

# Two Letters From Ulrike Meinhof To Hanna Krabbe<sup>1</sup>

## *First Letter: March 19<sup>th</sup> 1976*

What the politicians say is not what the people think, but what they need them to think - and when they say “us,” they are only trying out a sales pitch, trying to control what and how the people think.

But the State wouldn't need opinion polls, nor would it need constitutional guarantees, if indoctrination by psychological warfare was as simple as that.

As Gramsci<sup>2</sup> said, the legal country is not the real country; or more plainly stated, the dominant opinion is not the opinion of the dominated.

What you say is bullshit. You reason in the realm of the imaginary, as if the enemy is the ideology which he sputters, the sales pitch, the platitudes that they've drummed into you from their bag of tricks, with the politicians' tone of consensus, as if the media and the people whom they pour all this shit on are the same thing.

Not real, not *material*, the counter-insurgency machine constructed by the BKA<sup>3</sup>, BAW<sup>4</sup>, the Constitutional Council, the government, the media, the Secret Services, etc.

As if the enemy wasn't material, but ideal.

So you don't question the real situation which Brandt<sup>5</sup> qualifies as "normal" - and faced with Buback's<sup>6</sup> proposal, you don't notice that *he* has understood the character of the confrontation, the war and its international character, and that he speaks for internationalized US capital. You find this “absurd,” and instead of analyzing it, you find a single word - the CIA - which is a metaphor for the moral decay of Buback's policy - and it is gratuitous. But in so doing you expose yourself, because, in practice, you now

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<sup>1</sup> In May, 1976, Jan-Carl Raspe, a co-founder of the RAF, issued a statement saying that the Letters to Hanna Krabbe, who was a member of the Commando Holger Meins of the RAF (Holger Meins was a co-founder of the RAF, who died on hunger strike in November 1974), the Commando that seized the German Embassy in Stockholm Sweden in April 1955 demanding the release of 26 German political prisoners, Ulrike Meinhof's Last Letter, and Fragment Regarding Structure should only be printed as a unit. We have respected this wish. Ulrike Meinhof was a co-founder of the RAF, and the author of all three.

<sup>2</sup> Antonio Gramsci - Italian Socialist, founder of the Italian Communist Party in 1921, arrested in 1926 and sentenced to twenty years in prison - because of ill health, he was released after ten years and died a few days later, on 27 April 1937.

<sup>3</sup> BKA - German equivalent of the FBI.

<sup>4</sup> BAW - Federal Prosecutors Office.

<sup>5</sup> Willy Brandt - leading figure in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and head of the Second International.

<sup>6</sup> Siegfried Buback - Federal Attorney General.

deplore the fact that this is war, *after* you have clearly stood on our side in this war and begun to struggle.

Your text resembles that of the legal American civil rights movement.

Which begs the question, if that is how you see things, why are you here and not there?

But you are here.

The internationalism for which you have struggled is completely different from that of international organizations like the United Nations, or the Geneva Convention; it is the internationalism of liberation movements in the Third World and in the metropolises.

*War* - that is everything. You won't find your bearings if your point of reference is gossip, but *only* from studying the facts, and in the light of class struggle.

If in isolation you are no longer able to pursue and face *reality*, by understanding its material basis in light of the struggle - the class struggle taken up as war - it is because you've lost touch, you're coming apart, you are sick, which means you are starting to have a distorted relationship with reality. That is treason, this capitulation in the face of torture and the effort which resistance demands if it is to be more than just a word.

It is not acceptable; in isolation you can't permit yourself, on top of everything else, to torture yourself. Which, as Andreas<sup>7</sup> has said, doesn't mean that certain experiences must not be endured in the process of liberation from alienation. But to be destroyed because of an understanding of the politics, the facts and how they relate to each other, as well as an understanding of the group, and for choosing to act - that is one thing. It is quite another to be destroyed because isolation strips you of all illusions about yourself, which can be very hard.

And if it is a case of your propensity to act being based on socialization by agony and despair, then struggle on the basis of that.

One day you will have to understand - I don't know - that we can only achieve something with words if they accurately describe the situation in which each of us finds ourselves under imperialism, that it is absurd to want to fight with words, when *only* clarity, only the truth can fight.

Given where we are struggling - the post-fascist State with its civilization of consumption, metropolitan chauvinism, media manipulation of the masses, psychological warfare tactics, Social Democracy - and faced with the repression that confronts us here, indignation is not a weapon; it is shortsighted and completely unproductive. Whoever is truly indignant, who is truly concerned and mobilized, does not scream, but instead reflects on what can be done.

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<sup>7</sup> Andreas Baader - founding member of the RAF.

That's the SPK<sup>8</sup>; replacing the struggle with screams. It is not only annoying, it leaves you to die in isolation, because you only oppose brutal material oppression with ideology, instead of opposing it with an intellectual effort, which also means a physical effort.

Arm the masses - again, above all, it is capital that is doing this; the cops, the army and the extreme-right. So before you talk about the masses in the FRG, or about “the masses” at all, reflect carefully on what is going on here. Ho Chi Minh<sup>9</sup> wrote in *l'Humanité*<sup>10</sup>, in 1922, “The masses are fundamentally ready for rebellion, but completely ignorant. They want to liberate themselves, but they don't know where to start.”

That is not our situation.

In our situation here, we must figure out how to communicate the at times horrible experiences that we have had in isolation and which have led to treason, capitulation, self-destruction and de-politicization, so that you do not repeat them. For if it is true that in the guerrilla each individual can learn from every other individual, then a way must be found to transmit information about our experiences and about the places where people are institutionalized, and with which they are in a completely antagonistic relationship - the only condition which will allow us to develop a collective process of understanding.

Taking collectivity as a process means struggling together against the system, which is very real and not at all imaginary.

## ***Second Letter: March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1976***

It's bullshit, this “psychiatric” section.

Life at Ossendorf<sup>11</sup>, like everywhere else, is annihilation, and the psychiatrists participate; the methods applied by the Council for State Security are all formulated by psychiatrists. Psychiatry, like imperialist science in general, is a means and not an end.

Psychiatric treatment is a front in the terrain of psychological warfare; it attempts to persuade broken fighters of the absurdity of revolutionary politics, to deprive the fighters of their convictions. It is also a police tactic meant to deprive the fighters - by destruction - of a possible “liberation by force,” as Buback calls it, and of their military interests, that is recruitment.

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<sup>8</sup> SPK - Socialist Patients Collective, a therapy collective that identified capitalism as the source of mental illness. Some core members went on to become members in the RAF.

<sup>9</sup> Ho Chi Minh - leading figure in the Vietnamese Communist Party.

<sup>10</sup> *L'Humanité*. - theoretical journal of the French Communist Party.

<sup>11</sup> Ossendorf - the prison at Cologne-Ossendorf.

What Bückner<sup>12</sup> does isn't psychiatric treatment; it's terror. He wants to push you past the limit. With notions of therapy, attempts at brainwashing, you are absolutely twisted; you must place a buffer there or else the attack becomes a frontal assault.

The Ossendorf method is the typical prison method, but at Ossendorf it has been perfected, with a particular use for punishment personified by Bückner and Lodt<sup>13</sup>. It is aseptic, total. They deprive the prisoner of air until he finally loses his dignity, all consciousness of himself and the sense of what terror is. The idea is annihilation. Psychiatric treatment is only a moment, only one instrument among others. If you allow yourself to be paralyzed by it, like a deer in the headlights, you can no longer struggle against that which accompanies it.

“No windows,” of course. But there is even worse beyond that; the loss of all clarity as a result of isolation, the sadism with which it is calculated, the perfection of its application, the desire for complete annihilation in the security wing, the shock before the intensity of the antagonism which we have chosen to struggle against, the shock when you understand that fascism effectively rules here, which is not just something we say, but an accurate description of the kind of repression which hits you when you start to carry out revolutionary politics in this country.

They cannot use psychiatry on someone who doesn't accept or want it. Your shrieks about psychiatry mystify the realities of isolation. It works. It must be struggled against, and, naturally, you must confront Bückner's chicanery.

So demand the end to acoustic control; accept *only* control surveillance, as in Stammheim<sup>14</sup>.

Naturally, it was also a struggle here to get rid of the cop who came to *listen* to us, to be allowed to sit on the ground, etc. For you, *only* repression exists, and it is clearly having the desired effect.

Also, you are a pig. It's nonsense that you take the slogan “association” and the line “prisoners of war” out of your toolbox, as if they are a threat against Müller<sup>15</sup>. We must have association and the application of the Geneva Convention<sup>16</sup>, but what do you expect from Müller?

We struggle against them; this struggle never ends. And it isn't *them* that provide us with the conditions of struggle. Obviously, if you only reason on the level of bourgeois

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<sup>12</sup> Georg Bückner - warden of Ossendorf prison.

<sup>13</sup> Lodt - Inspector of Security at Ossendorf prison.

<sup>14</sup> Stammheim - high security prison used to house leading RAF prisoners. A court was built into the structure as a security measure.

<sup>15</sup> Herman-Josef Müller - head judge in trial of the Commando Holger Meins.

<sup>16</sup> Geneva Convention - the Convention guarantees minimum conditions for Prisoners of War. The RAF demanded POW status as fighters in the international anti-imperialist struggle.

morality, you will soon be out of ammunition. It's idiotic. So, take care of yourself, because nobody else can do it for you in isolation.

Not even Bernd [19]<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Bernd Rossner - member of the Commando Holger Meins.