the RAF posed and decided to stifle any hope of a revolution by eliminating the RAF early on. The RAF used this increased police brutality as further justification that an armed struggle was necessary.

58 Trans. “Serve the People: The Urban Guerilla and Class struggle”
60 “Den Volk dienen: Stadtguerilla und Klassenkampf,” 112. Trans. “The struggle has only just begun!”
The RAF envisioned that the Stadtguerilla and its armed struggle would naturally develop from the class struggle. The RAF claimed that this development was contingent upon the existence of the RAF as an organization that could serve as a model: a group that had already participated in guerrilla warfare, was not demoralized by the media’s allegations, and would not simply give up at the sight of the slightest obstacle. The RAF saw the class struggle forming with the Chemie-Arbeiter-Streik in 1971, when unsatisfied workers organized without their unions and demanded wage increases. The chemical companies refused to barter with the unions, so the workers took it upon themselves to participate in small spontaneous walkouts. But instead of negotiating with their full time employees, the chemical companies brought in strikebreakers, which the RAF took to mean that the companies cared more about their profits than they did about the welfare of their workers.

A large portion of the West German chemical industry conducted its business outside of Germany. The FRG and America dominated the chemical and pharmaceutical markets in Iran, which explains why the West German government welcomed the Shah of Iran to West Berlin in June 1967. The Shah oppressed his own people with the help of West German financial support. The RAF commented that while Chancellor Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik atoned for the atrocities committed in eastern European countries, the FRG’s economic interests in Iran were simply a continuation of German imperialism. The FRG provided military services in Iran to guarantee that the conditions of exploitation there would greatly increase German capital gains. The FRG conducted brutal exploitation abroad and within Germany to

62 Trans. “Chemical Workers Strike”
maximize their profits.\textsuperscript{63} While the chemical workers demonstrated great promise for a class struggle in their strike, they did not achieve their goals of unity or wage increases. Instead, the chemical industry ensured that the first strike ended in defeat, which would hopefully diminish the likelihood of any future strikes.

In “Dem Volk dienen,” the RAF commented that the \textit{Radikalenerlass} imposed in 1972 was a result of state preparations for the class struggle’s militarization. Limiting the access that leftist social critics had to the public sphere would reduce the chance that the system’s methods would be openly criticized. Anyone who disagreed with the police state was labeled a criminal. Since the system could no longer rely on the blind loyalty of its people, it relied on threats of violence to warrant their obedience. With the Hand Grenade Law and \textit{Aktion Kobra}, the state had overreacted, according to the RAF manifesto, to the point where violence became a part of everyday life and the RAF was declared Public Enemy Number One well before they began their aggressive campaign.

The RAF warned that the people should not let the increased police domination and threat of violence demoralize them, but rather, they should see this as an opportunity to unite for the revolutionary cause. Some people argued that guerilla tactics were appropriate for Latin America, not West Germany where discussions were still possible. The RAF countered that poverty and oppression were merely hidden skillfully in the FRG and in actuality, over fourteen million people in the FGR and West Berlin were living in poverty.\textsuperscript{64} The RAF stressed that people needed to realize that, contrary to media headlines, the RAF was not the enemy; the courts,

\textsuperscript{63} “Den Volk dienen: Stadtguerilla und Klassenkampf,” 114-19.
\textsuperscript{64} “Den Volk dienen: Stadtguerilla und Klassenkampf,” 128-29.
police, authorities, bosses and traitors were the enemy and the only successful tool against them is solidarity. Solidarity between legal and illegal organizations was crucial for the success of the armed struggle, for without it, the movement would crumble in the face of repression.65

A month after the publication of “Dem Volk dienen,” the RAF began their bombing campaign. It had been two years since the formation of the underground group, which had given them plenty of time to train, recruit, and acquire funds for their guerilla warfare. On May 11, 1972, the RAF’s “Thomas Weissbecker Commando” bombed the U.S. Army headquarters and National Security Agency in Frankfurt. The blasts killed Lieutenant Colonel Paul A. Bloomquist and injured thirteen people, but the death toll would have been much higher had the bombs gone off during regular working hours. On May 16, the “Manfred Grashof Commando” placed a bomb in the car of Federal Supreme Court Judge Buddenberg, who was assigned the RAF court cases. However, the judge’s wife was behind the wheel when the bomb detonated, suffered severe injuries, but lived. On May 19, the “2nd of June Commando” planted three bombs in the Springer Press building in Hamburg. The RAF called the office three times to warn them that bombs had been placed in the building, but they were ignored, resulting in seventeen people being injured. On May 24, the “July 15 Commando” bombed the European headquarters of the U.S. Army in Heidelberg. Two cars loaded with explosives were parked near the data processing center and the Campbell Barracks officers’ club. Once again, they were deliberately set to detonate after most people had left for the day, but three soldiers were killed and six other injured. The computers at the data processing center were used to

calculate the positions that would result in the highest number of deaths during the U.S. carpet bombings in North and South Vietnam.

While this bombing spree was a horrific display of counter-violence, there are many details that need to be taken into account to better understand the motives of the RAF. Their actions were horrendous, but they had rationalized that they were necessary. The RAF believed that the police state was a danger to the very lives of those who attempted to instigate change, continuously citing Benno Ohnesorg’s death. The RAF’s rationale led them to the conclusion that their violent acts were justified as a necessary mean to combat the police state. All of these attacks targeted institutions that represented the enemies of the revolution, arguably even Judge Buddenberg who personally represented the judicial system for the RAF. Ample warnings and precautions were given to minimize the threat to human life. The targets were institutions that these buildings represented and not the individual people who worked there. Even though the RAF set their bombs to detonate after business hours and warned the offices to evacuate their employees, there were still casualties. The RAF tried to minimize the number of casualties, but accepted them as a part of guerilla warfare. After each bombing, a certain commando of the RAF would lay claim to their work. These commandos were named after victims of police state violence: Thomas Weissbecker and Manfred Grashof were killed by police, the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of June commemorated the murder of Benno Ohnesorg by officer Kurras, and July 15 commemorated the day Petra Schelm was killed. The RAF named these commandos to remind the public that their actions were a political response to the escalating violence of the state.
With the guerilla actions making headlines, the police continued their massive hunt for those responsible. Police located a safe house in Munich and cornered Holger Meins, Jan-Carl Raspe, and Andreas Baader on June 1, 1972. Raspe attempted to flee but was caught, Meins surrendered without a struggle, but Baader barricaded himself inside the safe house. Over 300 police officers surrounded the warehouse and a sniper eventually shot Baader in the leg, and he was taken into police custody. Even though Meins had surrendered without a fight, the police beat him so severely while he was in custody that he required hospitalization. On June 7, Gudrun Ensslin was arrested in Hamburg. On June 15, a left-wing trade unionist in Hannover, who had agreed to house them for the night, turned Ulrike Meinhof and Gerhard Muller in to the police. On July 7, a new young recruit turned Klaus Junschke and Irmgard Moller over to police in Offenbach. By 1972, the first generation of RAF members had been either been killed or incarcerated.

Between 1970 and 1972, the RAF had established itself as an underground guerilla group, published manifestos explaining their theories and intentions, and had attempted to realize their theories with violent political action. The important issue lies within the difference between a discourse on violence and practicing violence. Many young leftists and other political groups understood the RAF’s justification for their use of violence, but retracted their support once buildings were bombed and people died as a result. The RAF made a strong case for their use of violence through the rhetoric of their manifestos. The RAF strongly believed that the state was fixated on eliminating the opposition and that the only way to end systematic violence was through revolutionary violence. Their manifestos were an attempt to enlighten their
readers, who presumably were already inclined towards the left if they chose to read the 883, of the dangerous truths of police domination and the need for an armed struggle.

The RAF’s method of enlightenment through the genre of the political manifesto lacked some of the polemical wit and poetry of its historical predecessors. The most famous example, Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*, begins with the unforgettable line “a specter is haunting Europe – the specter of communism,” an image that captivates its readers with the idea that communism, like a specter, can be denied but not defeated: it will continue to haunt the capitalist system.\(^{66}\) The RAF’s manifestos were also completely devoid of the political satire favored by the Kommune I, as well as the aggressive yet somber rhetoric of Meinhof’s *konkret* articles; instead, the RAF manifestos sought to appeal to only the anger and fear felt by leftists and the wider public in the FRG through their uniformly blunt and polemical language. The RAF bombarded their readers with past images of violence and depressing statistics to exemplify their points.

The RAF set up a Manichean argument that if the people did not side with the RAF, then they were part of system and thus the enemy. The RAF recounted the numerous examples of police violence against the passive student protesters of the 1960s and claimed that this was only the beginning of the rising police state. It started with vile accusations in the media, escalated to the death of Benno Ohnesorg and attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke, and would only continue until the state had complete control over its people. The repetition of these violent acts against student protesters attempted to ingrain the idea of an escalating police state into the minds of

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their readers; if the people believed, as the RAF did, that their personal lives were in danger, then they would be more likely to support the RAF’s drastic tactics. If the people chose to remain passive amongst the ensuing chaos, then they would have allowed the FRG to fully regress into the fascism of the Nazi era. The anger created by the oppression and the fear that state violence would only increase attracted many who sympathized, mostly students and intellectuals, with the cause of the RAF.

However, the public often observed the chaotic violence that was ensuing, through the lens of the media, without completely understanding the underlying important political issues that were the driving force.67 The RAF sought to bring these issues to light and hoped that once the people realized that their government was the cause of their suffering, they would unite in the class struggle to change the system. The RAF’s expectations were rather high in this regard. They argued that the proletariat’s class struggle was essential for the formation of the armed struggle and thus the creation of the revolutionary force. Their manifestos, no matter how many times they referenced the oppression of the proletariat by the capitalist state, did not reach the workers. One of the biggest criticisms the RAF levied against the students was that their language was arrogant and incomprehensible to the working class people, but failed to realize that their own political language was also difficult to comprehend. The students and the RAF both used revolutionary rhetoric that would have only been fully appreciated by someone familiar with the historical discourse on revolution. This ruled out the majority of the working class as well as the marginalized young people of society. They did have the advantage of appealing to the two very strong emotions of fear and frustration, but it is rather unreasonable to

assume that the average worker would read through an RAF’s thirty-page manifesto like, “Dem Volk dienen,” and understand every nuance of it. The RAF’s revolutionary theory included in their manifestos came from a Maoist and Marxist tradition, which required sufficient familiarity with these theoretical discourses. Only educated individuals, namely intellectuals and middle-class students, would have understood the language of revolutionary theories enough to fully comprehend the manifestos and the praxis deduced from their arguments. Despite the fact that a majority of the RAF’s “revolutionary subjects,” meaning the marginalized, young people of society, were not educated in revolutionary discourses, the RAF still claimed that they and working class people were the agents of change in order to give the group’s very existence a purpose.

Once the RAF began their praxis of bombing buildings and endangering innocents, they lost many sympathizers. It was easier to support the RAF when they were being individually hunted down and even murdered by the police, but support for the guerilla group waned when they were seen as the murderers. On May 31, 1972 at a teach-in against state repression at Frankfurt University, the Communist Student Association, KSV, discussed the RAF’s use of violence. They claimed that their violence was not revolutionary because it was not even understood as an expression of the masses’ interests. Because the masses did not practice violence, they perceived it as a threat and often identified with the actions of the state to eliminate the RAF. Many labor leaders condemned the “political adventurists,” “terror,” and “murder” exhibited by the RAF and preferred the more traditional approach of legal

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organization.\textsuperscript{69} Other groups, such as the guerilla group Revolution\aire Zellen, applauded the efforts of the RAF in demonstrating that the armed struggle was possible and that resistance did not stop where the law began.\textsuperscript{70}

With the arrests of the essential members of the RAF’s first generation, their political praxis had only just begun. The RAF remained an active terrorist group until 1998, when it was officially disbanded. During the first years of the group’s formation, between 1970 and 1972, the RAF provided the theoretical justification for the use of violence as a means of political praxis. Their manifestos expressed the increasing discontent with the dominating police state felt by the young people of West Germany. Their violent actions helped polarize the Left who were contemplating the discourse on the turn to violence; few groups believed that their violence was legitimized and joined the armed struggle while others remained committed to their legal organizations and intellectual discourses on how to change society.

The formation of the RAF demonstrated that the idea of transitioning from peaceful protests to armed resistance was logical given the circumstances of a failed student movement and an increasingly violent police state. However, their use of violent praxis had an extremely adverse effect; the RAF claimed that an armed struggle was the only way to free the people from their oppressive and violent society, but the state responded by issuing discriminatory laws and increasing police violence, which ultimately harmed the movement for change. Even though the RAF saw themselves as freedom fighters, they were what the media labeled them:

\textsuperscript{69} Moncourt, \textit{The Red Army Faction: A Documentary History}, 169.

\textsuperscript{70} Moncourt, \textit{The Red Army Faction: A Documentary History}, 168.
terrorists. The majority of the people in the FRG feared the RAF and did not believe that their violent praxis would positively change society. Their theories of changing society through violent actions were well founded, but their actual praxis resulted in many casualties and created an atmosphere of terror in West Germany. After 1972, the people they sought to free were more afraid of the RAF than their own government. Violence as a means to counter systematic violence stopped making sense once these theories were actually put into practice because they failed to change to the fundamental structure of society, which, as Marcuse argued, was the only legitimate justification for the use of revolutionary violence.
Conclusion

“Thought has no power to bring about such a change unless it transcends itself into practice.”

– Herbert Marcuse, 1964

The relationship between the Critical Theory of society and the attempt to realize its insights and ideas as revolutionary praxis is complex. The establishment resisted many student-proposed radical changes and there was no political, organizational structure in place to mediate the transition between theory and action. Student groups, intellectuals, underground guerilla groups, and proletarian organizations each had very different ways of trying to realize their theories through political action.

The Kommune I chose theatrical, humorous protests and communal living as a means to criticize and challenge the established norms in society. Their political activism was a fusion of theory and practice, not only because the theoretical texts of Marx and Marcuse informed their means of criticism, but also because each political act meant to encourage the wider public to think critically about society. However, their theatrical protests only made sense in a society that had not yet witnessed overt state violence against the student movement.

While the RAF shared the Kommune I’s goals of ending state violence and oppression, they adhered to a very different form of praxis that called for violent guerilla tactics. Their theoretical manifestos demonstrated a logical justification for their use of counter-violence, but once they began acting upon their ideas, their
violent praxis was difficult for even the leftists to support. The West German public did not agree with the overt use of violence from either the establishment or guerilla groups. Many members of the public were afraid of the chaos created by the RAF bombings and bank robberies and ultimately sided with the establishment in their pursuit to eliminate the threat to social order.

Herbert Marcuse observed the student movement from the beginning and provided not only a theoretical justification for the students’ discontent with society, but also a critique of different forms of praxis within the movement. In *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, published in 1972, Marcuse analyzed the changing conditions of the establishment that directly affected the course of student movement. He criticized the methods of the Kommune I and the RAF but also recognized that even though both theatrical praxis and violent praxis had their limits, they each served their respective causes to some extent.

While the communes in West Germany demonstrated that it was possible to live in contrast to societal norms, they were often susceptible to “depoliticization” if they became too involved in their personal liberating experiences, such as sexual freedom and drug use. Marcuse stressed that while individual liberation was important, it should always have a universal political goal.¹ As an indirect reference to the Kommune I, Marcuse stated that, “There is nothing wrong with having fun with the Establishment—but there are situations in which the fun falls flat.”² Although humorous tactics were only effective before the radicalization of the student

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¹ Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 50.
² Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 50.
movement, Marcuse noted that that the Kommune I supported the sexual liberation movement and helped to expose the oppressive nature of the state.³

Marcuse believed that while “martyrs have rarely helped a political cause, and ‘revolutionary suicide’ remains suicide,” he recognized that death in the name of a movement did briefly serve the revolutionary struggle for change. This “desperate act,” as he referred to it, exposed the brutal nature of the establishment and its failed justice system.⁴ Although Marcuse did not directly reference the RAF in Counterrevolution and Revolt, it is clear that the RAF and other militant groups influenced his analysis of counter violence. Marcuse was correct in stating that revolutionary martyrs served the movement for a “brief moment,” because they attracted sympathizers. However, the escalation of the RAF’s use of counter violence seemed to nullify the support that their fallen comrades’ deaths had created.

The Kommune I wanted to change the system by exposing its injustices, which would hopefully influence the government to modify the institutions. The RAF wanted to change the system by demolishing the institutions in favor of a completely new form of government. Marcuse argued that the only way to effectively combat the state’s “counterrevolutionary” (Marcuse’s term) violence was through an organized New Left willing to provide political education that would awaken the people to experience their own social condition.⁵

Marcuse supported Dutschke’s idea of a “long march through the institutions,” which, given the outcome of the Kommune I and RAF praxis, seemed to

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³ Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, 51.
⁴ Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, 52.
⁵ Marcuse, Counterrevolution and Revolt, 28.
be the most logical strategy in the 1970s. The Kommune I, and even more drastically the RAF, did not want to be part of the system, but the only effective way to influence change was from the inside. It is difficult to build a new society from scratch; this explains why many government officials in postwar West Germany also once held positions of authority during the Nazi regime. The majority of the rebellious students of the 1960s eventually realized that they could be more influential if they were personally part of the system rather than trying to fight it from the outside. Many individuals who were once radical students became journalists, professors, and government officials in the 1970s and 1980s.

Because of the profound influence that Critical Theory had on extraparliamentary political groups like the Kommune I and the RAF, it is difficult to conceive of a West German student movement without Critical Theory. The Frankfurt Institute mediated between the students and the theoretical texts of the Marxist tradition. Critical theorists educated the students on the concepts of Critical Theory and revolution, influencing the language that they used and therefore the way in which they thought about their role in the movement for a better, more liberated society.

Members of the Frankfurt Institute, namely Adorno and Marcuse, not only provided the students with access to the discourse on revolutionary theory, but also addressed many issues concerning postwar German society: establishing democracy after fascism, ensuring social justice and political participation, overcoming sexual repression and conservative social norms. The students used their newfound knowledge of revolutionary discourse and Critical Theory to address these same
issues. Critical Theory seems to have influenced the very lives of the students and provided the base upon which they tried to build a liberated society: they exposed the authoritarian aspects of the establishment with the hope of creating more democratic institutions; university students proposed educational reforms that would ensure greater student participation in policymaking; many students rebelled against social norms by practicing free love, living communally, and challenging authority. If the Frankfurt Institute had not developed Critical Theory, how would the students have formulated and legitimized their discontent with society? Were there alternative theories regarding postwar German society that could have influenced protest movements of the same magnitude as Critical Theory did in 1960s Germany? The answers to these questions can only be speculative, but it is clear that Critical Theory decisively shaped the student movement that changed West German society.
Bibliography


