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"The Urban Guerrilla Is History..."

The Final Communiqué From The Red Army Faction (RAF)

**Red Army Faction
March 1998**

This document was translated by Arm the Spirit; it also appears on the Arm the Spirit website at: **the following text was translated by Arm the Spirit, and comes from their website at <http://www.etext.org/Politics/Arm.The.Spirit/Guerrilla/Europe/Red.Army.Fraction/march.1998.communique>**

Almost 28 years ago, on May 14, 1970, the RAF was born from an act of liberation¹: Today we are ending this project. The urban guerrilla in the form of the RAF is now history.

We, that is all of us who were organized in the RAF until the end, are taking this step jointly. From now on, we, like all others from this association, are former RAF militants.

We stand by our history. The RAF was the revolutionary attempt by a minority of people to resist the tendencies in this society and contribute to the overthrow of capitalist conditions. We are proud to have been part of this attempt.

The end of this project shows that we were not able to succeed on this path. But this does not speak against the necessity and legitimacy of revolt. The RAF was our decision to stand on the side of those people struggling against domination and for liberation all across the world. For us, this was the right decision to make.

Hundreds of years in prison terms for RAF prisoners were not able to wipe us out, nor could all the attempts to eradicate the guerrilla. We wanted a confrontation with the ruling powers. We acted as subjects when we decided upon the RAF 27 years ago. We remain subjects today, as we consign ourselves to history.

The results are critical of us. But the RAF - like all of the left until now - was nothing more than a phase of transition on the path to liberation.

After fascism and war, the RAF brought something new into the society: The moment of a break with the system and the historic flash of decisive opposition to the conditions which structurally subject and exploit people and which brought about a society in which the people are forced to fight against one another. The struggle in the social cracks, which marked our opposition, pushed a genuine social liberation forward; this break with the

¹ On May 14th 1970 Andreas Baader was broken out of prison by by armed RAF members while he was on an educational visit to a library. It was the group's first claimed action.

system, a system in which profit is the subject and people are the objects, and the desire for a life without the lies and weight of this distorted society. Fed up with stooping down, functioning, kicking, and being kicked. From rejection to attack, to liberation.

The RAF Arose From The Hope For Liberation

Backed by the courage which emanated from the guerrillas from the South to the rich nations of the North, the RAF came about in the early 1970s in solidarity with liberation movements in order to take up a common struggle. Millions of people saw in the struggles of resistance and liberation around the globe a chance for themselves as well. The armed struggle was a hope for liberation in many parts of the world. In Germany, too, tens of thousands of people were in solidarity with the struggles of the militant organizations Second of June Movement², the Revolutionary Cells (RZ)³, the RAF, and later Rote Zora⁴. The RAF came about as a result of the discussions of thousands of people in Germany who began to think about armed struggle as a means to liberation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The RAF took up the struggle against the state, a state which had never broken with its national-socialist past following the liberation from Nazi fascism.

The armed struggle was a rebellion against an authoritarian form of society, against alienation and competition. It was a rebellion for a new social and cultural reality. In the euphoria of the global attempts at liberation, the time was right for a decisive struggle which seriously aimed at overturning and no longer accepting the pseudo-natural legitimacy of the system.

1975-77

With the 1975 occupation of the German embassy in Stockholm⁵, the RAF launched a phase during which it did everything possible to liberate its prisoners from jail.

First came the "1977 Offensive", during which the RAF kidnapped Schleyer⁶. The RAF posed the question of power. This began a radical and decisive attempt to push through

² The June 2nd Movement was a West Berlin guerilla group influenced by anarchism, active in the 1970s. In the 1980s it merged with the RAF.

³ The Revolutionary Cells were a decentralized guerilla movement which sought to act as an armed auxiliary to the autonomist left.

⁴ In the 1980s a feminist guerilla, *Rote Zora*, emerged, carrying out attacks on sex traders, businesses implicated in the exploitation of Third World women, and engaging in an extensive bombing campaign against bio-tech research facilities.

⁵ Stockholm - reference to the April 25, 1975 seizure of the German Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, by the 6 member Commando Holger Meins of the RAF. They demanded the release of 26 political prisoners, including the Stammheim prisoners. A police assault on the Embassy resulted in an explosion, which killed one guerrilla, Siegfried Hausner, and one hostage. (see <http://www.germanguerilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/75-04-24.html>)

an offensive position for the revolutionary left against the state power. It was exactly this which the state wanted to prevent. The explosive escalation of the conflict, however, also came against the background of German history: The continuity of Nazism in the West German state, which the RAF attacked with its offensive.

Schleyer, a member of the SS during the Nazi regime, was, like many Nazis in all levels of society, back in office with all his honor intact. Nazis built careers in the West German state in government positions, the courts, the police apparatus, the armed forces, the media, and in major corporations. These anti-Semites, racists, and genocidal murderers were often times the same people responsible for crimes against humanity under the Nazis, and now they were back among the powerful elite.

Schleyer worked towards the ends of the Nazis and the capitalists to create a European economic region under German dominance. The Nazis had wanted a Europe in which there were neither struggles between industrial workers and capital nor any resistance whatsoever to their system. They wanted to end the class struggle by utilizing German workers or workers who could "be made like Germans" and incorporating them into their society. All others were to be enslaved to forced labor or systematically destroyed in concentration camps.

With the liberation from Nazi fascism came the end of the industrial destruction of people by the Nazis, but there was no liberation from capitalism. After 1945, Schleyer worked towards the same economic goals - in a more modernized form. The push towards modernization came with the social democratic model of the 1970s. As the chief of industry, Schleyer was continually building up a system to contain social resistance to the conditions of capital - for example, by locking out workers - and to integrate workers into the system by means of negotiated contracts for social security. This integration was meant to incorporate the German portion of the society most of all, meanwhile capital increasingly exploited immigrant workers and, at the global level, dominated and exploited the people of the southern hemisphere, which resulted in massive destruction from hunger. The continuity of the system which Schleyer embodied - in the 1970s during the period of the social democratic model - was a crucial moment in the building and development of the Federal Republic of Germany.

⁶ Hanns-Martin Schleyer, a leading industrialist and former Nazi, was kidnapped by the RAF on September 5th 1977. His release was offered in exchange for that of RAF prisoners being held by the West German State. The state opted for a repressive hard line, and the situation escalated further when a Palestinian Commando hijacked a Lufthansa Airliner in support of the RAF's demands (and also demanding the release of two Palestinian political prisoners held in Turkey). The Palestinian "Commando Martyr Halimeh" flew the airplane from Bahrain to Dubai to Aden (where the pilot was shot) and then finally - on October 17th - they landed in Mogidishu (Somalia). The next day, on October 18th, the conflict reached its climax, as a West German anti-terrorist unit stormed the hijacked plane, killing three of the four hijackers. Left-wing houses were raided across West Germany. Most ominously, the State announced that four RAF prisoners - Andreas Baader, Jan-Carl Raspe, Gudrun Ensslin and Irmgard Möller - had been "found dead" or seriously injured in their cells. Only Möller survived, and despite the fact that to this day she has described having been attacked in her cell, the State maintains that the three committed "suicide".

The Absolute Necessity To Approve Of All Measures Enacted By The Crisis Staff And The Repression Of All Critical Voices, Going So Far As To Try And Eliminate The Political Prisoners - These Were The Same Reactionary Techniques Utilized By The Nazis

The actions of the 1977 offensive made it clear that there were elements in the society which would in no way be integrated into or controlled by the system. After the Nazis had eliminated the resistance, the actions of the urban guerrilla groups after 1968 marked a return to a moment of class struggle, no longer integrated to the ruling powers, in post-fascist West Germany. The abduction of Schleyer heightened this aspect even more. The state did not by any means react with panic, as has often been said. The state reacted by suppressing all forms of expression which did not support the state of emergency measures. The state ordered all media to follow the line of the Crisis Staff, which most willingly did. All who refused risked a confrontation with the system. Intellectuals, who everyone knew did not sympathize with the RAF, but who nonetheless contradicted the state of emergency, were no longer safe from smear campaigns and repression. The members of the government's Crisis Staff, some of whom had military backgrounds, reacted with the same means in 1977 as the Nazis had done - although the Nazis, of course, went to a far greater degree of barbarity - to prevent and wipe out anti-capitalist and anti-fascist struggles. Under Nazi fascism, and in 1977, the state's policies were aimed at eliminating any space between total loyalty to the state in an emergency situation on the one side and repression on the other.

When it became more clear that the state was prepared to abandon Schleyer, the RAF gave its approval for a civilian airliner to be hijacked in a guerrilla action as part of its own offensive, and this made it appear as though the RAF no longer differentiated between the top and bottom sectors of the society. Although the attempt to free the prisoners from torture was justified, the social-revolutionary dimension of the struggle was now no longer visible. From the break with the system and the rejection of the conditions in the society - the preconditions for any revolutionary movement - had come a break with the society as a whole.

From The 1970s To The 1980s

The RAF had gambled everything and suffered a huge defeat. In the process of struggle until the end of the 1970s, it became clear that the RAF was left with just a few people from the period of the 1968 upheavals. Many people from the '68 movement had given up on movement politics and used their chances to build careers. The RAF, as part of the global anti-imperialist struggle, had taken up the war of liberation within West Germany. The year 1977 had shown, however, that the RAF had neither the political nor the military strength to direct the situation after the subsequent reaction, the domestic war. It was right to make use of the historical situation at the beginning of the 1970s and open a new and previously unknown chapter of struggle in the metropolises in the fight between imperialism and liberation. The experiences of the defeat of 1977 revealed the limitations

of the old urban guerrilla concept of the RAF. There needed to be a new concept of liberation.

The front concept⁷ of the 1980s was an attempt to achieve this. The RAF wanted new ties and a basis for a joint struggle with radical segments of the resistance movements which had arisen in the late 1970s. But the front concept held on to many of the basic notions of the old project from the 1970s. Armed actions remained the central focus and the decisive moment of the revolutionary process, which was seen as a war of liberation.

The Anti-Imperialist Front Of The 1980s

In the early 1980s, there were several struggles directed against inhumane projects of the system, but which were also expressions of the search for free forms of living. A social revolt which sought a new social reality, now.

Thousands of people from these new movements went onto the streets in the 1980s to protest the same thing which the RAF sought to attack since 1979: The militarization policies of the NATO states, which would enable the West to wage "one and a half" wars simultaneously, the war against the Soviet Union and, at the same time, warlike interventions against liberation movements and revolutions, like in Nicaragua⁸, where the first step towards liberation from Western dictatorship had been taken.

The RAF assumed that they would not be alone during this new phase. The concept was fueled by the hope that militant sectors of various movements would join a common front. But this concept failed to recognize that, in the given social situation, only very few people saw any purpose in a liberation struggle on the level of a war. The liberation struggle, whose central moment is that of war, only makes sense when there is a possibility that there are forces in the society who are willing to take it up and expand it - at the very least, the radical elements of the movements.

But even those who were in solidarity - and they were by no means few in number - did not take up the struggle with this in mind. A guerrilla war requires a perspective for expansion to a level of struggle. This is necessary for the existential development of the guerrilla, and we were not able to achieve this.

The RAF's notion of armed action at the focal point of the struggle placed less importance on the political and cultural processes outside of the political-military

⁷ In May 1982, the RAF released a paper which called for the building of an anti-imperialist front in Europe with the urban guerrilla as the vanguard. This paper can be viewed at http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/82_05.html.

⁸ Nicaragua – In 1979 a popular revolution in Nicaragua brought the left-wing Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (or Sandinistas) to power, forcing the US-backed dictator Anastasio Somoza to flee to Miami. Under the Reagan regime (1981-1989), the United States worked hard to destabilize the Sandinista regime (and this was one of the factors behind its defeat in 1990), arming and supplying right-wing mercenary armies, mining the harbour of Managua, and carrying out various covert operations. Nevertheless, the US never dared to directly invade the country.

struggle. Overcoming this strategic direction, which had come from the fundamental structure of the concept in the 1970s, should have been a precondition for any new revolutionary project. The front could not become this new liberation project to remove the distinctions between the movements and the guerrilla.

In the 1980s, the RAF operated under the assumption that a social-revolutionary approach lay in the attacks on the central power structures of imperialism. With this approach, the RAF's politics became increasingly abstract. This led to a split of what should be united: anti-imperialism and social revolution. The social revolutionary outlook disappeared from the theory and praxis of the RAF. The orientation became reduced to the anti-imperialist line, and the result of this was the anti-imperialist front. The RAF was not a factor in social questions. This was a fundamental mistake.

Subsuming all social and political content under the anti-imperialist attack against the "entire system" produced false divisions instead of a process of unity; and it led to a lack of identity on concrete questions and the content of the struggle.

The resonance within the society remained limited, because the proposal to create consciousness in the society and to break the consensus between the state and the society - a central moment of any revolutionary process - disappeared. Instead, the RAF sought to destroy the state's dominance of control by increasing the intensity of its attacks. The priority shifted to the military dimension. This emphasis remained throughout the 1980s and it defined our struggle.

We carried out attacks against NATO projects as well as the military-industrial complex of capital, together with other guerrilla groups in Western Europe; an attempt was made to forge a West European Guerrilla Front comprised of the RAF, Action Directe in France, and the Red Brigades/PCC in Italy.

The RAF concentrated - as far as its strength allowed - on attacking NATO projects and, after 1984, the formation of a new power bloc by West European states. The focus remained on our own limited forces and those militants who closely identified with the RAF. The attempt to form a front with other groups from the resistance movement did not broaden into reality. For this reason, the front collapsed, because too much energy was spent on trying to adhere to the "correct" line. This narrow focus prevented any political dynamic from being created. Instead of a new horizon, which seemed possible given the variety of resistance in the early 1980s, the rigidity and narrowness of the politics increased as the decade wore on.

There was a great discrepancy between the willingness of RAF militants to give everything in the confrontation and the ability, at the same time, to seek new ideas for the process of liberation. In this respect, very little was risked.

During this time - the concept of the 1980s was by then a few years old already - there was also development on our side, which was characterized by demonstratively coldly

driven politics, which was little more than "making politics", and which was far removed from anything having to do with liberation.

But this was also a time when the RAF and its prisoners, despite all the difficulties and defeats, showed with their determination that they had remained uncorrupted by the course of history and remained committed to changing the conditions against the will of the ruling powers. This gave others hope as well and drew in people who wanted to struggle for collectivity and togetherness and against isolation and loneliness in the society. The struggle by the prisoners against isolation detention and for their regroupment, their struggle for dignity and freedom, which other people longed for as well, was something many people could identify with. The determination and lack of compromise by the RAF and the prisoners against the ruling powers stood in the face of all attempts by the authorities to suppress all struggles for another way of living.

We, Most Of Whom Became Organized In The RAF Very Late...

...joined in the hope that our struggle could contribute new impulses for global revolt in the changed conditions. We sought changes for the liberation struggle, for a new path on which we could join ourselves with others. And we wanted to give something back to those who had taken up the struggle before us, and who had died or been sent to prison. The struggle in illegality had a very attractive affect on us. We wanted to break though our borders and be free of everything which confined us within the system.

Armed struggle in illegality was, for us, nothing more than the only possible and necessary way for the liberation process. But also, especially considering the crisis of the left all around the world, we wanted to further develop the urban guerrilla as a possibility and keep illegality as a terrain for the liberation process. But we recognized then that that alone would not be enough. The guerrilla, too, would have to change.

Our hope was to create new ties between the guerrilla and other sectors of the resistance in the society. To do this, we sought a new proposal, in which all struggles from the city neighborhoods to the guerrilla could stand together.

It Was Important For Us, Following The Collapse Of East Germany, To Bring Our Struggle In Tune With The New Existing Social Situation

We wanted to take steps to relate to all those people whose dreams had ended with the collapse of the GDR⁹ and its annexation into West Germany. Some had realized that "real existing socialism" was not liberation after all. Others, who were part of the opposition to real existing socialism in East Germany, had dreamed of something different from either capitalism or real existing socialism. Most people who had lived in the GDR and who had demanded reunification with West Germany began to examine the new, depressing social situation which had come about, with social security measures having been drastically

⁹ GDR, the German Democratic Republic; East Germany.

done away with. We wanted to relate to all those people, during this historical situation which was unknown to everyone, who had struggled for liberation in confrontation with the West German state and also those who were fed up with the racist and completely reactionary developments unfolding in the now non-existent East Germany. We did not want to abandon these people to resignation, or to the right-wing.

Later on we saw that the dimension of this change could only result in a new and internationalist liberation project if the new reality in both East and West were dealt with. The RAF, with its roots in the history of resistance in the old West Germany, could not achieve this.

The Attempt To Anchor The RAF In The 1990s Was An Unrealistic Proposal

We wanted to transform a concept which had arisen from the 1968 movement into a new, social revolutionary and internationalist concept in tune with the 1990s. This was a time when we sought for something new, but - weighed down by the dogmas of the past years - we did not go radically enough beyond the old concept. So we made the same mistakes which all of us made after 1977: We overestimated the support for this continuity of our conception of struggle. Fundamentally, the danger exists of discrediting armed struggle when it is maintained without explaining how it concretely advances the revolutionary process and leads to a strengthening of the liberation struggle. It is important to deal with this issue in a responsible manner, because otherwise the armed struggle becomes discredited - even for another situation, in which it is needed again.

The crisis, when the left reached its limits in the 1980s and began partially to disband, made our attempt to link the RAF into some new project an unrealistic proposal. We were much too late - even to transform the RAF after a period of reflection. Criticism and self-criticism do not aim at ending something, rather at further developing it. In short, the end of the RAF is not the result of our process of (self-)criticism and reflection, rather because it is necessary, because the concept of the RAF does not contain the necessary elements from which something new can arise.

When we examine this segment of our history today in light of the historical process in general, the attempt to bring the RAF back into a strong political process was more than anything just the prolongation of something which had long since had the perspective of a project at its end. We needed to realize that the form of struggle, above all else, was what had remained from the old concept. There was no new meaning, something which could offer a perspective of an alternative to the labor society and its inhumane, profit-oriented economy, something which could serve as the foundation for the liberation struggles of the future and bring many people together.

Following our defeat in 1993, we knew that we couldn't just keep going on as we had since we began the break with our struggle in 1992. We were sure that we had set the correct goals for ourselves, but that we had made some serious tactical mistakes. We

wanted to think things over one more time with those who were in prison, and take a new step together.

But in the end, the very hurtful split of one group of the prisoners from us, who declared us to be enemies, completely erased the very conditions which had given rise to the RAF in the first place - solidarity and the struggle for collectivity¹⁰.

The Process Of Our Own Liberation...

...was important to us, and yet we always seemed to become stagnant. We desired collectivity just as we desired the joint overcoming of all forms of alienation. But the contradiction between war and liberation often got pushed off or talked away by us. Revolutionary war also produces alienation and structures of authority, which is in contradiction to liberation. Dealing with that, so that it does not become established as a structure, is only possible if there is consciousness about it. Otherwise it goes without saying that new structures of authority will arise, as well as a hardening in both politics and relationships. That fact showed itself during the often changing hierarchical structures of the front in the 1980s and the authoritarian tendencies during the split in 1993. And it showed itself during the relapse into mainstream analysis and thought, which, in the history of the RAF, led to many people who struggled here no longer being able to see a justification for total revolt any longer.

It Was A Strategic Mistake Not To Build Up A Political-Social Organization Alongside The Illegal, Armed Organization

In no phase of our history was an outreaching, political organization realized in addition to the political-military struggle. The concept of the RAF knew only the armed struggle, with a focus on the political-military attack.

In the formative communiqués of the RAF up to the mid 1970s, this important question was never even posed, nor could it have been. In the metropolises in general, and especially in Germany, there was no previous experience with an urban guerrilla. Many things had to be discovered and learned along the way, and shown to be true or false in practice. Nevertheless, there was never an orientation to the decisive question, whether the project of liberation can be fulfilled by an illegal organization and the armed struggle - or if the building up of the guerrilla should go hand in hand with the expansion of political structures which can grow in the base processes. In January 1976, our imprisoned comrades wrote about this, stating that only an armed struggle from illegality could be a practical-critical opposition to imperialism. The concept in the May 1982

¹⁰ In 1993 several prisoners from the RAF publicly broke from the organization over the question of negotiations with the State and the ceasefire. See http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/93_prisoners_split.html

paper¹¹ also maintained this position, despite all the contradictions and despite the fact that it was an attempt to find a new political association together with other people. Because this concept, too, did not break with the notion that the armed struggle should be central in the metropolises. The political activities which arose from the front process got bogged down in communicating the attacks within the structures of the radical left.

The lack of a political organization for more than 20 years resulted in the continual weakening of the political process. The over-estimation of the political-military actions in the metropolises of the last few decades was the precondition for this concept. The RAF based its strategy on armed struggle, in different ways during different phases, but at no point did it arrive at the point where militant actions aim at: The tactical option of a comprehensive liberation strategy. This weakness also led to the fact that our organization could not transform itself after two decades. The preconditions for placing the focus of the struggle on the political level - which is what we wanted to do in 1992 - were not at hand. But, in the end, that was simply the result of fundamental strategic mistakes. The lack of a political-social organization was a decisive mistake by the RAF. It wasn't the only mistake, but it's one important reason why the RAF could not become a stronger liberation project, and in the end the necessary preconditions were lacking to build up a fighting counter-movement searching for liberation, one which could have a strong influence on social developments. The mistakes inherent in the concept, such as these, which accompanied the RAF throughout its entire history show that the concept of the RAF can no longer be relevant in the liberation processes of the future.

The End Of The RAF Comes At A Time When The Whole World Is Confronted With The Effects Of Neo-Liberalism - The International Struggle Against Displacement, Alienation, And For A Just And Fundamentally Different Social Reality Is In Opposition To The Entire Development Of Capitalism

Global and inner-societal relations are becoming heightened in the turbulence of the historical developments following the end of real existing socialism. Nevertheless, it is not a contradiction for us to end our project while still recognizing the necessity that everything which is useful and possible must be done so that a world without capitalism can come about, one in which the emancipation of humanity can be realized. Considering the devastating effects of the collapse of real existing socialism world wide, and the mass poverty of millions of people in the former Soviet Union, it's not enough to talk today of the chances which have been brought about by the end of real existing socialism. Nevertheless, we recognize that true liberation was not possible under the model of real existing socialism. It is possible to draw consequences from the anti-emancipatory experiences with the authoritarian and state bureaucratic concepts of real existing socialism and to recognize future paths to liberation.

With the collapse of real existing socialism, the competition between systems ended, meaning that the proponents of the capitalist system no longer feel the need to make their

¹¹ In May 1982, the RAF released a paper which called for the building of an anti-imperialist front in Europe with the urban guerrilla as the vanguard. This paper can be viewed at http://www.germanguerrilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/82_05.html.

system appear to be "better". In the absence of an ideological check on capital, a process of global unleashing of capital has resulted: All of humanity are to be subjected to the needs of capital. Neo-liberalism is the ideological and economic foundation for a world wide push towards optimization and the evaluation of people and nature according to the demands of capital. Representatives of the system call this "reform" or "modernization".

It is more than clear that the present stage of the development of the system will bring an overwhelming majority of humanity further social and existential difficulty. For the majority of the people in the world, neo-liberalism adds a new dimension to the threats on their lives.

In the struggle for political hegemony and economic power, only those economies survive which increasingly orient their capacities towards the blank profits of the corporations and an ever smaller segment of the society. The side effects of this system lead to deep changes within societies. Furthermore, increasing poverty and the increasing brutalization of a further unleashing of wars and barbarity. If their own economic and political interests are at stake, the rich nations will intervene in these conflicts with their own wars, in order to secure "unlimited access to raw materials" in the earth and to enhance their positions of power. They will never concern themselves with actually solving the problems of people, rather they wish to control the destruction which their system sets into motion so as to squeeze out profits for the few.

It is not a contradiction, rather it is a part of the logic of the system that transnational corporations are more powerful than ever, with larger profits than ever, in this phase of political systems in crisis all around the world, the breaking apart of societies, and the impoverishment of wider sectors of the metropolitan masses who had previously been spared from material problems.

Paradoxically, the successful maximization of profits by capital and the process of social collapse called forth by it seems to be pushing capitalism to its limits. This development threatens, above all else, to result in further outbreaks of barbarity: From the independent dynamic of system development, this negative process will continue, until such time as there is a proposal for liberation which can call forth a new force to overturn the system. But today, there is not only the defeat of the historic left and the violence of the global social relations, there is also a wealth of rebel movements who can draw on the experiences of the global history of resistance.

In this global development, capitalism, in the metropolises as well, tries to buy social peace by means of "welfare systems". Instead, however, increasingly large segments of the society become marginalized when they are no longer needed in the production process. The "world power" and the "welfare state" can no longer exist together under one roof. In Europe, for example, the old "welfare states" are coming under the political and economic hegemony of Germany, with Germany serving as a racist frontline state in an entire continent which is turning into a police state.

The police and military are deployed against those fleeing from poverty, war, and oppression. A society full of prisons. Cops and security forces tossing the homeless out of the consumer shopping areas, as well as youths and anyone else who upsets the regular customers and the bourgeoisie. The re-introduction of closed facilities as prisons for kids. The attempt to exert total control over refugees in the near future by means of computer chip cards, with other social groups coming later on. Police batons and weapons against the foreseeable revolts by those pushed to the edges. Exclusion, repression, and displacement. Even the total perfection of humans by means of genetic engineering can no longer be considered unthinkable.

Exclusion and repression through a lack of social feeling within the society as well is normal both here and elsewhere. Racism from below threatens the lives of millions, which in Germany is the murderous mark of the historical continuity which this society carries with it. The exclusion of handicapped persons from above and aggression against them from below are expressions of the day to day brutality of the society. Only people who don't contradict the efficiency of the economic system are desired, as well as anything which can be capitalized. Anything else which is outside of the needs of the capitalist society are given no place. The great many people who can no longer live here, or who no longer want to - and there are many people who chose to end their lives every day - speak of the emptiness of the system and the hardness in the society.

The marketing of people and the violence in the home and on the streets, these are the violence of suppression, the social coldness against others, the violence against women - all of these are expressions of patriarchal and racist conditions.

The RAF always stood in contradiction to the conscious mentality of a large segment of this society. That is a necessary moment in the process of liberation, because it's not only the conditions which are reactionary, rather the conditions produce reactionary character in people, and this continually suppresses their ability to become liberated. Without a doubt, it is a matter of existence to resist and fight against racism and all forms of oppression. Future outlines for liberation must be measured according to this, and they must find a key to unlocking the closed, reactionary consciousness and awakening the desire for emancipation and liberation.

The Reality Of The World Today Proves That It Would Have Been Better If The Global Wave Of Revolt, Which The RAF Was A Part Of, Had Been Successful

The global wave of revolt, which the RAF arose from as well, did not succeed, which does not mean that the destructive and unjust developments up until today can't still be turned around. The fact that we still don't see sufficient answers to these developments weighs more heavily upon us than the mistakes which we made. The RAF came from the revolts of the last decades, which did not exactly foresee how the system would develop, but which at least recognized the threat which it posed. We knew that this system would allow fewer and fewer people around the world to live their lives with dignity. And we also knew that this system seeks total access to people, so that they subjugate themselves to the values of the system and make them their own. Our radicalism sprung from these

realizations. For us, we had nothing to lose with this system. Our struggle - the violence with which we resisted these relations - had a difficult, a heavy side. The liberation war has its shadows, too. Attacking people in their capacity as functionaries for the state is a contradiction to the thoughts and feelings of all revolutionaries in the world - it contradicts their notion of liberation. Even when there are phases in the liberation process when this is viewed as necessary, because there are people who desire injustice and oppression and who seek to defend their own power or the power of others. Revolutionaries desire a world in which no one has the right to decide who may live and who may not. Nevertheless, our violence upset some people in an irrational way. The real terror is the normality of the economic system.

The RAF Was Not The Answer For Liberation - It Was One Aspect Of It

Although many questions remain open today, we are sure that from the liberation ideas of the future the seed of free relations can arise, if it truly does embrace the variety which is needed to overturn the conditions. It is useless to speak of "the correct line", the aspect of life outside of which everything else seems inefficient, just as it is to seek a revolutionary subject. The project of liberation in the future will know many subjects and a variety of aspects and content, and this had nothing to do with being random. We need a new proposal in which seemingly very different individuals or social groups can be subjects, and yet still be together. In this sense, the liberation project of the future will not contain the old concepts of the German left since 1968, not those of the RAF or other groups. The joy of building an encompassing, anti-authoritarian, and yet binding organizing project of liberation lies before us still, sadly too little attempted up until now. We see that there are people all over the world who are trying this, to find ways out of the vacuum.

We draw hope from the fact that everywhere, even in the most remote corners of this country - where the cultural hegemony of the fascist right is no longer a seldom thing - there are people who have the courage to join together against racism and neo-nazism, to defend themselves and others and to struggle.

It is necessary to recognize that we are at a dead end and we need to find ways out. So it makes sense to abandon things which can only be carried forward in a theoretical sense. Our decision to end something is the expression of our search for new answers. We know that we are joined with many other people around the world in this search.

There will be many future discussions until all the experiences have been brought together and we have a realistic and reflective picture of history.

We want to be part of a joint liberation. We want to make some of our own processes recognizable, and we want to learn from others.

This excludes the notion of a vanguard which leads the struggle. Although the concept of being the "vanguard" had been dropped from our understanding of the struggle for years,

the old concept of the RAF would not allow this to be actually done away with. That's another reason why we had to cut ourselves loose from this concept.

The Guerrillas In The Metropoles Brought The War Back Into The Belly Of The Beast, To The Imperialist States Which Waged Their Wars Outside Their Own Centers Of Power

Despite everything which we could have done better, it was fundamentally correct to oppose the conditions in West Germany and to seek to wage resistance to the continuity of German history. We wanted to open up chances for revolutionary struggle in the metropolises as well.

The RAF took up its own social terrain of struggle and sought to develop it for more than two decades, a terrain which historically knew little resistance, lacked a movement against fascism, and which was characterized by a population loyal to fascism and barbarism. Unlike in other countries, in Germany, liberation from fascism had to come from the outside. There was no self-determined break with fascism "from below" here. There were very few people in this country who resisted fascism; too few with any trace of humanity. Those who struggled in the Jewish resistance, in the communist resistance - in whatever anti-fascist resistance - were right to struggle. And they will always be right. They were the few glimmers of light in the history of this country since 1933, when fascism began to kill off all that was social in this society.

In contrast to these people, the trend in this society was always more or less to accept what those in power said; authority determined what is legitimate. In the social destruction of this society, which was a precondition for the genocide by the Nazis, the indifference to any other essential moment remains today. The RAF broke with German tradition after Nazi fascism and refused to grant it any legitimacy. The RAF came from the revolt against it. It not only rejected this national and social continuity, it waged an internationalist struggle in place of this negation, a struggle whose praxis rejected the ruling conditions in the German state and attacked the military structures of its NATO allies. All over the world, this alliance, in whose hierarchy the USA was the driving force and the unquestioned leader, sought to defeat social rebellions and liberation movements by means of the military and war. The guerrillas in the metropolises brought the war, which the imperialists waged outside their centers of power, back into the belly of the beast.

We answered the violent conditions with the violence of revolt.

It is not possible for us to look back on a smooth and perfect history. But we tried to do something, and in doing so we overstepped many of the ruling powers' laws and the internalized boundaries of bourgeois society.

The RAF was not able to point out the path to liberation. But it contributed for two decades to the fact that there are still thoughts about liberation today. Putting the system

in question was and still is legitimate, as long as there is dominance and oppression instead of freedom, emancipation, and dignity for everyone in the world.

There are nine former militants from the struggle of the RAF still in prison. Although the struggle for liberation is far from over, this conflict has become part of history. We support all efforts which seek to get the prisoners from this conflict out of prison upright.

At this time, we'd like to greet and thank all of those who offered us solidarity on our path for the past 28 years, who supported us in various ways, and who struggled together with us in the ways that they could. The RAF was determined to contribute to the struggle for liberation. This revolutionary intervention in this country and in this history would never have taken place if many people, not organized in the RAF themselves, hadn't given a part of themselves to this struggle. A common path lies behind all of us. We hope that we will all find ourselves together again on the unknown and winding paths of liberation.

Our thoughts are with all those around the world who lost their lives in the struggle against domination and for liberation. The goals which they strived for are the goals of today and tomorrow - until all relations have been overturned in which a person is but a lowly object, a downcast, abandoned, and contemptuous being. It is sad that so many gave their lives, but their deaths were not in vain. They live on in the struggles and the future liberation.

We will never forget the comrades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) who lost their lives in the fall of 1977 in an act of internationalist solidarity, seeking to liberate the political prisoners. Today we would especially like to remember all those who chose to give their all to the armed struggle here, and who lost their lives.

Our memories and all our respect goes out to those whose names we do not know, because we never knew them, and to

Petra Schelm
Georg von Rauch
Thomas Weissbecker
Holger Meins
Katharina Hammerschmidt
Ulrich Wessel
Siegfried Hausner
Werner Sauber
Brigitte Kuhlmann
Wilfried Bose
Ulrike Meinhof
Jan-Carl Raspe
Gudrun Ensslin
Andreas Baader
Ingrid Schubert

Willi-Peter Stoll
Michael Knoll
Elisabeth van Dyck
Juliane Plambeck
Wolfgang Beer
Sigurd Debus
Johannes Timme
Jurgen Peemoeller
Ina Siepmann
Gerd Albartus
Wolfgang Grams

The revolution says:

I was
I am
I will be again

**Red Army Faction
March 1998**