

A Terrorist Call to “Build up the Red Army” (June 5, 1970)

Abstract

After springing 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 establishment of a Red Army to begin the revolutionary struggle against the state.

Source

Build up the Red Army!

Comrades from 883[1] – there is no point trying 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 Märkisches Viertel [public housing district], to the girls in the Eichenhof, in Ollenhauerstrasse, in Heiligensee, to the boys on the Youth Farm, in the Youth Aid Center, in the Grünes Haus, in Kieferngrund.[2] To the families with many children, the young workers and apprentices, the secondary school students, the families in the redevelopment areas, the women working at Siemens and AEG-Telefunken, at SEL and Osram, the married women workers who, in addition to taking care of the house and children, are still working on a piecework basis—damn it!

You have to explain the action to all those who are exploited but receive no compensation for it in the form of a good standard of living, consumption, a savings contract for building a house, small loans, mid-size automobiles. To 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 early childhood educators and teachers, property managers and welfare workers, foremen and master craftsmen, union officials and district mayors, and are now afraid only of the police. They are the ones you have to 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 take the conflicts to extremes? It means not letting ourselves go meekly to slaughter. That's why we are building the Red Army. Behind the parents are the teachers, the youth welfare department, the police. Behind the foreman is the master craftsman, the personnel office, the factory security office, the welfare workers, the police. 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, for tear gas, hand grenades, and submachine guns; of course, they escalate the means 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] [the government in] 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 also no further. We are building the Red Army to take the conflicts to extremes.

Without simultaneously building up the Red Army, every conflict, all political work in the factories, in the Wedding and Märkisches Viertel districts,[4] in the Plötze,[5] and in the courtroom will devolve into mere 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 up 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, shooting, ruling. Taking the conflicts to extremes means they can no longer do what they want but have to do what we want.

You have to tell those who gain nothing 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 going on here now has already started in Vietnam, Palestine, Guatemala, in Oakland and Watts, in Cuba and China, in Angola and New York. They will understand if you tell them that the action to liberate Baader is not an isolated act, never was, but was only the first 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 the right person in the face. They will assume the leadership. And don't get caught and learn from them how not to get caught. They know more about that than you do.

Gudrun Ensslin

Unleash the class struggle. Organize the proletariat.
Start the armed resistance!

BUILD UP THE RED ARMY!

NOTES

[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*. 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.

[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.

Source: Gudrun Ensslin, “Die Rote Armee aufbauen!” June 5, 1970, from <http://www.rafinfo.de>

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