

On the Liberation of Andreas Baader

The following text was read by Ulrike Meinhof at her trial alongside Hans-Jürgen Bäckler and Horst Mahler. (M. & S.)

This trial is a tactical maneuver, a part of the psychological war being waged against us by the BKA, the BAW, and the justice system:

- with the goal of obfuscating both the political ramifications of our trials and the BAW's extermination strategy in West Germany;
- with the goal of using separate convictions to create the appearance of division, by putting only a few of us on display at any one time;
- with the goal of erasing the political context of all the RAF prisoners' trials from the public consciousness;
- with the goal of forever eliminating from the people's consciousness the fact that on the imperialist terrain of West Germany and West Berlin there is a revolutionary urban guerilla movement.¹

We—the Red Army Faction—will not participate in this trial.

THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST STRUGGLE

If it is to be more than just an empty slogan, the struggle against imperialism must aim to annihilate, to destroy, to smash the system of imperialist domination—on the political, economic, and military planes. It must aim to smash the cultural institutions that imperialism uses to bind together the ruling elites and the communications structure that ensures their ideological control.

In the international context, the elimination of imperialism on the military plane means the elimination of U.S. imperialism's military alliances throughout the world, and here that means the elimination of NATO and the *Bundeswehr*. In the national context it means the elimination of the state's armed formations, which embody the ruling class' monopoly of violence and its state power: the police, the BGS, the secret service. On the economic plane, it means the elimination of the power

¹ The preceding points appeared in the German as one long paragraph; they have been reformatted here for added readability.

structure that represents the multinational corporations. On the political plane, it means the elimination of the bureaucracies, organizations, and power structures, whether state or non-state (parties, unions, the media), that dominate the people.

PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle against imperialism here is not and could not be a national liberation struggle. Socialism in one country is not its historical perspective. Faced with the transnational organization of capital and the military alliances with which U.S. imperialism encircles the world, the cooperation of the police and the secret services, the way the dominant elite is organized internationally within U.S. imperialism's sphere of power—faced with all of this, our side, the side of the proletariat, responds with the struggle of the revolutionary classes, the people's liberation movements in the Third World, and the urban guerilla in imperialism's metropole. That is proletarian internationalism.

Ever since the Paris Commune, it has been clear that a people who seek to liberate themselves within the national framework in an imperialist state attract the vengeance, the armed might, and deadly hostility of the bourgeoisie of all the other imperialist states. That is why NATO is currently putting together an intervention force, to be stationed in Italy, with which to respond to internal difficulties.

Marx said, "A people who oppress another cannot themselves be free." The military significance of the urban guerilla in the metropole—the RAF here, the Red Brigades in Italy, and the United Peoples Liberation Army¹ in the U.S.A.—lies in the fact that it can attack imperialism here in its rear base, from which it sends its troops, its arms, its instructors, its technology, its communication systems, and its cultural fascism to oppress and exploit the people of the Third World. This is because it operates within the framework of the Third World liberation struggles, struggling in solidarity with them. That is the strategic starting point of the guerilla in the metropole: to unleash the guerilla, the armed struggle against imperialism, and the people's war in imperialism's rear bases, to begin a long-term process. Because world revolution is surely not an affair of a few days, a few weeks, or a few months, because it is not an affair of a few popular uprisings, it will not be a short process. It is not

1 Klaus Croissant indicated that Meinhof misspoke, intending to refer to the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), a guerilla group active in the California between 1973 and 1975.

a question of taking control of the state as the revisionist parties and groups imagine—or, more correctly, as they claim, for they don't really have any imagination.

THE NOTION OF THE NATION STATE

In the metropole, the notion of the nation state has become a hollow fiction, given the reality of the ruling classes, their policies, and their structure of domination, which no longer has anything to do with linguistic divisions, as there are millions of immigrant workers in the rich countries of Western Europe. The current reality—given the globalization of capital, given the new media, given the mutual dependencies that support economic development, given the growth of the European Community, and given the crisis—while remaining subjective, greatly encourages the formation of European proletarian internationalism, to the point that the unions have worked for years to box it in, to control it, to institutionalize it, and to repress it.

The fiction of the nation state, to which the revisionist groups are attached with their organizational form, is in keeping with their fetish for legality, their pacifism, and their massive opportunism. We are not reproaching the members of these groups for coming from the petit bourgeoisie, but for reproducing, in their politics and in their organizational structure, the ideology of the petit bourgeoisie, which has always been hostile to proletarian internationalism—their class position and conditions of social reproduction cannot be seen otherwise. They are always organized within the state as a complement to the national bourgeoisie, to the dominant class.

As for ourselves—we of the RAF, revolutionary prisoners detained in isolation, in special units, subjected to highly structured and completely illegal brainwashing programs in prison, as well as those underground—the argument that the masses are not yet sufficiently advanced just reminds us of what the colonialist pigs have been saying about Africa and Asia for the past seventy years. According to them, blacks, illiterates, slaves, colonized peoples, torture victims, the oppressed, and the starving, who suffer under the yoke of colonialism and imperialism, are not yet advanced enough to control their own administration like human beings. According to them, they are not yet advanced enough to control their own industrialization, their own education, their own future. This is the argument of people concerned with their own positions of power, those who want to rule the people, not to emancipate them or to help them in their struggle for liberation.

THE GUERRILLA IN THE METROPOLE

Our action on May 14, 1970, was and remains an exemplary action for the guerilla in the metropole. It contained all of the elements required for a strategy of armed struggle against imperialism. It served to free a prisoner from the grip of the state. It was a guerilla action, an action of a group that, in deciding to carry it out, organized itself as a politico-military cell. They acted to free a revolutionary, a cadre who was and remains indispensable for organizing the guerilla in the metropole. And not only indispensable like every revolutionary is indispensable in the ranks of the revolution, for already at this stage, he embodied everything that made the guerilla possible, that made possible the politico-military offensive against the imperialist state. He embodied the determination, the will to act, the ability to orient himself solely and exclusively in terms of the objectives, while leaving space for the collective learning process, and practicing leadership collectively right from the start, mediating between each person's individual experience and the collective as a whole.

This action was exemplary, because in the struggle against imperialism it is necessary above all to liberate the prisoners, to liberate them from prison, which has always been an institution used against all of the exploited and oppressed, historically leading only to death, terror, fascism, and barbarism. To liberate them from their imprisonment within the most complete and utter alienation, from their self-alienation, from the state of political and existential disaster in which the people are obliged to live while in the grip of imperialism, of consumer society, of the media, and of the ruling class structures of social control, where they remain dependent on the market and the state.

The guerilla—and not only here: it is the same in Brazil, in Uruguay, in Cuba, and, for Che, in Bolivia—always starts from point zero, and the first phase of its development is the most difficult. Neither the bourgeois class prostituted to imperialism, nor the proletariat colonized by it, provide anything of use to us in this struggle. We are a group of comrades who have decided to act—to break with the stage of lethargy, of purely rhetorical radicalism, of increasingly vain discussions about strategy—and to struggle. We are lacking in everything, not only the capacity to act: it is only now that we are discovering what sort of human beings we are. We are uncovering the metropolitan individualism that comes from the system's decay, the alienated, false, poisonous relationships that it creates in our lives—in the factories, the offices, the schools, the universities, the revisionist groups, during apprenticeships,

or at part time jobs. We are discovering the effects of the division between professional life and private life, the division between intellectual labor and manual labor, the childishness of the hierarchical labor process, all of which reflect the psychic distortions produced by consumer society, by this degenerate metropolitan society, fallen into decay and stagnation.

But that is who we are, that is where we come from. We are the offspring of metropolitan annihilation and destruction, of the war of all against all, of the conflict of each individual with every other individual, of a system governed by fear, of the compulsion to produce, of the profit of one to the detriment of others, of the division of people into men and women, young and old, sick and healthy, foreigners and Germans, and of the struggle for prestige. Where do we come from? From isolation in individual row-houses, from the suburban concrete cities, from prison cells, from the asylums and special units, from media brainwashing, from consumerism, from corporal punishment, from the ideology of nonviolence, from depression, from illness, from degradation, from humiliation, from the debasement of human beings, from all the people exploited by imperialism.

We must find, in our distress, the need to liberate ourselves from imperialism and to struggle against it. We must understand that we have nothing to lose by destroying the system, but everything to gain from armed struggle—collective liberation, life, human dignity, and our identity. We must understand that the cause of the people, the masses, the assembly line workers, the lumpen proletariat, the prisoners, the apprentices—the lowest of the masses here and the liberation movements in the Third World—is our cause. Our cause—armed struggle against imperialism—is the masses’ cause and vice versa, even if it can only become a reality through a long-term process whereby the politico-military offensive develops and people’s war breaks out.

That is the difference between true revolutionary politics and politics that only seem revolutionary, but are in fact opportunist. It is necessary that we start from the objective situation, from the objective conditions, from the actual situation of the proletariat and the masses in the metropole, from the fact that all layers of society are in all ways under the system’s control. The opportunists base themselves on the alienated consciousness of the proletariat; we start from the fact of their alienation, which indicates why their liberation is necessary.

In 1916 Lenin responded to the colonialist, renegade pig Kautsky:

No one can seriously think it possible to organise the majority of the proletariat under capitalism. Secondly—and this is the main point—it is not so much a question of the size of an organisation, as of the real, objective significance of its policy: does its policy represent the masses, does it serve them, i.e., does it aim at their liberation from capitalism, or does it represent the interests of the minority, the minority’s reconciliation with capitalism?

Neither we nor anyone else can calculate precisely what portion of the proletariat is following and will follow the social-chauvinists and opportunists. This will be revealed only by the struggle, it will be definitely decided only by the socialist revolution. And it is therefore our duty, if we wish to remain socialists to go down lower and deeper, to the real masses; this is the whole meaning and the whole purport of the struggle against opportunism.¹

THE GUERRILLA IS THE GROUP

The role of the guerilla leadership, the role of Andreas in the RAF, is to provide orientation. It is not only a matter of distinguishing what is essential from what is secondary in each situation, but also of knowing how to connect each situation to the greater political context by elaborating its particularities, while never losing sight of the goal—revolution—as a result of details or specific technical or logistical problems, never losing sight of the overall tactical or strategic politics of the alliance, the question of class. This means never falling into opportunism.

This, said Le Duan,² is “the art of dialectically connecting firm principles with flexibility in action, the art of applying the law of development that seeks to see incremental changes transformed into qualitative leaps within the revolution.”³ It is also the art of “never shrinking

1 With minor omissions, this is a quote from Lenin’s *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism* written in October, 1916 and available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/oct/xo1.htm>.

2 Le Duan became the first Secretary of the Communist Party in North Vietnam in 1960. After the death of party founder and leader Ho Chi Minh in 1969, Le took over the leadership of the government. He remained General Secretary of the CP and head of the government until his death in 1986 at the age of seventy-nine.

3 This quote is from Le Duan’s *Principles and Methods of Revolutionary Action*, written on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the establishment of the Indochinese Communist Party (1970). A slightly different translation appears in

from the unimaginable enormity of your goals,” but of pursuing them stubbornly and without allowing yourself to be discouraged. It is the courage to draw lessons from your errors and the general willingness to learn. Every revolutionary organization and every guerilla organization knows that practice requires that it develop its capabilities—at least any organization applying dialectical materialism, any organization that aims for victory in the people’s war and not the edification of a party bureaucracy and a partnership with the imperialist power.

We don’t talk about democratic centralism because the urban guerilla in the metropole of the Federal Republic can’t have a centralizing apparatus. It is not a party, but a politico-military organization within which leadership is exercised collectively by all of the independent sections, with a tendency for it to be subsumed by the group as part of the collective learning process. Tactically, the goal is to always allow for an autonomous orientation towards militants, guerillas, and cadres. Collectivity is a political process that functions on all levels: in interaction and communication and in the sharing of knowledge that occurs as we work and learn together. An authoritarian leadership structure would find no material basis in the guerilla, because the real (i.e., voluntary) development of each individual’s productive force is necessary for the revolutionary guerilla to make an effective revolutionary intervention from a position of weakness, in order to launch the people’s liberation war.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

Andreas, because he is a revolutionary, and was one from the beginning, is the primary target of the psychological war that the cops are waging against us. This has been the case since 1970, since the first appearance of the urban guerilla with the prison break operation.

The guiding principle of psychological warfare is to set the people against the guerilla, to isolate the guerilla from the people, to distort the real, material goals of the revolution by personalizing events and by presenting them in psychological terms. The goals of the revolution are freedom from imperialist domination, from occupation, from colonialism and neocolonialism, from the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, from military dictatorship, from exploitation, from fascism, and from

This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan First Secretary, Central Committee Vietnam Workers Party available at <http://leninist.biz/en/1976/NSO261/05-Principles.and.Methods.of.Revolutionary.Action#forw1page17>.

imperialism. Psychological warfare uses the tactic of mystifying that which is easy enough to understand, presenting as irrational that which is rational, and presenting the revolutionaries' humanity as inhumanity. This is carried out by means of defamation, lies, insults, bullshit, racism, manipulation, and the mobilization of the people's unconscious fears and reflexes inculcated over decades or centuries of colonial domination and exploitation—knee-jerk existential fear in the face of incomprehensible and hidden powers of domination.

Through psychological warfare, the cops attempt to eliminate revolutionary politics and the armed anti-imperialist struggle in the German metropole, as well as its effect on the consciousness of the people, by personalizing it and turning it into a psychological issue. In this way, the cops attempt to present us as what they themselves are, they attempt to present the RAF's structure as similar to their own, a structure of domination mimicking the organizational form and functioning of their own structures of domination, a structure like that of the Ku Klux Klan, the mafia, or the CIA. And they accuse us of the tactics that imperialism and its puppets use to impose themselves: extortion, corruption, competition, privilege, brutality, and the practice of stepping over corpses to achieve their goals.

In their use of psychological warfare against us, the cops rely upon the confusion of all those who are obliged to sell their labor simply to survive, a confusion born of the obligation to produce and of the fear for one's very existence that the system generates within them. They rely on the morbid practice of defamation, which the ruling class has directed against the people for decades, for centuries; a mixture of anti-communism, antisemitism, racism, sexual oppression, religious oppression, and an authoritarian educational system. They rely on consumer society brainwashing and the imperialist media, re-education and the "economic miracle."

What is shocking about our guerilla in its first phase, what was shocking about its first actions, is that they showed that people could act outside of the system's limits, that they didn't have to see through the media's eyes, that they could be free from fear—that people could act on the basis of their own very real experiences, their own and those of the people. Because the guerilla starts from the fact that—despite this country's highly advanced technology and immense wealth—every day people have their own experiences with oppression, media terrorism, and insecure living conditions, which lead to mental illness, suicide, child abuse, indoctrination, and housing shortages. That is

what the imperialist state finds shocking about our actions: that the people can understand the RAF for what it is: a practice, a cause born in a logical and dialectical way from actual relationships. A practice which—insofar as it is the expression of real relationships, insofar as it expresses the only real possibility for reversing and changing these relationships—gives the people their dignity and makes sense out of struggle, revolution, uprisings, defeats, and past revolts—that is to say, it returns to the people the possibility of being conscious of their own history. Because all history is the history of class struggle, a people who has lost a sense of the significance of revolutionary class struggle is forced to live in a state in which they no longer participate in history, in which they are deprived of their sense of self, that is to say, of their dignity.

The guerilla allows each person to determine where he stands, to define, often for the first time, his overall situation and to discover his place within class society, within imperialism: to determine this for himself. Many people think they are on the side of the people, but the moment the people start to confront the police and start to struggle, they cut and run, issue denunciations, put the brakes on, and side with the police. This is a problem that Marx often addressed: that one is not what one believes oneself to be, but what one is in one's true functions, in one's role within class society. That is to say, if one doesn't decide to act against the system, doesn't take up arms and fight, then one is on the system's side and effectively serves as an instrument for achieving the system's goals.

With psychological warfare, the cops attempt to turn the achievements of the guerilla's actions back against us: the knowledge that it isn't the people who are dependent on the state, but the state that is dependent on the people—that it isn't the people who need the investment firms or the multinationals and their factories, but it is the capitalist pigs who need the people—that the goal of the police isn't to protect the people from criminals, but to protect the imperialist order of exploitation from the people—that the people don't need the justice system, but the justice system needs the people—that we don't need the American troops and installations here, but that U.S. imperialism needs us. Through personalization and psychological rationalization, they project the clichés of capitalist anthropology onto us. They project the reality of their own facade, of their judges, of their prosecutors, of their screws, and of their fascists, pigs who take pleasure in their alienation, who only live by torturing, by oppressing, and by exploiting

others, pigs for whom the whole point of their existence is their career, success, elbowing their way to the top, and taking advantage of others, pigs who take pleasure from the hunger, the misery, and the deprivation of millions of human beings in the Third World and here.

What the ruling class hates about us is that despite a hundred years of repression, of fascism, of anticommunism, of imperialist wars, and of genocides, the revolution once again raises its head. In carrying out psychological warfare, the bourgeoisie, with its police state, sees in us everything that they hate and fear about the people, and this is especially so in the case of Andreas. It is he who is the mob, the street, the enemy. They see in us that which menaces them and will overthrow them: the determination to provoke the revolution, revolutionary violence, and political and military action. At the same time they see their own powerlessness, for their power ends at the point when the people take up arms and begin to struggle.

The system is exposing itself, not us, in its defamation campaign. All defamation campaigns against the guerilla reveal something about those who carry them out, about their piggishness, about their goals, their ambitions, and their fears.

And to say we are “a vanguard that designates itself as such” makes no sense. To be the vanguard is a role that we cannot assign ourselves, nor is it one that we can demand. It is a role that the people give to the guerilla in their own consciousness, in the process of developing their consciousness, of rediscovering their role in history as they recognize themselves in the guerilla’s actions, because they, “in themselves,” recognize the necessity to destroy the system “for themselves” through guerilla actions. The idea of a “vanguard that designates itself as such” reflects ideas of prestige that belong to a ruling class that seeks to dominate. But that has nothing to do with the role of the proletariat, a role that is based on the absence of property, on emancipation, on dialectical materialism, and on the struggle against imperialism.

THE DIALECTIC OF REVOLUTION AND COUNTERREVOLUTION

That is the dialectic of the anti-imperialist struggle. The enemy unmasks itself by its defensive maneuvers, by the system’s reaction, by the counterrevolutionary escalation, by the transformation of the political state of emergency into a military state of emergency. This is how it shows its true face—and by its terrorism it provokes the masses to rise up against it, reinforcing the contradictions and making revolution inevitable.

As Marighella said:

The basic principle of revolutionary strategy in conditions of permanent political crisis is to develop, in the city as well as in the countryside, such a breadth of revolutionary activity that the enemy finds himself obliged to transform the political situation in the country into a military situation. In this way dissatisfaction spreads to all layers of the population, with the military alone responsible for all of the hatred.

And as a Persian comrade, A.P. Puyan,¹ said:

By extending the violence against the resistance fighters, creating an unanticipated reaction, the repression inevitably hits all other oppressed milieus and classes in an even more massive way. As a result, the ruling class augments the contradictions between the oppressed classes and itself and creates a climate which leads of necessity to a great leap forward in the consciousness of the masses.

And Marx said:

Revolutionary progress is proceeding in the right direction when it provokes a powerful, unified counterrevolution, which backfires by developing an adversary that cannot lead the party of the insurrection against the counterrevolution except by becoming a truly revolutionary party.²

In 1972, the cops mobilized 150,000 men to hunt the RAF, using television to involve the people in the manhunt, having the Federal Chancellor intervene, and centralizing all police forces in the hands of the BKA. This makes it clear that, already at that point, a numerically insignificant group of revolutionaries was all it took to set in motion all of the

1 Amir Parviz Puyan was a prominent member of the Organization of the People's Fedayeen Guerillas, a Marxist-Leninist guerilla group established in 1971. By the time of the 1979 revolution, the OPFG was the most significant guerilla group operating in Iran.

2 Probably quoted from memory, this is a mangled paraphrasing of an argument from Marx's "The Class Struggles in France." The full passage as it appears in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works II*, ed. V. Adoretsky (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1942), 192: "revolutionary advance made headway not by its immediate tragi-comic achievements, but on the contrary by the creation of a powerful, united counter-revolution, by the creation of an opponent, by fighting which the party of revolt first ripened into a real revolutionary party."

material and human resources of the state. It was already clear that the state's monopoly of violence had material limits, that their forces could be exhausted, that if, on the tactical level, imperialism is a beast that devours humans, on the strategic level it is a paper tiger. It was clear that it is up to us whether the oppression continues, and it is also up to us to smash it.

Now, after everything they have carried out against us with their psychological warfare campaign, the pigs are preparing to assassinate Andreas. As of today, we political prisoners, members of the RAF and other anti-imperialist groups, are beginning a hunger strike.¹ We must add the fact that for some years now—in keeping with the police objective of liquidating the RAF, and consistent with their tactic of psychological warfare—most of us have found ourselves detained in isolation. Which is to say, we have found ourselves in the process of being exterminated. But we have decided not to stop thinking and struggling: we have decided to dump the rocks the state has thrown at us at its own feet.

The police are preparing to assassinate Andreas, as they attempted previously during the summer 1973 hunger strike when they deprived him of water. At that time, they attempted to have the lawyers and the public believe that he was allowed to drink again after a few days: in reality he received nothing, and the pig of a doctor at the Schwalmstadt prison, after nine days, when he had already gone blind, said, “If you don’t drink some milk, you’ll be dead in ten hours.” The Hessen Minister of Justice came from time to time to have a look in his cell, and the Hessen prison doctors’ group was at that time meeting with the Wiesbaden Minister of Justice. There exists a decree in Hessen that anticipates breaking hunger strikes by withholding all liquids. The complaints filed against the pig of a doctor for attempted murder were rejected, and the procedure undertaken to maintain the complaint was suspended.

We declare today that if the cops attempt to follow through with their plans to deprive Andreas of water, all RAF prisoners participating in the hunger strike will immediately react in turn by refusing all liquids. We will react in the same way if faced with any attempted assassination through the withholding of water, no matter where it occurs or against which prisoner it is used.

Ulrike Meinhof
September 13, 1974

¹ This signaled the third of the RAF prisoners’ hunger strikes; see page 253.