

**Terrorism and Language:
A Text-Based Analysis of the German Case**

by
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“The pen is mightier than the sword.”

Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Richelieu*, 1839.

INTRODUCTION

In his film role as General George Patton, George C. Scott appears in triumphant glee overlooking the sandy plain where Erwin Rommel's decimated tanks lie ablaze. He gloats: “Rommel, you bastard, I read your goddamn book!” Elsewhere, reflecting on that same dark period of German history, many have claimed the Allies would have done well to anticipate, and perhaps might even have pre-empted, Hitler's rise to power and aggression, had they read and carefully analyzed his *Mein Kampf*.

Writing recently in the *Washington Post* from the perspective not of analysis but of politics, former United States U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick has argued that there are “no excuses” for terrorism:

The issue that should concern us is not whether in their heart of hearts, gunmen seek goals beyond the violence they perpetrate. The issue that should concern us is the violence itself. Terrorist acts are the issue, not the motives or sincerity of those who commit them.¹

While her underlying political premise is open to argument in the minds of many, the fact is that, objectively, one of the keys to understanding terrorism in its varied manifestations is the analysis of these “excuses” cited by the terrorists themselves. Terrorism is, after all, a set of tactics, not a belief system.

The following discussion argues that a careful reading and analysis of what today's terrorists are saying can reveal unique and essential data with which to assess and perhaps to help anticipate their actions and intentions. Moreover, if such analysis of terrorist texts is to be useful, it must exploit recent linguistic findings and not rely solely on political science's traditional, lexically-based quantitative (content analysis) methodology.

The contemporary terrorism phenomenon remains a deadly, serious challenge to the policymaker, the traveller, the uninvolved bystander, the security or law enforcement officer, the military professional, and the terrorism analyst. Nevertheless, it is the analyst whose task is most complicated by the nature of the terrorism phenomenon itself. The clandestine lifestyles and tradecraft of terrorist groups, their surprise hit-and-run tactics, minimal size, retention of the operational initiative, and

endless spectrum of potential available targets makes terrorism analysis a difficult and often frustrating task.

To be effective and utilitarian, terrorism analysis must avail itself of any and all promising information, perspectives, disciplines, and methods. Traditionally, these include: intelligence collection (severely limited by terrorists' operational security and caution in recruitment); political analysis of the terrorists' avowed goals or cause, their operating environment, and the group's motivations; psychological research into violent behavior and into what Eric Hoffer terms "true belief"; examination of the actors' individual biographies and assessments of evidence revealing their intra-group dynamics; military tactics and surrogate warfare; assessment of case studies and statistical and operational trends; and analysis of terrorist communications, an area too often neglected.

It is this last named field, that of looking closely at what terrorists say in all the various manifestations, which warrants closer scrutiny and greater exploitation. This is especially true since it is terrorist recourse to language, in order to communicate demands, goals, feelings, and needs, which often provides the only first-hand evidence from which to discern and assess a terrorist group's attitudes and intentions. Often the only communications accessible are those the terrorists choose to publish, not those hidden in their safehouses. Every piece of information becomes important for what it may reveal about the terrorist group's capabilities and choices.

In the process, the "how" of their communicative approach reveals much about the "what" of its content. However, just as *Mein Kampf* had no precise timetable or detailed game plan for Hitler's own "march through the institutions," terrorist texts contain few pure nuggets of insights. Rather, they present an accumulated set of data and observations which augment those discernible via other disciplines.

WHOSE LABELS WILL WE USE?

It is arguable whether linguists or politicians have the better understanding of language. Certainly, those who seek or exercise political power, and those who formulate political leaders' statements, understand well the utility of language. Every speaker and every political movement seeks, consciously or otherwise, to impose its own labels, concepts, terminology, and definitions on listeners.² Is there any doubt that it makes a difference whether the world's media and governments "condemned" or "regretted" the Soviet attack on an intruding Korean civilian airliner, that a violent political group is made up of "terrorists," "guerrillas," or "freedom fighters"? Yet few focus on the central importance of language. Those engaged in political analysis, either professionally or as critical citizens, need to note especially what linguists and philosophers call the "naming" or "labelling" process.

Language is man's greatest and most malleable tool, long thought to be not only the key to learning but a *sine qua non* for human intelligence.

Language constantly changes shape, is capable of infinite permutations, and yet, despite our differing experiences and definitions of meaning, remains the one inescapable medium of inter-personal communication. In many respects, however, language is also the mirror of the speaker, not just his tool. As such, it serves the speaker's intentions and simultaneously provides insights into the user.

Language is manipulable, a fact one encounters clearly in wartime propaganda, political campaigning, advertising, fiction, romantic and other persuasive speech situations. It is no coincidence that these speech situations were those which first drew political scientists like Lasswell and Leites into analytical endeavours focused on semantic choices and their use for political ends.³ Recent linguistic research has clearly revealed that each discrete use and user of language manipulates this tool with every utterance, choosing, and thus excluding, lexical items, grammatical structures, favored optics, the ordering of information, and in verbal speech, changing intonation, pitch, and stress.⁴ The analytical task then is not to condemn or bewail the manipulation of language, but to recognize and understand the nature, purpose, and effect of manipulation as it occurs.

One need only note the labels "hot autumn" and "peace movement" in the context of the West German debate over intermediate-range nuclear (INF) missiles to recognize that major elements opposed to German government policy, though only a small minority of the population, succeeded in winning acceptance of several carefully crafted political labels. Thanks to acquiescence by the government, the media, and the public at large, a minority of protesters won some measure of credibility and legitimacy for their "movement" and for its particular aims and methods.

Had others not acceded to the coinages, which threatened a "hot autumn," expropriated the mantle of "peace" advocates, and claimed the numbers and organizational cohesion of a "movement" (as opposed, say, to "anti-war protesters"), the issues, debate, and political momentum might have been quite different. By letting the minority usurp these labels, the established majority basically denied itself the use of these same labels and their favorable attributes. Evidence of concern on this score can be found in subsequent statements by U.S. political leaders to the effect that the U.S. military or NATO itself constituted the "real peace movement" or that the leaders themselves also belonged to "a peace movement."

It is not coincidental or insignificant that labels terrorist elements introduced into the German lexicon are reflected in the statements of leaders of the radical anti-nuclear Greens Party as well. For instance, speaking on the INF issue before the parliament in July 1983, then Greens leader Petra Kelly charged the Kohl government with "criminalizing" the "nonviolent" peace movement. *Kriminalisierung* is a coinage found throughout Red Army Faction and other German terrorist writings. Kelly termed the government's acceptance of the NATO policy to site INF in the Federal Republic illegal, anarchist, and marked

by “enmity toward humanity” (*menschenfeindlich*). She warned against a recurrence of “genocide,” of Hitler, and of the FRG becoming an “American (military) rear area” — all repeated themes of RAF texts from 1972 to the present.⁵

Though seldom noticed and difficult to isolate, the impact of the West German terrorism experience on political discourse has been significant. Concurrently, the terrorist Red Army Faction’s ambivalent approach to language and dialogue results from its realization that Germany hardly is ripe for revolution. This undercuts their would-be effort to propagate a broader subversive uprising. RAF violence has had its effects but the inability to articulate convincing arguments for its use has been telling. Thus, the half-hearted verbal component of the faction’s “strategy” has done little to win the crucial battle for public support and legitimacy.

Analysis of a terrorist, event-related text demands that one separate fact from terrorist fiction, read between the lines, look for useful indicators behind and beyond what is on the page, and render judgements based on analysis of both linguistic forms and contents. The manipulative characteristic of language is crucial in understanding terrorism communications in that, just as terrorist violence emanates from the weak pretending to be strong, so it is with much of their speech. This is true especially in texts coinciding with terrorist events, as both the event and the text seek external attention and call prevailing values and perceptions into question. A fundamental objective, with language as with violence, remains the redirection of the populace’s positive identification away from the government’s and the establishment’s legitimacy toward a belief that both moral and political legitimacy belong with the terrorists. As with violence, language is aimed at creating a vision of the RAF which is larger than life.

It is the rare terrorist group that inflicts violence without also propagating some rationale, threatening other moves, explaining objectives, and damning perceived wrongs and injustices.⁶ Purists among terrorism analysts might even argue that the lack of a political message disqualifies violent actors from the “terrorist” label — that is, without a political claim, they become “criminals” or “crazies,” in psychologist Frederick Hacker’s paradigm.⁷ On the other hand, one can argue that in the case of Palestinian terrorism, for example, the track record of actions and the political context in which they are wrapped perhaps obviates a need for specific messages. Nonetheless, even the December 1985 attacks in Rome and Vienna indicate the assailants were prepared with some kind of political message had they had the opportunity to express it.

The German case under study here is an apt one even in terms of the group’s own chosen name, for the West German “Red Army Faction” is indeed much less than the name is designed to suggest. The group, in existence for some fifteen years now but having undergone several major generational and operational changes, is not a *faction of the Red Army*. Political scientists also question the adjective “red” if legitimate Marxist-Leninist credentials are implied, since these terrorists’ eclectic

approach to communist ideology fits their pre-conceived anti-capitalist, "action" orientation. Finally, despite their reputation for major acts of violence, these Germans political actors do not comprise an army. Indeed, their adversaries in government and media succeeded in superimposing the adversary label "gang," reserved for criminals and other ostracized elements.

Where contemporary terrorists actually have achieved "strategic," not just "tactical" success, they have succeeded in convincing and intimidating political bystanders as well as in coercing or eliminating their various terrorist targets. To understand the tactics and appraise the prospects of these and other terrorist groups and their campaigns, therefore, one must examine what they are saying — their "excuses" — and how they exploit language in pursuing their objectives.

THE RED ARMY FACTION — A THUMBNAIL HISTORY

The decision to study the German RAF is an appropriate one for several reasons. The group, active for nearly fifteen years, has had several generations of leaders. It operates in, and is a product of, a society relatively similar to that of the United States in social structure, demography, industrialization, affluence, and cultural and moral values. The RAF clearly shares with the earlier U.S. Weathermen group and the terrorist Japanese Red Army origins in the student-dominated, anti-Vietnam protests of the 1960s. Tactically, though suffering severe personnel losses necessitating at least three successions of leaders, it is a sophisticated terrorist entity whose primary targets have been the United States, in particular, its military, the West German political and industrial establishment, and NATO.

In fourteen years, RAF terrorists have killed a half-dozen U.S. servicemen and a dependent wife, have bombed (with casualties) major U.S. military bases in Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Ramstein, and have come within an eyelash of assassinating SACEUR General Alexander Haig and U.S. Army Europe Commander-in-Chief General Frederic Kroesen. In short, excepting perhaps the totality of pro-Palestinian and radical Shiite terrorism, the RAF has posed a more direct danger for a longer period to American interests, facilities, and officials than has any other active terrorist group.

The history, personalities, operational cycles, psychology, and socio-political impact of the Red Army Faction (known earlier as the Baader-Meinhof Group or Gang) is well-documented elsewhere and need take little space in this discussion.⁸ Significantly, many leaders have been jailed or killed, only to be replenished some three or four times, over two dozen noteworthy attacks are attributed to the RAF, and its tight-knit core has never been extinguished. It continues to mount selective, well-planned attacks on American, NATO, West German, and related interests in Western Europe.

From its inception in the period 1967-72, the RAF captured the attention, and often the imagination, of the West German and other

Western publics. Many media initially romanticized them as the political equivalents of Bonnie and Clyde. However, soon large numbers of Germans came to consider the RAF a threat to German democracy and stability, reminiscent of the fascism which brought Hitler to power. (Jillian Becker's title, *Hitler's Children*, seeks to capitalize promotionally on this very point.) On the other hand, the RAF has failed in its half-hearted attempt to mobilize a large number of supporters, nor has it spawned similar guerrilla formations in Germany or elsewhere. These revolutionary calls, though effective, lack the kill-or-be-killed fanaticism of the RAF. That said, RAF acceptance of the notion that there may be more than one legitimate way to skin the revolutionary cat is a new phenomenon, unique to the RAF's current generation and one which is still evolving.

A thumbnail operational history of the RAF begins in its 1968-72 formative period during which a group headed by Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, Horst Mahler and Gudrun Ensslin and distilled from German youth's anti-Vietnam war protest element centered in university cities, chose "to take arms against a sea of troubles" and oppose with force what they saw as U.S. imperialism and fascist West German complicity. The initial six attacks in May 1972 were directed at the U.S. Army and at West German institutions, the judiciary, the police and the conservative media. Following the group's rapid operational denouement during that summer and the subsequent search by the RAF's surviving second echelon for new leadership and direction, German terrorists generally tended to use the years 1974-76 in an effort to regroup, spending a part of this period in the Middle East. In some cases, there were decisions to join with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), participating in the 1975 seizure in Vienna of OPEC oil ministers and the 1976 hijacking of an airliner out of Athens, an act which ended with an Israeli Commando assault at Uganda's Entebbe airport.

The PFLP connection proved useful when, in 1977, the RAF assassinated the German attorney general and then sought twice to kidnap German captains of industry to force the release of imprisoned comrades, as they had attempted unsuccessfully by seizing the West German embassy in Stockholm in 1975. When Dresdner Bank chairman Robert Ponto resisted their assault, they shot him in his living room. However, in September 1977 they succeeded in seizing Daimler-Benz executive Hanns-Martin Schleyer, a close friend and advisor of then-Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. By this juncture, the RAF's targeting had moved from anti-U.S., or imperialism, to anti-capitalist German business, though the selection was not necessarily any more dictated by doctrinal than by operational considerations.

Despite terrorist efforts, the Bonn government refused to release the RAF leadership, and PFLP's added leverage through the seizure of a Lufthansa aircraft collapsed after a successful German counter-terrorist assault in Mogadiscio, Somalia. A profound sense of disillusionment seemed to grip the surviving RAF cadre. Their role models, Baader,

Meinhof, and Ensslin were now dead in controversial suicides committed in prison. Nonetheless, the new level of operational sophistication and commitment which the incidents of 1977 had demonstrated also served as a milestone in the RAF's thinking. For the Faction, it was a year to be emulated.

Thereafter, the RAF again focused on U.S. and NATO military interests and personalities, namely, Generals Haig and Kroesen, and Ramstein and Rhein-Main airbases. Its 1985-86 target emphasis reflects a synthesis of anti-imperialist/anti-capitalist lines of thought, wedded in the convenience of focusing on NATO. For the RAF, NATO comprises a military entity, the army of imperialism, a U.S. tool using willing European regimes, and an institution spanning national borders which various other, non-German terrorists and resistance elements could all attack in parallel. This target synthesis accounts for defense industrial establishment targets including the recent murders of General Audran in France and of German defense corporation executives Zimmerman and Beckurts in Munich. Herein also lies the heralded "Euro-terrorism," which the RAF and others relish seeing overrated while they themselves admit, in their own writings, that it remains only a distant dream. Here is where textual analysis of RAF talk regarding its vision of a West European "anti-imperialist front" can bring us back down to earth. The mere fact that, while triumphantly acknowledging recent attacks, RAF texts call for revolutionary comrades "not to be overwhelmed by the difficulties of the challenges we face," reflects the faction's own analysis of the immensity of the task and the dangers of becoming demoralized.

CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

Published RAF event-related texts or communiqués (in German parlance known as *Kommandomeldungen* or *Bekennerbriefe*) were examined first for the period 1972-81. Subsequently, similar texts from 1982 through 1985 were analyzed in like manner. The objectives were:

- 1) to determine the terrorists' attitudes toward and skills in the use of language and its importance in their overall operational and strategy considerations;
- 2) to relate relevant findings of contemporary linguistics to a field of political analysis and to seek insights into the RAF's thinking and planning as revealed in event-based as well as secondary texts; and
- 3) to correlate the linguistic form and content manifestations of one terrorist group across a spectrum of thirteen years of RAF texts in order to map patterns, enhance in depth understanding of West German terrorism, and indicate the areas and degrees of terrorist impact on West German political life in general.

Various disciplines and perspectives are useful in such an effort: traditional content analysis, or "quantitative semantics"; linguistics and its subfield of pragmatics; psychobiography; sociolinguistics; psycholinguistics; and threat, or risk, analysis. One major shortcoming of the

established political content-analysis approach to text analysis, however, is its focus on word- and phrase-level meaning. Linguistic research highlights the broader plane of text-level and contextual meaning, the very areas most crucial for political analysis and also most troublesome to those seeking to apply computer technology to the problem. By examining entire texts, singly and in their inter-textual relationships, one can better grasp trends, patterns, and meaningful contrasts in and between texts. Many of those contrasts, in turn, have their basis and import outside the domain of language in the political and social environment of the speakers themselves, in this instance in tightly-knit, clandestine terrorist cells.

Another criticism of traditional content analysis is its heavy emphasis on language as the mirror of users, more than as a tool. Thus, in looking at the RAF or other terrorist use of language, the focus is equally, if not more, on language as the tool of political strategy. The manipulation of language, though a universal feature of human speech, tempts even the best linguists to succumb to moralizing on "good" and "bad" uses. Nonetheless, the objective should be to identify what is being done with language, with what means and to what ends, even as insights into the terrorist group itself are sought. The fact that written terrorist texts are deliberate, not spontaneous, speech and are the product of a group of people writing carefully over time, also renders psycholinguistics of marginal value. Many of the necessary individual, spoken, and impromptu characteristics of speech are missing. Likewise, aberrant speech patterns are extirpated in the process of group editing and retooling of written texts.

Using linguistics to plumb the intentions of the RAF through its communicated textual output presupposes a thorough grounding in the RAF's history, origins, tactics, operational preferences and demonstrated capabilities, attitudes toward like-minded groups (violent and otherwise), leading personalities, public reception, and sense of mission and strategy. Keys to these data are found in the details of RAF attacks, biographies of leaders, generic tactics and tradecraft of terrorist groups, public opinion surveys, and contemporary West German political history. Moreover, RAF doctrinal writings, miscellaneous correspondence, other terrorist autobiographies and isolated interviews provide indispensable insights.

The overall analysis undertaken for this study involved close examination of early RAF literature concerning group doctrine, its application of and borrowings from Marx, Lenin, and theorists of urban guerrilla warfare, and initial RAF attempts to "talk" young Germans into becoming revolutionaries. Although those attempts clearly failed, the early treatises, especially those of Ulrike Meinhof and Horst Mahler, provide much of the foundation and ideological wellspring of the RAF to this day. Scholarly appraisals of these early tracts agree, for the most part, that "action" *per se* is foremost in RAF thinking ("das Primat der Praxis") and that the grounding in Marx which the RAF touts lacks the will or ability to accept or assimilate key aspects of Marx.

This is particularly true in the context of violence, revolution, and the terrorists' conviction that the demise of capitalism, while foreordained, can and must be expedited.' Moreover, contemporary political philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, and Johan Galtung left an imprint on the earliest RAF leadership which still colors the group's thinking. To cite only one example, Galtung's thesis of structural violence as an inherent characteristic of large institutions serves as the basis for much of the RAF's claim to be operating essentially in self-defense and self-preservation.

There are also, of course, uniquely German factors behind the RAF's development. Germany's Nazi past and the moral indignation of many youth in the late 1960s and the 1970s over perceived German "complicity" with U.S. imperialism (or at least aggression) in Vietnam and elsewhere in the developing world have played a pivotal role. As well, personal frustrations and individual psychological factors related to familial situations no doubt played a part in certain cases.

Given this backdrop drawn from other disciplines and equipped with the linguistic skills pertinent to carrying out text-level analysis in the native language of the communications, the trained analyst can exploit a terrorist groups' communications (texts) for insights not otherwise to be gained, even via traditional word- or phrase-level content analysis. Identifying key lexical items and methodically tabulating them is a necessary but insufficient part of text-linguistic analysis. Meaning is neither fully communicated nor fully grasped in anything less than a given text, that is, in one self-contained body of speech, be it a sentence, paragraph, page, communiqué, treatise, newspaper column, conversation or even an entire book. Humans communicate in texts, not in words or phrases.

THE TEXTS

Using a linguistic approach to RAF texts, it is important to note how sparse the evidence is in each short text (generally only one communication per incident, excepting the 1977 Hanns-Martin Schleyer kidnap-murder) and the expressed disdain by early RAF leaders of the need to resort to language. They resent the "passive," impotent means with which all other political actors make do, in order to *explain* themselves and their aims. At the same time, looking at thirty or more event-related RAF texts, drafted with great care between 1972 and 1985 and subjected to rewriting and editing, one finds inter-textual evidence which indicates changes and variations in group attitudes, moods, intentions, political emphases, and targets.

For example, in addition to the RAF's operational track record, the event-related texts, both those referring to attacks and to hunger strikes, shift in thematic emphasis from anti-imperialist, anti-U.S. targeting over the Vietnam issue in the earliest period through a period of heavier focus on economic inequalities and German corporate magnates in the late 1970s to the current anti-defense/industrial establishment emphasis tinged with a new, avowedly "communist" flavor as well. Operationally, this has been revealed most recently in attacks on persons and facilities

identified with arms production and other military matériel for NATO and U.S. allies in Europe, particularly the 1985 and 1986 assassinations of General Audran in France, carried out in cooperation with Action Directe, and of Dr. Zimmermann and Dr. Beckurts in Munich.

Scrutiny of the RAF communiqués laying claim to the most recent anti-U.S. military attacks and the comparison of these communiqués with 1972 anti-U.S. RAF texts reveals telling similarities in some respects but changes in others. The RAF has always held that the German worker, for whose benefit the group at times has claimed to be waging its struggle, is hopelessly co-opted by German material comforts and is beyond the reach of revolutionary ideals or motivation. Secondly, the RAF, as with any terrorist group which must operate in fear of being identified, penetrated, and apprehended, is a staunchly exclusivist, hierarchial group. It never attained the size or organizational complexity of the Italian Red Brigades, but based on the RAF's highly selective approach toward both operations and recruitment such were never avowed or implicit RAF goals. Thus, in West Germany and West Berlin there emerged not a set of RAF units, but other, less tightly-knit groups, including the Revolutionary Cells (RZ), the now defunct Movement Two June, and various *ad hoc* smaller groups on the periphery. Indeed, the RZ routinely has capitalized on this very contrast with the RAF in its own call for the spontaneous creation and operation of other "Revolutionary Cells."¹⁰ Even given a new RAF acceptance of other legitimate forms of "resistance," the RAF still insists on a clear distinction between those worthy of the hallowed mantle of "guerrilla" and all others not so exalted.

The RAF's corpus of writings encompasses doctrinal texts, event-based communiqués, letters and exhortations to supporting groups, political declarations not tied to violent acts, and court trial (defense) statements. Two former German terrorists have published autobiographies; neither of them belonged to the RAF, but their comments are not irrelevant to understanding the RAF and its political milieu.¹¹ The number of available RAF interviews can be counted on one hand, and most were either handled via written questions or subjected to editing. The most recent, and an exception to the rule, is that of Klaus Juenschke which appeared, excerpted, in *die tageszeitung (taz)*.¹² Imprisoned RAF members, as a group and individually, generally have been uncooperative with persons seeking to draw political or psychological profiles of them. No more demeaning assault on their political commitment apparently can occur than to have their revolutionary credentials explained away as some kind of psychological pre-destination or aberration. Moreover, the RAF remains convinced that founding-mother Ulrike Meinhof was subjected to psychological torture and manipulation while imprisoned.

The statements made by RAF co-founder Horst Mahler in his conversations with then German Interior Minister Gerhard Baum cast light on the motivations and aspirations of the first RAF generation.¹³ They clearly spell out the moral indignation of the group over the perceived

continuation of fascist dominance over German political and economic institutions, RAF utopian thinking, and despair over the futility of traditional means of protest. Having failed to attract proponents to its revolutionary approach and being continually criticized by the non-violent West German left, the RAF evolved into an isolated group of terrorists. The terrorists sought to: 1) prove their ability to perform significant terrorist acts, thereby building their case for the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare while embarrassing the government; and 2) communicate their political thinking, view of the future, calls for support, and justification of violence in an effort to rend the German political fabric. Their increasingly obscure texts remained, until 1982, almost solely limited to the time of actual attacks and without reference to the political controversies of the day in West Germany (peace, nuclear, and ecology issues) which were the focus of the mainstream political left's attention.

Study of RAF texts reveals the group's attitude toward, and skills in, language, the sense of a need to communicate to various audiences, and motivations. With one notable exception, however, the RAF's textual history is marked by a concatenation of isolated texts (one per incident or event) rather than a continuing flow of communications. This complicates the analysis and supported by collateral evidence from other disciplines, at least until recently, gave analysts strong reason to conclude that RAF terrorism is more a highly dangerous political temper tantrum, than part of a cohesive revolutionary strategy — regardless of how unrealistic the latter might appear to be.

In the single instance where a series of closely connected texts allows insight into RAF thinking and behavior, careful analysis reveals linguistic cues to changing moods within the group which could have been, and perhaps were, helpful in gauging RAF actions and reactions. The texts issued during the 44-day Hanns-Martin Schleyer kidnapping/murder incident in September and October 1977 clearly show the growing frustration and despair of the RAF terrorists as time passed without the desired FRG government capitulation to demands to free eleven major German terrorist leaders in jail. The tone of the texts — laid down in adjective selection, sentence and text length, sentence rhythms, and types of labels and denunciations employed — illustrates significant changes in the writers' emotions.

The initial Schleyer text, simply claiming credit for his seizure without any denunciation in all but the last sentence, communicated the demand for the cessation of police searches for the victim ("or he *will be* shot") and listed six conditions for his release. Interestingly, other than to call Schleyer a "fat magnate of the nation's economic cream" the text offered no political or economic rationale for his seizure and expressed no particular anger. Further, the confident tone of the first letter is noteworthy, as is the RAF's implicit expectation that one of its conditions, that the full RAF communiqué would be read on nationwide evening television news, would not be met.

Initially, almost superhuman in their sense of confidence and control, observable by the use of "imperative adverbials" such as "quickly,

immediately, unlimited, at all times," the RAF terrorists lost that momentum within five days of their triumphant seizure of Schleyer, soon resorting to hapless reiterations of previous, totally unmet demands. "We are getting tired of repeating ourselves" is coupled with boxing themselves in linguistically through the repeated, increasingly limp phrase "for the last time" in three successive letters over a four-day period. Five days into the incident, the terrorists had won no concessions from the German government and then, resorting to the formal, police form of address "Ihnen," telephoned to warn of dire consequences yet again. In the end, the German texts show them almost pleading to be spared the need to kill their victim, an act which became increasingly dependent upon the necessity to save face with a worldwide audience of political observers and revolutionary brethren, especially those external powers with whom the credibility of RAF capabilities and threats had to be attained.

RAF texts tied to events follow a basis format which blends elements of newspaper reporting, correspondence, and the political tract. Almost all begin with a headline which is not a news summary but a credo or revolutionary call to arms. The second basic element is the "event report" — the who, what, where and when. Formerly, this routinely included a "how" element inserted to ensure that the RAF's claim to have perpetrated an event was accepted. The RAF therefore provided specifics of the event or technical details which would be known only to the perpetrators, for instance, the makeup and location of a bomb. This RAF practice has now given way to an immediate political declaration in the body of the texts, presumably on the assumption that the group's credibility is fully established and that it need not lower itself to prove its claim. The initial event report/claim is usually devoid of denunciations and threats.

In the core of the text, the political context and rationale for the terrorist act is laid out. It contains the RAF's political *Weltanschauung* which supports their reason for carrying out the attack and understanding its purpose. This part of the text is the longest, the most important for analysis, and often most obtuse in its syntax and lexicon. The German language is renown for complicated structures given to multiple clauses, a heavy reliance, in academic writing, on nouns, and generally complex syntax; all appear in this portion of most RAF texts, rendering them virtually incomprehensible to all but reasonably well-educated Germans. After some 80 to 650 words dedicated to the rationale behind the RAF attack event-texts conclude with one or more additional calls-to-arms, "revolutionary pep talks," and a group signature with a commando name, the RAF name, and its own logo, and perhaps that of an ally.

As noted above, a basic critical finding concerning the RAF's use of language and its reliance on written texts to reach its audiences is that, with very rare exceptions, only one text (message unit) is produced for each RAF attack. That is, the group issues a single statement, always after the attack, never in anticipation of it, and makes no recourse to a second pronouncement. (The Schleyer operation was the exception.)

Chronologically, the government and media always have had the last word, except in one case where the RAF denied responsibility for bombing the Hamburg rail station. Nonetheless, in a detailed examination of RAF event-based texts, one finds: 1) insights into the group's thinking and its evolution; 2) attempts, in a single text, to reach differentiated audiences, victims and their peer groups, the government, the left, and uninvolved observers, with similar arguments; 3) the reluctant acceptance of the need to communicate at all; and 4) attitudes toward, and capabilities to produce, effective statements.

THE RAF ON LANGUAGE

Actual RAF commentary pertaining to language, though less specific and plentiful than that of the RZ terrorists, who in one instance, list the preparation of the political statement as the first phase of planning an offensive operation, documents the concern of the RAF leadership that the group's spartan statements accurately and unambiguously reflect its politics thus making them less susceptible to misinterpretation or government manipulation. A case in point was the insistence, in the initial Schleyer text, that the government publish the totality of the RAF's letter "ungekuerzt und unverfaelscht," uncut and unfalsified.¹⁴ RAF leader Gudrun Ensslin's ire over a support group's use of the vital label "political prisoner" in a way which, she claimed, could have included Rudolf Hess in its meaning and her insistence on brevity is another illustration of concern with language and labels.¹⁵ Similarly, RAF reference to "forced feeding" (*Zwangsernaehrung*) of hunger-strikers, rather than use the government's preferred neutral term "artificial feeding" (*kuenstliche Ernaehrung*), has been explicit and carefully calculated to convey the charge that the state itself is committing violence and human rights abuses whenever it keeps RAF hunger-strikers alive.¹⁶

The complete set of RAF texts illustrates deliberate variances in the RAF's language-based claims to specific events. The text writers, for example, routinely resort to passive voice or impersonal verbs in describing any unintended injury or killing of victims — especially to an agent-less "passive of deceit" which omits the "by whomever" element in order to create distance from an event. For example, in the unplanned shooting of Ponto, the text refers to "ponto and the shots which struck him." The active voice and action verbs, are used when the writers want to attest to their own sovereign control over external events and hold on their victims lives. Here the RAF relies most often on military vocabulary, both in keeping with standard revolutionary practice (theirs is a "war against imperialism," or "war against war," in RAF parlance, *Krieg dem Krieg*), and in seeking to emphasize RAF power, retention of the offensive, and depth of commitment. In these contexts, an "army" presumably has to talk like one in order to impress others with its strength and ability to wage war.

Terrorism is a group phenomenon. Thus, it is no great surprise that one looks in vain for the first person singular in any RAF text. The texts instead stress "we-they" dichotomies, tending to say much less in

positive self-appraisal about the RAF than about the enemy, particularly with negative comments about imperialism, the U.S. and West German governments, and prevailing power structures generally. The textual space devoted to negative portraits of adversaries, both institutions and conditions, is three or four times as great as that given to self-depiction. Even in the most recent period of greater attention to communicating with other groups, the vast amount of space is devoted to vitriolic but coherently argued attacks on adversaries rather than to the RAF itself.

Terrorism — a set of violent tactics or threats of violence used to induce fear in order to obtain political objectives through intimidation and coercion — rests on a projection of threat and the means necessary to lend that threat ample credibility in order to create favorable political leverage. RAF texts themselves, however, are virtually devoid of specific linguistic threats or commands identifiable via traditional content analysis. For example, there are few “if ..., then” or grammatically imperative constructions. The same holds for any “do this or else” phrases, aside from the Schleyer case in which the prolonged kidnapping involved dynamic RAF-to-government communications. Instead, threats and demands are realized through indirect linguistic means at the level of the entire text rather than in sentence units. Thus, though it comes as no particular surprise to schooled analysts, one cannot find the explicit terrorist threats which most policymakers and security managers are eager to have pinpointed. Rather, it is the tone or content of entire texts which conveys the sense and contours of “the threat.” One needs to analyze each text in detail first and then to step back from the text, to reconstruct and paraphrase it, and finally to draw insights from that combined approach and from comparison with other texts in the RAF corpus.

1982-86: ANTI-IMPERIALIST FRONT, “FIGHTING TOGETHER,” AND “EUROTERRORISM”

Viewed pragmatically and tactically, the practice of communicating only once concerning any single action produces strong, if circumstantial, evidence that the elitist RAF indeed has sought no broad constituency of political support, desired no real dialogue with the radical German left (as Meinhof once did), and engaged in no major recruitment campaigns. Recent evidence, however, points in a slightly different direction. Beginning perhaps with a 1982 RAF letter published in a West Berlin alternative newspaper (*taz*), which called for a united anti-imperialist front, one can see the onset of a new RAF line of thought and argument which continues to this day.¹⁷ However, before discussing the current outlook, it ought to be noted that the 1982 manifesto explicitly excluded any thought of new RAF units or recruits. In marked contrast with the egalitarian Revolutionary Cells (RZ), the RAF's revolutionary hubris has yet to dissipate.

Between the Schleyer incident in September/October 1977 and mid-1982, there was no apparent RAF attempt to engage the German left in a meaningful political dialogue. In July 1982, the long tract alluded to above broke this silence. It was a convoluted, rambling plea for more

anti-imperialist struggle alongside, but beneath, the RAF. The text, though neither easily analyzed nor event-related, warrants close scrutiny for in it the RAF signals an ideological, philosophical, and even operational course adjustment. The text calls for a three-pronged revolutionary onslaught, thereby according, from the elitist RAF, some revolutionary legitimacy to those other "resisters" in the FRG who fight but are not among the "chosen people" of the *guerrilla* RAF. Those three resistance segments are guerrillas, prisoners (captured guerrillas), and resisters.

Admittedly, it is with the benefit of hindsight that one is inclined to investigate the rambling July 1982 tract. But, given the RAF target and propaganda stress on anti-imperialism, the text shows a gradual target synthesis of capitalism and imperialism which blends into attacks on the NATO defense industrial establishment. (Again, a contributing factor, remains NATO's geographic breadth and availability of NATO property targets to groups which will not go beyond hit-and-run facility bombings and strafing, such as the RZ.)

With the French Action Directe, in the case of the January 1985 assassination of French General Audran, and in the subsequent shooting of defense firm officials Zimmermann and Beckurts in Germany the civil-military, the defense-industrial target link has been made. NATO, the RAF claims, is a U.S. imperialist tool in Europe. NATO's "adoption" of the current U.S. policy line concerning methods of counter terrorism is, for the RAF, not only proof of that concentration, but the basis and justification for their own "counter-attack."

From its July 1982 tract in *taz* through the attacks on U.S. military personnel until late 1984, the RAF was building toward a broader base of political action coincident with domestic turmoil in West Germany over the placement of new NATO nuclear missiles on German soil. In late 1984 and early 1985 an RAF prisoner hunger strike, the third of its kind and breadth, was again to be a stimulus for public attention and to serve as a counterpoint and diversionary move for the Audran and Zimmermann assassinations. Indeed, the RAF prisoners ceased their fast immediately upon receipt of the news of Zimmermann's death, drawing 'cat calls' from other leftists for their claim that eating was all right again since the RAF's actions outside prison had reached a "new threshold."

The hunger strike declaration, longer than other event-texts, again cites starvation as the guerrilla weapon of last resort, explicitly says the strike is modelled on the IRA hunger strike of 1981, and claims (not without some basis) that starvation can be a potent weapon. The statement reiterates dominant RAF themes that the U.S. plans to rule the world (*Weltbeherrschungsplaene*) by annihilating all enemies in liberation movements (Nicaragua) and guerrillas (the RAF). Through technological imperialism the U.S., in the RAF view, seeks to envelop Europe in the U.S. transition to a wartime economy preparatory to a first-strike against the Soviet Union, a contention anticipated by Brigitte Mohnhaupt, with reference to SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative), in a letter from prison to the outside.¹⁹

However, even though they held that NATO is a U.S. instrument of suppression, the RAF hunger strikers claimed that each individual still can be effective in reversing the march of imperialism. In saying so, the RAF for the first time focused specifically on internal German and broader European political and security issues: public oath-swearings by the armed forces (*Bundeswehr*); the holding of NATO ministerial meetings; "police violence" against "peace resisters"; the construction of the new runway at Frankfurt airport (*Startbahn-West*); and NATO munitions transports across Germany. As they have done periodically for fourteen years, the RAF writers insisted that Europe must become a military front against the United States and that American troops in Europe must not be allowed to relax, retrain and refresh in a "quiet German hinterland," from which they are poised to launch imperialist wars into third areas.

In an ensuing dialogue within the left (much of it conducted in *taz*) concerning the RAF, its hunger strike, and the attacks in which it played a role, few commentators outside the group agreed, as the group claimed, that the RAF's actions had achieved more than the cumulative efforts of the "peace movement." Yet most agreed that, even were that the cause, neither the RAF nor the "peace movement" had made more than a minor dent in NATO. They would concede that the RAF had complicated NATO's security and public relations concerns, but little else. In one editorial reflection, even *taz* itself assessed the RAF hunger strike statement as proving "the RAF's political thinking (remains) miles apart from that of the Green-Left scene."²⁰

CURRENT OUTLOOK — TEXTUAL INDICATORS

In this necessarily cursory look at RAF texts, several statements from imprisoned RAF leaders concerning their assessment of the political situation confronting them and those still active in operations, and the two letters claiming credit for the August 1985 bombing of Rhein-Main Air Base and the shooting of U.S. Army member Edward Pimental, are perhaps the most interesting. Before turning to those texts, examining a *taz* interview with imprisoned RAF member Klaus Juenschke, who has broken with the group, offers some useful insights. Stating that he re-read RAF texts from 1972 to prepare for the interview, Juenschke bemoans the current lack of dialogue. Claiming that the original RAF texts gave "concrete answers to concrete questions," he asks where this now exists and argues that the present RAF does not engage in dialogue because it realizes its own end is imminent should such a dialogue commence.²¹

The mere fact that the RAF and its "legal periphery" were putting out a newsletter by 1985 in an attempt to build support, to focus the resistance activities and targeting of outside groups, and to claim the lead in building a "West European anti-imperialist front" is significant. Even though the earliest RAF leadership repeatedly referred to their international connections, with the exception of links with the Palestinians, there was little evidence to support such claims. By printing a paper

entitled "Fighting Together" (*Zusammen Kaempfen*), in which the statements of various guerrilla groups are disseminated and in which the RAF responds to external events and comments, the group has evolved. How long it will publish *Zusammen Kaempfen* (ZK), how open to criticism the RAF is, and whether the group would consider relationships which demand it subordinate its independence in order to improve cooperation, are matters open to serious question.

Even a quick perusal of issues three and four, July and September 1985, respectively, of ZK reveals useful data, containing, as they do, information on the last two major anti-U.S. RAF undertakings, the Rhein-Main bombing and killing of Pimental. It is in ZK that one first encounters explicit RAF calls for and identification with a "communist" solution for the benefit of the "proletariat." Not since Meinhof has this been a core argument, and it comes at a time when established Western European communist parties, save in Italy, are in decline. Here the RAF refers with greater clarity than before to the imperialist threat directed against the Soviet Union, seemingly highlighting the "red" in Red Army Faction.

One of the most interesting aspects of the late 1985 issues of ZK is the focus on U.S. government policy statements concerning terrorism, on American efforts to broaden support for an offensive counter-terrorist stance, and the RAF 'interpretation,' or blatant distortion, of American statements on terrorism, especially those of Secretary of State George Shultz. From his speeches, his Senate testimony, and from American and West German news analyses, they buttress their claim that "U.S. state terrorism" has become NATO policy. In assessments attributed to Adelheid Schultz, Rolf-Clemens Wagner, Christian Klar, and Brigitte Mohnhaupt, the RAF's current world view and targeting arguments emerge.²²

Secretary Shultz, they assert, has taken over crisis management of West European governments and the true "international terrorism" is that evinced in the My Lai, Sabra and Shatila massacres. The RAF claims that Shultz' emphasis on military solutions demonstrates the political bankruptcy of imperialism. This theme, that the use of force or violence is only legitimate in the hands of the non-state "counter-revolutionaries" — the terrorists — runs throughout RAF texts. Its thrust is to redefine the rules so that the underdog RAF alone can adopt the means of war, while its enemy has to play by different, more constricting rules. Thus, it is almost laughable, though hardly insignificant, to hear the RAF repeatedly accuse the United States and other institutions of authority of acting "without scruples" in selecting the means and methods of "warfare."

The whole ZK argument seeks to reverse the assignment of legitimacy, morality, and humanity from the state and its institutions to the RAF. "Prisoners" are "state hostages," anti-terrorism efforts become "state terrorism," and use of military or other means of force are a resort to "fascist" wars of "annihilation, genocide, final solutions." For every external terrorist action which occurs, RAF prisoners contend they become the victims of acts of state vengeance.

Moreover, they cite remarks attributed to Secretary Shultz to the effect that fighting terrorism cannot always be "clean" as nothing new; the state's "terrorist" response to the guerrilla challenge has always been dirty and inhumane. Indeed, Mohnhaupt laments that the RAF coinage of *Isolationsfolter* ("isolation torture," more generally known as "solitary confinement") has become a value-neutral term. Generally accredited to Meinhof, the term's negative load in the 1970s did much to generate popular protests against the alleged persecution of imprisoned terrorists. After a decade of use, the RAF regrets that the term has lost its punch."

The RAF's political analysis, though now admitting more avenues of resistance than their own as well as a more explicit identification with communist aims, retains the basic contours it has had since 1972. American imperialism, bound together with the political and military complicity and the overall inhumanity of multi-national capitalism, remain the adversary. Further, despite the difficulties, the United States and its military, both national and within NATO, remain an inescapable principal target in the RAF's "war against war."

In August 1985 the RAF bombed Rhein-Main U.S. Air Base, co-located with Frankfurt's civilian airport, killing two and wounding others. Just prior to that attack and a necessary, according to the RAF, precursor to it, the RAF shot and killed American serviceman Edward Pimental to acquire his military identification card allowing the group to breach base security and plant its bomb. The Rhein-Main claimant letter was sent in the commando name of George Jackson, chosen as an American, a "revolutionary," a Soledad prisoner, and a "persecuted" black.

The letter lambasted imperialism, called for proletarian internationalism to seize the offense, and claimed "West European guerrillas develop their strategy as they attack." Insisting that the imperialist machine had escalated its own offensive, the RAF called for attacks on all fronts. As the RAF prisoners had done in *ZK* issue number 3 in July, the letter writers denounced imperialism's "dirty methods." They argued recent bombings elsewhere had been state provocations, threatened retaliation in Lebanon and Nicaragua, and labelled President Reagan's call for "one Europe from Lisbon to Moscow," imperialism's vision of domination extant since 1917. They choose not to treat Soviet references to one Europe "from the Urals to the Atlantic."

After its broad political prologue, the Rhein-Main letter listed two RAF calls for revolutionary courage to attack the imperialist enemy. It then proceeded to lay out the RAF's "facts," justifying this particular Rhein-Main attack, essentially reiterated later in the first half of the Pimental letter. The RAF described Rhein-Main Air Base as a pivotal location for imperialist intervention in the Third World, a "nest of spies," and the real reason for building the new runway at Frankfurt Airport (Startbahn-West), the mainstream German left's *cause celebre* for the last five years. The letter was dated August 8 and carried both the RAF and French Action Directe as signatories, even though there was no trace of the latter group in either the attack or the text.

The letter corresponded in part to the RAF's Vietnam-era language which sought to depict Germany as a rest and recuperation area for GI's, and linked with the 1981 Ramstein bombing claim, almost exactly four years earlier, which spoke of imperialist war returning to Europe and described the "battle against international terrorism" as a NATO smokescreen to annihilate opponents of its war strategy. But the Ramstein letter, coinciding with the crescendo of anti-nuclear missile sentiment in West Germany, dwelt principally on Ramstein's alleged command center role in unleashing and managing nuclear war in Europe.

Nowhere in the Rhein-Main letter is there a reference to the RAF murder of Edward Pimental. That claim letter dated August 25, was separate and arrived belatedly. Its text was organized to explain, excuse, and defend the RAF killing, in accurate anticipation of criticism of the murder. It began with reference to the Rhein-Main bombing. In the space of two sentences, however, the RAF veered from listing its major objective, that of taking a principal American military power center out of action, to merely disrupting the function of some equipment. The letter then drew the avowed political link to Pimental, claiming that anyone who helps Rhein-Main operate, as do "all the soldiers who do their jobs in the headquarters or elsewhere," was a legitimate target. With this tenuous slide from macro- to micro-target, the RAF entered into a defensively-worded discourse on how killing Pimental might be justified politically, not just as a logistical necessity. Every soldier was a volunteer, was an enemy in war, and RAF action against them was no different than the Salvadoran FMLM attack on the American Marines in Central America or the TWA hijacking by the "Organization of the Oppressed of the World."

Two-thirds of the way through the text, which is unusually late placement for the actual event-report, the RAF in contradiction to all the foregoing political rationale, said it shot Pimental because "we needed his ID-card to drive onto the base." Having anticipated criticism from the non-violent German left for deliberately killing a common soldier, the RAF went on to argue that it had no "social worker perspective" on American soldiers in Germany and refused to see them both as actors and victims. The RAF stressed that Pimental and his cohorts were *volunteers*, not Vietnam-era draftees, that he and they gave up a civilian job to earn more "bread" by making war, and that everyone making such a choice had best realize that membership in the war-making, American military makes one fair game for the RAF. It should be noted, of course, that few, if any, American servicemen would ever see the German-language RAF text intended to intimidate them. Despite all efforts to argue otherwise, it is clear from the defensive tone, the delay in claiming Pimental's killing, and the structure of the claim, that the RAF simply needed an ID card.

In the September 1985 ZK interview with alleged "RAF comrades," planted to deal with criticism of Pimental's murder, the RAF admitted it erred in not sending in the claim letter at the same time it sent authorities Pimental's ID card. Asked why they had killed Pimental, the RAF

respondents replied in a rambling discourse that the imperialists escalated the challenge and they responded in kind. They did not indicate why Pimental could not simply have been robbed of his card, yet they went to some lengths to rationalize his killing in political terms. The fact that a GI was stationed in Germany, rather than in Central America, was no reason for letting him 'off the hook.' The RAF-GI relationship was one of war. Nevertheless, as they again admitted, they killed Pimental because, "without his ID card, the bombing was impossible." Then, in a crucial passage, they noted:

(W)e are naturally not saying that we are going to shoot every GI who comes around the corner — or that comrades should do that. One can only do that in a concrete situation which clarifies itself in the political-practical orientation of the attack. That is to say, it is a tactical question.²³

The ZK interview concluded with the RAF explanation of the extent of guerrilla cooperation in Western Europe. Just as governments cannot address themselves to issues in public without being heard by the terrorists, they also cannot address their would-be flocks without being overheard. The RAF in this text rejected the notion of a European-wide "central committee" or even of an RAF-Action Directe, organizational-logistical bond. The fact remained that each group determined its own concrete actions, according to the RAF, in terms of its own decisions, operational conditions, and role in national resistance. As long as ideological differences did not become political barriers, "the communist guerrilla groups" would remain the core and motor of the revolutionary process. Nonetheless, the RAF's commentary, put in the context of the group's operational and communicative history, helps discount what others have been quick to label "Euro-terrorism." Rather, the texts show the RAF to be very pragmatic in appraising the likelihood and desirability of tighter cooperation and clearly indicate that the RAF is not about to surrender any of the sovereignty it has been so jealous of in its fourteen year battle against the "monster" of imperialism.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The principal reason for the RAF murder of Edward Pimental is not iron-clad, nor may one ever know if the delay in claiming this act resulted from internal RAF feuding over having committed it or how to justify it. But, had one not made a close examination of the various texts involved (letters, interviews, and precursor RAF texts), one would know much less.

Throughout fourteen years of RAF texts and operations, the themes of anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism, along with anti-fascism, are interwoven. The same holds for the target focus on the United States and West Germany as the two principal adversaries. With the United States the concentration revolves around its military, both for its purported lead role as imperialism's instrument and to embarrass the state's strongest source of force and power. Here the unabated RAF *leitmotif* of

establishing a second, diversionary front enters in; German targets bear the brunt of the RAF's anti-capitalist focus.

The RAF seeks to depict itself as the protector of humane and moral values, as a defender of egalitarianism, and as a valiant underdog waging an indefatigable war against overwhelming odds, against a force whose methods know no moral bounds. The RAF contends that it acts via self-defense and self-preservation, as do all guerrilla groups that view themselves as victims of injustice and oppression by ruling establishments. Its lost comrades in state confinement allegedly are subjected to torture, violence, and terror, a barely defensible claim in light of the considerable privileges and sources of information available to them.

The RAF has failed to achieve anything beyond momentary, tactical successes because it can neither make credible its arguments for support nor deny the state its legitimacy and monopoly on the employment of force. Groups which resort to terrorist tactics as part of a broader revolutionary strategy recognize that the violence they perpetrate remains inarticulate as long as its purpose, value, and legitimacy are not effectively communicated to the general populace. They know, as Carlos Marighela, Abraham Guillen, Regis Debray, and others have insisted, that revolution demands a verbal strategy as well as a military component.

From Ulrike Meinhof's death in 1975 to at least 1984, the RAF practiced relative verbal isolation. It entertained no dialogue with the left, issued one short declaration for each operation, and seemed content to make no particular effort to win public support or sympathy. At the same time, the non-elitist Revolutionary Cells and their publication, *Revolutionary Wrath*, were drawing more and more attention, welcoming copycat attacks and giving lessons in do-it-yourself terrorism. Moreover, the ecological-pacifism campaign took hold in Germany, the Green Party won 27 seats in the 1983 Bundestag election, radical dissidents continued to attack nuclear reactor and storage areas, and anti-war protestors drew hundreds of thousands into the West German streets.

The RAF saw the turbulence in Germany as a threat and an opportunity. On the one hand, with a violent approach proving to be only one of several available, the RAF would be increasingly isolated and discredited. On the other hand, there were ample numbers of issues and people to generate greater turmoil directed at the ruling establishment and to use in calling prevailing institutional arrangements and political priorities into question. Yet, as has been their lot since 1972, though the RAF can find many who share their sense of grievance and animosity toward the German establishment and American influence in the world, few agree that the RAF's terrorism is useful, whether moral or not. Critics claim that the RAF lives in a distorted world of black and white distinctions which can only lead to frustration and self-destruction — hardly evidence that their spartan verbal strategy has proven the least bit effective.

This study has yielded several new insights and reinforced others. First and foremost, terrorist statements remain the most readily available and potentially productive avenue into comprehending terrorist thinking. The most promising approach to terrorist, and perhaps all political, texts is investigation at the text-level by analysts with native-speaker competency working on originals. Translation all but destroys text-level and contextual meanings in the socio-cultural context of the writers. Nuances are lost, metaphors overlooked, epithets are overplayed or unseen. The assessment technique requires both a content-analytical and a text-linguistic appraisal.

In looking at the RAF and other terrorist groups issuing political and other statements concerning their actions — at their “excuses” if you will — one must engage in in-depth analysis of texts as they surface and in the context of their occurrence. Analysis must not rely solely on quantitative or statistical data but must examine, on a text-level, the questions of labelling, threats, speaker emotions, logic and argumentation, metaphors, text cohesion and development, and other related questions. The space available in this paper allows only incidental illustration of some of these avenues, but these and other text features, present or absent, enable one to infer certain things about the terrorists: (1) their intended audience; (2) their sophistication; (3) their attitude toward claimed constituencies; and (4) their ability to articulate political beliefs and their seriousness regarding those beliefs.

RAF texts contain the most persuasive arguments the terrorists can muster to enlarge their following, if not their membership; they constitute a crucial body of information for comparison with other data, for example, opinion research on popular attitudes. Terrorism is, after all, only the most extreme pole in a continuum of socio-political frustration and anger in those societies where it appears. As such, the texts prepared by terrorism’s users provide the political analyst or area specialist with the most starkly defined portrait of the political opposition, generational conflict, youth discontent, or general social malaise in the areas where it surfaces.

Terrorists in the FRG are in one sense the most extreme example of a political alienation and repressed national assertiveness felt by Germans aged forty and under. These young Germans are gradually assuming the most influential positions in German politics, industry, labor, education, and the media. Indeed, at least half of the identified German terrorists were preparing for, if not already at work in, these very professions before going underground to combat the inflated adversaries they perceived at home and abroad.

With the exception, perhaps, of the anti-Somoza revolutionaries in Nicaragua who relied only in part on terrorism, most of the world’s contemporary terrorists have not managed to advance their efforts into a revolutionary insurrection capable of turning out the state or regime enemy. In Western Europe, at least, this is due largely to the prevailing factors of Western anti-violent, legal and moral values, basic social and economic well-being, viable political pluralism, and effective and accepted government institutions in all branches. From another perspective, West

European terrorist groups, in particular, German ones such as the RAF, have failed to convince their would-be constituencies of the truth of their accusations and criticisms or of the likelihood that any new, improved "revolutionary" order would result from success in their terrorist efforts.

Just as physical violence cannot go on unimpeded, neither can terrorist statements and claims go unanalyzed or unanswered. Whether American concern is centered on the Soviet ability to manipulate European attitudes toward NATO and American security policies or on the impact of a terrorist group on a given population, the task for analysts and public diplomacy is the same; they must effectively identify and reject the adversary's labels and assert those of society's legitimate values and institutions. In the poignant words of one German commentator, "... a conspiracy of silence ... will always benefit the party capable of spreading the greatest fear." This holds true in the global strategic nuclear context as well as for the growing number of terrorists.²³

Endnotes

* Editor's Note:

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The larger study, from which much of this discussion is extracted, is incorporated in a copyrighted Georgetown University Ph.D. dissertation (GU Thesis 5329, May 1983, DA 8401507). The views expressed in this paper, a version of which was presented at 1986 International Studies Association annual convention, are those of the author and not those of the United States government or of the Department of State.

1. Jeanne Kirkpatrick, "No Excuse for Terrorists," *Washington Post*, January 13, 1986.
2. Among those who argue the significance of names (labels) and the power which comes from dictating the terminology of a debate are: Dwight Bolinger, *Language — The Loaded Weapon* (1980); Haig Bosmajian, *The Language of Oppression* (1958); Martin Grieffenhagen, *Kampf um Woerter?* (1980); Peter Hartmann, *Das Wort als Name* (1958); and Harald Weinrich, *Die Linguistik der Luege* (1966). For an insightful treatment of this kind of exploitation of the German language by the Nazis, see Viktor Klemperer, *Die unbewaeltigte Sprache* (1966).
3. For general grounding in traditional content analysis, see, *inter alia*, Harold Lasswell, *Language of Politics* (1966); Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (1952); Walter Dieckmann, *Sprache in der Politik: Einfuehrung in die Pragmatik und Semantik der politischen Sprache* (1969); Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (1951); and Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly*, 13 (June 1969).
4. Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1955), pp. 3-15.
5. Petra Kelly, statement in the 1983 Bundestag debate over INF missiles, *Das Parlament*, undated.
6. Carlos Marighela ("Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla," *Tricontinental*, [1970]) warns the political guerrilla never to allow himself to be confused or equated with the common outlaw. Regis Debray (in the prologue to *Los Tupamaros en Accion*, [1972]) is even more explicit in stating the importance of expressing aims: "Any terrorist action which does not make clear its political objectives is a great step backward in attaining those objectives." This point is not lost on West Germany's Revolutionary Cells terrorists who, in *Revolutionary Wrath*, no. 5 (April, 1978), list the preparation of the political declaration as the first step in planning any action.

7. Frederick J. Hacker, *Crusaders, Criminals, Crazies* (1976), claims: "Crusading terrorists feel obligated to explain," p. 71.
8. See, among others, Jillian Becker, *Hitler's Children* (1977), and Stefan Aust, *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (1985).
9. See *Ideologien und Strategien, Analysen zum Terrorismus, Vol. I* (1981), ed. by Iring Fetscher and Guenter Rohrmoser, a casual study funded by the Federal German Interior Ministry.
10. They write in *Revolutionary Wrath*, that "We have no patent on this (RZ) name or these policies."
11. See Hans-Joachim Klein, *Rueckkehr in die Menschheit* (1979), and Michael ("Bommi") Baumann, *Wie alles anfang* (1980).
12. "Freiheit oder Tod ist keine Alternative," (first interview of Klaus Juenschke in thirteen years' imprisonment), *die tageszeitung (taz)* (Berlin), April 20, 1985, pp. 10-12.
13. *Der Minister und der Terrorist: Gespraechе zwischen Gerhard Baum und Horst Mahler* (1980), ed. by Axel Jeschke and Wolfgang Malanowski.
14. See *Dokumentation zu den Ereignissen und Entscheidungen im Zusammenhang mit der Entfuеhrung von Hanns-Martin Schleyer und der Lufthansa Maschine 'Landshut'*, Bonn, (1977).
15. *Dokumentation ueber Aktivitaeten anarchistischer, Gewalttaeter in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (1974), pp. 52, 116.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-30.
17. "Guerrilla, Widerstand und anti-imperialistischer Front," *taz*, July 2, 1982.
18. *Minister und Terrorist*.
19. In *Zusammen Kaempfen*, no. 3 (July 1985), writing from prison, Mohnkaupt claims American-German-French cooperation is ensuring the adoption of Secretary Shultz' terrorism policy as NATO state terrorism, that it will link French and German military forces in order for American forces to suppress liberation movements in the Third World, abetting American efforts to isolate the Soviet Union by technological imperialism and hegemonism (including SDI). Those who go on strike, such as British miners and Spanish dockworkers, actually are fighting for their existence in the face of capitalism-imperialism's effort to impose wartime economic conditions in the work place.
20. "Nachdenken ueber den RAF-Hungerstreik," *taz*, February 3, 1985.
21. "Freiheit oder Tod ...," *taz*.
22. See *Zusammen Kaempfen*, no. 3, 27f.
23. *Zusammen Kaempfen*, no. 4 (September, 1985), pp. 7-8.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Ernst-Otto Maetzke, "Manuilskis Verspaeter Sieg," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 27, 1981.