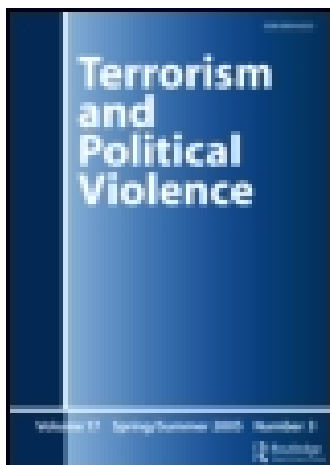


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The Lost Revolution of West Germany's Terrorists

Hans Josef Horchem

Dr Hans Josef Horchem, former President of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution for the Federal Land of Hamburg, has written a book entitled Die Verlorene Revolution (The Lost Revolution). In this work Horchem deals with the history of German terrorism. The book is published by Busse-Sewald Verlag. With kind permission of the author and the publisher we here print a translation of the final chapter.

Terrorist actions such as the attacks by the Red Army Faction, the 2nd of June Movement and the Revolutionary Cells (RZ) were unprecedented in Germany. German socio-political concepts were primarily focused on the notion of a well functioning and orderly system even if sometimes only formally. The first murders by the RAF shocked the population. Resistance built up only hesitantly. The potential number of the terrorists and their general readiness to undertake political crimes of violence were and still are overestimated.

This is a state of affairs to which the media have contributed. The media commented on the irrational actions of the terrorists in articles which speculated whether in fact the perpetrators might not after all have had serious reasons for acting in this way. Some commentators have still not grasped the essential nature of terrorism. This deficiency may in part be based on their understanding of what democracy is.

Even currently television commentators, in particular, persist in describing violent demonstrations as, for example, in Grohnde or in Wackersdorf, as if they are describing some sort of sporting event, in which two equally deserving teams are competing for points in a competition. Equal quality of coverage is given to acts of violence and police security measures. Indeed the perpetrators of violence are again given the 'sympathy bonus' reserved for those who are the 'weaker party', the supposed 'underdogs'.

The percentage of pictures covering police use of batons and depicting injured demonstrators by far exceeds the coverage of injuries to police. The resultant 'underdog effect' evoked in support of the demonstrators motivates others to participate in future violence.

The detailed reporting of explosives attacks and murders by the RAF,

in particular on television, has in many cases veiled the criminal nature of their operations and elevated them to the status of a politicum, a politically significant act. The reporting added weight to the impression that quite a large number of younger persons might infer that they were living under an unjust system which it must therefore be legitimate to alter with the use of violence.

In actual fact, however, the German terrorists have never been in a position to operate as advocated by Mao's principle that they should be in an environment like fish swimming in an ocean of sympathizers and supporters. Even the channelling of hidden sympathies into criticism of measures taken on behalf of the state, and criticism of the methods of prosecuting and punishing terrorist activities, could not compensate for this lack of a supportive environment. The population has reacted by adopting a stance against the terrorists, showing their independence of the views being spread by large sections of the media. This was of importance for the response by the security forces. A democratic state can never advance too far ahead of popular opinion. As soon as the state revealed its determination to take decisive counter-measures to prevent the development of terrorism, people immediately responded with indications as to the identity of the activists.

In the meantime the Federal government and the Laender governments also carried out effective information campaigns based on objective reporting and high quality academic research and analysis. These efforts further encircled and limited the phenomenon of terrorism.

With the exception of Sigrid Sternebek and Inge Vielt, the present 'command level' of the RAF, which is now in what could be termed the 'third generation', were no longer of those who experienced the student upheavals of the 1960s. Accordingly this third generation is no longer in any position to recall and stage a repeat performance of the political debates of the time. This generation has a fixation on the utopia of a worldwide struggle against US imperialism and is geared to actionism which has reached the bounds of any possibility of being communicated to any audience. The attempt to transfer their activity up to an international level, by setting up an 'anti-imperialist front in Western Europe' was effectively crushed with the arrest of leading members of the Belgian CCC and the French AD. The Autonomous Left in the Federal Republic has refused to allow the RAF to involve themselves in their operations as what is termed in their jargon 'revolutionary subject'.

Similarly, the wider seedbed for terrorist acts of violence has in the meantime virtually disappeared. The fact has penetrated into the consciousness of the Left and they have become increasingly convinced that terrorism in the final analysis only makes sense in countries where no opposition parties are allowed, and where no democratic elections are held.

In the Federal Republic in the last four years there has occurred a change. It is not yet possible to predict how long this change will continue, but its effects are visible. In the short term this transformation has to date been characterized by steady economic growth and an overall optimistic attitude, due in no small measure to this stable economic growth. Consumer readiness to spend their money has demonstrated this confidence in stable growth. Service in the armed forces and a well-organized system of industrial and craft training schemes and apprenticeships have pushed down the number of youngsters out of work in the Federal Republic so that youth unemployment in the Federal Republic is the lowest percentage of all European countries. The willingness of young people to work hard in their training, in employment and in their studies has grown. Work is no longer regarded merely as a necessary evil unavoidable in order to attain and maintain a certain standard of living, but instead work is once again seen as having an inherent value in its own right and work may even be a possible source of fun. Participation in the work process is also increasingly being viewed as representing one's contribution to provision for security in one's own old age. Opting out has gone out of fashion. A negative attitude to everything is no longer 'with it'. The generation conflict is now focused once again on problems connected with the normal process of young people growing up. Those who are affluent and who for a long time had succumbed to resignation are now finding their way back into political community involvement.

Marriage and family life are once again seen as goals worth striving for. Involvement in religious life and activities has increased. Clergy of the two main Christian churches are less preoccupied than previously with politics and are devoting themselves more to their pastoral cares. Above all, young people are showing increasing interest in cultural events and trends. There is an increased interest in philosophical topics.

According to research undertaken by a research working party at the University of Konstanz, whereas during the years from 1968 to 1978 18 per cent of students were of the opinion that in every democratic society certain conflicts had to be resolved with recourse to violence, by the year 1983 only eight per cent were of this opinion. According to the same analysis only relatively few students want to enter public sector employment. The overwhelming majority now seek permanent employment in private industry or in one of the 'free' or liberal professions.

The ecological and pacifist initiatives which were stimulated by the Greens and Alternative movements have in part been 'taken on board' by the more traditional political parties. The large-scale participation by Social Democrats and by people who are not members in any political party in pacifist demonstrations has prevented the Peace Movement from falling into the hands of the Communists. The increased strength of the pragmatic

wing of the Green Party (the 'realists' as opposed to the 'fundamentalists') has helped to render it possible for the environmental concepts, which had in any case in the meantime found general acceptance, to be converted into political administrative measures.

The view that a community requires 'elites' is still only accepted with reluctance. Role models have always been accepted. At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, many young people modelled themselves on Rudi Dutschke. Ten years later it was the turn of Petra Kelly to provide a role model. Nowadays Boris Becker and Steffi Graf are the idols of numerous young people. That means that for the youth of today, challenge, discipline, competition and success, have once again become acceptable values to be emulated. They provide a possible pattern, suggesting steps to be taken to achieve goals and turn plans into reality in life. In such a climate of opinion, violence as a method of political debate can have but little prospect of prevailing in the long run.

The operations of the RAF and the RZ, however, continue to pose a special problem. The RAF now operates largely outside its original circle of sympathizers. RAF members have also become outsiders, desperadoes in the eyes of extremists of the Left. The victims whom the RAF and RZ have killed or maimed and future victims, no longer symbolize success of the RAF, but at most they highlight the problems still to be solved by the security authorities, which consist in finding and capturing the perpetrators.

The murderers of Dr Zimmermann have still not been apprehended. Those who carried out the attack on Professor Beckurts are not known. In the car used by the murderers of Dr von Braunmühl for their escape, no clues were found.

The RAF will continue its struggle regardless. Its organization is still intact. It will continue its struggle even though it has no prospect of success. The RAF must meanwhile realize that its attempt to bomb the Federal Republic into a revolutionary situation has failed. The state reacted with firmness and with flexibility. Overreaction was avoided. The terrorists were unable to mobilize fresh recruits to fight on their side as a result of exploitation of any behavioural errors on the part of the police authorities and other organs of the state. There are, in fact, no new 'revolutionary subjects' available for recruitment. The revolution did not get beyond the stage of being a rebellion. The RAF has lost the revolution it propagated, RAF members are in the process of sinking back to the level of ordinary criminals.

In view of all this, the offers by the Greens and by the brothers of the murdered diplomat von Braunmühl to enter into discussions with the terrorists are bound to be fruitless and can meet with no response. No communication with the RAF is possible since any such offer presumes a possibility of compromise unacceptable to the RAF. The RAF in its

blind self-centred egomania has already shattered any chances of alliances with the extreme Left. Why should the RAF agree to accept any platform offered to it by the class enemy?

The negotiations with the Hamburg Senate steered by the RAF for the pacification of the Hafenstrasse squatters was only a vehicle to convey the message that a government institution is ultimately prepared to yield to violence. The RAF can no longer break free of the isolation which has been of its own choosing.

Nor will future violent demonstrators against 'objects' with political connotations be automatically on the route into the RAF. Violent actions developing out of demonstrations against political projects which are subjectively felt by the demonstrators to be an injustice do, however, require special evaluation. The conviction that major industries frequently put profits before people is a feeling not only restricted to young people prepared to resort to violence. Green politicians have thrown into the arena of public debate the notion that vital issues on which the survival of society depends, such as the further expansion of the use of nuclear energy, should no longer be dependent on parliamentary majorities, but instead should be decided by referendum. Such notions admittedly contradict our notions of the principles of representative democracy. However, they show that such developments are by no means universally accepted. Young people are not alone in their fears of the results of the situation.

Public institutions have frequently responded only inadequately to instances of abuse, of the scope afforded by the freedom of the market economy to find loopholes in regulations. Above all, in ecological matters the government has rarely been able to ensure implementation of its political decisions in a satisfactory manner. The revelations in the Pfeiffer-Barschel Affair have strengthened doubts about the integrity of democratic politicians. Notwithstanding the 40 years of democracy which represent the longest period in which Germany has had this form of state and society, it has not yet been possible, so it would seem, to get over the vital lesson of the necessity of having to reach compromise solutions. This represents an ongoing challenge to education, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and beyond.

When riots arise from such doubts or develop out of protests about what are felt to be wrong political decisions, the determination by the authorities to combat them by means of new or harsher laws is a decision likely to encounter problems. If the number of perpetrators is so great as to make it impossible to prosecute all but a few of the delinquents, a feeling of injustice at selective measures will persist. The same feeling arises when the average citizen accepts the motives of the offenders and when the punishable offence is viewed not as grievous bodily harm, but 'only' as damage to property or as trespass. Laws whose application is not

enforcable are useless and counterproductive. Useless laws bring the system of justice into disrepute and diminish the effectiveness of those laws which are necessary.

The same holds true for the proposal to elevate the law forbidding the wearing of face masks or disguises, the *Vermummungsverbot* or 'disguise ban', applied to demonstrations thereby altering the deed from just being an offence (*Ordnungswidrigkeit*) to being a crime (*Straftatbestand*). The police is thereby placed in the difficult position of hardly being able to carry out its obligation to adhere to the 'legality principle' by arresting masked demonstrators. As well as the problem of encircling and rounding up those who use violence in the midst of a mass of demonstrators, the police would be continually forced to check the extent to which a disguise or protection against inclement weather measures against the specification implied by the term 'disguise' (*Vermummung*). It cannot be disputed that the anonymity given by wearing face-masks encourages aggressive activity on the part of an individual. Such specific prohibition of disguise is however not necessary since identity checks are already permitted in the case of minor offences; repeated identity checks, if necessary after temporary arrests, usually are sufficient to dampen any enthusiasm for future participation in demonstrations. Here once again more labour-intensive police methods are the more appropriate response.

In any case it is wrong to put violent demonstrators in the same category as terrorists, and to arrest them as if their actions constituted terrorist acts. Such a reaction plays into the hands of terrorists, and could result in driving part of the politically motivated violent activists of the Autonomous Left into the welcoming arms of the RAF and RZ. This will not make any contribution to the solution of the problem of violence as a threat to internal peace and security.

In the course of a demonstration against the new West-Runway at Frankfurt Airport on 2 November 1987, two police officials, Kommissar Klaus Eichendörfer and Obermeister Torsten Schwalm, were murdered and nine more policemen were injured. These murders, although an isolated incident, probably occurred because the chief suspect, Andreas Eichler, maintained links with RAF sympathizers and supporters over a fairly long period of time and from these contacts derived encouragement for his fanatical involvement in the issue. The deed itself can not, however, be ascribed to the RAF. It was also condemned by the Autonomous Left. It will possibly force closer examination of future planning of demonstrations and may contribute to the Autonomous Left henceforth limiting acts of violence to 'objects' as targets, avoiding direct attacks on police personnel.

Now that RAF terrorism has also been deprived of the 'sympathy bonus' of the extreme Left, it must be countered by all legal means available, supplemented if necessary by a regulation valid for a limited period

guaranteeing mitigation or commutation of their sentences for so-called 'crown witnesses', witnesses for the state. In Italy some 600 members of the 'Red Brigades' have taken advantage of this possibility. This arrangement has made a vital contribution to the destruction of the organization of the 'Brigate Rosse' and limitation of future operations. In September 1986 France passed similar legal regulations.

Clemency for repentant terrorists is one thing, but what would not meet with any comprehension on the part of the German population, however, would be any amnesty for those terrorists who, according to their own utterances, still believe in the revolutionary struggle and still openly declare their intention of committing crimes of violence in the future. Existing legislation already offers possibilities of reduction of sentence or suspension or deferment of a remaining period of a sentence, under article 57 of the West German Penal Code. Use has been made of this provision in the cases of Norbert Kröcher, Horst Mahler, Heinz Dellwo, Gerold Klöpfer, Till Meyer, Siegfried Haag and Manfred Distelrat, who only had to serve two-thirds of their sentences. The bomb-maker of the early years of the RAF, Dierk-Ferdinand Hoff from Frankfurt, only served half of his sentence. Karl-Heinz Ruhland, who was the first to make a major contribution to the clearing-up of terrorist crimes of violence by his testimony, and Volker Speitel, both entered pleas for clemency. In November 1987, Christoph Wackernagel and Gerd Schneider were released prematurely. They had been sentenced in 1980 to 15 years in prison for attempted murder. Currently the release of the first terrorists who were condemned to life sentences is under consideration. Both terrorists concerned, Klaus Jünschke and Manfred Grashof, were sentenced in Kaiserslautern in 1977 on a charge of jointly murdering a policeman. Both have in the meantime renounced terrorism.

The Office for the Protection of the Constitution has made an offer to the RAF which might turn out to be of assistance in the fight against terrorism. This offer is directed to the immediate circle of sympathizers and supporters of the RAF including the Illegal Militants, but is also aimed at the RAF core cadre itself. At the end of October 1987 there appeared in the Sponti publication 'Pflasterstrand', edited by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, an interview authorized by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. This interview includes the statement:

We are convinced that there are members of the RAF who have recognized the pointlessness of RAF policy and who would be glad to disentangle themselves from their involvement. They too should be given the opportunity of 'retiring' from terrorism (and becoming 'Aussteiger'), so that they are not compelled to participate in further criminal acts.

This offer is of interest because, unlike the police and the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution is not bound by the 'legality principle' and not required to bring recognized terrorists to prosecution. The freedom under the rule of law prevalent in our society meets with the approval and support of the great majority of the population. As a result there does not exist any climate of opinion such as would facilitate revolutionary upheaval. The very possibility of 'retiring' from terrorist violence without penalty can consolidate the conviction that in a self-assured democracy which is prepared to be active in its own defence (in a 'streitbare Demokratie'), there are no prospects for extremism. This feeling that things are under control, that the authorities can master problems, can only continue to exist as long as it is founded on a general consensus that the democratic constitution offers the best guarantee of achieving fair appropriate and permanent solutions to conflicts. This public consensus conviction must be continually renewed by the example set by the behaviour of those in political life.

Translated by A.M. Stewart (Aberdeen)