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***Brothers in Arms?* The Red Army Faction (RAF) in its perception of the Black Panther Party**

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German Terrorism and African American Liberation

In September 1968, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover declared the Black Panther Party (BPP) to be “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.”¹ As an armed, self-declared revolutionary party, grown out of the African American Civil Rights Movement, the BPP did not only bring uncomfortable nights to Mr. Hoover. Many parts of the white establishment also feared the radical appearance and rhetoric of the Panthers. In 1977, the so-called *Deutscher Herbst* (German Autumn) lay itself over the German Federal Republic, as another armed, self-declared revolutionary party was instilling fear and loathing. The Red Army Faction (RAF) committed several acts of terrorism to perpetuate its declared war on the state. Some scholars like Götz Aly have perceived the RAF as a direct consequence of the ever-present unconscious dark side of the German Student Protest Movement, which had developed throughout the 1960s². This New Left had gained momentum in February 1968, when the international Vietnam Congress was organized in Berlin where some representatives of the Students Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) took part in³. The creative strategies of the Civil Rights organizations in their struggle for racial equality had greatly influenced the German Student Protest Movement. Klimke has traced the various ideological alliances and cultural appropriations which bound the Student Protest Movements in Germany and the U. S.⁴. Radical America was attracting German attention, especially because the War in Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement functioned as dialectic signifier of erupting youth rebellion all around the globe. Following this pattern, the RAF has referenced the BPP frequently and even applied the same word - “pigs” - for their enemy, the police.⁵ In German public perception the RAF has grown into mythic proportion, not the least through its presence in popular culture. The same is true for the symbolism surrounding debates over the BPP in the U. S.. In both cases, revolutionary rhetoric, actual events, and unconscious fantasies have blurred into a mythic whole. This essay intends to cut through this fog to interpret the original agenda of both groups within their specific context. I am especially interested to figure out whether the cultural appropriation of the BPP by the RAF is ideologically valid and if so, under which preconditions. As both of these organizations

1 Clayborne Carson, ed., *A Reader and Guide. Eyes on the Prize. America's Civil Rights Years* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 225.

2 See e. g. historian and former participant of the Student Movement Götz Aly's provoking book *Unser Kampf*, wherein he draws parallels between the generations of '33 and '68.

3 ct. Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom. The Civil Rights Struggle, African American Gis, and Germany* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 107.

4 Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

5 ct. Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom*, 118.

claimed to be influenced by Marxist-Leninist principles, I wish to explore whether the RAF is basically modeled after the BPP, or did impulses and motivations within the German *Wesenheit* trigger its initiation. To base this examination on solid ground the founding manifestos of the two groups are used as main source, alongside statements from their key figures. German quotes which I have translated into English are marked.

The RAF and the BPP: A Very Brief Introduction

This essay does not focus on the actual history of the RAF and the BPP and only a very basic summary is provided in the following. For a comprehensive and extra-ordinary detailed history of the RAF see Aust; editor Kraushaar provides numerous essays to cover the phenomena from various perspectives. For a Panther's history with a special emphasis on their relation to violence see Austin; the context of the entire African American history after 1945 is provided by Marable.

The first action of the ones who would later form the core of the RAF took place in April 1968: Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader set on fire two shopping malls in Frankfurt/Main – to raise consciousness as Ensslin declared after her arrest: “We did it to protest the ignorance of the people watching the genocide in Vietnam.[translated]”⁶ First two years later, the RAF was formally founded after the re-imprisoned Baader had been freed by Ensslin and Ulrike Meinhof, a well-known investigate journalist. Her founding manifesto, *Die Rote Armee aufbauen!* (Build Up the Red Army!) declared the RAF a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist organization intended to overthrow the capitalist system. In the years to come the RAF assassinated numerous state representatives and assaulted German and American institutions to perpetuate its self-declared war on the state – and to insist upon the freedom of the imprisoned core members of the group. The climax of the violent confrontation between the RAF and the German state mark the events of the fall of 1977, the *Deutscher Herbst*: The head of the federation of employers, Hanns Martin Schleyer was taken hostage and the Lufthansa airplane Landshut was hijacked to ultimately press free the leaders of the RAF – which completely failed as German special forces freed all airplane hostages. Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and the other core members of the group committed suicide in Stammheim prison and the RAF executed Schleyer in response. Until 1998 when the organization eventually declared its existence over 33 people had fallen victim to the murderous actions of the RAF.

⁶ ct. Michael Sontheimer, „RAF-Serie (3): Wie Alles Anfing,“ *DER SPIEGEL*, September 24, 2007, accessed October 11, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-53060246.html>.

In October 1966, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California. Inspired by Malcolm X, the Panthers carried weapons to defend themselves and the black communities which had often been brutalized by the police. The initial 10-Point-Program demanded freedom, justice and independence for the African Americans. Their appearance, black leather jackets, berets and rifles would soon become iconic and within a few years the BPP had grown into a national organization. To meet the needs of the people in the communities, they focused on various social programs like children`s schools, health care and free breakfast programs.⁷ After various ideological splits and a violent counterintelligence campaign by the FBI, the BPP lost much of its influence in the 1970s and eventually dissolved in 1982. I conceptualize two phases of different ideological emphasis which will be examined in this paper: the *Early Panthers* (1966 – 69) and the *Later Panthers* (1969 – 1972).

Common Revolution: The Revolutionary Ideology of the RAF in Relation to the BPP

The founding manifestos of the RAF and the BPP will now be compared in order to find similarities in the revolutionary ideology of both groups. I will undertake the challenging task of interpreting the statements of the RAF to figure out their perception of the BPP as ideological brother in arms:

“In the eyes of the RAF, the Black Panthers became both a role model and partner in what they conceived of as an international revolutionary struggle stretching from Vietnam, Africa, and South America all the way to the industrialized countries of the West.”⁸

It has to be emphasized that this struggle is perceived within an ideological framework: the oppressed gain consciousness about their situation, embrace revolutionary Marxism and eventually overthrow capitalist imperialism world-wide. In June 1970, a revolutionary pamphlet under the title *Die Rote Armee aufbauen!* was published in the left underground newspaper *agit 883*⁹:

“BUILD UP THE RED ARMY!

Did the pigs really believe we would leave comrade Baader in the lurch for 2 or 3 years? Did the Pigs really believe we would eternally fight with colored eggs against push sticks, with stones against pistols, with Molotovs against MG`s? Did anyone of the pigs really believe we would talk about the development of the class struggle, the re-organization of the Proletariat

7 ct. Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert, eds., *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 24.

8 Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom*, 118.

9 *Ibid.*, ct., 117-118.

without arming ourselves at the same time? [...]

Gandhi and Martin Luther King are dead. The bullets of their murderers, the bullets on Rudi, the bullets of Kurras, Dallwitz and Wetter have ended the dream of non-violence. The one, who does not resist, dies. [...]

Berlin is an outpost of American Imperialism. Our enemy and the enemy of South America, the enemy of the Japanese and Vietnamese people, the enemy of all blacks in the U. S., the enemy of the workers in Berlin – the enemy is American Imperialism. [...]

DEVELOP THE CLASS STRUGGLE!

ORGANIZE THE PROLETARIAT!

START THE ARMED STRUGGLE!

BUILD UP THE RED ARMY![translated]¹⁰

The call for building up the Red Army refers to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Lead by Lenin, the communist Bolshevik destroyed the regime of the tzar and eventually installed the *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* – the ideology of Marxism-Leninism was born (due to the limits of this essay, the term Marxism-Leninism will not be extensively discussed). The Red Army was the armed wing and vanguard of the Bolshevik, which fought the revolutionary war against the old regime of the tzar. After the complete take-over of the communist party, the whole Russian Army came to be called Red Army. By referencing the Red Army, Meinhof intends to initiate revolutionary warfare against the capitalist state of Germany – imagining this historical parallel reveals her objective to destroy the existing state to give way to the German *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. For Meinhof, the contemporary political situation is to be seen through the Marxist lens: all of history is struggle, class struggle. Within a German historical context, the signifier Red Army evokes ambiguous associations; on the one hand, it was the Russian Army defeating the Nazis alongside the Western allies. Together they had freed Germany from Hitler and his regime. On the other hand, the Red Army had soon become notorious for the brutality applied on their occupational path to Berlin. Furthermore, *Der Russe* (The Russian) was now the ideological enemy, as the Cold War had installed a bipolar world with capitalist U. S. and the Western World facing communist S. U. and its allies. Meinhof turns this perception of the world upside down: instead of fighting the Cold War alongside the American ally, a *Hot War* has to be inflamed in the German cities to destroy American imperialism and instigate the final victory of communism. Meinhof's international perception of this struggle is obvious: Southern America, the Japanese and Vietnamese people, the workers of Berlin and "all blacks in the U. S." face the same enemy: "American imperialism". Sharing one oppressor as a common unifier under which all oppressed are

10 ct. „Die Rote Armee aufbauen!“ Labour History Resources, accessed October 11, 2011, <http://labourhistory.net/raf/read.php?id=0019700522>.

equally suffering, free floating associations and connections are easily drawn, especially when resistance is identified and absorbed within a Marxist-Leninist framework. Thus, the RAF is enabled to read the 10-Point-Program of the BPP as a communist manifesto of the colonized African Americans:

“1966

What We Want, What We Believe

Black Panther Party Platform and Program

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community. [...]
2. We want full employment for our people.

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community. [...]
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.

We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society. [...]

6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service. [...]

7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people. [...]

8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails. [...]

9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States. [...]

10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny. [...]¹¹

The 10-Point-Program first features the demands and then expresses the underlying beliefs of the party. The above quoted excerpt presents all the demands but only the beliefs of point 2 and 4; the original program ends with the Declaration of Independence, which is the response

11 Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. „What We Want, What We Believe. Black Panther Party Platform and Program. 1966,“ in *Modern Black Nationalism. From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan*, ed. William L. Van Deburg (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 249.

to the last demand.

Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale clearly applied Marxist terms to frame the struggle of the oppressed African Americans: “means of production” (Point 2) for the people in the communities, “robbery by the CAPITALIST” (Point 3) and housing and land to be turned into “cooperatives” (Point 4). This common communist language enabled the RAF to ideologically appropriate the BPP, which Meinhof openly did in the founding manifesto, “which featured a black panther alongside a Russian Kalashnikov (later the visual trademark of the group).”¹² By applying a Russian Kalashnikov, the RAF makes unmistakable clear that the means of revolutionary change are to be violent, and again, this change ought to take place in a Russian manner: “Did any pig really believe we would talk about the unfolding of the class struggle, the re-organization of the Proletariat without arming ourselves at the same time?” By placing these two symbols right next to each other, the RAF implies an inherent connection between the BPP and revolutionary violence – and it is this path the RAF intends to follow.

The emergence of the RAF came not out of the blue, but must be placed in the historical context of escalating violence on behalf of the state and the German Student Protest Movement against it. The killing of Benno Ohnesorg by a police man during the peaceful demonstrations against the Persian Shah on June 2nd 1967, the attempted assassination of SDS¹³ leader Rudi Dutschke in April 1968 and the following violent clashes between the students and the police brought about by the attempt to give halt to the delivering of the BILD Zeitung (a conservative yellow print which was blamed for the reactionary climate resulting in the bullets on Dutschke) have to be seen as landmarks in the spiral of unfolding violence and counter-violence. For the radicalizing part of the Movement this repression carried out by the German state literally forced them to apply revolutionary violence, as Ensslin, who would eventually co-found the RAF, expressed after the death of Ohnesorg:

“This fascist state wants to kill all of us. We have to organize the resistance. Violence can only be answered by violence. This is the generation of Auschwitz – you cannot argue with them.”¹⁴

The radicalization of the German Student Protest Movement was essentially perpetuated by another phenomena: the pressing desire to deal with the Nazi past, which was perceived as unresolved open wound of the German psyche on behalf of the students. This moral burden made the students view both the Vietnam War and the African American freedom movement

12 Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom*, 118.

13 Main organ of the New Left: Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (German Socialist Student League)

14 Klimke, *The Other Alliance*, 129.

in a special light - a repetition of the horrors of Auschwitz and the existential struggle of a fiercely oppressed racial minority. For further insights in this context, see Gassert/Steinweis, Kundnani and Schneider.

Out of this climate the RAF came into being, but regarding the legitimacy of violence it was not only the situation in Germany fostering this perception:

“Gandhi and Martin Luther King are dead. The bullets of their murderers, the bullets on Rudi, the bullets of Kurras, Dallwitz and Wetter have ended the dream of non-violence. The one, who does not resist, dies.”

The founding manifesto of the RAF is reminiscent of the “international bullets” on the leaders of resistance world-wide which literally killed the ideology of non-violence. The framework of the struggle is international and the means of resistance are to be violent.

In the course of its existence the BPP also widened their initial focus from the African American freedom struggle to perceive it within an international context. The Party organized the “United Front Against Fascism” conference in 1969, where its commitment to international class struggle was stressed and alliances with other revolutionary organizations abroad were fostered. This embrace of an international struggle found reflection in the revise of the 10-Point-Program: “In most cases ‘oppressed people’ and ‘oppressed communities’ were added to ‘black people’ and ‘black community,’ but there were not other changes.”¹⁵ The issue of violent resistance had also become a more pressing one within the BPP as the open display of weapons had caused many, often deadly clashes with the police forces. For some Panthers, the initiation of an open ‘urban guerrilla warfare’ against the oppressing system became more likely as the police seemed to embody an “‘occupying army in the black community.’”¹⁶ This developing radicalization of the BPP was perceived as legitimate and inspiring on behalf of the would-become-members of the RAF (e. g. Ensslin followed the African American freedom struggle in detail), especially after the explicitly mentioned assassination of Martin Luther King. The fact that the highly acknowledged leader of the non-violent Civil Rights Movement fell victim to the violent climate in the U. S. made many people, on both sides of the Atlantic, lose hope in the potential for changing western societies from within. Not drawn to violent resistance in the first place, the symbolic death of “the dream of non-violence” contributed to the radicalization of the later RAF members who perceived the Panther’s philosophy of self-defense as justified and appropriate. Consequently, “there are numerous references to the Black Panthers in the theoretical writings of the RAF,

15 Jessica Christina Harris, „Revolutionary Black Nationalism: The Black Panther Party,“ *The Journal of Negro History* 85 (2000): 168.

16 Albert and Albert, *The Sixties Papers*, 24.

especially concerning its relationship to the masses and transition to illegality, as well as its use of violence.”¹⁷

The first lengthy strategy paper of the RAF – *Das Konzept Stadtguerilla* (The Urban Guerilla Concept) – begins with a quote from Mao and ends with a quote from prominent Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver:

“Either you’re part of the problem or your part of the solution. There is nothing in between. This shit has been examined and analyzed for decades and generations from every angle. My opinion is that most of what happens in this country does not need to be analyzed any further.”¹⁸

In the perception of the RAF, both Marxism-Leninism and the radicalizing self-defense philosophy of the Panthers merged into one seemingly consistent revolutionary agenda in which

“armed struggle is “the highest form of Marxism-Leninism” (Mao), and that it can and must begin now, as without it there can be no anti-imperialist struggle in the metropole.”¹⁹

Armed struggle is Marxism-Leninism and the Black Panthers engage in armed struggle – the Panthers must therefore be perceived a Marxist-Leninist ally in the “anti-imperialist struggle”.

Different Revolution: The BPP in its Revolutionary Ideology

After having interpreted the BPP through the eyes of the RAF, a closer look at the Panthers intends to figure out the meaning of its revolutionary platform to contrast it with the concept of revolution the RAF was built upon. I try to come close to a meaning of the platform of the Panthers by placing it within its political, social and cultural context.

“Black people had been taught nonviolence; it was deep in us. What good, however, was nonviolence when the police were determined to rule by force?”²⁰ Huey P. Newton’s words reveal the initial necessity that urged the founding of the Black Panthers: to protect the African American community from police violence. In the first place it were considerations of how to best guarantee the sheer survival of the community and not theories of revolutionary violence which guided Newton and Seale, as Point 7 of their 10-Point-Program demonstrates:

“We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality.”²¹

17 Klimke, *The Other Alliance*, 128.

18 „The Urban Guerilla Concept“, p. 105 Labour History Resources, accessed October 11, 2011, <http://labourhistory.net/raf/search.php?search=das+konzept+stadtguerilla&field=0&word=0&btn=Search>.

19 Ibid., 87.

20 Huey P. Newton. „Revolutionary Suicide,“ in *A Reader and Guide. Eyes on the Prize. America’s Civil Rights Years*, ed. Clayborne Carson (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 219.

21 Newton and Seale, „What We Want, What We Believe. Black Panther Party Platform and Program. 1966,“

The fact that originally the Party had the additional “for Self-Defense” in its name underlines this interpretation. Self-Defense, violent if necessary, is not perceived as automatically directed against the American system but as reaffirmation of its basic principles. Instead of attaching the Communist Manifesto to their 10-Point-Program, Newton and Seale reminded their fellow countrymen of the essential revolutionary spirit of the American nation. In 1776, Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence which justified the anticipated split from the English mother colony as it had fallen short of meeting the needs of the American people:

“[...] We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness. [...]”²²

When Jefferson wrote down these words, the *Peculiar Institution* of slavery was an integral part of American society, both in the South and in the North. 200 years and a civil war later, the African American still was not free although the U. S. founding manifesto had guaranteed basic rights for every citizen: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal[.]” Although the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965) had eventually granted full civil rights to blacks, they were still suffering under social and economic oppression. The 10-Point-Program was a clear call for fundamental change in the existing system: “We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.” These demands are again to be read in the genuine American context as they materialize the long denied “unalienable rights; [...] life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The BPP did not openly advocate an immediate overthrow of the government, Newton even stressed that “[t]he Black Panthers were and are always required to keep their activities within legal bounds [...]”²³ Simultaneously, the white power structure is unmistakably reminded of the given “right of the people to alter or to abolish it” “whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends[.]” The whole 10-Point-Program oscillates between the belief in system inherent reform and the insight in necessary revolutionary change. The beliefs of the Panthers which are attached below each of the 10 demands are all phrased in the

250.

22 Ibid., 251.

23 Newton, „Revolutionary Suicide,“ 221.

same manner: “We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then [...]”; “We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then [...]” etc. On the one hand, these “if...not, then” clauses read like the final call for the white power structure “to secure these rights” of the African Americans. On the other hand, they read like a cynical commentary as the white man`s government has so far (the entire course of American history) obviously failed to grant African Americans basic civil and human rights. Reform and *Regime Change* are possible in the Panther`s dialectic of revolutionary rhetoric – both perceived as potentials of the American *Wesenheit*.

For Newton it was obvious that the African American community was under siege and that something had to be done against it – even beyond armed self-defense. Grassroots community activism should reform the African American communities regarding their social, economic, cultural and political situation. The most prominent of these activities was the Breakfast for Children program, as it provided often lacking food for needy children and thereby helped to reinstall a sense of worth and dignity within them. Eldridge Cleaver has summarized the underlying philosophy of these kind of programs:

“Breakfast for Children pulls people out of the system and organizes them into an alternative. Black children who go to school hungry each morning have been organized into their poverty, and the Panther program liberates them, frees them from that aspect of their poverty. This is liberation in practice.”²⁴

These two initial brands of the BPP – armed self-defense and social community action - can be most fruitfully made sense of when placed in the context of Black Power. This slogan re-entered the political discourse through SNCC leader Stokeley Carmichael²⁵ but its origins trace back to early 20th century African American activists like W. E. B. DuBois and particularly Marcus Garvey`s philosophy of Black Nationalism:

“The political objectives of Black Nationalism can range from the admonition that black people must control the politics and economics of their communities, to the creation of a separate black nation in North America or returning to the African homeland.”²⁶

Building upon this strain of African American political philosophy, Black Power meant social, cultural, political and economic independence and self-determination of blacks, but initially the term was an open signifier, defiant of fixed meaning. Through the 10-Point-Program

“Newton sought to give a pragmatic significance to the black power slogan. According to the Panther leader, black power should mean more than a change in pride, consciousness, and culture. Power required the revolutionary will to alter forcefully the circumstances of black

24 Eldridge Cleaver. „On Meeting the Needs of the People. 1969,“ in *Modern Black Nationalism. From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan*, ed. William L. Van Deburg (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 245.

25 ct. Carson, *Eyes on the Prize*, 191-94.

26 Harris, „Revolutionary Black Nationalism: The Black Panther Party,“ 162.

life[...]"²⁷

as Point 1 makes clear: "We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community." In the daily practice of the Panthers, Black Power signified community action designed to uplift the physical and psychological conditions of African Americans. This is what Cleaver meant when he characterized the Breakfast for Children program as "liberation in practice". Within this context the *Early Panthers* must be perceived as Black Nationalist organization, which committed itself to racial self-determination, as Point 10 stresses:

" [...] And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny. [...]"

Dogmatic Marxism-Leninism which designed the background of the RAF must therefore be perceived as only one of the many possible strains to be incorporated by the BPP within the flexible framework of Black Power. The many facets of revolutionary ideology, the Panthers came to officially embrace after the above mentioned 1969 conference "United Front Against Facism" included the

"cleansing force of violence which frees one from despair and feelings of inferiority, adopted from Martinique psychiatrist and author Frantz Fanon; the power of the gun from Mao Tse-Tung; death with honor from Che Guevara; feeding on the brutality of the occupying army from Ho Chi Minh; terrorizing, disrupting, and destroying from Al Fatah; and autonomy, integrity, and responsibility of the Party from Kim Il Sung."²⁸

The cultural appropriation of this potpourri of revolutionary ideas was still intended to foster the survival of the community, although the initial focus on race had broadened to perceive oppression as international phenomena which intertwined the categories of race and class.²⁹ Lacking the communitarian aspect entirely, the ultimate goal of the RAF was to initiate revolutionary war to perpetuate the final victory of world communism – by any means necessary. These differing ideological perceptions become clear when we compare both groups' valuations of the outbreak of urban unrest in the ghettos. In the eyes of the RAF, the spontaneous upheavals of the suffering African American city dwellers were forebears of the anticipated revolution:

"The Afro-Americans and their allies did not weigh the distribution of power of the classes, nor did they count the divisions of the counterrevolution. They did not calculate their chances. They just let themselves go for a moment and turned their violence against their oppressors.

27 Albert and Albert, *The Sixties Papers*, 24.

28 Harris, „Revolutionary Black Nationalism: The Black Panther Party,“ 168.

29 cf. William L. Van Deburg, ed., *Modern Black Nationalism. From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 240.

In the streets of Watts, they ignited the fire of the revolution, which will not go out before their final victory.”³⁰

Besides the remark that “they just let themselves go for a moment”, which has a somehow smear racist undertone, bearing witness to the old stereotype of the more emotionalized African American, the language of this quote is again Marxian: “distribution of power of the classes”, “violence against their oppressors” and the “fire of the revolution”. As actual inhabitants of the destroyed inner-city areas, the Panthers had a less romantic perception of the race riots, which caused the deaths of many blacks and destroyed much African American property: “By the end of 1968, the decade’s racial upheavals had led to a total of 208 deaths and \$792,8 million worth of property destruction.”³¹ According to the Panthers the rioters should have better calculated their chances as “[s]pontaneous uprisings [...] were hurting the black community more than damaging the white power structure.”³² But this strong focus on community work was also subject of ideological debate within the BPP. One faction, lead by Eldridge Cleaver, called for an reduction of community programs to focus on revolutionary warfare instead, especially after the official doctrine of the party had shifted towards a more leftist and international perception of the black freedom struggle in 1969. This *Later Panthers* must be perceived within the framework of Revolutionary Black Nationalism, which had developed out of Black Nationalism:

“Revolutionary Nationalists maintain that African-Americans can not achieve liberation in the United States within the existing political and economic system. Therefore, they call for revolution to rid the society of capitalism, imperialism, racism, and sexism.”³³

As above mentioned, the BPP was born into the vacuum of believing in reform on the one hand and affirming revolution on the other hand. Hence, the ideology of the Panthers was oscillating between the concepts of Black Power, Black Nationalism and Revolutionary Black Nationalism. These philosophies were themselves subject to constant change and offered different perspectives on agency. Towards the end of the Sixties the concept of Revolutionary Black Nationalism was the dominating one; an international scope and determined means seemed to be best appropriate to fight the oppressing system from without. Eventually, the initial obligation towards and focus on the African American community remained the core of the party’s activism. Newton and Seale refused to follow Cleaver’s militant approach and finally ousted him from the BPP in 1972.³⁴ These ideological, often bitterly disputed

30 Höhn and Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom*, 118.

31 Albert and Albert, *The Sixties Papers*, 22-23.

32 Ibid., 24.

33 Harris, „Revolutionary Black Nationalism: The Black Panther Party,“ 163.

34 ct. Carson, *Eyes on the Prize*, 222.

differences among the Panthers weakened their influence and caused a split: while the official party remained active in the communities and became more engaged in local politics – the reformers around Newton and Seale had not completely lost belief in changing the American system from within – the revolutionary wing built up the Black Liberation Army and went into the underground.

Brothers in Arms? Cultural Appropriations in the Global Sixties

“The immense social-psychological significance of the RAF for the Federal Republic lies in the fact that it has re-opened a chapter of the murderous history which had preceded its founding – and initiated a new one.[translated]”³⁵

The RAF and the BPP were different organizations – different in their revolutionary agendas, goals, strategies and, most essentially, emerging from a different historical context. Coming out of the tradition of Black Nationalism, the Panthers focused on the survival and the social, cultural, economical, and political growth of the African American communities. The unfolding protest of the globalized generation of '68 enabled the BPP to place their freedom struggle within an international context. Still guided by the concept of Black Power, numerous philosophies like Marxism-Leninism or Fanon's ideas of colonial resistance were ideologically incorporated and culturally appropriated by the party. It were these *Later Panthers* of Revolutionary Black Nationalism which were perceived both as role model and partner in the common revolutionary war, the RAF liked to inflame. The fact that the initial focus of the BPP was almost exclusively placed on the community did not hinder the process of cultural appropriation, as Klimke has observed:

“Any objections to this strategy with reference to the highly different local environment of each of these movements were disregarded by the RAF and dismissed as only minor tactical differences.”³⁶

The significance of the BPP for the RAF must not be placed in the field of ideology, as Marxism-Leninism in its numerous varieties was taken for granted in the fight against capitalist imperialism, but in the realm of cultural symbolism:

“Particularly the carrying of weapons as a sign of an increasing militancy in imitation of the Black Panthers came to symbolize greater determination and confrontation.”³⁷

The logic of cultural appropriation must be understood as selective process, whereby the perceiver incorporates those elements of the perceived that strengthen the consistence of his

35 cf. Christian Schneider, „30 Jahre Deutscher Herbst. Zwischen den Toden,“ Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, accessed October 11, 2011, file:///E:/RAF_Boell_Vaeter.htm.

36 Klimke, *The Other Alliance*, 132.

37 Ibid., 127.

Symbolic Order. An intrinsic catalyst for engaging in the process of cultural appropriation is the aspiration to build up one's potential for agency. Reminiscent of genuine American revolutionary principles, the Panthers strove for further ideological assistance by embracing the world-wide struggle against oppression. They reaffirmed their grassroots approach later on which offered practical agency to the African American community. The RAF perceived everything through the angle of Auschwitz, which made them flee into the desert of ideology. The more radical, the easier cultural appropriations were made, but the ever-present nightmare of the Holocaust, which was aspired to be overcome, eventually erased all potential for agency:

“Murder is suicide is murder”: In the final suicide orchestration of Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Jan-Carl Raspe, and Irmgard Möller, the haunting return of Auschwitz condensed as agitated extermination phantasy of the later-born: the phantasmal recurrence of that violence which became the negative creation myth of the second German Republic. In Stammheim, the founders of the RAF turned with ostentation, desperate, and simulating a faked reality, against themselves the historically suppressed potential for destructiveness, whose returning yet all were frightened of. The origin of the `myth` that has later on been imputed on the RAF is to be found here.[translated]³⁸

As resistance against the system came to be perceived within a global framework towards the end of the Sixties, both the BPP and the RAF engaged in the free-floating discourse of cultural appropriation – the ones adjusting to revolutionary theories to broaden their community-based freedom struggle, the others incorporating militant symbols of resistance to perpetuate their bloody process of coming to terms with Germany's past, while becoming their fathers in the end.

38 cf. Schneider, „30 Jahre Deutscher Herbst,“ Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, accessed October 11, 2011, file:///E:/RAF_Boell_Vaeter.htm.

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