

CHAPTER 4: EUROPEAN AUTONOMOUS MOVEMENTS

Within massive mobilizations, whether those of the peace movement, the contestation of nuclear power plants at Brokdorf, and the prolonged attempt to stop the Startbahn West runway in Frankfurt, the role of the Autonomen was to provide the militant cutting edge to popular struggles. By the mid-1980s, they consolidated themselves and served as an organizing base separate from single-issue campaigns and locally-defined groups. As I discuss in this chapter, they built urban bases in Berlin, Hamburg, Amsterdam and Copenhagen. After the high point of autonomous "dual power" of the squatters in Kreuzberg in 1983, activists moved on to other projects and campaigns. By 1984, all the squatted houses in Germany had been legalized, and the anti-nuclear power and weapons insurgencies were momentarily quiet, but the Autonomen, galvanized in the crucible of years of militant struggles, helped create a "renaissance" of resistance.

The most significant victory won by the autonomous movement occurred at Wackersdorf, Bavaria, the site where a nuclear reprocessing facility was being built that would have had the capacity to provide Germany with bomb-grade plutonium. Twice in 1985-6, Autonomen initiated the occupation of the construction site.¹ Demonstrations of between 40,000 and 80,000 persons were pulled together with regularity, often despite police bans on such gatherings.² On December 12, 870 persons were arrested when the first *Hüttendorf* was cleared out, and on January 7, another 700 people were taken into custody at a nearby encampment.³ Impressed with the sincerity and determination of the Autonomen, Bavarian farmers and middle-class people became involved in the protracted campaign to prevent Wackersdorf from ever opening. Every weekend for months, thousands of people brought themselves to the site, and when confrontations occurred, autonomous groups received support from the local population. As one unsympathetic observer put it: "Stunned Germans watched unprecedented scenes on their TV screens as old ladies led masked Autonomen away to hide them from the police, and farmers wielded shovels and pitchforks against police."⁴ The response of the authorities was to forbid public events (even the performance of Haydn's Creation in June 1987) and private meetings (as when anti-nuclear groups were prevented from having a national meeting in Regensburg at the end of November 1986). Nonetheless, the movement continued its mobilizations and militant actions, eventually winning closure of Wackersdorf (although the government claimed it was for technical reasons).

As exemplified at Wackersdorf, autonomous movements synthesized a new militance -- neither armed guerrilla actions nor passive civil disobedience. Their conscious spontaneity provided an alternative to party membership that facilitated activism and provided a news means of impacting political developments. Besides Wackersdorf, Autonomen also played a critical role in a victorious campaign against a national census that would have authorized half a million bureaucrats to pry into the private lives of West Germans.⁵ During the same time that the Common Market unified European planning and production, autonomous movements resisted world economic developments that impacted cities and regions without taking local needs into account. Opposition to gentrification and capital-intensive building projects, exemplified in the struggles against Startbahn West and Wackersdorf, are part of the defense of localized life-worlds being destroyed by the giant governments and global corporations.

Despite conservative interpretations of autonomy as meaning isolation from the rest of the world, or worse, autonomy at the expense of others as in the case of Serbia, the type of autonomy practiced by the transnational Autonomen was in harmony with the downtrodden. In solidarity with the "wretched of the earth," they acted according to ethical and moral imperatives of international solidarity. In June 1987, the day before Ronald Reagan paid his second presidential visit to Berlin, more than

50,000 people went into the streets to protest and 10,000 riot police mobilized to protect him.⁶ The next day, in order to prevent a disruption of Reagan's speech, the city fathers and their American military governors issued an order banning three scheduled demonstrations, and to make sure their will prevailed, they sealed off the Autonomen stronghold in the Kreuzberg neighborhood of Berlin, claiming that "technical difficulties" caused the subways there to stop running. Promised replacement buses never appeared, and anyone trying to leave Kreuzberg was stopped at one of nine checkpoints ringing the neighborhood. Despite all these precautions, when a spontaneous demonstration erupted in the middle of the city, the police quickly surrounded it and held over 500 people in a "kettle" (an encirclement of police) for over five hours. Several of the above measures violated existing laws, causing a legal crisis of no small proportions. But the shooting deaths of two police men at Startbahn West on November 2, 1987 soon overshadowed the government's abuse of power in Berlin.

In September 1988, the autonomous movement moved to the next level of confrontation against the world system. Using the international conventions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to dramatize the contradiction between internationalization from the top and the destruction of autonomy at the grassroots, they were the motor force behind a broad mobilization on Berlin. While the Greens met to discuss alternatives to the existing world financial system and dozens of other groups organized events, the Autonomen declined to cooperate with reformists vis-a-vis the IMF.⁷ **Der Spiegel** quoted one radical as saying: "A death machine can only be combated."⁸ Acting on their understanding of the imperialist role of the IMF, the Autonomen mobilized thousands of militants from across Germany as well as from England, Italy, Holland, Denmark, Austria and the United States. When 80,000 protestors arrived to demonstrate against the conventions of these globally decisive organizations, thousands of bankers were compelled to cut short their meetings and leave Berlin a day earlier than they had planned. During the convention's first four days, the 12,000 police and 4,000 private bodyguards were able to maintain order only by banning demonstrations and viciously attacking hastily assembled groups of protesters. As members of the international press corps and local residents were brutalized by roaming police snatch squads, public sympathy for the Autonomen grew. On their side, the Autonomen enforced a strict ban on alcohol at movement bars. In preparation for their confrontations, they tried to drive heroin users and dealers out of Kreuzberg in a campaign dubbed "Fists Against Needles." Most importantly, rather than invited riots into their neighborhood, they took great pain to make sure street fights would happen in the fashionable sections of Berlin, rather than in their own communities, an indication of the movement's building of a base area that they were now protecting from police invasion.

As their international links developed, the Autonomen in many countries paralleled one another more than they conformed to mainstream politics or even to countercultural values in their own countries. Activists converged in conferences, friendships, and internationally coordinated campaigns, and a loosely-linked network of "info-stores" or libertarian centers sprang up, functioning as the movement's eyes and ears.⁹ For years before anyone dreamed of anything resembling the Autonomen, regional movements sprang up that punctuated local scenes with creative tactics and ironic interventions. In Holland, the Provos released chickens at rush hour in Amsterdam to have fun with traffic, and squatters were a huge presence. Copenhagen's flowerful countercultural was the darling of all Europe. By the end of the 1980s, however, the movements in these cities had adopted the features of the Autonomen, an intuitive and practical unity that transcended or even negated the nationalistically defined conceptions of self still inculcated in many young Europeans. As I discuss in this chapter, a remarkably coherent autonomous movement developed in Europe out of many disparate struggles. Their uniformity and unity had both positive and negative features: In Holland and Denmark, countries which, for a

variety of reasons, had largely avoided violence of the German variety, the movements adopted tactics from Germany and became increasingly militant -- to the point where their isolation hurt their own existence.¹⁰ In Hamburg, Amsterdam and Copenhagen, the central thrust of local autonomous movements was to create free spaces for everyday life--and there have been long and bitter struggles to defend these liberated territories. These two sides of Autonomien activism -- campaigns against what they view as the system's irrationality and building up their own "revolutionary dual power" -- define complementary (and sometimes contradictory) dimensions of their existence. The former can easily lead to isolated small groups and prison, while the latter poses the dangers of integration and accommodation.

As European radicals became increasingly violence-prone, police actions were also internationally coordinated. In one month, they destroyed an Autonomien stronghold in Switzerland (the Zaffaraya encampment in Bern), evicted squatters in the German cities of Göttingen, Freiburg, Düsseldorf, Bochum and Kiel, and mounted an unsuccessful assault on the Hafenstrasse squatters in Hamburg. The kettle tactic they used in Berlin was copied from earlier kettles in Hamburg and Mainz.¹¹

In the 1980s, the "economic wonder" of post-war Europe turned into economic crisis, a continually developing erosion of economic prosperity which has not turned around in the 1990s. This economic downturn worried the guardians of *pax Americana* long before their attention was called to the possibility of limited nuclear war or a breakdown in Western Europe's military and political alliances. During Jimmy Carter's Presidency, the word "recession" became widely used in the U.S., but in Western Europe, **depression** was how the economy was commonly described. In the period from 1980-81, unemployment in Common Market countries rose 30%. After Margaret Thatcher came to power in May 1979, Great Britain's unemployment rate more than doubled to over 12% (about 3 million people), the highest unemployment rate there in over 50 years. Dutch unemployment rose to a post-war record of over 350,000. The expected turnabout never materialized and unemployment remains the main economic problem of Europe.

An above average--and climbing--unemployment rate for young people was a new phenomenon. Over the next decade, as these trends only intensified, youth unemployment in Germany climbed to 9.6% in 1982 (over 20% in both France and the United Kingdom) and it remains above 9% into the 1990s.¹² Since the post-war baby boom in Germany was delayed until after reconstruction, the number of Germans between 15 and 29 years old in the workforce did not reach its apex until 1987.¹³ The economic dimensions of the crisis of youth is told in statistical surveys of shortages of housing and jobs, but there was another moment of the crisis accounting for the emergence of autonomous youth movements -- a cultural-motivational dimension obvious in the unwillingness of young people to integrate themselves into what they considered to be the "middle class." The legitimacy of the family, the hegemony of the state, and the desirability of an everyday existence predicated on material comforts in exchange for hard work (the Protestant ethic) all became questioned. The new radicals were less concerned with material comforts for themselves than with creating a new relationship between humans and Nature, with finding a way of life freed from both capitalist exploitation and bureaucratic domination. Their aspirations for a nuclear-free, fully-housed society seemed unattainable within the existing system: Their aesthetic fight defied the logic of large-scale capitalist efficiency, and their notion of freedom as more than freedom from material want seemed incomprehensible in a world where starvation and war were still remembered by many older Europeans.

AMSTERDAM

From the 1960s into the 1990s, imaginative and playful countercultural movements in

Amsterdam and Copenhagen connected with each other in a synchronous continuum of issues and tactics. Not burdened with the weight of reacting to nationalistic militarism, activists in these three cities shared a political-culture of immediate actionism, and their actions often had direct national effects. In the 1980s, Amsterdam was a city being (post)modernized through a massive infusion of capital. Billions of guilders were pumped into urban revitalization programs, and as Holland became part of the homogenization process (widely perceived as the scourge of Americanization) sweeping Europe, its movement underwent a transition from a purely Dutch phenomenon, one replete with *provos*, *kabouters*, and *kraakers*, to a wing of the international Autonomen. In 1986 in the course of a three-hour battle against police guarding the nuclear power plant at Borssele, the first Dutch group formed which referred to itself as Autonomen.

At its high point in the early 1980s, the *kraakers* of Amsterdam fired the imaginations of young people all over Europe. Between 1968 and 1981, more than 10,000 houses and apartments were squatted in Amsterdam, and an additional 15,000 were taken over in the rest of Holland. Many of these squatters (or *kraakers* -- pronounced "crackers") were organized into a network of resistance to the police and the government. In squatted "People's Kitchens," bars and cafes, food and drink were served at affordable prices. In occupied office buildings, neighborhood block committees set up information centers to deal with complaints against police and landlord brutality. A *kraaker* council planned the movement's direction and a *kraaker* radio kept people posted on new developments and late-breaking stories.

The single most important event in the life and death of the *kraakers* (and the most internationally publicized) occurred on April 30, 1980 when riots marred Queen Beatrice's lavish coronation. "*Geen woning--Geen Kronung*" ("No place to live, no coronation") was the slogan for the demonstrations, but it was meant more as a mobilizing call than a physical threat to the ceremony. The *kraakers* had originally hoped for a peaceful party day, although like any other day, they had also planned to occupy a few more empty dwellings before beginning to party. They were against a coronation so lavish that it cost 56 million Gilder (about \$25 million). When mounted police attacked some of the street parties, people fought back, unleashing a storm the police were unable to control. The police were so badly beaten that day that the next week, the police commissioner complained that many of his men could not continue to fulfill their duties for psychological reasons.

In Amsterdam, a city with fewer than 800,000 inhabitants, more than 50,000 dwellings places were needed. When polled, a majority of the Dutch people repeatedly expressed sympathy for the squatters because of the dearth of reasonably priced places to live. Given the widespread sympathy enjoyed by squatters, local authorities attempted to divide the movement by proclaiming only a few to be dangerous radicals who "led astray" thousands of "honest" squatters. Intense police attacks were then mounted on houses perceived as a central leadership, but hastily assembled throngs of squatters, about one thousand within the first half hour, blocked the way to besieged houses in the Vondelstraat on March 3, 1980, and the *Groote Keyser* after the Queen's coronation.

The *kraakers* were able to control the streets in the early 1980s, but their victories exacted a high cost: Dutch tolerance was tempered with a new edge of legal reprimand and revengeful violence. Citizens Committees formed to support the police, and football teams were recruited by landlords to clear out occupied buildings. These groups often did their dirty work dressed in American football gear (helmets and shoulder pads) and steel-tipped boots. In response to *kraaker* self-defense, the Dutch Parliament reconsidered laws governing the vacant buildings. As previously liberal social security payments to students and young people were curtailed, the police were granted more money and more power. New laws were enforced to make it easier for landlords to evict squatters. Property owners had

needed the names of specific individuals in order to obtain authorization to call in the police, and because no self-respecting *kraaker* used their full name, it was all but impossible to evict them. The new laws waived the name requirement to obtain eviction papers and speeded up the time for actions to be sanctioned by the courts to less than a month. Also introduced were temporary rental contracts under which landlords did not have to show grounds for annulling contracts. When compared to the United States and other European countries, Dutch law remained quite liberal in terms of squatters' rights.¹⁴ Once a table, a chair and a bed have been moved into a vacant apartment, the occupant is legally permitted to stay.

Although there continued to be new squats (in Amsterdam a new squat per week was recorded), public opinion had turned dramatically against the squatters, and the police had inflicted a series of major defeats on them. One of the first battles lost by the *kraakers* -- for the *Lucky Luiyk* (the Lucky Luke) in 1982 -- was fought against the police and members of one of the small but increasingly violent neo-fascist parties in Holland. The squatters repelled the fascists who assaulted the house, but they could not hold out against the police. When a streetcar was set on fire in this fight, schisms began to appear in the ranks of the movement since many people questioned this extension of militant self-defense.

In truth, some *kraakers* were not for the radical transformation of society but merely needed an individual solution to their housing needs. To them, fighting the police was unnecessary, especially when it was possible to negotiate with the government and obtain a reasonable solution to their own individual housing problem. From their point of view, the simultaneous existence of thousands of empty apartments and tens of thousands of people in need of housing was a technical problem which could gradually be solved by the existing system. Other *kraakers* -- the radicals -- saw the housing crisis as another example of the system's irrationality, an irrationality also evident in the increasing starvation in the Third World, in the production of nuclear waste and in transformation of cities into concrete jungles. From their point of view, using crowbars to occupy vacant buildings and barricades to defend them was part of the same struggle being waged with stones and slingshots in occupied Palestine and AK-47s in Nicaragua. They had the feeling that it was part of their national privileges as members of an affluent society in a corrupt world system that they were afforded the luxuries Dutch citizens enjoy. These *kraakers* understood the atomization and standardization of their lives as part of the price exacted upon them by the world system, and they hoped to contribute to its global transformation.

By 1983, this division among the *kraakers* was no longer an internal matter. After doing all they could to distance these two wings of the movement from each other, Dutch authorities moved resolutely to eradicate the radicals. At the battle for the *Groote Watering*, the police used armored vehicles and construction cranes to evict the squatters. The cranes were used to hoist metal containers filled with a half-dozen police onto the roofs of the building from where they could penetrate the elaborate defenses. At first, the *kraakers* were able to repulse these rooftop attacks, but the police used their imagination and loaded a police officer dressed as Santa Claus (St. Nick) into one of the containers. His emergence so surprised the *kraakers* that the attack succeeded. The next police target was a building on Weyers, a huge stronghold with art galleries, coffee shops, and a concert hall. Despite 500 defenders in the building and thousands of people in the streets, the massive police concentration and their use of overwhelming quantities of tear gas, armor and cranes won the day. Today the new Holiday Inn at Weyers is a painful reminder of the police success, and February 1984 is remembered as a time when the movement was split beyond repair.

Despite these setbacks, the *kraakers* were not yet defeated. When the Pope visited Amsterdam in May of 1985, millions of guilders had to be spent on his defense. Anonymous individuals

offered a hefty reward to anyone who reached the pontiff, and in the riots which ensued, severe damage was inflicted on the city. The government reacted quickly. Using one of their specially trained units, the police illegally evicted a woman and her child from a squatted house in a working-class neighborhood known as a *kraaker* stronghold. When hundreds of people attempted to resquat the house, the police panicked, shooting one person in the arm. The house was retaken by squatters. As riot police arrived to bolster the forces of order, hundreds more *kraakers* reinforced the ranks of their opponents. After the police took the house for the second time, they badly beat up all 32 of those who were inside and put them in jail without bedding, food or medical care. The next day, Hans Koch, one of those who had been beaten, was found dead in his jail cell. For the next three nights, angry groups of *kraakers* attacked police stations, torched police cars--some in front of police headquarters--and smashed many city offices. City authorities stonewalled any response to the death of Hans Koch, and even a year later, the government still had not completed its inquiry into his death. In December 1986, when the report was finally released, it blamed the victim, claiming that his drug addiction had caused his death. Although the *kraakers* swiftly responded by firebombing more police stations, the government had chosen a violent solution in the struggle to reclaim Amsterdam.

The next month, when the new law governing housing went into effect, the balance of forces shifted. With yuppies on the ascendancy, the movement moved underground, and those committed to a vision of change developed new forms of resistance. Alternative institutions, previously incidental offsprings of a vibrant popular movement, were compelled to tie themselves more intimately to their only remaining constituency: the international Autonomes. Increasingly cut off from the younger generation in Holland, the *kraakers* replenished their ranks with activists from England, Germany, and as far away as Australia. The internationalization of the movement only intensified the reaction of the Dutch Right. Portraying the *kraakers* as foreigners, they recruited Dutch football teams to join with neo-fascist groups and attack squatted houses, often in full view of police. In one such confrontation, a team known as the Rams arrived in full American football gear, and although the occupants tried to surrender peacefully, they were severely beaten, to the point where one of them had to spend two weeks in the hospital with multiple fractures of the legs and arms and severe facial lacerations.

With the intensification of the attacks against the movement, a greater commitment to practical resistance seemed needed. With a declining popular base, secretive small-group actions, particularly by people using the signature of RA RA (Anti-Racist Action Group) became more common. RA RA grew out of the *kraaker* movement, and like the squatters, it became part of a wider European movement. By the late 1980s, RA RA was part of a militant anti-imperialism on the ascendancy in European movement circles. In 1985, RA RA began its most successful campaign -- to force MAKRO supermarkets, a chain owned by one of the largest corporations in Holland, to divest its investments in South Africa. After a series of firebombings caused over 100 million guilders in damages to these supermarkets, the corporation withdrew its money from South Africa. Emboldened by success, RA RA then attacked Shell, Holland's largest corporation, one of the world's largest multinationals, and the Dutch Queen's main source of income. In one night, 37 Shell stations were torched in Amsterdam alone. Despite more than 100 such attacks on its gas stations, Shell increased its investments in South Africa and simultaneously launched an extensive public relations campaign against the domestic "terrorists."

The Dutch royal family is one of Shell's largest stockholders, and the police were eager to show their loyalty. On April 11, 1988, Dutch police raided 10 houses, seizing address books, diaries, and computers and arresting 8 people on suspicion of belonging to RA RA. Although the press immediately declared that the hard core of RA RA had finally been apprehended, 5 of the 8 were quickly released for lack of evidence, and the cases against the remaining 3 were undeniably weak. Moreover, in

response to the arrests, Shell stations were sabotaged in Utrecht, Apeldoorn, Tilburg, Baarn, Almere, and Haaksbergen, a clear sign that the infrastructure of RA RA remained intact. At the same time, the popular movement declined. We see here a stark subcycle within the better known synergistic dynamic of repression and resistance: Secretive conspiratorial resistance helps minimize the possibility and impact of open popular forms of resistance; guerrilla actions replace massive mobilizations; and the impetus to increasing democracy is lost as the bitterness of confrontation becomes primary. In such contexts, the forces of order thrive while popular movements become weakened and vulnerable.

In Holland, the police first crushed the *kraakers* in Nijmegen, their second greatest redoubt. A large vacant building owned by Shell -- the Marienburch -- had been resquatted on April 24 by over 100 people wearing masks, helmets, and gloves and armed with clubs. They quickly scared away the few policemen at the scene and barricaded themselves inside the building. At 5 a.m. on the next morning, hundreds of riot police retook the building, arresting 123 people. Three weeks later, another building, originally squatted by a women's group in 1980, was also attacked by police enforcing the city council's declaration of the city as a "*kraaker* free zone" would be enforced.

The government's success in Nijmegen encouraged the police to take action in Amsterdam, where the squatters were strongest. On July 18, hundreds of riot police launched a combined assault from the canals and the streets on the last big *kraaker* bastion in Amsterdam on the Konradstraat. Hundreds of people defended the building, an old textile mill used for years as an alternative workplace for artisans and home for 140 people. At one point in the battle, the building caught on fire, causing a giant cloud of smoke to rise ominously over the city. In the aftermath of their eviction, one of the *kraakers* expressed his frustration: "We were disappointed not because we didn't carry our own plan of defense, but because the police came at us much harder than we anticipated." At the time, homelessness and unemployment were severe problems in Holland and the Dutch state was throwing money at them. Few people expected the huge attack on the Konradstraat, particularly since its occupants had put forth a proposal to renovate the building at a low cost. The squatters' plan would have provided double the number of apartments and jobs that eventually were created, but the fate of that building revealed that the Social Democrats governing Amsterdam had another priority: destroying the *kraakers*.

By 1990, massive police attacks and modification of the laws covering squatters succeeded in displacing thousands of them from the center city, areas which were reclaimed by yuppies and sanitized for tourists. In 1993, fewer than 1000 apartments and houses were occupied in the entire country. What had been a feeling of empowerment in 1980 had been transformed into marginalization and paranoia. While once conflicts with the system had been paramount, as with all movements in decline, the most pressing problems became defined as internal ones. Such severe splits took place that a "traitors" list was published, a booklet entitled "Pearls Before Swine" containing the names of about 200 people found guilty of informing to the police, negotiating with the government for their own personal gain, or of becoming "yuppies."⁵ The movement had cut itself off from its own membership. One of the participants explained: "Once paranoia sets in, every new person is suspect, and you're left with 200 militants in your friendship circle. Then the rest of society has been insulated from the movement, and the 200 gradually become 150, then 50."

COPENHAGEN

In September 1971, a former army base on Christiania Island in Copenhagen was occupied by 50 activists, and during the years since, a diverse group of nearly 1000 inhabitants have made the 156 abandoned army buildings into homes. Christiania has long been a focal point for a cultural-political opposition in Denmark, and its residents have repelled attacks from police and from an invasion of

bikers in 1976. They have created more than 200 jobs in self-managed institutions and provided foreigners and Danes alike with a countercultural haven.¹⁶ The Christiania squat grew out of the same 1960s impetus that produced the "children's power" movement in Copenhagen. While Danish society took care of every Dane's needs, left out of the smoothly functioning system was any consideration of young people determining how to live their own lives. To create alternatives for themselves, teenagers squatted several empty houses in the late 1960s and were heard to shout: "Free us from our parents!" In March 1972, they established the "Children's Liberation Front," a decentralized organization that had groups living in several parts of the city. They dedicated themselves to providing a sanctuary for battered, abused and bored young people. In response to complaints from concerned parents, the police raided some of the houses in the summer of 1973. Trying to maintain a safe refuge, the group kept its campaign going by squatting one of the buildings in Christiania.¹⁷

In the Free Republic of Christiania, hundreds of people illegally lived in an alternative community where no authority counts except that of the Ting, an ancient Danish form of consensual decision-making. One of the central buildings is known as the "Tinghus" (Ting house). Sitting in a circle at meetings of the Communal Council, each resident may go to the center and speak, and decisions are made by the eventual agreement of all through consensus rather than a majority vote. Direct democracy within the Danish movement does not have to be explained--it is almost second nature--nor is it limited to occasional gatherings of political groups who use it as a formal method of decision-making. In other free areas besides Christiania, the Ting has been the way of life for over a thousand people since 1971.

Social atomization in the United States has advanced far beyond Europe and our cultural heritage is young and diffuse. Consensus often means that dissenting individuals exercise veto power over a group, making it impossible to formulate a common will and fomenting internal strife. In contrast, the bonds between those who live in Christiania are reinforced by the Ting. As one communitarian explained Christiania's structure to me:

If a problem comes up, it is first discussed in the house where it originates, where it hopefully will be resolved. Only if the issue is still not taken care of will a neighborhood meeting be called to discuss it. This way, the house and then the neighborhood must fail to deal with the problems before it becomes necessary to have a community meeting, and by then, most people have already heard about the matter and considered the various options. We never vote at community meetings nor do we have a council, because then some people make decisions for others. We only have community meetings when we need to--sometimes not for years, other times once a week.

Although Christiania is squatted, rent is collected for community projects and utilities. Every neighborhood has a person who collects a minimal payment (about \$100 per resident per month or 400 kroner in 1990) and each of the bars, restaurants, and shops pays something to the "big box," as the community fund is known. "Little boxes" for each neighborhood spend about half of the collected money, a structure which keeps decision-making at the base and also guarantees the availability of funding for grassroots ideas and initiatives. Residents have created a variety of shops: blacksmiths and metalworkers produce ecological ovens and a unique Christiania-designed bicycle; jewelers, potters, candle-makers and shoemakers labor side by side in other workshops; and there are numerous alternative healers and restaurants. The hundreds of people who work in Christiania's shops have a workers' council with regular meetings open to all who labor in the alternative institutions. The council also funds a child-care center.

While many people lived in Christiania for short periods of time, some stayed together through

the years. At a particularly tense moment in their relations with the authorities, the long-term residents formed a "Rainbow Army" (committed to nonviolence) designed to deal with repeated threats by the authorities to evict them, to keep the collective buildings in good repair and to meet other communal needs. The call in the Christiania newspaper, *Ugespejlet* (Daily Mirror), read:

By creating a Rainbow Army of nonviolent, hardworking people who all collaborate with each other, every individual in his or her own way, we can stand united, one for all and all for one, and overcome the threatening situation we are facing. Because we love each other, we can organize ourselves practically, in spite of our differences."¹⁸

On April 1, 1976, Danish authorities had promised to clear out the communards, but the imaginative campaign mounted by the Rainbow Army brought 25,000 supporters to Christiania on the appointed day. Some of the best bands in Denmark had produced a Christiania record, and the Christiania Action Theater had toured the country with a production of *April Fool's Day*. Evidently, the Rainbow Army won a decisive victory, because the planned eviction was first postponed and finally cancelled altogether in favor of legalization. Christiania thereby was transformed from a free space in which laws did not exist to possibly a charming village throwback to feudal Europe in which autonomous principalities existed only with the consent of the lord.¹⁹ In this case, Christiania pays the Ministry of Defense over \$500,000 annually for water, electricity and other services and has been recognized officially as a "social experiment."

Like any community in formation, Christiania has problems, particularly death drugs and police incursions. Over the years, the most severe internal issues Christiania has faced have been profit-hungry heroin dealers who moved into the "liberated" zone and refused to leave even though at every entrance to Christiania, signs posted by the residents read: "Speed, coke, heroin etc. are forbidden to be sold, used or possessed in Christiania." Christiania's position on drugs is the same as that of the Black Panther Party and the Metropolitan Indians: life drugs (marijuana, hashish, mushrooms) should be cheap and legal while death drugs (speed, cocaine, heroin) should be unavailable. Not only does this sensibility contradict mainstream understanding of psychopharmacology, its realization represents the de facto enactment of dual power regarding everyday life. Outdated, hypocritical regulations governing individual decisions on drug use are a revealing dimension of the obsolete character of the existing criminal justice system. Christiania's existence as a center for life drugs is civil disobedience in everyday life. In this context, being a dealer should not simply be understood as individual criminal behavior. Since the community tacitly accepts the use of life drugs, making them available at a reasonable price is part of the process of living according to self-determined norms and values. The existing government's laws are, at best, a nuisance, and at worst, a giant conspiracy supporting corporations which manufacture alcohol and market tobacco. Between January and October 1975, over 1000 people were arrested in police sweeps aimed at hashish dealers and petty thieves.²⁰ While police intrusions come in waves, the Christiania communards are left to fend for themselves when confronted with death drugs. Twice they used the Ting to convince motorcycle gangs who were dealing heroin to leave Christiania, although several people suffered injuries while persuading the bikers to leave.²¹ Unless the movement is able continually to deal with the drug issue collectively, Christiania be destroyed from within like Haight-Ashbury in the 1960s. Despite public support for an "Amsterdam solution," i.e. turning a blind eye to hashish as long as heroin was not sold, in the summer of 1987, there were 14 days of fights with the police, numerous searches, and many arrests before the authorities finally relented. The threat of renewed hostility remained, but the police returned to their old policy of tolerating hashish dealers as long as the quantity they carry is less than 100 grams.

In the mid-1980s, RA RA's anti-Shell campaign spread throughout Europe. In Denmark, on November 23, 1986, 28 Shell stations were simultaneously attacked, causing damages of about \$200,000. Although the international cycle of repression and resistance was not yet fully synchronized, these actions were one indication that the targets and tactics -- particularly the turn toward small-group destruction of property -- were increasingly coordinated across national borders. Years earlier, the struggle in Switzerland for an autonomous youth center had profoundly affected emerging Danish movements. In August 1981, thousands of people signed a petition requesting the use of a vacant bread factory to create a youth house "managed by those using it through direct democracy." For two months, the group raised money, canvassed the neighborhood and negotiated with the city council. When they were unable to achieve even the slightest positive response from Copenhagen's politicians, the "Initiv-gruppen" decided to take matters into their own hands -- they squatted the factory. But within two hours, the police evicted them.

A week later, after hours of meetings with city officials and debates among themselves, the Initiv-gruppen squatted an abandoned rubber factory in the same neighborhood. This time the police response was quite violent. The 100 or more people in the building, ranging in age from 10 to 25, were shelled by massive quantities of tear gas, the first time gas had been used against demonstrators in Denmark since the 1930s. The police violence led to an intensification of the struggle. Five days after the gassing, hundreds of people converged on an abandoned convent and barricaded themselves inside (and made preparations to repel even a heavy gas attack). Public support was with the squatters, and the police could do little more than encircle the building and await the outcome of neighborhood elections which happened to be scheduled for that week. The Left Socialists, a small radical party which grew out of the New Left of the 1960s, won control of the borough and quickly sanctioned the use of the convent for a youth house. During the next four months, however, the dream of a youth center turned into a nightmare. Drug addicts from the neighborhood used the convent as a shooting gallery, and a biker club, the Black Panthers, beat up the youthful occupants on several occasions without having to worry about police intervention. After months of such problems, the Initiv-gruppen disbanded themselves in disgust, leaving behind only 20 activists, who were soon evicted without incident.

Despite the disappointing outcome, a new group emerged--the BZ (occupation brigade)--and a month later they squatted a vacant music museum, the *Mekanisk Musikmuseum*, in an upper-middle class neighborhood. This time the police were unprepared to deal with the escalation of the confrontation. For the first time, the squatters fought back when the police arrived, throwing anything and everything--including a toilet--out the windows. The stubborn resistance mounted by BZ was initially successful, but after several hours of fighting, the police retook the building and arrested all 147 people inside. The ground rules of confrontational politics in Denmark were forever changed. After the battle for the music museum, a militant squatters movement emerged in Denmark's cities, and although it was never as massive as the one in Holland, it forged significant ties to groups of retired elders and linked up with the "free areas" of Christiania and Thy camp in northern Jutland.

Christiania provides a living example of the fusion of work and play--of the organizing principles for a new society--and its effect on Denmark's movement has been unmistakable. As one communitarian explained, in much of Europe political activists generally emerge from the tough punk rock milieu, while in Denmark, many people who become active were first hippies whose earliest experiences with self-determined actions were in Christiania. Christiania is a safe back area to which evicted squatters can escape and from which new actions can emanate; it provides a respite from the turmoil of urban repression and stress; and it also acts as a brake on the reduction of popular movements to small group actions and martyred heroes. In one such example, a BZ base of 4 squatted houses in one block was

under attack. As the police massed for their final assault, the squatters saw the handwriting on the wall and made use of an elaborate network of tunnels to escape. After the police had battered down door after door in the adjoining squats, much to their public embarrassment, they found no one in the buildings: The BZers had vanished. Although no one would say for sure where they went, Christiania was a common guess.

Perhaps the most well-organized single action of the international Autonomen was accomplished by BZ in September 1986, when hundreds of people took over part of the Osterbro neighborhood in Copenhagen and held it for nine days despite repeated attacks by police and fascists. The fight for the Ryesgade, as this action became known, grew out of the housing crisis but was also an extension of the politics of anti-imperialism. Inside the "cop-free zone," one of the first acts was to torch a building owned by Sperry Corporation, a U.S. multinational involved in the production of Cruise and Pershing missiles. As one BZ activist explained: "It's not enough to talk. Love is a battle. We are fighting homelessness and gentrification, but also the USA, South Africa and capitalism to show our solidarity. Many of us have been to work in Nicaragua. Now the battle comes home."

To call the Ryesgade action a battle is a slight misstatement. Actually it was a series of streetfights, all of which were won by the squatters. It all began on Sunday, September 14, when 1000 people gathered in the center of the city for what was supposed to be a march to a park. The demonstration suddenly broke away from the "planned" route and, following prearranged plans, hundreds of people ran to Ryesgade area, completely fooling the police. In the words of one of the participants, when the police finally massed and marched on the barricades: "It was a vicious fight. As hundreds of riot police attacked, we threw molotovs, fireworks, bricks, and slung catapults, driving them back." When the police counterattacked from the other side of Ryesgade, hundreds of masked Autonomen repulsed them. When the police retreated for the final time that day, the barricades were reinforced and a huge street party began. Hundreds of people slept at the barricades in preparation for the next attack. In the morning, the police were again greeted with "concrete rain" when they charged, but this time the police attacked on two sides simultaneously and broke through on one. As someone described the scene: "All seems lost, then at the last moment, over 100 supporters from the city come charging in from the rear, attacking the police from the rear and forcing them to flee! The riot cops run away and don't try to break through again. We reinforce the barricades."

Even though the situation in the neighborhood resembled martial law, the local residents remained supportive of the BZers. During the nine days of fighting, BZ members went food shopping for elderly residents of the neighborhood who were afraid to venture out beyond the barricades because of possible police reprisals. As the city government met in emergency sessions, the Danish autonomists discussed their options. They easily reached a consensus that reformist solutions -- such as the offer of a Danish rock star to buy the buildings and give them to BZ -- were out of the question. BZ did not recognize the legitimacy of the government, and they resolved to prove themselves beyond its powers. In Amsterdam, a solidarity demonstration attacked the Danish consulate, and there were marches in Aarhus (Jutland) as well as in Germany and Sweden. The network of free radio stations in Denmark provided support for the 400 people in the Ryesgade by sponsoring open mike debates and calling for food, blankets, and supplies to be delivered to the "liberated area." After nine days, the city finally called on the army for help, and a bloody finale seemed imminent. The squatters called a press conference for 9 a.m. on Monday, September 23, but when the media arrived, they found the houses deserted, prompting the two negotiators working for the city to ask: "Where did the BZers go when they left? What did the townhall learn? It seems the act can start all over again, anywhere, at any time. Even bigger. With the same participants."

After the Ryesgade action, the police tried unsuccessfully to locate the leadership of BZ. At the same time, the movement began to attack targets related to South Africa. Besides an increasing number of small group sabotage actions, particularly against Shell, another tactic became widely used: "compulsory relocations." A large group of people suddenly would arrive at a corporate office, bank, or travel agency guilty of some wrongdoing like having ties to South Africa. People would then quickly remove everything, piling typewriters, computers, desks and furniture in the street while others handed out letters of explanation to the workers and to onlookers. Finally, as quickly as the action began, everyone vanished, leaving the office relocated. These quick and peaceful compulsory relocations enjoyed wide public support and, because they were accomplished so quickly, afforded little opportunity for the police to attack. The same could not be said of the attacks on Shell. In the fall of 1987, activists accidentally damaged a gas station's underground tanks and caused hundreds of gallons of fuel to leak into the earth. Taking advantage of the movement's apparent blunder, Danish police raided homes, offices and the youth house, arresting people and confiscating property.

The Autonomen internationally borrowed tactics and targets from each other, and in May 1988, Danish BZ copied a page from their German counterparts and put together an action week like *Tuwat* in Berlin and *Tag X* in Hamburg. The actions began on May 12, when the door of city hall was painted with the word "*Amandla*" (ANC slogan for victory) and Israeli, NATO and Confederate flags were burned from a makeshift gallows. On Friday the 13th, BZ small groups carried out attacks throughout Copenhagen. Supermarkets carrying Israeli produce were spraypainted to remind shoppers of the boycott of Israeli goods; a street was barricaded and a house quickly squatted; and spontaneous demonstrations fought off police attacks. While such tactics helped activists feel good, they did little to help broaden their base of support. Prior to the action week, it was already clear that the autonomous movement was increasingly isolated. The meager number of votes garnered by the Left Socialist Party when they used a slingshot as their campaign logo was one such sign. (They failed to receive even the 2% needed to gain parliamentary representatives.)

Like their counterparts throughout Europe, the more the Autonomen relied on militant small-group actions, the less popular support they got and the more they came to rely on a small circle of people. As the rise of anti-imperialist politics created a set of priorities focused on the Third World, many activists did not care whether they received popular support within their own societies. As the movement became increasingly violent, it lost whatever sympathy it had, making it an easy target for the forces of repression to hit. Finally on May 18, 1993, militant isolationism reached its climax when several hundred demonstrators, reacting to the Danish electorate's approval of closer European union, went on a rampage in Copenhagen. As cobblestones and bricks were thrown at police, the order was given to fire on the crowd, and that night ten people were wounded by police gunfire.²² During the subsequent trials, riot participants received little public support, and long sentences were meted out to many activists.

HAFENSTRASSE: INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL

By 1988, the international focal point of the Autonomen was undoubtedly the set of houses first occupied in 1981 in Hamburg's Hafenstrasse. At the same time as the squatters movement reached its high point in Berlin, several empty houses in the St. Pauli district of Hamburg were quietly taken over. These eight houses on the harbor gradually became the single most significant single struggle waged by autonomous movements in Europe. Repeated attempts by the city government and police to dislodge the squatters failed as the Hafenstrasse squatters mobilized thousands of sympathizers and hundreds of street fighters to protect their liberated space. They enacted elaborate defense plans in the face of

repeated police assaults; put together lightning like retaliatory raids on city offices and corporate targets after assaults on the squatted houses; dealt with severe internal problems; and walked a thin line between the state's programs of legalization and criminalization. Moreover, they have hosted international Autonomi gatherings in their houses, thereby strengthening the movement's international vitality by providing a forum where the movement could discuss its options and plan its actions.

When the squatters movement elsewhere suffered a series of defeats, the Hafenstrasse's capability to remain intact made it a symbol of almost mythic proportions among Europe's Autonomi. As one leaflet put it: "Everything is present in this struggle: militant resistance, the fight to live together in communes, internationalism, the struggle for self-management and collective structure. The Hafenstrasse has shown that resolute struggle can become the path for many." Unlike their counterparts in Berlin and elsewhere who are very often ex-students or of respectable working class origins, the Hafenstrasse drew heavily from the lumpenproletariat (the criminal element and black market entrepreneurs). Part of the squatters' murals painted on the side of one of the houses transformed the famous call made by Karl Marx ("Workers of the World, Unite!") into "Criminals of the World, Unite!"

Klaus Dohnanyi, formerly mayor of Hamburg, was unable to control the Hafenstrasse "Chaoten." He sent his police to clear out these houses four times without success. In 1986, after the Hamburg electrical utility documented the yearly 'theft' of more than \$50,000 worth of services by the squatters, hundreds of police were called in and were able to clear out a few of the buildings, although eight houses clustered together into three large buildings were able to remain in the hands of the Autonomi. In response to these attacks, the movement unleashed its own counteroffensive, marching more than 10,000 strong around a "black block" of at least 1500 militants carrying a banner reading "Build Revolutionary Dual Power!". At the end of the march, the black block beat back the police in heavy fighting. The next day, fires broke out in 13 department stores in Hamburg causing damages estimated at almost \$10 million. Over the next months, while the city government floundered about, the movement kept the pressure up.²³ On "Day X", April 23, 1987, small groups of Autonomi again retaliated, attacking houses of city officials, court buildings, city offices, and radio Hamburg. In all, more than 30 targets were hit in a 15 minute period.

The city then declared the occupied houses "Public Enemy Number 1," and the squatters braced themselves for fresh attacks. Steel doors were installed, bars were mounted into the windows, and barbed wire was hung on the sides and roofs of the buildings. In early November, the city promised to clear out and tear down the houses within 14 days. The squatters painted a new slogan on the side of the one of the houses: "Don't count our days, count yours!," and barricaded the houses. Rumors spread that a network of underground tunnels had been dug for resupply and/or escape. Netting was hung on the second stories of the houses to ward off the use of ladders, and patrols on the roofs guarded against helicopters landing. Four thousand police arrived from all over Germany, and the country's borders were closed to suspicious looking tourists headed in the direction of Hamburg.

On Friday, November 13, 1987 (less than two weeks after the shootings at Startbahn West) the squatters' radio station began broadcasting for supporters to join the fight. Police helicopters were chased from the rooftops by a few shots from flare guns, and loudspeakers blasted the song "It's war, war in the city," as the fight began in earnest. After a night of fighting, the barricades were still standing, and rush hour traffic had to be rerouted because part of a nearby bridge has been borrowed to help build them. Adopting a Spanish Republican and Sandinista slogan, the banner hung on the outside of the houses said "No pasaran!".

photo here

Over the next week, as the Autonomi celebrated their victory, 2000 police reinforcements

arrived, posing an even uglier confrontation. Mayor Dohnanyi, however, had his fill, and he succeeded in averting a final battle by mobilizing support for a new plan: Legalize the Hafenstrasse squatters by creating a corporation composed of liberal city council members and some of the squatters. The building would then be leased to the squatters, and the city would provide funds for renovations, thereby creating needed "alternative" housing. Most importantly, by providing government approval, these measures would have the effect of ending the illegal occupation of the Hafenstrasse. Although Dohnanyi's plan gave the Hafenstrasse and their supporters a victory, he vowed to clear out any new squats in Hamburg within 24 hours (Berlin's solution to militant squatters).

At first, conservative politicians resisted Dohnanyi's plan, but they reluctantly agreed to support it in order to defuse the crisis. After the approval of Dohnanyi's proposal by the city government, the jubilant Autonomen dismantled their street barricades, stripped the houses of their defenses, and even sent the mayor a bouquet of flowers. For his efforts, Dohnanyi was awarded the prestigious Theodor Heuss medal. After six months of peace, however, conservatives in the city government blocked the new corporation in May 1988. Rather than participate in a new round of fighting, Klaus Dohnanyi resigned as mayor, leaving the future of the Hafenstrasse in doubt. Years of negotiations led to a long-term agreement through which the former squatters can remain in the buildings, and in the early 1990s, residents drew up blueprints for major renovations rather than for militant self-defense.²⁴

Although they were victorious, the Hafenstrasse's residents paid a high price for their years of continuous resistance to state assaults. Among the earliest occupants, children were driven out, and the internal relationships among those remaining were strained. One of the lowest points was reached in June 1984, when three squatters (two women and a man) beat and raped a visitor in one of the buildings.²⁵ The collective decided to take matters into their own hands: The three were beaten up; their heads were shaved, and they were thrown out in the street. In a leaflet explaining their actions, the residents wrote: "It was clear that we could not work with the bulls (the police) and the judges in order to deal with the problem. If we had, that would have meant going to precisely the same forces that never missed an opportunity to trick us, and with them in control, they would have tried to do us in." Because they exercised their own brand of revolutionary justice, the squatters were accused of creating a space outside the law, a common conservative charge over the following years used to justify the massive use of police force.

The psychological price paid by those who lived in the Hafenstrasse was all too evident in their paranoia and crisis mentality. As Hamburg's 800th birthday celebrations approached and more and more new construction was completed along the waterfront, the future of the Hafenstrasse remained contingent upon constant alertness and the willingness of hundreds--possibly thousands--to fight for their free space. While the Autonomen's continuing resistance to anything approaching middle-class respectability should have resulted (at least by American standards) in a decisive offensive against them, the costs of clearing out the houses would have been unacceptably high by European standards.* For more than a decade, the squatters' stubborn refusal to accept the inevitable succeeded in transforming the idea that the imposition of the system's will is inevitably the outcome of the popular contestation of power.

*Many Americans find it hard to understand how the Hafenstrasse could resist the police. After all, around the same time (on May 13, 1985), a similar group in Philadelphia (MOVE)--as well as the entire neighborhood in which they lived--was wiped out by a massive police firebomb, and squatters in the U.S. are routinely evicted brutally by overwhelming police force. Unfortunately, the delicate nature of authorizing deadly force in Europe finds no parallel in the U.S.

The Hafenstrasse inspired the conscious spontaneity of the autonomous movement. Their continuing existence symbolized militant resistance, and they were the cutting edge of an autonomous movement that existed in a series of militant confrontations. To be sure, the Autonomen remain a diffuse collection of militant counterculturalists who assemble sporadically and whose identity is far from fixed. Their strength is not in their overwhelming numbers. In June 1987, for example, when President Ronald Reagan visited Berlin, the autonomous "black bloc," identified by their black ski masks and militant disposition, numbered only 3000 of the 50,000 anti-Reagan demonstrators. And in 1988, when 75,000 protesters gathered at the meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Berlin, only a small fraction could be counted as Autonomen. In both cases, however, the initiative of Autonomen resulted in the larger actions, and they were the militant organizers creating a context in which other forms of participation (signing petitions, attending programs and rallies, publishing informational leaflets, etc) had meaning.

After the shootings at Startbahn West in Frankfurt and the wave of arrests throughout Europe in November 1987, however, public opinion dramatically swung over to the states' side. Criminalizing the autonomous movement, as was done a decade earlier in Italy, caused many people to drop out of political activism altogether. Yet the structure--or, to be precise, the lack of formal structure--of the autonomous movement made it difficult to obliterate the movement. No matter how many times the police raided offices or arrested people, they could not seize the leaders of the movement--since there were none--or to destroy its organizations--since they were fluid and changing. The Autonomen occupy a nebulous territory of oppositional forces located somewhere between the clandestine red underground and green corridors of parliament, and the counterculture nourishes and creates a context out of reach of political repression.

THE GUERRILLAS AND THE MOVEMENT

While the declining structure of opportunities for young people in Europe and the movement's diffuse structure were structural conditions for the continued existence of the radical opposition, internal dynamics continually cut the movement off from a larger constituency. Visible in the arrogance of "anti-imps" (anti-imperialists), the self-righteous holier-than-thou mentality reaches its most extreme expression in guerrilla groups like the RAF.²⁶ Since the mid-1970s when they kidnapped and killed Hanns-Martin Schleyer, one of Germany's leading industrialists, the RAF has waged a deadly campaign against the country's rich and powerful. In the process, they have repeatedly exhibited disdain for legal methods of struggle and set a standard of "commitment" that essentially invoked their own deaths as a superior form of political activism when compared to others whose risks are not as extreme.

Although all of their original members are dead or in jail, the group has repeatedly been able to regenerate itself, and they remain capable of taking daring initiatives. In 1972, only about 40 people associated with the RAF were wanted by the police, but by 1974, one estimate placed the number at 300.²⁷ The group's low point was reached in 1977. In a daring series of actions, one RAF team kidnapped Schleyer and held him at a secret location, demanding release of RAF prisoners -- including its founder Andreas Baader. (The Red Brigades in Italy would copy the technique used to kidnap Schleyer six months later when they kidnapped Aldo Moro in Rome.²⁸) While negotiations were underway with the authorities for the exchange of prisoners, another team composed of RAF members and Palestinian allies hijacked a Lufthansa jet and took its 86 passengers and crew to Mogadishu, Somalia. The demand to release prisoners was increased to include two Palestinians. While waiting for word that their imprisoned comrades had been freed, the hijackers were overcome and all but one killed by a special commando unit. That night, all three of the main imprisoned RAF leaders died in what

the authorities maintain was a suicide pact. A few days later, Schleyer's body was found in the trunk of a car parked in France near the German border.

Needless to say, it took a few years for the next generation of RAF to emerge, but when they did, their actions were vengeful. In 1979, they tried to kill Alexander Haig when he visited NATO headquarters in Belgium, but their bomb exploded after his car had passed. In 1981, a RAF bomb wounded 20 people at the NATO air base at Ramstein and a RAF rocket hit the car of Frederick Kroesen, US commander in Europe.²⁹ In 1982, over 600 bomb attacks were recorded in West Germany, many of which were tied to RAF.³⁰ By 1984, the third generation of RAF publicly formed a working relationship with their French counterpart, *Action Directe* (AD). Numbering no more than a few dozen people, the two groups moved ahead with their action agenda. In 1985, a joint RAF/AD group killed an American enlisted man simply to steal his identity card (which they used to plant a bomb on an American base that killed two people). In 1986, the RAF killed a prominent foreign ministry official in Germany and AD assassinated Renault chief, Georges Besse. After all members of AD and many RAF members had been arrested, the remaining RAF formed an alliance with a revived Red Brigades, then called the Fighting Communist Union.³¹ In 1988, the two groups held a series of meetings and eventually issued a joint communique in which they declared:

Western Europe is the cardinal point in the conflict between the international proletariat and the imperialist bourgeoisie. Because of its historic, political and geographic character, Western Europe is the area where the three lines of demarcation intersect: State/Society, North/South, East/West.³²

Within a few days of the communique, police in Rome arrested most of the Italians involved in this alliance, and the German RAF was left without significant international ties or resources.

By the end of the 1980s, only about two dozen imprisoned RAF members were left in Germany but their symbolic importance far exceeded their numbers in the media and for the movement. On February 1, 1989, some of the RAF prisoners began a hunger strike (their tenth in a series) to demand that political prisoners be allowed to serve their time together in groups and that they be permitted to receive visits and mail from a range of people. Despite their being held in isolation, many imprisoned guerrillas write letters regularly to movement magazines. Within a few weeks, more than 43 prisoners throughout Germany were refusing food, and thousands of people mobilized to support them. Small groups attacked government buildings and the Frankfurt stock exchange. On April 8, 3500 people protested in Berlin, and on April 29, more than 5000 people marched in Bonn, after which hundreds of people occupied government offices. Even the Greens, normally reluctant to say anything supportive about "terrorists," called for the imprisoned members of RAF to be recognized as political prisoners. As support groups formed around the country, in three states where the Social Democrats governed, they offered to put the prisoners in small groups of 4 to 6. Determined to live in one large group and to get a national settlement, the hunger strikers refused the offer. Like the Hafenstrasse and others, collectives defined the way the imprisoned members of the RAF wish to live. Unlike their Irish counterparts, the German prisoners did not fast to the death but orchestrated their hunger strikes in stages. On May 12, 1989, after it was clear to them that there was no hope for realizing their demands, they temporarily ended the fast, calling for a renewal of the anti-imperialist struggle by supporters. On November 30, in the first attack linked to the RAF in three years, a bomb exploded under the limousine of the chief executive of the country's largest bank, killing him and his chauffeur. According to the police, the first car in the three-car convoy was allowed to pass before the bomb was detonated by a light-triggered device connected by a cable to a nearby park.

After the demise of East Germany, many RAF members gave themselves up and others were arrested. Newly released information showed that the group had received aid for years from the East German *Stasi* (secret police). Although reported by the police to be nearly finished, the armed struggle continued to haunt the country's elite in the 1990s. On March 31, 1991, the head of *Treuhand*, the government agency overseeing the economic transition of eastern Germany, was shot and killed in his home in Düsseldorf. In 1993, a few days before a new \$153 million prison was scheduled to open, RAF bombs were so precisely exploded that four cell blocks and the administration building had to be razed, adding a cost of over \$60 million to the project and delaying its opening for years.³³

Neither the government nor the guerrillas appear in any way ready to acquiesce. In Italy, the Red Brigades were effectively destroyed through a government program of amnesty for informants, and in the US, there are few (if any) remaining underground groups. As yet another new generation of guerrillas emerges in Germany, there appears to be little chance for an end to the armed struggle. Although the group made one offer to cease its operation in exchange for leniency for the remaining prisoners, no deal was struck. Part of the reason is that the German authorities refuse to adopt a lenient position even toward those who agree to turn state's evidence. One woman who fully cooperated with the authorities was nonetheless given a "relatively light sentence" of 12 years. Those who remain underground fare much worse. In what many regarded as an assassination, on June 27, 1993, Wolfgang Grams, a RAF leader, was killed during a shoot-out with an elite anti-terrorist team. Eyewitnesses, including one of the government's commandos, claimed that Grams was captured alive but then finished off at close range.³⁴

Could part of the reason the German authorities refuse to negotiate an end to their guerrilla war is because it serves their needs? The climate created by the armed struggle conditions an all-too-easy acceptance of the use of violence within the movement and gives the state an easy excuse for increasing its repressive powers. The issue is complicated because small groups' use of force has had results. Squatters in one house related the story of how their landlord finally relented in some of his demands after his house had been attacked by unknown persons. Another group described how they had "persuaded" the dentists who owned the building their neighborhood bar is in to rescind a large rent increase which would have driven the bar out of business. Apparently, the mere presence of scraggly autonomists in the sanitized waiting room of a medical practice suffices to bring landlords to their senses. In a case made infamous in the U.S. by a *New Yorker* article, an upscale Kreuzberg restaurant owned by a former activist was driven out of business by unfriendly autonomists bent on resisting the gentrification of their neighborhood.³⁵ On at least two occasions, a small group ran into the restaurant and threw excrement at customers. While these actions were easy to chastise, some acts were more focused on more clearly appropriate targets. Perhaps the most successful of the various guerrilla groups are autonomous feminists called the Red Zoras.

THE RED ZORAS

In the early 1970s, after nearly every single member of the original RAF had been killed or imprisoned, the *Revolutionären Zellen* (Revolutionary Cells or RZ) became the newest name among groups waging small-group warfare on the established system.³⁶ In contrast to Marxist-Leninist ideology and the centralized structure of RAF, the RZ consist of independently organized groups who select their targets and tactics according to specific conditions, particularly as defined by popular struggles. One estimate placed the number of RZ members at about 300 in the early 1980s.³⁷ Unlike the Marxist-Leninist RAF, the RZ are organized in autonomous groups, each of which is responsible for its own actions. They parallel the Italian group *Prima Linea* (discussed in chapter 2).

Part of the RZ consisting solely of women are the Red Zoras, autonomous feminist guerrillas who formed from currents of feminism and anti-imperialism. They took their name from a popular novel in which young girls steal from the rich to give to the poor. It is not uncommon for autonomous groups to borrow images from the world of children to describe themselves. In a popular squatters' song, the Hafenstrasse long relied on Pippi Longstocking to help explain how the houses miraculously remained occupied. In some sense, autonomous groups refuse to group up: They refuse to shed their dreams of a better world or to conform to existing cultural norms like marrying, living in nuclear families and taking on a career. Their affinity for the pleasure principle -- or at least their negation of the reality principle -- is a salient part of their identity.

Since 1974, when they bombed the Supreme Court building the day after it overturned the abortion law, the Red Zoras have conducted militant campaigns against pornography, international traders in women (those who profit from importing Asian women as "brides" for German men), the Doctors' Guild ("We see the Federal Doctors' Guild as exponents of rape in white trenchcoats."), and drug companies (notably Schering who produced the birth defect causing drug Duogynon). In conjunction with the RZ, they have launched over 200 attacks on selected targets. Their most successful campaign was won in the summer of 1987, when they compelled Adler Corporation, one of Germany's largest clothing producers, to agree to the demands of South Korean women textile workers. Adler had initially fired 12 South Korean women union leaders, but after the Red Zoras and their sister group in Berlin, the Amazons, firebombed 10 Adler outlets in Germany causing millions of dollars in damages, the company rehired the 12 and agreed to meet the textile workers' demands. In a recorded interview, the Red Zoras explained: "We do not fight for women in the Third World, we fight alongside them." Looking at the massive disarmament movement whose practice has been constrained by pacifism, they commented: "When the refusal of violence is elevated to the level of an inviolable principle where good and evil are counterposed, it is not a question of disagreement but of submission and obedience."

The anti-authoritarian structure of their groups -- a decentralized decision-making process for choosing targets and a lack of uniform politics or spokespersons -- made it nearly impossible for German authorities to find them. In their frustration, the police resorted to massive raids on women's groups. In December 1987, hundreds of federal police conducted raids on 33 offices and apartments in an attempt to destroy the Red Zoras.³⁸ The police seized address books, audio and video cassettes, mail and research archives relating to the movement against genetic engineering, abortion rights, and reproductive technology and took 23 women in for questioning. Although all but two of these women were quickly released, the cases of Ingrid Strobl and Ulla Penselin became the focal point for an international campaign of solidarity. These two women were long-time feminist activists, and their being charged with "membership in a terrorist organization" -- the Red Zoras to be exact -- was designed to criminalize the women's movement.

The Red Zoras' popularity and success had to be punished, and the arrests of Ingrid Strobl and Ulla Penselin, however weak the evidence against them, were the state's avenue of last resort. Because these two activists have played significant roles in the women's movement over the past decade, the police tactic may also have been designed to exacerbate the growing differences within feminist circles. Ulla Penselin spent eight months in prison, while Ingrid Strobl was released after two and a-half years.³⁹ For over seven years, Strobl worked for the feminist magazine, **Emma**, writing on topics as diverse as immigrants in Germany, Rosa Luxemburg, and witchcraft. In 1987, when women associated with the Greens issued a "Mother Manifesto" calling for a new conception of women's liberation, she wrote the autonomist response. Noting the Greens' demands for paid child-rearing and paid housework were premised on the assumption that German women are "primarily mothers and gladly mothers," she

responded angrily: "It's a proposal for a few middle-class women who are not ready to continue the struggle but prefer to return to the gilded cage of home and hearth. It is extremely doubtful if the majority of women, who aren't waiting for the gilded cage but for the nose ring of the runaway slave, will follow the Mother Manifesto on the path of betrayal." Strobl's polemic was one of the better crafted criticisms of the Greens.

In 1981, the feminist movement was extremely critical of the "male violence" and "penis politics" of the extraparliamentary movement, and the Autonomen were still a movement in formation, clearly unprepared to deal with issues raised by feminists. Seven years later, the greater role played by women in the movement made it impossible to argue against violence solely from the perspective of sexual politics. The very existence of the Red Zoras was itself an indication of the transformation of this new generation of German women and profoundly affected the ground rules upon which feminism, and the politics of gender in general, are evaluated by men and women alike. The very notion that some inherent peacefulness in women's nature makes them naturally disposed to resist domination was viewed as part of the system of patriarchy by the Red Zoras: "When sections of the feminist movement ingenuously return to norms of feminine behavior to find in 'the nature' of women all the characteristics that find parallels in the peace movement in the form of the will to sacrifice, humility, refusal of confrontation and combat, they favor the biological theory of 'femininity' which for a long time has been known and understood as a product of power."

The autonomous women's movement had long worked with Turks, but given the cultural contrast between punks and newly-arrived immigrants from Turkey, feminist connections, beyond those forged by working together in cooperative food stores selling organic produce or learning German, took time to develop. When Turkish and German women first began to meet, obstacles seemed insurmountable. German women, for example, could not understand why their Turkish counterparts insisted on retaining the traditional scarfs worn by Islamic women to cover their heads in public. Turkish women could not convince the Germans that public lesbian leadership and gay banners at marches on International Women's Day made it almost impossible to justify their own participation to their communities. Despite such cultural divergence, common needs led to a Women's Crisis Center being established. The Gray Wolves, Turkish fascists who have long attacked leftist Turks in Germany and in Turkey, issued warnings to Turkish women to stay out of the center. When these warnings were ignored, a gunman assaulted the center in 1984, shooting a Turkish woman dead and severely wounding one of her German co-workers. Along with the Gray Wolves, the police also treated Kreuzberg as enemy territory, frequently entering punk bars like the Pink Panther and Turkish coffeehouses to arrest people.

By Mayday of 1987, the stage was set for a reaction to police brutality, and when it finally came, everyone seemed surprised by its intensity.⁴⁰ What began as the traditional street party in Kreuzberg's Lausitzer Platz quickly turned into a full scale riot. Although the police has initiated the confrontation, they quickly realized that they did not have the strength to control the crowd, and they hastily retreated. Store after store was looted--or as some insisted, became the scene of "proletarian shopping." One of the participants jubilantly remembered: "From Heinrichplatz to the Gorkitzer Bahnhof, a liberated territory was held for most of the night. It was not just the Autonomen who participated but also 'normal' people: youth, grandmothers, Turks. It was fantastic."

A year later, with thousands of police massed on what seemed to be every side street, demonstrators formed spirited contingents of women, Turks, and a "black bloc" of ski-masked militants ready for action. The banner leading the march, "We fight internationally against capital and patriarchy," indicated the growing influence of the women's movement on the Autonomen as well as the ascendancy

of "anti-imperialism" as the defining content of the current generation's politics.

MAYDAY 1988: A PERSONAL NOTE

As the sun set and the full moon rose on Mayday 1988, I sat with friends at an outdoor table at a Greek tavern in Kreuzberg. Police sirens began what would be their night-long wail, and a line of more than 30 police vans, each containing a half-dozen helmeted riot police, pulled past the bar headed for the street party at Lausitzer Platz. After they passed, someone strolled over to the corner and returned with a report: "The bulls (police) are going nuts. They must still be smarting from last year." We quickly discussed our options: leave the scene, go and fight the police, or stay and drink some more beer under the full moon. We chose the latter.

Given the police preparations, none of us felt any possibility of winning the streets, but we did not want to head home in case we had not evaluated the situation properly. Gunther quickly improvised a spontaneous modification of our plan. He strolled back to the corner and moved a trash barrel into the middle of the street. Udo went next, carrying a broken chair from the back of the bar, followed by Renate who picked up a cement block and tossed it on the growing pile. Before long, the street was flimsily blockaded.

We ordered another round, and I asked Gunther if we should reconsider our decision not to move back to Lausitzer Platz. "Look," he began, "We're driving the bulls up the walls. They don't know what to expect from us. Years ago, when we were fighting them every day on the Ku'damm (Berlin's main shopping street), there were a few thousand of us ready to go at it. It was such a hot day we couldn't stand it, and you know if we were hot, it might have been hell in full riot gear. A few people took off their clothes and before you knew it, people were jumping into the Hallensee (a nearby lake) to cool off. Then we all stripped and jumped in. Thousands of us were enjoying ourselves at the beach, while the bulls stood by sweating like pigs not knowing what was happening. The city government, the media, and the bulls could never figure out who gave the order to jump in. They still can't understand our politics or our culture, especially when we don't lose our sense of humor. Right now there are hundreds of bulls looking for us and here we sit, enjoying ourselves drinking a beer. Look at that moon!"

As we sat watching the arc of the moon, I recalled my last night in Berlin in 1981. No matter where in Kreuzberg you went, vicious street fights erupted when the police savagely--and unsuccessfully--attempted to stop the squatters movement from occupying more vacant houses. After their brutality against non-violent protesters at Gorleben, the police had suddenly found themselves unable to maintain order in any of Germany's big cities, and Berlin, of course, was in the forefront of the movement. I will never forget the transformation of Hans. He and I had gotten to know each other fairly well in the eighteen months I'd lived in Berlin. He'd patiently explained nuances of German politics to me, while I, perhaps not so patiently, had questioned his assumptions regarding the propriety of pacifism. After a few hours of back and forth with the police in Hermannplatz one night, our roommate Anna and I had grown weary of the effort and were determined to head home. When we found Hans, he was incredulous that we were leaving. "What?" he shouted. "You're leaving now? I'll be here until there are no bulls left in the streets or no more rocks to throw at the bulls!" Hans' radicalization was symptomatic of thousands of people who followed a similar trajectory in 1981, as a cycle of resistance and repression had intensified.

Around two in the morning, the riot was apparently over, and we headed home, taking the indirect route through Lausitzer Platz. Evidently, not all the party goers had time to pack up their belongings before heading home. There were many abandoned items of clothing in the streets. The city

had cleared the streets of anything that looked like it could be used to build barricades, but the charred remnants of wood lying in the streets indicated that the state's preparations had not been entirely successful.

The next day, as we read the newspaper reports on the previous night's events, several people stopped by the commune looking for friends who had not made it home. Renate was quite concerned for the fate of Arnt since he was no where to be found. As she searched for him in the neighborhood, we read the **Tageszeitung**. Apparently, the police had moved against the street party when a small campfire had been lit. The ensuing confrontation involved 1500 Berlin police against the remnants of 6000 demonstrators, most of whom had chosen not to participate in the resistance to the police assault. The Pink Panther was raided again, and by the end of the night, more than 100 people had been injured and a total of 134 people were under arrest--most of them with the equivalent of felonies that might bring some jail time.

On the bright side, Arnt was discovered sleeping in the commune next door, and among the casualties of the previous night's police riot were none other than Berlin's chief of police and two of his top aides. These gentlemen were observing the police action from the edge of the crowd when from another direction, they were confronted with newly arrived members of the riot squad who proceeded to bash heads without warning. When the police officers exclaimed that they were in charge of the riot squad and that one of them was the chief of police, the response was indicative of the demeanor of the police that night: "Yeah, and we're the emperors of China!" That remark was followed by blows which sent the three to the hospital.

When Gunther finally came downstairs and heard the news, he bellowed, "You see, who says there isn't justice in this world?" As he drank his morning cup of coffee, he continued, "This whole system is destroying itself--killing off the rivers and the forests, poisoning the air, stockpiling nuclear waste, and building the ugliest buildings imaginable. No wonder they're beating up their leaders. They can't even take care of Germany's two and a half million unemployed."

"Where's the alternative?" one of us rejoined. "It's certainly not in the anti-imps (anti-imperialists), who would just as soon see Germany go down the tubes, and the Greens are part of the system, no?" For the first time, Gunther looked serious: "The alternative won't appear readymade overnight, my friend, but we see it growing in the Hafenstrasse, in the resistance to Wackersdorf, to Startbahn West, and in our street parties. An army of lovers cannot lose."

NOTES Chapter 4

Versions of parts of this chapter appeared in **Z magazine** (September and October 1992) as "Europe's Autonomes" and "Mayday in West Berlin" (with Rodolfo Torres) and were presented as "The Autonomes: A New Social Movement?" at Harvard University's Center for European Studies in March 1990. Invaluable sources of information were interviews with Saskia K. and activists in the Hafenstrasse, Fränkelufer, Christiania, and the Groote Keyser.

- 1..Winfried Kretschmer und Dieter Rucht, "Beispiel Wackersdorf: Die Protestbewegung gegen die Wiederaufarbeitungslage," in Roland Roth und Dieter Rucht (Herausgeber), *Neue soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Erste Auflage (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1987) pp. 142-3, 148.
- 2..Staatsgewalt, pp. 259-260.
- 3..Bunte Hilfe Nordbayern, "Repression in der Provinz," (1989) pp. 87-8. (In the archive of the Institute for Social History in Amsterdam).
- 4..Monika Bauerlein, "Germany's Radical Counterculture: Are They Revolutionary Heroes or an Albatross for Other Activists?" **Utne Reader**, July/August 1989, p. 32.
- 5..See Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany: Extra-Parliamentary Opposition and the Democratic Agenda* (St. Martin's Press, 1988) pp. 182-3.
- 6..For an analysis of this action and the mobilization at the international meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, see Jürgen Gerhards and Dieter Rucht, "Mesomobilization: Organizing and Framing in Two Protest Campaigns in West Germany," **American Journal of Sociology**, Volume 98, Number 3, November 1992, pp. 555-596.
- 7..Altogether, 475 different events were counted in one study. See Jürgen Gerhards, "Die Mobilisierung gegen die IWF- und Weltbanktagung 1988 in Berlin: Gruppen, Veranstaltungen, Diskurse," in Roland Roth und Dieter Rucht (Herausgeber), *Neue soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Zweite Auflage (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1991) p. 219.
- 8..**Der Spiegel**, 3 October 1988, p. 132.
- 9..In 1989, the German government counted such centers in more than 50 cities. See *Verfassungsschutzbericht* (1989) p. 62.
- 10..There were points at which Dutch movements rejected tactics from Germany. In 1988 and 1989, discussions in Amsterdam questioned the idea of wearing black ski masks at militant demonstrations. See Val, "Liebe, Krieg und Alltag," in Geronimo u.a., *Feuer und Flamme 2: Kritiken, Reflexionen und Anmerkungen zur Lage der Autonomes* (Edition ID-Archiv, 1992) pp. 34-5. In Denmark, however, the ski masks became part of an autonomous uniform.
- 11..Enno Brand, *Staatsgewalt* (Verlag Die Werkstatt, 1988) pp. 259, 262, 266.
- 12..*OECD Employment Outlook* (1984 and 1985); *Amtliche Nachrichten der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit* (1991).
- 13..Elmar Altvater, Jürgen Hoffman, and Willi Semmler, *Von Wirtschaftswunder zur Wirtschaftskrise* (Verlag Olle und Wolter, 1979) p. 263.
- 14..See Martin Moerings, "Niederlande: Der subventionierte Protest," in *Angriff auf das Herz des Staates*, Zweiter Band (Suhrkamp, 1988) pp. 321-2.
- 15..See Adilko, *Cracking the Movement: Squatting Beyond the Media* (Autonome Media, 1994) p. 205.
- 16..Heiner Luft Kastell, *Christiania: Selbst-organization von Nichtangepassten* (Copenhagen,

- 1977) and Doris Teller, Heiner Gringmuth and Ernst-Ullrich Pinkert (ed.), *Christiania: Argumente zur Erhaltung eines befreiten Stadtviertels*, (Gisela Lotz Verlag, 1978).
- 17..Michael Haller, "Schwesterlichkeit: Über die 'Kindermacht' in Kopenhagen," in Michael Haller (Herausgeber) *Aussteigen oder rebellieren: Jugendliche gegen Staat und Gesellschaft* (Spiegel-Buch, 1981).
- 18..Ria Bjerre, "For Christiania With Love," in Alberto Ruz Buenfil, *Rainbow Nation Without Borders: Toward an Ecotopian Millennium* (Bear and Co. 1991) p. 89.
- 19..See Bjerre, pp. 99-100.
- 20..Michael Haller, "Das Dorf in der Stadt: Über 'Christiania' in Kopenhagen," in Haller, p. 143.
- 21..For one account of what was involved, see Mark Edwards, *Christiania: A Personal View of Europe's Freetown* (The Photographers Gallery of London, 1979).
- 22.."Danish Police Fire at Anti-Unity Mob," *New York Times*, May 20, 1993.
- 23..See Andrei Markovits and Philip Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 224 for an analysis of the parliamentary dimension of the Hamburg government's weakness as related to a strong showing by the local Greens (GAL) in November 1986 and Dohnanyi's subsequent jockeying to form a coalition with the Free Democrats.
- 24..See **Die Tageszeitung**, 3 September 1993, for drawings and an interview with the architect, Wolfgang Dirksen.
- 25..See Michael Hermann, Han-Joachim Lenger, Jan Philipp Reemtsma, und Karl Heinz Roth, *Hafenstrasse: Chronik und Analysen eines Konflikts* (Verlag am Galgenberg, 1987) p. 147. Additional materials for this chapter were found in the archive of the Schwarzmarkt Buchhandlung in Hamburg.
- 26..For a chronological account that also conveys within it the guerrillas' contempt for non-armed activists, and an unfortunately glib regard for human life, see Tom Vague, *The Red Army Faction Story 1963-1993* (AK Press, 1994).
- 27..Vague, p. 55.
- 28..Richard Clutterbuck, *Terrorism, Drugs and Crime in Europe After 1992* (Routledge, 1990) p. 48.
- 29..Clutterbuck, p. 50.
- 30..Vague, p. 97.
- 31..Yonah Alexander and Dennis Pluchinsky, *Europe's Red Terrorists: The Fighting Communist Organizations* (Frank Cass, 1992).
- 32..Alexander and Pluchinsky, p. 228.
- 33..**Boston Globe**, March 28, 1993.
- 34..Craig R. Whitney, "German Guerrillas Assert Leader Was 'Executed,'" **New York Times** (July 11, 1993).
- 35..Jane Kramer, "Letter from Europe," **The New Yorker** (November 28, 1988) pp. 67-100.
- 36.. For a comprehensive history and collection of their communiqués, see *Die Früchte des Zorns* (Edition ID-Archiv, 1993).
- 37..Clutterbuck, p. 51.
- 38..*Staatsgewalt*, p. 292.
- 39..*Die Früchte des Zorns*, pp. 681-2. After her release, Strobl made a documentary film about women's resistance in the Warsaw ghetto and published a book on the politics of population control,

Bevölkerungspolitik: Ideologien, Ziele, Methoden, Widerstand (Edition ID-Archiv, 1991).
40..See *1.Mai 1987-12.Juni 1987* (Ermittlungsausschuss Berlin, 1988); *1. Mai 1987-1992* (Umbruch-
Bilder, 1992).