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## Ulrike Meinhof's "From Protest to Resistance"

### About

Ulrike Meinhof first published "Vom Protest zum Widerstand" ("*From Protest to Resistance*") as a column in the left-wing newspaper *konkret* on May 1968. I found the article initially through the German History Documents website. ("Ulrike Meinhof Calls for a Move from Protest to Resistance (May 1968)", German History in Documents and Images, accessed February 1, 2014. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=895](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=895))

### Contextualizing the Article

*From Protest to Resistance* was written after the shooting of Rudi Dutschke, one of the most prominent leaders of the student protest movements of 1968, at the encouragement of the right-wing Springer-owned media. Protestors not only broke into riots but also erected barricades on the streets to obstruct Springer activity. Their actions were met with police repression. Meinhof calls for the continuation of movement *en masse* from non-violent protest to forceful resistance which she terms "counter violence." It will, she states, reveal to the elites that the only solution to the violence inspired by the debacle would be to shut Springer media down – to expropriate them.

She does not mention the circumstances behind Dutschke's injury. For that, I had to do a Google search on "Dutschke," which led me to several newspaper articles and informational websites, including: "Baader-Meinhof's press gang confronts Springer," *The Independent*,

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/baadermeinhofs-press-gang-confronts-springer-6153559.html>, 31 Jan 2005. This article provides information about Dutschke's prominence in the student movement and how he was on the receiving end of a brutal media assault by Springer-owned media. He was shot by one of the readers who took the command to "Stop Dutschke!" literally.

*From Protest to Resistance* is significant in that it not only captures the generational discontent that characterized the massive political uprisings of 1968 that took flame throughout the world but also the transformation of Meinhof's own character. The roots of her radicalization from a critical and respected journalist ('protest') to a feared terrorist ('resistance') can be traced to the attack on Dutschke: the moment where she saw violence used to silence opposition and terror used to restore it.

### **Translation Information**

The source provided on the German History Documents website did not list any translator for the English edition of Meinhof's article, which was originally written in German. Therefore, I copy and pasted a chunk of the translation into Google to see if it could track down the source.

I arrived at <http://socialiststories.net/liberate/From%20Protest%20to%20Resistance%20-%20Ulrike%20Meinhof.pdf> - which was a .pdf copy of the article from a book. Checking the dating as listed in the file directory (<http://socialiststories.net/liberate/>) the reproduction itself was uploaded onto the website on April 12, 2012. To discover the actual source, I had to do further exploration. However, socialiststories.net itself is a rather curious website.

<http://www.socialiststories.net/our-manifesto/> - From reading the site's manifesto as

linked to on the index page, apparently it is a website run by an unnamed socialist organization dedicated to spreading socialist literature without respect to “copyright laws nor any other reactionary law” for the sake of inspiring a worldwide socialist revolution. There are a number of articles contained within from influential leftists throughout the world, such as Antonio Gramsci and Maxim Gorky, with an additional plethora in Arabic.

<http://socialiststories.net/writers/ulrike-meinhof/> - Looking at the directory of writers, I found a page dedicated to Meinhof as a minor writer. Aside from a short biography, the site also provides reproductions several other significant Meinhof articles such as her writings on the role of women in German society.

Continuing my search for the English search, I turned to Melvyl and searched for any English language books concerning Meinhof. The first result ended up being *Everybody Talks About the Weather... We Don't*, a collection of translations provided by Luise von Flotow and edited by Karen Bauer. It was only recently published in 2008. I tracked it down on Google Books and was delighted to find that the page styles of the pdf copy and the book matched. Unfortunately, a good deal of information was blocked on Google Books so I had to track down a physical copy. The sole copy in UCSB was checked out and a recall or an interlibrary loan request was slated to take up to a week so I turned to Amazon Prime and found it at a discounted price. However, other than the selection of writings included in *Everybody Talks...*, the majority of Meinhof's writings otherwise remain in German. I was unable to find through Google any further translations into other languages.

### **Tracking down the Original Copy**

The original copy of the article was quite difficult to track down due to the fact that it was

originally published in German and - compounding that language barrier - had no popular English translation until the publication of *Everybody Talks About the Weather... We Don't* in 2008 by Karen Bauer. Through the use of Worldcat, I found that a collection of *konkret* that contained a copy of the May 1968 edition was residing at UC Berkeley. I attempted to use the Interlibrary Loan System to get it delivered to UCSB, but I was emailed in reply that the lender was quite reluctant to send it out. As an alternative, they linked me to an online reproduction of the German text: <http://www.ruhr-uni-bochume.de/bsz/516/516meinhoff.htm>.

Back copies of *konkret* otherwise are quite scarce. A Google search for “konkret” led me to the official website of *konkret*. They have collections of archived writings available to order, but since the shipping and the euro-dollar is so steep, I decided not purchase anything. A Google search for "vom protest zum widerstand" returned 839,000 results – a significant amount of sites being left-leaning archives - so it appears to be more a language and locational barrier than any shortage of popularity in history.

### **Author Background**

Ulrike Meinhof is infamous for her involvement in the West German left-wing terrorist group “Red Army Faction,” also known as the “Baader-Meinhof” gang, responsible for numerous acts of arson, kidnappings, bombings, and deaths. This is basic information found on her Wikipedia page.

Looking through Google for more information on the “Baader-Meinhof Gang,” I came upon a website called <http://www.baader-meinhof.com/>, an English treasure trove of information concerning the Baader-Meinhof Gang and their activities. One of the most often cited sources for the information provided on the webpage was Stefan Aust’s *Baader-Meinhof: The Inside Story*

*of the R.A.F.*; apparently he used to work with *konkret* and was a close compatriot of Meinhof. Drawing upon his own experiences, he wrote what appears to be - with the frequency of its citations on both that site and as returned by Google Scholar with 283 citations - an authoritative biography of the gang. Unfortunately, the English copy of the book was difficult to find. I ordered a copy through the Interlibrary Loan System.

In it, Aust describes his own tumultuous relationship with the Baader-Meinhof Gang. He also spoke about how Meinhof, after her arrest, intended to have her two daughters trained by guerilla forces and how, in the end, Aust managed to find them (Aust 2009, 11). Meinhof was serious in her militant use of counter-violence as a form of resistance when she proved herself willing to subject her own children to a life of guerilla warfare.

This also affected how her own daughters relate to her. Betina Rohl, who took on her father's name, stipulated that for Bauer to publish Meinhof's collected works in English, she would have to include Rohl's own afterward, *Icon of the Left, Propagandist and Communist*, as a closing statement. In contrast to the introduction by the Nobel Prize winning Elfriede Jelinek, Rohl's article is unforgiving and charges her mother of being a Stasi agent sent to destabilize West Germany. She makes it apparent how much she disapproves of her mother's actions and ends the book with a sharp criticism of the left.

Looking through Wikipedia and Google Search, I did not find any more indictments of Meinhof as a Stasi agent. While there is evidence that the RAF was indeed aided by the Stasi - such as in the case of Horst Mahler, a former left-wing lawyer and member of the RAF, who was found after an excavation of Stasi papers to be an agent as described in a Guardian article I found on Google with the term "meinhof+stasi" (Pidd, Helen, "**Baader-Meinhof terrorist may have**

worked for the Stasi”, August 1, 2011, accessed March 1, 2014,

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/01/baader-meinhof-gang-founder-stasi>) - there is no further conclusive evidence beyond Rohl’s writing that Meinhof was directly in contact with the Stasi herself.

As Betina Rohl controls the publication of her mother’s work, I speculate that to be the reason why Meinhof’s works have largely not any sort of English translation until 2008, for she certainly is a historical figure significant enough to merit translation and publication.

While browsing the ProQuest newspaper article database, I discovered that Meinhof was captured alongside the rest of the Baader-Meinhof ringleaders in 1972 (“Police Capture ‘Bonnie’ of West German Gang,” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 June 1972.). She committed suicide in prison in 1976, sparking a series of riots (“News in Brief: THE WORLD Meinhof Death Triggers Riots,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 May 1976). I was unable to find articles related to her career in journalism; just as she abandoned her prior life to fight a guerilla war in the R.A.F., so too was her identity subsumed by the legacy of her militancy.

### **Other Writings**

Meinhof was a prolific writer, though the majority of her works remain untranslated in German. However, *Everybody Talks About the Weather... contains False Consciousness* (1968), which is an essay critical of the capitalist oppression of women in German society, and *Columnism* (1968), the last column she wrote for *konkret* before departing. In it, she expresses immense dissatisfaction with the direction the newspaper was heading and the constraints the editor was imposing on her. Her columns there, she felt in the end, were fruitless.

### **Further Information on Wikipedia**

- “Ulrike Meinhof,” Wikipedia, last modified January 12, 2014, accessed February 5, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulrike\\_Meinhof](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulrike_Meinhof).

Meinhof’s Wikipedia article contains a short passage on *From Protest to Resistance* - mainly mentioning the context from which it arose - the shooting of Rudi Dutschke - and that it was evidence of her increasing militancy that would later be expressed with her involvement in the R.A.F..

- “Rudi Dutschke,” Wikipedia, last modified January 16, 2014, accessed February 5, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudi\\_Dutschke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudi_Dutschke).

Rudi Dutschke’s own Wikipedia page provides a small passage of its own on the role Springer media played in the shooting. However, it contains no information about Meinhof’s involvement with the Stasi or contact with the East German Government, as her daughter asserts.

### Google nGrams Results

Comparing “Ulrike Meinhof”, “Andreas Baader”, and “Rudi Dutschke” in Google Ngrams from the English and the German language reveals some interesting trends. “Rudi Dutschke” has a large spike in the latter part of the 1960s and early 1970s due to the prominence of the student movement. “Ulrike Meinhof” was far more popular than the other two after the 1970s - presumably due to her arrest and subsequent suicide. Meinhof’s height peaks at around 0.00000325% of the English corpus. However, switching the corpus to German produces an immensely different graph. Rudi Dutschke rates at 0.0000900% of the German corpus as of 2000 - peaking more than 0.0000500% over Ulrike Meinhof - following a sudden spike in popularity in the 1990s.

Looking at the German Wikipedia page for Dutschke, there are several listings of prominent media productions relating to his role in the student movement produced in the 1980s and 1990s, such as a television docudrama. Perhaps that could be the cause behind Dutschke's resurgence in the German corpus, though due to language barriers, I am unable ascertain exactly. In both cases, Andreas Baader ranked the least frequent.