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A Terrorist Call for “Building a Red Army” (June 5, 1970)

After springing the petty crook Andreas Baader from prison, radical student protester Gudrun Ensslin rejected further compromise with the authorities. Here she denounces liberal democracy and rejects evolutionary socialism, and instead calls for armed resistance and the building of a Red Army to begin the revolutionary struggle against the state.

Build Up the Red Army!

Comrades from 883¹ – there is no point in wanting to explain what is right to the wrong people. We have done that long enough. We don’t have to explain the action to free Baader to the intellectual windbags, the scaredy-pants, and know-it-alls, but rather to the potentially revolutionary segment of the population.

That means to those who can immediately understand the act because they themselves are prisoners. To those who think nothing of the prattle of the “leftists,” because it has remained without consequences or actions. To those who have had enough! You have to explain the Baader liberation action to the young people in the Märkischen Viertel [public housing district], the girls in the Eichenhof, in Ollenhauerstrasse, in Heiligensee, to the boys in the Youth Farm, in the Youth Aid Center, in the Grüne Haus, in Kieferngrund.² To the large families, the young laborers and apprentices, the older youths in the elementary schools, the families in the areas being modernized, the women working for Siemens and AEG-Telefunken, and SEL and Osram, the married women workers who in addition to taking care of the house and children are still doing piecework – damn it!

You have to speak of the action to all those who are being exploited but receive no compensation in the form of good living standards, consumption, savings contracts for building a house, small loans, mid-size automobiles. To all those who cannot afford all that stuff, who don’t care about it. To those who have exposed as lies all the future promises of their daycare workers and teachers, property managers and welfare workers, foremen and master craftsmen, union officials and district mayors, and still fear only the police. They are the ones you have to

¹ This refers to *Agit883* (*Magazine for Agitation and Social Practice*), a West Berlin underground paper from 1968 to 1973. Most of the footnotes in this document were adapted from *Rote Armee Fraktion: Texte und Materialien zur Geschichte der RAF* [*Red Army Faction: Texts and Materials on the History of the RAF*]. Berlin, 1997, pp. 24-26 – trans.

² Children’s and adolescent homes in Berlin. Before going underground, some of the later RAF members worked with youth from state homes – trans.

tell – and not the petty bourgeois intellectuals – that it's enough already, that now is the time, that the liberation of Baader is just the beginning!

That the end of the rule of the pigs is in sight! To them you have to say that we are building the Red Army; it is their army. To them you have to say the time is now. They won't ask dumb questions, like why right now? They have already gone through the thousand channels to authorities and offices – the dance with the courts – the waiting times and waiting rooms, the date when it was promised that something would certainly work out and then didn't work out at all. And the conversation with the nice teacher who, in the end, didn't prevent the transfer into special education, and the helpless daycare worker who had no space available after all. They don't ask you why right now – damn it.

Of course they won't believe a word you say, if you yourselves cannot manage to distribute the newspaper before it gets confiscated. Because it is not the lefty ass-kissers you have to agitate, but the objective left-wing; you have to build up a distribution network that the pigs can't get to. Don't blather that it is too hard. The action to liberate Baader wasn't crocheting doilies either. [. . .]

What does it mean to push the conflicts to a head? It means don't go meekly off to slaughter. This is why we are building the Red Army. Standing behind the parents are the teachers, the youth welfare department, the police. Standing behind the foreman is the master craftsman, the personnel office, the factory security office, the welfare workers, the police. Standing behind the house superintendent is the property management, the owner, the bailiffs, the eviction suit, the police. Whatever the pigs manage with grades, dismissals, terminations, with bailiff's seals and billy clubs, that's what they manage. Of course they reach for their service revolver, turn to tear gas, hand grenades, and submachine guns; of course they escalate the means in order to get what they want. Of course the GIs in Vietnam were retrained in guerilla tactics and Green Berets were set on a torture course. So what!? Of course the enforcement of sentences for political prisoners is being intensified.

You have to make clear that it's social democratic bullshit to claim that imperialism along with all the Neubauers and Westmorelands,³ Bonn, the senate, the State Youth Welfare Office and district offices, that the whole filth can be undermined, duped, overpowered, intimidated, and eliminated without a fight. Make it clear that the revolution will not be an Easter stroll. That of course the pigs will escalate the means as far as they can, but no further. We are building the Red Army in order to push the conflicts to a head.

Without simultaneously building the Red Army, every conflict, all political work in the factories, in the Wedding and Märkische Viertel districts,⁴ in the Plötze,⁵ and in the courtroom will degenerate into nothing more than reformism, which means you merely push through better means of discipline, better methods of intimidation, better methods of exploitation. All that does is break the people down. It does not break down what breaks the people down!

If we don't build the Red Army then the pigs will be able to do anything, the pigs will be able to go on as usual: Locking people up, firing them, impounding, stealing children, intimidating,

³ Kurt Neubauer, West Berlin interior senator; William Childs Westmoreland, commander of U.S. armed forces in South Vietnam, 1964-68, and later U.S. Army Chief of Staff – trans.

⁴ Working class districts in northern Berlin – trans.

⁵ Plötzensee women's prison in West Berlin – trans.

shooting, ruling. Pushing the conflicts to a head means they can no longer do what they want, but have to do what we want.

You have to tell all those who don't gain anything from the exploitation of the Third World, from Persian oil, Bolivia's bananas, South Africa's gold, who have no reason to identify with the exploiters. They can understand that what is starting here has already started in Vietnam, Palestine, Guatemala, in Oakland and Watts, in Cuba and China, in Angola and New York. They understand if you tell them that the action to liberate Baader is not an isolated act, and it never was, but it was just the first act of its kind in the FRG. Damn it.

Don't sit around on your house-searched couches and count your loved ones like some petty-minded bourgeois. Set up a proper distribution apparatus and leave behind the scaredy-pants, the cabbage eaters, the social workers who do nothing but kiss ass, this riffraff.

Find out where the state homes are and the large families and the subproletariat and the proletarian women who are just waiting for the chance to punch out the right person. They will assume the leadership. And don't let yourself get caught, and learn from them how not to get caught. They know more about that than you do.

Gudrun Ensslin

Develop the class struggles. Organize the proletariat.
Start the armed resistance!

BUILD UP THE RED ARMY!

Source: Gudrun Ensslin, "Die Rote Armee aufbauen!" ["Build up the Red Army!"], June 5, 1970, from <http://www.rafinfo.de>

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