

The Urban Guerilla Concept by Ulrike Meinhof

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“A clear dividing line must be drawn between ourselves and the enemy.” (Mao)

It is actually good when the enemy fights us – not bad: In my opinion, whether as individuals, political parties, soldiers, or as students it is a bad sign if the enemy has not already formed a front against us. It shows that we are hidden under the same cover as them. There is nothing wrong when the enemy attacks us, it is proof that a clear distinction has been made between ourselves and the enemy. It is much better having an enemy that confronts us, devalues us or attempts to paint us in the darkest possible colours. It is proof that a clear dividing line has been drawn with the enemy – in fact it shows that our struggle is scoring splendid results already.

-- Mao Tse Tung, May 26th 1939

I. Concrete Answers to Concrete Questions

“I would emphasise the point that anyone who is not prepared to conduct a proper investigation loses any right to discuss the matter.” (Mao)

Some comrades have made up their minds about us already. Their false and denunciatory use of the term ‘anarchism’ shows that they are no different than the Springer press. We are not going to be dragged down to this miserable level of discussion with anyone.

Many comrades want to know what we’re up to. The letter to 883 from May ’70 was too vague. The tapes from Michele Ray were not authentic, they were just some private discussions that were taken out of context. Ray used the tapes in order to write her own article – in the process, she either tricked us or we simply over-estimated her. If our political practice was in any way as hasty and rash as she describes – the cops would have got us by now. *Der Spiegel* paid Ray a fee of \$1000.

Virtually all the stuff written about us in the newspapers are lies – that’s clear. Apparent plans to kidnap Willy Brandt make us look like political buffoons, underhand methods are used to try and connect us with planning a child-kidnapping. Printing these lies even extends to *Konkret* where the so-called ‘reliable details’ about us turned out to be just trivial anecdotes, pasted together for the purpose of publishing anything. Claims that we have ‘officers and soldiers’, or ‘a strict hierarchy’, that we talk of someone being ‘liquidated’, that comrades have been ‘threatened’, that we have forced entry into flats or obtained passports at gunpoint, or that we are in the grip of some kind of ‘group terror’ – this is all a load of crap.

Whoever imagines that the organisation of an illegal armed resistance can be based on medieval forms of justice like the Volunteer Corps or right-wing militias, is intent on initiating their own pogrom. The psychological mechanisms that produce these sort of subjective projections and their

connection to fascism were analysed by Adorno in *The Authoritarian Personality* and by Reich in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. The very notion of a revolutionary possessing a ‘compulsive personality’ is a *contradictio in adjecto* – a contradiction in terms. In the current, or for that matter any circumstances, engaging in revolutionary activities must involve the permanent integration of an individual’s character with his own political motivation – *this is political identity*. All those Marxist critiques, self-criticisms etc. have little to do with ‘self-liberation’ – *whereas revolutionary discipline does*. It certainly wasn’t some ‘left-wing groups’ who were trying to ‘grab the headlines’, but *Konkret* itself, whose editor is currently promoting himself as some sort of Eduard Zimmermann in the hope that his rag can profit from some market niche. Many other comrades are spreading lies about us that we stayed overnight with them, or that they were involved in the organisation of our trip to the Middle East, some think they have ‘inside’ contacts, they claim to have done things for us – even though they did nothing. A few comrades want to try and portray themselves as being ‘in’. Just like Günter Voigt, who claimed to Dürrenmatt that he was involved in the operation to free Baader. He probably regretted doing this when the cops came after him and his subsequent attempt to issue a denial did not prove very straightforward. With all this kind of stuff, they want to portray us as being stupid, untrustworthy, clumsy, or even crazy. They are attempting to set others up against us. They are just a bunch of hangers-on. We want nothing to do with these wind-bags for whom the anti-imperialist struggle only takes place in coffee houses. There are many others who feel differently – like those not engaged in such political chit-chat; those who actually know the meaning of resistance; those for whom the system stinks enough already and who are willing to give us a chance. The basis for their support is that the whole crap around us just isn’t worth living a life of subservience to the system.

They didn’t find out about the safe-house at 89 Kneesebeck Street (Mahler’s arrest) due to any shoddiness on our part, that was betrayal – the informer came from one of us. The nature of our activities means that there’s no protection from that sort. By contrast, other comrades are being beaten up by the cops for not putting up with the terror of the system anymore, they put up a fight. The pigs themselves wouldn’t be so powerful if it wasn’t for the resources made available to them by the State.

Some have fallen into an insufferable trap of self-justification. They are intent on distorting the truth in order to avoid entering into a political debate with us, a debate that would force them to examine their own political activism and compare it to ours. For example – it has been claimed that Baader had just a few months remaining of his sentence when we managed to free him. The facts state otherwise and are freely available: he had three years for arson, a six month suspended sentence still outstanding, another six months for forging documents, and another trial was also in the offing. From the overall total of 48 months, Andreas Baader had sat only 14 months, in ten different jails, getting nine transfers for ‘bad behaviour’ i.e. organising prison revolts and resistance. The circulation of deliberately wrong calculations which reduced his outstanding sentence to three, nine or twelve months was done in order to weaken the moral justification for launching the operation on May 14th. This is an example of how some comrades attempt to rationalise away the fears they have for the personal consequences of entering into political argument with us.

The question of whether Andreas’s escape operation would have gone ahead if we had known already that Linke was going to get shot – and it has been asked of us often enough – we can only answer with a ‘no’. However the question ‘what would have happened if’ is too ambiguous – it is pacifist, platonic, moralistic and politically neutral. Anyone with serious intentions of carrying out

an operation like that doesn't ask such questions – *they look instead for answers*. Comrades who are posing this type of question are wondering if we are as 'brutalised' as the tabloids are saying, our whole 'creed' is being brought into question. They try to circumvent the issue of revolutionary violence by lumping revolutionary violence and bourgeois morals together – *which is impossible*. All possible outcomes were considered when we planned Andreas's escape. There was no reason to expect that a civilian could, or would, get himself in the way. As for the idea of not using weapons when executing such a prison escape, that's just suicidal.

The cops fired the first shots on May 14th, just as they previously did in Frankfurt, when two of us managed to escape arrest. The cops always shoot first and ask questions later. We hadn't shot anyone until now – neither in Berlin nor in Nürnberg nor in Frankfurt. This can be proven by anyone. Nor are we in the business of 'recklessly using our weapons'. As for the cop, living the contradiction of being a 'little man' and a capitalist slave, he earns his low income for protecting monopoly capitalism. These guys don't have to obey orders. If we get shot at we'll return fire – but we won't shoot at the cops that let us get away.

The claim that the huge manhunt for us that is currently being staged in the Federal Republic and West Berlin is also being directed at the entire socialist left, is a correct one. Neither the paltry sums of money, the few cars, nor the documents we are supposed to have stolen, not even the attempted murder charge they are trying to pin on us – *none of this justifies such an elaborate circus*.

The ruling establishment is rattled, it is in a state of shock. They made the mistake of thinking that the State, with all its inherent contradictions, was still firmly under their control. Intellectuals were reduced to writing articles in journals, it looked like Marxist-Leninism had surrendered, the demoralisation of internationalism had taken place.

We believe that this is the right moment, that it is possible and that it is justified to organise armed resistance groups in the Federal Republic and West Berlin. We believe that the armed struggle as the "highest form of Marxist-Leninism" (Mao) can commence, and that without it, no effective anti-imperialist struggle can take place in the metropole.

We are not asserting that illegal groups of armed resistance are going to replace the existing network of legal and active proletarian groups and other independent examples of class struggle. Nor do we expect the armed struggle to replace political mobilisation taking place in work places or elsewhere. *But we do maintain that a pre-requisite for progress and an eventual victory of revolutionary forces is the armed struggle*. We are neither Blanquists nor are we anarchists – although we do consider Blanqui to have been a great revolutionary and the personal heroism of many individual anarchists is something that we aspire to.

We have been active now for under 12 months, much too short a time to start speaking of 'results'. However the huge attention being lavished on us by Messrs. Genscher, Zimmermann & Co has given us the opportunity to mull a few things over, even at such an early stage.

"If you want to know what communists are thinking – look at their hands, not their mouths" – said Lenin.

II. The Federal Republic – The Metropole

The current systemic crisis has its origins in the nature of the system itself, not just its mechanics. Resulting from the all-consuming goal of profits, the capitalist system has become ever more parasitic and exploitative. The disintegration of social life has accelerated due to entire sections of society becoming disadvantaged and having needs that the State can no longer cater for. It is only possible to stem the unquiet and dissent arising from this situation by manipulating the media and imposing State repression on a massive scale. The political crisis caused by the student rebellion and the Black Power movement in America; the spreading unrest resulting from student protests in Europe; the resurgence of a workers' and peoples' struggle with a new and radical agenda – culminating in the explosion of May '68 in France; the deep crisis in Italian society and the resumption of discontent in Germany – all this is indicative of the current situation.

IL Manifesto: *The Necessity of Communism*, from Thesis 33

Our comrades from IL Manifesto are quite correct in describing the situation in Germany with the vague term, 'discontent'. Six years ago Barzel described the Federal Republic as an 'economic giant but a political dwarf'. Since then the economy has remained robust but the Federal Republic is no longer a 'political dwarf', it is now both externally and internally in a politically stronger position. The prospect of a political crisis resulting from an imminent economic recession was pre-empted by the formation of a Grand Coalition in 1966. The Emergency Laws, pushed through by this coalition, proved a valuable tool in subsequent 'crisis-management' situations. These laws arose out of an alliance between reactionary forces and all those liberals who find it convenient to support 'legal' methods of repression. The coalition was formed to absorb the 'discontent' simmering in the student movement and the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition. In the SDP [Social Democratic Party of Germany], the reformist line was re-packaged as the alternative to communism, thereby taking the steam out of the anti-capitalist camp within the party. The Federal Republic's *Ostpolitik* didn't only open up some new capital markets, it was also Germany's contribution to the reconciliation and alliance between U.S. imperialism and the Soviet Union. This geo-political strategy was essential to the Americans in order to pursue their aggressive wars in the Third World. The government here has also managed to split the Left by separating the 'New Left' from old guard 'anti-fascists', thereby isolating the New Left from the worker's movement. The DKP [German Communist Party], can put their re-instatement down to this new accommodation between U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism. The DKP even organised demonstrations to support the government's *Ostpolitik* and Niemöller a symbolic figure of anti-fascism, has already been canvassing SPD support for the coming election.

Under a pretext of acting on behalf of 'the common good', the State and the trade unions joined together and introduced a concerted policy of wage limits. The September strikes proved that these policies had gone too far in serving the interests of profit. However the exclusively economic content of the strikers' aims still shows how firmly the State can keep things under control.

The strength of today's system is evident in how workers can be disciplined and terrorised by holding up the spectre of cheap foreign labour, the threat of unemployment and the constant fear of recession. All this happens without the necessity of resorting to the right-wing militias of the past and reduces the prospect of any further radicalisation of the masses.

The Federal Republic's indirect financial and military support of American wars of aggression enable it to profit from the exploitation of the Third World without taking any direct responsibility for these war crimes. It also helps in taking on a detached role when dealing with its own internal opposition to war.

The political opportunities that are open to imperialism, whether of the reformist or fascist variety, have not yet been exhausted. Capitalism has not lost the ability to repress or integrate its own self-generated contradictions. *The Red Army Faction's Urban Guerilla Concept is not based on an optimistic view of the prevailing circumstances in the Federal Republic and West Berlin.*

III. Student Revolt

By recognising the globalised nature of the ruling capitalist system, it is now impossible to separate the potential for revolution in the 'strongholds of capitalism' in the West and its viability in the more 'backward regions'. Without the rekindling of revolutionary forces in the West, imperialism (which has its own logical system of violence) will be forced to find its way by means of a catastrophic war or else the superpowers will enforce an overwhelming system of repression.

IL Manifesto from Thesis 52

To dismiss the student movement as just some kind of petit-bourgeois revolt is to reduce it to the self-exaggerated slogans that have accompanied it. It means a denial of the fact that the movement originated in the already existing contradictions inherent in bourgeois society and ideology. To just focus on the shortcomings of the student movement is to ignore the theoretical level that has already been achieved in its anti-capitalist critique.

There was undoubtedly some element of pathos when students identified themselves with the exploited people in Latin America, Africa and Asia just after becoming aware of the psychologically damaging conditions in academic institutions. It was also a gross oversimplification to compare the mass circulation of the *Bild Zeitung* with the mass bombardment of North Vietnam. It was arrogant to compare the armed struggle going on over there with ideological criticism of the system over here. And the belief that students are the sort of revolutionary force as propagated by Marcuse proved a philistine one when you take the actual relations of production in bourgeois society into account.

Nevertheless, the student movement in the Federal Republic and West Berlin can be credited with the street fights, the arson attacks, the counter-violence, its own pathos, even the exaggerations or naivety. *In short, it should be acknowledged for its practice.* At least the students managed to plant the political theories of Marxist-Leninism back into the minds of the intelligensia – the most important theory being that without taking political, economic and ideological factors into consideration one will not have an adequate description of the internal and external contradictions within capitalist society.

Students have had direct experience of the contradictions between the ideal of academic freedom and the reality of monopoly capitalism's grip on universities. As a result their initiation into political activism was not only an ideological process, in fact the movement didn't lose momentum until (at least theoretically) a connection was made between the crisis in the universities and the

systemic crisis caused by capitalism. It became clear to the students and their public that our 'democracy' is not about 'equality, freedom and fraternity', nor human rights; nor about the United Nations Charter. It is what the exploited peoples of Latin America, Africa and Asia know already – imperialism and colonialism. For the oppressed, for those who take sides, for those who resist, for those who take part in the anti-imperialist struggle – they will suffer a State-imposed system of discipline, subordination and brutality.

Almost all aspects and manifestations of this imperialist oppression were captured in the ideological criticisms made by the student movement and in their political activism. It was evident in the *Springer* campaign, in the demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, in the campaigns against class injustice, in the campaign against the re-militarisation of the German Army, the fight against the Emergency Laws, and in the mobilisation of students in schools and colleges... Expropriate Springer! Smash NATO! Fight Consumer Terror! Fight Authoritarianism! Fight For Tenants Rights! – all these slogans were correct. They were aimed at the self-generated contradictions of contemporary capitalism latent in the consciousness of all oppressed people. On the one side are the new material needs and the new means of fulfilling those needs, while on the other side is the irrational subordination expected of every individual within the capitalist class system.

The self-confidence of the student movement did not come from the class struggle but from the realisation of being part of an international movement in which we are being confronted with exactly the same enemy here as the Vietcong confronts over there – *the same paper tigers, the same pigs....*

The student movement has also managed to distance itself from the provincial isolationism of the Old Left's 'People's Front' strategy, which included such things as the Easter marches; the German Peace Union; the Old Left's media organ, the *Deutsche Zeitung*, which raised false hopes of a landslide victory in the 1970 election; the Old Left's fixation on parliamentarians like Strauß on one side and Heinemann on the other; their vacillation over the GDR [East German] question; their isolation, resignation and moral hypocrisy. In short, their willingness to sacrifice their principles and their inept political practice. Despite a few theoretical shortcomings, the student movement has gained confidence with the correct assertion that: "The revolutionary initiative now taking place in the West is derived from new forms of resistance that are reaching maturity in many countries – resulting from a crisis in the world system." (IL Manifesto, Thesis 55) Students adapted their political agitation to the new political circumstances in Germany – that any national struggle has to take on an international perspective; that stability can only be attained by linking national and international agendas; and that conventional forms of struggle must be connected to the newly forming international revolutionary initiatives. The student movement turned their own weaknesses into strengths, by realising that only this strategy could prevent trudging down the Old Left's familiar road of renewed resignation, provincial isolationism and reformism – which was the reality of socialist politics in the Federal Republic both before and after Nazism.

By the 1960s, the New Left was aware that it was right to combine mobilisation in the workplace with the tactic of disrupting circulation of the *Bild Zeitung*; that it was right to hand out leaflets to GIs calling on them to desert in the face of the horrific U.S. bombing campaign in North Vietnam; that it was right to combine the campaign against re-militarisation with attacks on NATO bases; that it was right to condemn class justice while bombing prison walls; that it was right to criticise *Springer Verlag* as well as disarming their gang of security guards; it was also right to set up a radio

stations, to demoralise the police, to accommodate deserters in safe houses, to forge documents for foreign workers and to sabotage those companies involved in the production of napalm.

It was *wrong*, however, to make the production of Leftist propaganda dependent on commercial factors such as having no newspapers that workers could not properly finance; no car seemed to be unaffordable to the ‘movement’; every progressive radio station needed the ‘proper’ license; sabotage was deemed a waste of time because capitalism wasn’t collapsing quickly enough!

The student movement began to disintegrate when a typically student type of bourgeois structure – the “anti-authoritarian camp” – proved a thoroughly unsuitable vehicle for developing theoretical aims into feasible political practice. The spontaneous nature of this camp was thoroughly inappropriate for the factory floor, for socialist mass-organisations or for the development of an Urban Guerilla group. Disintegration came about because unlike in Italy or France, the German student movement did not act as a spark that would then ignite broader class conflict. It was only able to formulate an agenda of anti-imperialist struggle but couldn’t accomplish the next task of transforming itself into a revolutionary force.

The Red Army Faction, in contrast to the so-called ‘proletarian groups’ of the New Left, is not in denial of its own roots in the student movement. It has moved on and reconstructed Marxist-Leninism in an international context – as a weapon in support of the revolutionary struggle in the metropole.

IV. The Primacy of Political Practice

If you want to know a certain thing or a certain class of things directly, you must personally participate in the practical struggle to change reality, to change that thing or class of things, for only thus can you come into contact with them as phenomena; only through personal participation in the practical struggle to change reality can you uncover the essence of that thing or class of things and comprehend them.

Marxism emphasizes the importance of theory precisely and only because it can guide action. If we have a correct theory but merely prate about it, pigeonhole it and do not put it into practice, then that theory, however good, is of no significance.

Mao Tse Tung: *On Practice*

While still authority figures within the student movement some radicals turned towards a more academic study of socialism, coming to the conclusion that any critique of the political economy entailed a self-criticism of the student movement itself – this coincided with students retreating from the streets and returning to the safety of their classrooms. Judging by these ‘scholarly’ works – with their organisational models and complicated declarations – you are led to believe that these revolutionary ‘leaders’ are in the midst of a tumultuous class struggle, it is as if 1967-68 was for the Left in Germany like 1905 was in Russia. When Lenin wrote *What Is To Be Done?* in 1903, he gave prominence to some theoretical requirements for Russian workers, spelling out the necessity of class analysis, organisation and propaganda to both anarchist and social revolutionaries. For Lenin, the class struggle amongst the masses had already started: “The working classes are shaken by the wretchedness of life in Russia. What we have not figured out, as yet, is a way of collecting every drop and trickle of this resentment and concentrate this huge resource of Russian society into what

we believe and visualize, then unite it, and turn it into a massive torrent.” (Lenin: *What Is To Be Done?*)

We are questioning, in the present circumstances, whether it is going to be feasible to develop a strategy for unifying the working class in the Federal Republic and West Berlin. We question whether an organisational form is possible that can both express and initiate the necessary steps towards this unification process. We question whether the goal of *welding* the socialist intelligentsia to the working class can be achieved simply by making programmatic statements with a supposed intention of mobilising the proletariat to revolution. In fact, the only group up to now that has succeeded in collecting “every drop and trickle” of the wretchedness of life in Germany has been the Springer Corporation. They then managed to compound this misery even more.

We are maintaining that without a revolutionary initiative; without the practical revolutionary intervention of the vanguard; without a coalition of workers and intellectuals; without any real anti-imperialist struggle – that the unification of revolutionary forces will prove impossible. All this can only be achieved through the collective action of workers and intellectuals – both participating in the mass struggle together.

When reading the texts of various left-wing organisations, we discovered that their activism is in reality a trivial competition between intellectuals, judged by an imaginary jury, which by definition contains no ordinary workers on it because of the complicated jargon they use. The winner is whoever manages the smartest interpretation of Karl Marx. For such people the embarrassment of being caught out quoting Marx incorrectly is far worse than the hypocrisy of their own political activism. Their page footnotes are more accurate than the membership numbers they give for their organisations. They fear the charge of ‘revolutionary impatience’ much more than being corrupted through the nature of their bourgeois jobs. They devote time to do a long thesis on Lukacz, but are wary of being inspired too quickly into activism by Blanqui. Their internationalism consists of point-scoring various Palestinian commando groups. Acting as the advocates of ‘true’ Marxism – they beg money from rich friends in the name of the Black Panthers. The money they get is used to ease their guilty consciences, this being more on their minds than any “Victory in the People’s War” – *this is not a revolutionary intervention*.

Mao’s *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* (1926) sets out the parameters of the revolutionary struggle and the counter-revolutionary fight: “the red banner of revolution [is] held aloft by the Third International as the rallying point for all the oppressed classes of the world, the other is the white banner of counterrevolution held aloft by the League of Nations as the rallying point for all the counter-revolutionaries of the world.”

Mao does not restrict himself here to just a purely economic class analysis of Chinese society, he differentiates between classes also according to which banner they are flying to bring the revolution forward. The crucial aspect of this analysis is the *attitude* of different classes to the revolution itself.

Marxist-Leninists will have no leading role in the class struggle if the vanguard does not fly high the banner of proletarian internationalism. The vanguard must answer some questions: How to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat? How political power for the proletariat can be achieved? And how can the political power of the bourgeoisie be broken? The vanguard cannot answer these questions due to its lack of political practice. *The class analysis that we need is impossible without*

revolutionary practice, without a revolutionary initiative.

Workers' groups up and down the country have formulated their "revolutionary interim demands" – such as fighting exploitation; getting shorter working hours; no more wasting public funds; equal pay for men, women and foreign workers; the campaign against piece-work laws etc. These demands remain nothing but narrow economic trade unionism as long as the obstacles preventing their fulfilment are not properly dealt with – the main obstacle being the unresolved question of how to dismantle the military, political and propaganda power structures. Such 'revolutionary interim demands' are rubbish if they remain as just economic demands. No victorious revolutionary struggle is worth attempting without the belief that: "Victory means to accept the principle that life itself is the greatest thing for a revolutionary." (Debray) These workers' demands are only a trade unionist intervention: "The trade unionist politics of the working class is, in fact, the bourgeois politics of the working class." (Lenin) They are not a method of revolutionary intervention.

These so-called workers' organisations were conveniently silent on the question of using armed resistance as a response to the Emergency Laws; the re-militarisation of the army; the actions of the border police and riot police; Springer Press lies etc. Only the DKP [German Communist Party] was once different in this respect, when it was less institutionalized, had more radical slogans and a substantial theoretical basis. On a practical level, these workers' groups are more like civil rights campaigners – seeking popularity at any price and deluding themselves with the bourgeois illusion that you can build a fair system through parliamentary democracy. It is barbaric of them to encourage a workers' struggle in the face of an overwhelming and violent State security apparatus. Debray wrote about Latin American communists: "All these Marxist-Leninist parties or factions are asking the same technical questions about how they are being ruled by the bourgeoisie. By doing this they encourage the bourgeoisie to hold on to power even more."

For the first time in their lives, thousands of young people at work, or elsewhere, challenged exploitation in the work place after they became politicised by the student movement. These people are not being offered anything with the proposal that they must first *adapt* to capitalist exploitation. The effect of radical groups accepting the system is that they themselves become like prison governors on the subject of youth crime; or like judges on the subject of prison sentencing; or like social workers when talk turns to underground resistance.

Without political practice, Marx's *Kapital* is just another bourgeois text. Without political practice, making programmatic statements is just twaddle. Without political practice, proletarian internationalism remains just bragging. Accepting the theoretical basis for the proletarian revolution means accepting its practice.

The Red Army Faction is about the primacy of political practice. Whether it is right to organize armed resistance at this moment is dependent on whether it is possible – and it can only be made possible by actually doing it.

V. The Urban Guerilla

Imperialism and all reactionaries, looked at in essence, from a long-term point of view, from a strategic point of view, must be seen for what they are — paper tigers. On this we should build our strategic thinking.

If the paper tiger of American imperialism can eventually be defeated. If the tactics of the Chinese Communists are correct that the victory over American imperialism will be achieved through fighting imperialist forces everywhere, splitting them up, and then defeating these forces separately. If these assertions are correct, then there is absolutely no reason to rule out or disregard any region or country from the anti-imperialist struggle. This is also the case when revolutionary forces are particularly weak or the reactionary forces are particularly strong in those regions or countries.

It is mistaken to discourage revolutionary forces by underestimating them. It is also mistaken to fuel disputes between them that could eventually lead to their destruction. There is an undoubted tension between the Red Army Faction and some of our sincere comrades (we'll leave out the windbags for now) who are currently active in political organisations. On the one hand we are accusing you of discouraging revolutionary forces – on the other hand you are accusing us of needlessly whipping them up. There is a tendency for factionalism in work-places and communities to have gone too far between some active comrades and the Red Army Faction. Dogmatism and adventurism are characteristic deviations in the weaker phases of the revolution. As for the anarchist reproach that we are 'opportunists' – that's old hat – they have always criticised 'opportunism', it is nothing new.

The Urban Guerilla Concept comes from Latin America. The situation there is the same as here – a revolutionary intervention coming from relatively weak revolutionary forces.

The Urban Guerilla is not waiting for the Prussian-type marching orders that some so-called revolutionaries are holding out for in order to lead the people's struggle. When the time comes, the Urban Guerilla is completely ready for the armed struggle. He assumes that in a country like the Federal Republic, with a weak revolutionary tradition and massive potential for State violence, that revolutionary intervention is a *necessity*. The Urban Guerilla assumes that the conditions for revolution have never been better than at present – due to the economic and political circumstances prevalent in late-capitalism.

In this context the Urban Guerilla can be seen as a logical consequence of the long tradition of the negation of parliamentary democracy by its own representatives. The Urban Guerilla is the unavoidable response to the emergency and hand-grenade laws; to the readiness of the system to use all means necessary to liquidate its adversaries. The Urban Guerilla Concept is based on an acknowledgement of these facts rather than trying to apologise for them.

The student movement had at least a partial experience already of Guerilla tactics when they translated some of the Left's usual tactics – agitation and propaganda – into more concrete forms. This could be seen in the Springer campaign or by the Carbor-Bassa campaign carried out by Heidelberg students†. It was also evident in campaigning against the military aid given to the comprador regimes by the Federal Republic. Guerilla tactics were also used in respect to exposing the court system, fighting class justice and achieving justice on the factory floor and other work-places. The Urban Guerilla turns all the talk about internationalism into the practical procurement of money and weapons. He renders the State tactic of banning communists irrelevant by organising an underground that is impossible for the police to penetrate. The Urban Guerilla is a weapon of the class struggle.

The Urban Guerilla Concept should be seen as an armed struggle taking place in the light of police shoot-to-kill methods and the class justice that managed to free Kurras. The system would bury our comrades alive if we didn't stop it. We will not be demoralised by the violence of the system.

The Red Army Faction intends to temporarily put specific parts of the State's government and security apparatus out of action. This will destroy the myth of the overwhelming nature and invincibility of the system.

The Urban Guerilla Concept entails setting up an illegal organisation – involving safe houses, weapons, ammunition, cars, documents etc. Marighella's *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla* already sets out what needs to be done. We will provide additional information to anyone who needs it for the armed struggle. We might not know everything – but we have learnt some lessons already.

Before embarking on armed struggle it is important to gather appropriate political experience. If your attachment to the revolutionary Left has been of a more fashionable nature – then your involvement should only extend to a point where you can still turn back.

The Red Army Faction, by fusing the *faction* with political practice, have drawn a clear dividing line with the enemy. As a result, we will be the ones who will be most fiercely opposed by the State. This already assumes the attainment of political identity and also the fact that we have learnt some important lessons already.

Our original organisational concept involved linking the Red Army Faction with existing grassroots activists. We envisaged participating in existing socialist groups – we would work with them, influence debates, gather experience, learn some lessons. However, it soon became obvious that this wouldn't work. Infiltration by the security services and their knowledge of meetings, agendas and plans, had reached a point that you were prevented from talking freely. You cannot combine legal political activism with an illegal political practice.

Being an Urban Guerilla requires a clear set of motives: You have to make sure that you are unaffected by the tabloid attacks. That whole “anti-semitic/criminal/low-life/murderers/arsonists” syndrome which is used to attack revolutionaries, all that shit must not affect you operating as an Urban Guerilla.

The system will be prepared to use any means, however scandalous, in order to restrict our terrain and show its determination to oppose us.

No areas of public life are left which don't have, in some way or another, the main goal of serving the interests of capital. This also holds true for the Left, whose activities do not extend beyond their subscribers, their supporters, their internal organisation or their cadre. These activities play themselves out in the context of mostly private, coincidental, personal and bourgeois forms of communication. No publications escape the control of vested financial interests – through advertising; through ambitious journalists trying to make a name for themselves; through TV and radio; and through the concentration of media ownership. In the public domain a powerful elite has the dominant role. They divide and spread themselves around the market-place, filling in market gaps and distributing ideological content for specific audiences. The media's message in a nutshell is... *Sell*. Anything that can't sell is considered pukeworthy: News and information become

commodities for consumption and the most popular publications become commercially saturated. A ratings war ensues on television. All this is an attempt to avoid contradictions and antagonisms latent in public audiences, those contradictions that are highlighted are never of any real consequence. In order to achieve any position in the market you must attach yourself to huge media corporations, for example the dependency of smaller entities on the Springer Corporation grows in proportion to Springer's expansion – it has now started swallowing up local newspapers. An Urban Guerilla can expect absolutely nothing but bitter hostility from these institutions. An Urban Guerilla can only orient himself by means of self-criticism and Marxist critique – nothing else: “Whoever is not afraid of execution dares to tear the king down from his horse.” (Mao)

Formulating long-term strategies or just getting on with smaller tasks etc. are only applicable to the Urban Guerilla in the sense that he doesn't only talk about them – *he takes action*. This takes place without any possibility of a return to some bourgeois career. There is no return to making the revolution by pinning stuff on the notice-boards of terraced houses. There must be a desire, even with its inherent pathos, of what Blanqui formulated: “The duty of all revolutionaries is to fight, to carry on fighting, to fight to the death”. There were never any revolutionary struggles where this principle has not applied – Russia, China, Cuba, Algeria, Palestine, Vietnam.

Some people think that not all the possibilities have been exhausted for political work in the form of propaganda, mobilisation and agitation. They maintain that only when all these avenues are closed should we resort to armed struggle. Our reply: It is *never* going to be possible to fully exploit these political opportunities because the armed struggle is an integral part of the politicisation process. *The strategic identification that reactionaries are just paper tigers results from the tactical identification of them for what they really are: criminals, exploiters and murderers.*

We're not going to brag about the armed struggle – *we will do it*. Freeing Andreas Baader was not done for publicity purposes – we wanted to get our comrade out of prison. The bank robberies the cops are trying to pin on us – we only did them to get a bit of money. The “splendid successes” mentioned by Mao when “the enemy is painting you in the darkest possible colours” will occur when we start scoring results of our own. We are indebted to our Latin American comrades for our progress so far. They have already established a clear dividing line with the enemy. The government is worried that the same thing will happen over here as well. As a result they have stated that they will ‘vigorously stand up to us’ – all this when all that has happened is that we are suspected of a few bank robberies. The huge outcry about us leaves the impression that the Red Army Faction has already become fully operational!

VI. Legality and Illegality

The revolution in the West, the stronghold of capitalism, is of crucial concern. No region of the world today can achieve the transition to stability and democracy through peaceful means. The crisis is lurching towards its climax. To cut yourself off in parochialism or to postpone the struggle means being caught up in a vicious circle of ever-worsening decline.

IL Manifesto, from Thesis 55

The anarchist slogan: “Destroy What Has Destroyed You Already!” – is aimed at grassroots mobilisation – like the young people in care homes or borstal, in schools and colleges – it is directed at those worst off. It hopes for an immediate response and resonance by being a direct call

for resistance. Stokely Carmichael's call to "Trust your own experience" means what it says – it stems from the insight that all the oppression, torture and tensions caused by capitalism have their origins in the relations of production. Every oppressor, in whatever guise, represents class and capital interests. *In short, they are the class enemy.*

The anarchist slogan is right because it is proletarian and part of the class struggle. However it is wrong in planting the wrong message in peoples' heads that you just have to lash out or smack people in the face. As a result, organisation becomes of only secondary importance, discipline is perceived as 'bourgeois' and class analysis becomes irrelevant. Those taking this slogan at face value are left unprotected from the ferocious State response to their actions. They are abandoned because of not having prepared a functioning illegal and legal network. They get arrested. The words some communist groups are spouting like "communists are not stupid enough to choose the path of illegality" – just feed the jaws of class justice – no one else. The implication they are making that the legal avenues such as agitation, propaganda, organisation and political and economic struggle should not be discarded lightly is quite correct – *but that is not what they are actually saying.* They are saying that socialist politics only has room for manoeuvre within the boundaries of the prevailing system of class politics and class justice. They think that it is necessary to submit to the ever-increasing encroachment of the State and retreat from any confrontation in order to stay within the 'law'. In other words, it is legality at any price: Illegal arrests, draconian sentences, police raids, oppression and intimidation from State prosecutors. You either sink or swim.

This is just opportunism. It displays no solidarity. It writes off the comrades in prison. It halts the mobilisation and politicisation of all those people falling prey to criminality due to their upbringing and social environment – the sub-proletariat, the underground, working class youths, guest workers etc. It serves as a virtual criminalisation of those who don't happen to be members of various organisations. *It is an alliance with class justice.*

Legality is about power. The position of legality in relation to that of illegality is determined by the contradiction between reformist and fascist tendencies in government. The representatives in Bonn are currently a Social-Democratic/Liberal coalition on the one side and Barzel/Strauß on the other. Their media mouthpieces are the *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, the *Stern*, WDR3, SFB, and the *Frankfurter Rundschau* on one side and the *Sender Freies Berlin*, Springer Corporation, *Zweite Deutsche Fernsehen* and the *Bayerkurier* on the other. Their police forces follow one line in Munich and another one in Berlin. And finally there is the justice according to the Federal Administrative Court on one side and that of the Federal Supreme Court on the other.

The reformist political line is taken in order to avoid conflict by a process of institutionalisation; i.e. co-determination in the decision-making process. This is done by making reform promises of better prison conditions; or through clearing up historical baggage, like Brandt's gesticulation in Poland; or through avoiding provocation, like the 'soft-line' of the Munich police and the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin; or through a verbal recognition of failures in the system like the statements on the reformatory system in Hessen and Berlin. Conflicts are also avoided by the reformist tactic of moving both inside and outside the boundaries of the law – they manage to give the appearance of legitimisation by being armed with the Basic Law. By the use of this prop they can iron out the contradictions; left-wing critique just dries up; the Young Socialists within the SPD can be kept in check. Without question, the reformist line has been successful in securing the

long-term stability of the capitalist system – however there are strings attached. It is dependent on economic prosperity, e.g. the soft-line of the Munich police force is far more expensive than the hard-line tactics in Berlin. As the Munich police commissioner stated recently: “Two men with machine guns can hold 100 people in check, 100 men with truncheons can hold 100 people in check. Without any proper weaponry you need 300-400 men.” The reformist line does not expect an organised anti-capitalist opposition of the type that recently took place in Munich.

Disguised as political reformism, the monopolisation of State and corporate power continues unabated. What Schiller is doing with his economic policies and what Strauß has already achieved with his financial reforms is the intensification of exploitation through the division of labour, labour-intensive production and long-term measures of rationalisation in the administrative and service sectors.

We learned from the student movement and May '68 in Paris that the accumulation of power in the hands of a few works with less resistance when it is handled noiselessly and when they avoid unnecessary provocations which can produce instants of solidarity beyond their control. Therefore the Red Cells are not yet forbidden, therefore the KP can exist as the DKP without the ban on the KP being lifted, therefore there are still some liberal television programs, and therefore some organizations can afford to think that they are not as stupid as they are.

The legal leeway offered by reformism is the capitalist response to the attacks from the APO and the student movement. As long as it is still possible to use reformist measures to answer these challenges, they will be more effective than brute force. By the Left relying on this ‘legal’ framework – by putting trust in it, by craving for it, by underpinning it with statistical forecasts and by constantly defending it – this entails repeating the failed strategy of the ‘self-defence zones’ in Latin America. In other words, this defence of the State means you have learnt nothing – it gives valuable time to the forces of reaction to re-group and re-organise. *Reactionaries don't need to ban the Left... they can smash it.*

Willy Weyer was hardly towing a tolerant line when recently criticised by liberals for his policy of breathalyser controls, making all car drivers potential criminals. His impudent reply “we’ll carry on” displays the meaninglessness of the so-called liberal consensus. Meanwhile, Eduard Zimmermann is trying to turn the whole population into policemen. The Springer Corporation has taken on the role of controlling the police leadership in Berlin. And the *BZ* journalist, Reer, is doing the job of writing arrest warrants for magistrates in Berlin in his newspaper column. All the fascist-type mass mobilisation; the draconian legislation; the calls for the death penalty; the brute force; the readiness for oppressive action – this has all started taking place. The liberal “New Look” presented by the Brandt/Heinemann/Scheel Administration in Bonn is just the facade for this fascist mobilisation.

Comrades are deluding themselves if they think that the cynical move by the State of granting an amnesty for the student movement is a sign of progress. By decriminalising hundreds of students these students have escaped with a ‘shock’; it is a preventive medicine for further radicalism. They are forced to be reminded of the bourgeois privilege of being a student (despite the miserable state of the universities) as being a passport to a better social class. Barriers have been re-erected between the proletariat and the students; between the privileged daily life of students and that of the lower-paid. The underclass never got an ‘amnesty’ from the same class enemy. This is evidence of

the marked separation between theory and practice. *In short: Amnesty equals Pacification.*

The recent initiative by some 'reputable' writers (not just the fucked up Günter Grass) in the election campaign is being seen as an attempt to mobilise progressive and democratic forces. It is supposed to be a defence against fascist tendencies and therefore worthy of support. This is the mistaken reality of a few people in television, radio and in publishing – broadcasting the views of a small elite of writers who have not (as yet) fully capitulated to the system. However these writers don't have much to do with those on the receiving end of State repression, those who are in prison; those victims of class justice; those who suffer accidents at work; the deluded consumers; the oppressive school system; the tabloid trash; the miserable council estates; the ghettos of foreigners. *These writers can only understand this reality aesthetically, not politically.*

Legality is the ideology of parliamentarianism, the social partnership, the plural society. Many of those attempting to challenge the system are ignoring the fact that telephones are being legally bugged; that the post is being scrutinized; that neighbours are being legally questioned; that informers are being paid; and that all this State activity is legal. *The organisation of political work and activism – if you want to keep away from the eyes of State scrutiny – has to take place on an illegal level, as well as the legal one.*

We refuse to rely on some spontaneous anti-fascist mobilisation in the face of this kind of State terror and fascism. We also don't believe that choosing a path of legality necessarily leads to corruption. We are aware that our political practice can deliver similar pretexts for intolerance and oppression such as the 'alcohol' issue for Willy Weyer; or the 'growing crime figures' issue for Strauß; or the *Ostpolitik* issue for Barzel; also for the ranting of a Frankfurt taxi driver; or the collection of money for the murderer of a car-thief in Berlin. Another excuse for intolerance towards us is that we are communists. Any progressive change is dependent on the organisation and struggle of communists. Therefore, whether terror and repression just cause fear and resignation or provoke armed resistance, class hatred and solidarity. Whether things will all go smoothly for the State imperialist strategy or take a different course. All these things are dependent upon whether communists are stupid enough to just lie down and let things happen to them or whether they are willing to use the legal means available for the purposes of organising the illegal struggle – as opposed to what they are doing at the moment, which is to make out that the armed struggle is just some sort of fetish or fad.

The fate of the Black Panthers and that of the *Gauche Proletarienne* can be put down to a false assessment of the inherent contradiction between the written constitution and the harsh reality when faced with the challenge of organised resistance. They did not realise the necessity of changing the conditions of legality when embarking on the path of active resistance. 'Active resistance' means the use of legal means for the political struggle while simultaneously taking the opportunity for underground organisation. It is wrong to grasp at illegality as some sort of last resort – as some kind of desperate measure – it is too self-destructive.

The Red Army Faction is organising the illegal struggle as an offensive position in a revolutionary intervention.

To be an urban guerilla means to launch an offensive against imperialism. The Red Army Faction is striking the connection between the legal and illegal resistance; between national and international

resistance; between national and international struggle; between the strategic and tactical requirements of the international communist movement.

The Urban Guerilla Concept means that despite the weakness of the revolutionary forces in the Federal Republic and West Berlin – we intend to make a revolutionary intervention: Here And Now!

“Either you are part of the problem or part of the solution. There is nothing in between. The whole shit has been researched and examined from all sides already. I’m of the opinion that the majority of things in this country are not in need of any more analysis or study.” (Clever*)

**SUPPORT THE ARMED STRUGGLE!
VICTORY IN THE PEOPLE’S WAR!**

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