CHAPTER 3

The Postcolonial World: From the 1950s to the 1980s

The Urban and the International
3.1 Anti-colonial terrorism: The Algerian struggle

The Algerian war of independence from the French colonial rule was one of the most ruthless nationalist struggles in postwar history. The years 1954 and 1962 mark the beginning and the end of the last anti-colonial fight after the Second World War. The Algerian cause was for various reasons immensely popular among other liberation groups and terrorist organizations internationally, from the Palestinian PLO to the freedom fighters of IRA.

The anti-colonial struggle against the French occupation of Algeria was spearheaded by the FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale), a military-turned-terrorist organization whose purpose was to call international attention to the problem of colonized Algeria. The country had already been part of France for more than a century (since 1851), therefore it was too hard for the majority of the indigenous population to believe that independence from the French rule was at all feasible. In the beginning of the struggle, the FLN adopted conventional military strategies against the French by mainly engaging in battle on rural territory away from urban centers and the Algerian capital, Algiers. Despite the fact that the revolutionaries were much more familiar with Algeria’s mainland than their enemy, the massive military forces of the colonizers made it impossible for them to make any progress. What is more, the natives (mostly Muslims) were showing little interest in FLN’s ideals and practices while, from a certain point on, they even became frustrated with the organization’s tendency to terrorize the population for what seemed to them to be a “lost” cause.

Precisely because it all seemed futile, a new dramatic change of strategy was needed. International recognition of the “Algeria problem” had been the main target all along the line, still, the means through which that target would be attained had to be altered. To attract the attention of the world both inside and outside the country, the FLN had to turn “terrorist” by shifting, only two years after the outbreak of the war of independence (that is, in the summer of 1956), from the countryside to urban spaces and more specifically the wider area of Algiers. The idea was that the violence and the determination of the insurgents should become much more visible and palpable, while the wider layers of the Algerian population should be made to really feel the destruction by sensing the urgency of striking at the colonizers. In other words, the passive masses should learn that some change, rather than no change at all,
was in the offing, that real as well as meaningful violent action was possible provided that they were mobilized and taken out of their complicant attitude that only favored the colonizers. Simultaneously, the—so far—conventional military warfare had to be transformed into an unconventional, asymmetric, urban, hence terrorist one, insofar as it was the French-speaking colonists—the so-called pied noir—who were supposed to not just feel uncomfortable by the activities of the resisting forces but terrorized at the thought that their very physical safety was at serious risk.

From what one can gather from above, it was necessary to escalate the violence against the representatives of French imperialism not through an increase of the hits themselves but rather through the expansion of the scope of the terrorist activity to include surprise attacks against unsuspicous civilians and noncombatants in the capital. The war was suddenly converted from a strictly military activity to a symbolic and psychological game. Ramdane Abane, the leader of the FLN, had realized that for the violence to be effective it had to directly affect the lives of innocent, peace-loving people who were in no way related to the ruthlessness of the French military and the imperial institutions located in Algeria. Moreover, it had to attract the attention of the international community as well as appealing to the instincts and aesthetic of the public opinion, both home and abroad. Abane was once recorded asking the following rhetorical question: “Is it preferable for our cause to kill ten enemies in a dry river bed [in a remote location of the Algerian hinterland] when no one will talk of it or a single man in Algiers which will be noted the next day by the American press?” In a similar tone, Nelson Mandela intimated that for his own struggle in South Africa he had to take very seriously the advice that an Algerian “terrorist” had given to him, according to which “international opinion . . . is sometimes worth more than a fleet of jet fighters.” A terrorist outrage against a civilian will generate more horror than an open military conflict would to the extent that the latter is presumably based upon the, more or less, logical premise that in the theater of war there will inevitably be casualties and collateral damage. By contrast, in the case of terrorism there are no rules or logic and, therefore, the “theatrical stage” is not limited to distinct battlefields: all people are potential participants/victims. In addition, it is the randomness of terrorist strikes that assigns them their shocking quality. What Abane is really talking about when he brings up the importance of the media in the question of terrorist tactics is the communicative and aesthetic value of a terrorist outrage. An act of violence is meaningless and futile unless there is someone
around to bear witness to it, communicate its atrociousness, and thereby affect emotionally the public opinion and the international community. What better way of showing the atrocity than acting it out in front of every citizen, in the center of the city and in broad daylight? The FLN broke new “terrorist ground” in the twentieth century when it decided to strike not military or nongovernmental buildings but rather bars and cafeterias frequented by carefree civilians, and more particularly, French-speaking colonists. Saadi Yacef, Abane’s military deputy, recruited three Muslim women with European looks who would hardly arouse any suspicion and gave them three bombs that they would have to detonate simultaneously in three different crowded areas of Algiers: a seaside bar packed with pied noir families, a café with University students, and the Air France passenger terminal. What is ironic is that the only target that seemed somehow relevant to the terrorists’ political agenda—the Air France terminal—was accidentally not hit (the bomb failed to go off). However, the two other attacks, aside from killing three people and injuring seriously fifty, created a lot of confusion, panic and terror amongst the, up-to-then unaccustomed to extreme violence, crowds.

By going from bombing inanimate targets with symbolic significance—government offices or military and police stations—to striking haphazardly at noncombatant civilians in Algiers downtown, the FLN achieved its purpose of shifting international attention to the revolutionary cause and producing second thoughts, among the French colonists, about the necessity of holding onto Algeria. In a way, the shift from nonlethal symbolic tactics to lethal “meaningless” ones (because what did the innocent have to do with military operations?) signified a shift from thought and intellect to nought and feeling. In other terms, and in accordance with terrorism’s basic premise that “there are no innocents,” the French-speaking community and the European colonists had to be dragged out of their cosmopolitan indifference by being forced to feel, rather than understand on an intellectual level, that they did not belong there. That feeling would be reinforced by an aesthetic of irrational terror and intensified by their uncertainty as to whether they were complicit or not in what was taking place in the country they had settled in.

Terrorism is also a vehicle of propaganda. Through the random attacks, the FLN hoped to create noise which other parties would be able to listen to. Therefore, the ostensibly erratic, irrational violence unleashed on unsuspecting citizens would hopefully imprint on the minds of the indigenous Muslim population that the FLN
was the true representative of the people and the only one capable of overthrowing the
domineering French colonizers. In addition, it was the guarantee that something was
finally about to change in the status quo after so many decades of suppression. In
essence, the more irrationally violent the insurgents got the more credible they
became to the eyes of the people and, as a consequence, the more supporters they
gained. In short, the terrorist hits constituted rhetorical instruments of persuasion. This
rhetoric deceived also the French into believing that there was a need to outbid the
revolutionary terror with even more terror on their part.\textsuperscript{4} Thus, extremist elements
related to the French occupying forces resorted to bombing the homes of alleged FLN
members, and later, when total chaos was wreaked upon the country through the
continuation of the FLN bloody operations—ranging from assassinating the mayor of
Algiers to bombing popular bars and sports stadiums—the authorities were left with
no option but to bring the army into the equation. The FLN had doubtless succeeded
in exposing the tyrannical face of the French Occupation, thereby leading many
moderate Muslims into their own radical arms. That was the beginning of the end of
the French occupation of Algeria.\textsuperscript{5}

Frantz Fanon, a fervent supporter of the Algerian revolution and an active
participant in it, discerned something noble in anti-colonial violence: the possibility of
inaugurating a cultural as well as international consciousness in the minds of the
formerly colonized:

\begin{quote}
The nation is not only the condition of culture, its fruitfulness, its
continuous renewal, and its deepening. It is also a necessity. It is the
fight for national existence which sets culture moving and opens to it
the doors of creation. . . . The nation gathers together the various
indispensable elements necessary for the creation of a culture, those
elements which alone can give it credibility, validity, life, and creative
power. In the same way, it is its national character that will make such
a culture open to other cultures and which will enable it to influence
and permeate other cultures. A non-existent culture can hardly be
expected to have bearing on reality, or to influence reality. . . . We
believe that the conscious and organized undertaking by a colonized
people to re-establish the sovereignty of that nation constitutes the
most complete and obvious cultural manifestation that exists.\textsuperscript{6}
\end{quote}
For Fanon culture means life, therefore, anti-colonial violence that re-establishes the “sovereignty” of a nation is a “complete” “cultural manifestation” which is not only life-giving but also reality-conferring. If the extreme, indiscriminate violence and terror unleashed upon unsuspecting civilians qualify as “conscious and organized undertaking[s],” then the terrorist action undertaken by the FLN against not just the occupational forces but also the cultural products accompanying those forces may well qualify as action that restores a sense of national consciousness and an aesthetics of cultural identity—prerequisites of re-establishing connection with authentic reality. The very aesthetics of reality, that is, presupposes a cultural and national instinct which, however, stems necessarily from the liberation of individual imagination.

This is why “on the eve of the decisive conflict for national freedom [one notices] the renewing of forms of expression and the rebirth of the imagination.” A very important remark that Fanon makes (which relates indirectly to unconventional, “terrorist” action as not just a cathartic factor but also one that will likely lead to the inculcation of a democratic consciousness) is that a national identity or culture opens itself freely to other cultures, thus creating a sense of belonging to a wider international and intercultural community within which it is capable of continually redefining, hence renewing itself.

Whether Fanon was able to persuasively theorize the potential improvement of society through revolution and terrorism, or not, is debatable. What he has definitely put his finger on, however, hinges upon the perils underlying terrorist, insurgent action when the latter stops being “terrorist” and becomes instead institutional and too conventionalized. As already noted in the previous chapter, history has demonstrated that a terrorist organization or revolutionary movement determined to rid a people from the yoke of a tyrannical regime usually has no coherent plan concerning its own future action when it finally takes over from the previous status quo. More particularly, the FLN, “which emerged from the war as the only possible Algerian ruling party, had learnt how to govern while waging a fantastically brutal campaign of terrorism. Coarsened by violence . . . weaned on extremism, antagonistic toward the concepts of tolerance, compromise, and the rule of law. . . . The use of terrorism is indeed poor preparation for effective, democratic governance.” As is well-known, during the French occupation, Arabic, as a formal language of instruction, was forbidden. What happened after 1962 was that the new FLN nationalist government established Arabic as the only permissible language, thereby encouraging an
education and culture that would be based upon Islam. It would simply, that is, reverse the status quo. For the next thirty years, the FLN as a socialist political party and the sole legal one (up until 1989 when other parties were rendered legal after the Algerian Constitution was amended to allow for the existence of other parties as well as the possibility of democracy) would ironically rule Algeria almost with an iron fist and without attending to the need for political reform to ameliorate the lives of the Algerian people for whom it had struggled for so long. As a result, there were massive demonstrations that favored the rise of Islamist powers such the Islamic Salvation Front (ISF). Stuningly, what the formerly revolutionary FLN government did when the ISF appeared to be winning a general election in 1992 was to encourage a military coup that would dismantle the organization and banish its members. Eventually, the entire ISF party was officially banned and a civil war that would last for years began between the government and all those Islamist forces whose electoral victory had been denied.

What the events, above, show is that a radical as well as revolutionary organization can easily turn into a non-radical, conservative as well as intolerant regime as soon as its authority is questioned. In the case of Algeria, postcolonial critic and theorist Edward Said tells us that at the time of the insurrection the national consciousness embodied by the FLN’s anti-colonial struggle was unfortunately not transformed into a social consciousness which would transcend the very logic of the antithesis between “colonial/anti-colonial,” thus turning Algeria into a true, postcolonial state. Said takes the two terms—national consciousness, social consciousness—from Fanon’s own book in which Fanon had foreseen such a turn of events in Algeria. Said eloquently explains how an anti-state terrorist force tends to mimic its former enemy’s tactic and logic:

The FLN . . . proceeded politically to absorb the whole of Algerian civil society: within three decades this alignment of state and party authority with a restored identity caused not only the monopolization of most political practices by one party and the almost complete erosion of democratic life, but, on the right wing, the challenging appearance of an Islamic opposition, favoring a militantly Muslim Algerian identity based on Koranic (Shari’ah) principles. By the 1990s the country was in a state of crisis, whose result has been a deeply impoverishing face-off between government . . . and the Islamic
movement, which appeals to the past and orthodoxy for its authority. Both sides claim the right to rule Algeria. What both Fanon and Said allude to is the trap which revolutionary and anti-colonial terrorist groups have frequently fallen into, insofar as through their actions and mentality they end up causing an extension of imperialism in their very attempt to simply counter imperialist ideologies and policies.

3.2 International attraction to terrorism: Palestinian novelty and modern technologies

The Algerian war of Independence and the terrorist campaigns launched by revolutionary and other insurgent groups inside the country (or outside it) managed to attract attention to anti-colonialism and imperialist politics and, most importantly, influence future radical liberationist organizations. The FLN’s tactics did indeed grab headlines while foreshadowing the onset of a new wave of terrorism of a much more “international” and modernized character. It was in the late 1960s that this new kind of extreme violence made its appearance. On 22 July 1968, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a branch of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), took over an aircraft belonging to EL AL, Israel’s national airline, and diverted it to Algiers. The plane was full of unsuspecting passengers going from Rome to Tel Aviv. Undoubtedly there was a felicitous symbolism in the very choice of the city the aircraft would be diverted to—the Algerian capital—as if the hijackers had wanted to make the point that their own mission or struggle would have to be just as successful as the Algerians’ war of liberation from French colonialism. The aim of the hijackers was not to harm any of the passengers but rather to exert political pressure upon Israel so that it would be forced to release sixteen members of the PFLP who remained in captivity. After many days of negotiations the hijackers finally achieved their target and the hostages were traded for the captured fighters (or terrorists).

Of course, the PLO was not always carrying out attacks against civilian targets. When it was first set up in 1964, it concentrated on strikes against the Israeli military infrastructure. Its declared purpose was to destroy the state of Israel, create a
Palestinian state and restore to it all the territory Palestinians had lost after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. However, after the Six-Day War in 1967, which was also won by the Israelis, it became absolutely clear that Israel had not only occupied more (Palestinian) land but established settlements on it too. Israel, in other words, was there to stay on a more permanent basis. After 1967, that is, it was resolved by the PLO (and Yasser Arafat, the real leader of Palestinians) that “[a]rmed resistance from within and beyond the Occupied Territories [should become] the basis for the construction of Palestinian national identity. . . .”

“Armed resistance from within and beyond the Occupied Territories,” in essence, meant unleashing terrorist violence not only on a military level but also on a nonmilitary one. It also meant that Palestinian fighters would not restrict themselves to inflicting pain upon combatants and soldiers but they were willing to go out of their way to terrorize (without necessarily killing) civilian noncombatants.

After the Six-Day War therefore, attacks would be launched against targets that were seemingly irrelevant to the Palestinian cause, barely having anything to do with their enemy, Israel, and far away from the usual theater of operations. It was in such a context that the aforementioned hijacking incident took place, ushering in the new international era of terrorism focusing on the importance of publicity for furthering terrorist agendas. George Habash, leader of the PFLP and an advocate for airliner hijackings, declared openly in a 1970 interview that when “we hijack a plane it has more effect than if we killed a hundred Israelis in battle. For decades world opinion has been neither for nor against the Palestinians. It simply ignored us. At least the world is talking about us now.” Hijackings had occurred before this EL AL incident, however, the specific act was the first one to constitute a dramatic political statement. The choice of the aircraft was not random—it was the national air carrier of the Occupying Forces—while the emergency it created forced Israel to come in direct contact with people whom the Jewish state itself had only been characterizing as “terrorists.” The very contact with them, therefore, was an indirect recognition of their political existence.

Despite the tactical victory won by the terrorists through their de facto recognition, there are several other important factors that one should consider. As we have already emphasized, terrorism generally is about inculcating fear and terror in the human mind. The purpose of a terrorist act is to shock and stun an “audience”—specific layers of society, or even an entire country. The EL AL hijacking managed
precisely to do that: it stunned not just the Israeli authorities but the entire Israeli society. Hijacking a civilian aircraft was obviously a stepping up of the campaign against Israel. It was the first time that terrorists thought about exploiting state-of-the-art modern technology—the airplane—by turning it into a means of putting pressure upon their adversary. In addition, it was the first time that terrorists had decided to internationalize their cause by involving somehow other countries—as mentioned above, the plane had taken off from Italy—as well as foreign nationals that were presumably unrelated to the Palestinians’ “oppressors.” The further development of commercial aviation and mass air transportation encouraged people to fly in masses to different international destinations for business or pleasure, while the new tactical change—hijacking—tapped into the new habit of air travel, thus turning terrorism from a provincial to an almost cosmopolitan phenomenon. At the same time, taking over planes and keeping passengers as hostages cast a shadow upon air travel as a totally safe means of transportation and created unease in the minds and hearts of civilians and travelers as to the probable growth of the problem in the immediate future.

Habash, leader of the PFLP, uses words that encapsulate the renewed objectives of the terrorists: “world opinion,” “effect,” “talking.” He supports the view that the world does not need to be in favor of or against Palestinians. Rather, the world needs to not be ignorant, it has to know and talk about the problem of the injustice done to them, regardless of whether it supports it or not. Therefore, hijacking international flights forces the innocent to listen to what the hijackers have to say and reflect on the supposed urgency of their concerns. In a way, through compelling the people to feel the problem, the hijackers aspire to render them more ethically involved in the question of injustice. But since we have already underscored that the main aim of a terrorist is to attract the attention of those that are not directly affected by the terrorist act, the passengers of an aircraft are not the main “target group” of the hijackers. The latter are rather interested in making others—Israelis as well as non-Israelis and distant spectators—empathize with those that are immediately implicated in terrorist violence (that is, the passengers), which should potentially lead those others to try and resolve the situation that will certainly have sparked general outrage in the meantime. The aesthetic of pain, that is, seems to be built into the mechanism of psychological coercion activated by the threat of death.
After the EL AL incident, hijackings became quite fashionable in terrorist circles. The problem of “bad publicity” was not a real problem as long as it kept the Palestinian question a hot issue—bad publicity was, in fact, good publicity. Thus, before the decade drew to its close, there were more hijacking incidents that indicated the zeal of the perpetrators to outbid the determination shown in previous cases of air piracy as well as stepping up the campaign against the Israeli occupation. On December 26, 1968, PFLP terrorists stormed an EL AL aircraft just before take off from the international airport in Athens, Greece. The terrorists’ aim was to kill as many Jews as possible en route from Tel Aviv to New York, and to achieve that they fired at the jet with a machine gun for more than a minute. This was no bloodless attack: one man was killed and two more were seriously injured. In August 1969 the PFLP hijacked a TWA flight that had taken off from Rome and diverted it to Damascus, Syria. Their intention was not to harm any passengers but to send the message that the US was unethically protecting the Israeli interests against Palestine. Soon after evacuating the plane, the terrorists blew it up. Television, which was gradually but steadily becoming the most popular medium at the time, transmitted extraordinary images from the destruction and captivated spectators’ interest around the world. Seeing that the international media might unknowingly contribute immensely to the advertizing of their cause, the Popular Front took to hijacking four other transatlantic flights in September 1970. Three of the planes landed in the desert of Jordan and the fourth in Cairo where it was destroyed, while more than six hundred passengers were held for nearly three weeks. This was just one out of twenty-nine hijackings attempted or carried out successfully by various Palestinian factions from 1968 to 1977, which proves the massive dimensions to which the problem had grown. The problem of Palestinian terror was now everybody’s problem.

A terrorist campaign is “like a shark in the water: it must keep moving forward—no matter how slowly or incrementally—or die,” argues Bruce Hoffman. The Palestinians realized that carrying out guerilla attacks on the Gaza strip had not brought about satisfactory results—such as persuading Israel to change its policy in the area, for instance—and that people around the world had grown tired of hearing about localized military operations conducted by one ethnic minority against another. Consequently, they had to somehow step up the campaign in order to re-sensitize the international community and attract more publicity to their activities. The only way to do that was by relinquishing their typical methodology of harming their enemy
physically, and adopting unexpected and unconventional methods of doing harm: hijacking planes was obviously such a “stepping up” of the campaign which would apparently reawaken people’s consciences as to the fairness of the Palestinian goals. In order to refocus attention to themselves, that is, terrorists, often reluctantly, resorted to more dramatic and highly theatrical acts that they would not have opted for under different circumstances. In a way, the demand for creativity and inventiveness does fall upon the shoulders of terrorist groups insofar as they have to always come up with novel initiatives or even tricks to sustain the interest of the public and, by extension, the media.

The method of hostage taking, chosen during the hijacking incidents mentioned above, is a bloodless kind of violence that terrorists employ so as to exert psychological pressure upon governments and authorities rather than physical pressure upon hostages. This is a situation where the threat of death (rather than actual death) hovers over those captured. Hostage taking has been called “smart” terrorism because the terrorists involved maintain control over the situation, gain media attention for their cause over a sustained period of time, and force governments to recognize them in the course of any negotiations to free the hostages. In effect, the leadership of the terrorist group taking the hostages becomes the puppet master, pulling the strings... of the government whose people are taken hostage. The aims of the terrorist organization are to gain maximum press and television coverage for their cause and themselves and to increase their bargaining power for the next round.16

“Smart” terrorism, in other terms, involves theatrical ploys, bluffs, and puppeteers putting on terrorist shows and pulling strings before an ever increasing body of TV spectators eager to watch sensational images from around the world.

In the late 60s and early 70s, the significance of television not just for informing the masses but also shaping their worldviews was unquestionable. Terrorist organizations realized early enough the ability of the TV to publicize a problem or an occurrence of violence, at times, creating an aesthetic view of it through the transformation of the violent act into a dramatic performance. History has shown that terrorism feeds upon the media in the same way that the media frequently depend upon terrorist acts to increase their ratings. As we have already argued, terrorists
depend upon the visual images of the terror that they provoke. Publicity is terrorists’ “life blood and their oxygen. No other medium has provided more oxygen to terrorism than television because of its ability to report the news instantly, nonstop, and in visuals and words from any place to all parts of the globe, a facility that has affected the reporting patterns of other media as well.”17 Actually, the relationship between terrorism and the TV became much closer, even symbiotic, during the 1980s and afterwards. A prominent example is a 1985 hijacking of a TWA flight in Beirut virtually staged for the camera. During the unfolding of the crisis, it turned out that the perpetrators were fully aware of “the geographic reach of the American media, the audience size of different media types, the working of press pools, and the advantages of scheduling live interviews during TV networks’ popular morning and early evening news broadcasts.”18 It seems extraordinary but true: hijackings were staged or choreographed for television audiences. They were elevated to aesthetic products to be consumed by hungry consumers as well as media obsessing with violence.

In the case of the Palestinian struggle, the dramatic escalation of violence (to include innocent civilians from other countries) was symptomatic of a “bidding war” amongst rival Palestinian factions fighting for their own survival as radical organizations. What this means is that once terrorist violence or the threat of it escalated there was no going back. The expectations of the viewing public, both eyewitnesses and TV viewers, would have to be met. Suddenly it becomes obvious that ideology and politics yield to a strange game of internal competition over which a faction can mount a performance to outbid a previous one. Peter Neumann elucidates this almost unconscious procedure very eloquently:

The result of outbidding will be a spiral of violence in which different groups feel compelled to engage in evermore spectacular acts of violence in order to “top” their rivals’ latest attacks. Organizations which had previously refrained from deliberate attacks against civilians may be drawn into mass-casualty attacks simply in order to prove that they are capable of inflicting as much damage as their rivals. . . . Furthermore, once the “bidding war” is over, it will become more difficult to reduce the violence to a more “acceptable” level. The population will have become desensitized, and the expectation of what constitutes “terror” in the eyes of the target audience will have shifted
to a higher level. The result is an increased overall threshold of terror which any subsequent terrorist attacks will need to overcome. . . .

There is no turning back from violence once it is resorted to, and that is not because de-escalation is not feasible but because no subsequent terrorist act, symbolic or otherwise, would be just as mind-boggling and shocking unless it was just as loud and terrifying as the previous one. It is consequently a question of rhetorical persuasion and performance: a question of which party can demonstrate a rhetorical ability in sending a loud and clear message to the other parties as well as the wider public.

The appearance of Black September, a new terrorist group sponsored by Arafat, was the outcome of the “rhetorical” war between moderate and hard-line guerillas in Palestine. Black September perpetrated what was seen as perhaps the most shocking terrorist attack in history before the September 11 terrorist outrage in New York: the killing of two members of the Israeli Olympic team and the capturing of nine more athletes (who later died too) after a raid on the Olympic village during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, Germany. The hit was impressive and unprecedented insofar as it occurred in the context of the most important international sports event, which was also widely televised. More than 800 million spectators witnessed the attack live and learned of the terrorists’ political goals regarding the PLO’s fight against the Israeli occupation. But most importantly, those spectators—mainly Western viewers who, up to then, had had no previous visual (or other) experience of Palestinian terrorism—were taking an imaginary (but just as traumatic) plunge into the physical and psychological ordeal caused by the experience of what looked like an irrational act of extreme violence.

Irrational or not, the act itself had no precedent in the sense that it was no mere hostage situation given that the terrorists had not precluded the possibility of taking innocent lives. In fact, they had given serious consideration to such an option. As one of the members of Black September said, “We have to kill their most important and most famous people. . . . [W]e have to kill artists and sportsmen.” Real death for noncombatants on foreign soil had just entered the picture for the first time in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What is more, what was required was the actual death of famous people who were completely extraneous to governmental affairs and the political arena. Sportsmen and artists typically represent the world of entertainment and recreation and a terrorist note which was left behind by the organization was precisely establishing a link between the public’s entertainment and its indifference to
real tragedy and sufferance: “We are neither killers nor bandits. . . . We are persecuted people who have no land and no homeland. . . . We are not against any people, but why should our place here be taken by the flag of the occupiers. . . . [W]hy should the whole world be having fun and entertainment while we suffer with all ears deaf to us?”  

The idea expressed here is that had the world not been so consumed by material pleasures and joyful activities it would have been able to feel the injustice done to the Palestinians. A second reading might perhaps interpret the reference to the “fun” the world was allegedly having as some sort of envy that people, including their own “oppressor”—Israel—were capable of entertaining themselves, whereas all Palestinians could do was suffer: why “should our place here be taken by the flag of the occupiers”? A 2005 novel entitled The Attack, written by Palestinian author Yasmina Khadra, addresses similar issues that relate to the total disjunction between revolutionary/sacrificial death and laid-back, complacent lifestyle. The novel is about Amin, a middle-class Arab-Israeli surgeon who enjoys a successful career in Tel Aviv, and who is shocked by the news of the death of his wife. What completely devastates him though is that his wife died while on a suicide bombing mission. His desperate attempts to discover why she was caught up in the web of terrorism lead him to question his own convenient middle-class (a)political apathy which had blinded him to the real day-to-day tragedy experienced by his fellow Palestinians. In essence, he discovers that it is precisely his own pleasurable indifference to ethnic injustice and the plight of Palestine which works against the liberation of his homeland. The real enemy is himself, not the Israelis.

Back into the “real” world and the Munich attack, taking the lives of the famous and/or harming those wallowing in insouciance would not just attract the attention of the whole world; it would actually horrify spectators into thinking that if the cream of the crop of a country cannot protect themselves against terrorist violence despite all the means available to them, why would anonymous people be any less vulnerable to such violence? Or even, should they (the “common” people) be involved in a terrorist incident, would they be treated as real human beings worthy of all the attention they could get or simply as unnecessary but, somehow, “acceptable” casualties? In other words, in spite of the physical distance between the events and the persons viewing them, an overwhelming feeling of helplessness—similar to the sense of sublime awe—would go over the remote spectators standing speechless before
their TV sets. All of a sudden, death felt, at the same time, distant and in close proximity, visual but also real.

As we have already emphasized in the introduction, aesthetics is bound up with the terrorist deed and its reception. Particularly the feeling of the sublime referred to above is a highly aesthetic one, not necessarily in terms of an appreciation of the beautiful (since it is rather callous to refer to a visually compelling image of terror as a “beautiful” one), but in terms of the feeling of relief unconsciously experienced by a distanced spectator at the sight of an episode of extreme violence. The spectator is relieved that she is not the one who is physically affected; rather, someone else is. Back in eighteenth-century England, it was Edmund Burke who elaborated upon the nature of the sublime as relief:

[T]here is no spectacle we so eagerly pursue, as that of some uncommon and grievous calamity; so that whether the misfortune is before our eyes, or whether they are turned back to it in history, it always touches with delight. This is not an unmixed delight, but blended with no small uneasiness. . . . [T]he pain we feel, prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer.23

Burke is virtually telling us that people derive an unconscious pleasure from other people’s calamities. However, such a pleasure is always combined with a more natural feeling of pain (we also claim to have) at seeing other people suffer. This mixed feeling creates an uneasiness that can only be dissolved by expressing words of comfort for the others’ ordeals. Burke talks about how the condition of sublimity presupposes that one “flirts” with the terror of death on an imaginary, fictional way, without actually coming into direct contact with death. Such a condition is one of a “delightful horror”:

[I]f the pain and terror are so modified as not to be actually noxious; if the pain is not carried to violence, and the terror is not conversant about the present destruction of the person . . . they are capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror; which as it belongs to self-preservation is one of the strongest of all the passions. Its object is the sublime. Its highest degree I call astonishment.24

Keeping in mind Burke’s notion of sublimity as a kind of “safe” (because remote) astonishment, we might think of the TV witnesses of the terrorist attack in the
Olympic village as experiencing in astonishment the very feeling of the sublime as a horror which was also tinged with a puzzling sense of awe and attraction to the shocking scene at hand. But what about the terrorists themselves who had broken into the world of “fun and entertainment” as they called the Summer Olympics? In some perversive fashion, by storming the Olympic village the Palestinian terrorists became active participants in the scene of entertainment they had set themselves against.

In the years to come, Black September would raise the bar for terror by launching campaigns that involved the indiscriminate killing of foreign citizens in strategic or not positions. Taking over embassies (such as the Saudi Arabian one in 1974, for instance) and executing diplomats would send multiple messages of ambivalence to a variety of addressees. The content of those messages (namely, the real intentions behind the future attacks) would purposefully have been hard to discern. As Fatah leader Salah Khalef explained, “we are planting the seed. Others will harvest it. . . .”25 The metaphorical, almost literary language used by Khalef speaks the truth in forthright manner. It is not their duty to render their messages comprehensible; it does not befall the perpetrators to determine their content. The receivers of the messages will have to interpret them or attach meaning to them. What the terrorists do is simply spread around signifiers without specific signifieds. To put it differently, they deliberately sow chaos but they will not be around to reap its blowback.

The rationale (or rather, “irrationale”) behind such an attitude takes us back to the dogma of “propaganda of the deed,” which posits that we should not first theorize insurgency and its supposed legitimacy and then put it into practice through actual deeds of violence that prove the plausibility of theory. It is rather the opposite: one acts in a certain violent way, and only retrospectively is the act made comprehensible via linguistic articulations. Simply put, words do not mean; it is action which not only speaks louder than words but also constitutes the potential meaning of any supporting linguistic entity thereafter. There is a fascinating aesthetic paradox here. The terrorist, or freedom fighter, employs a metaphorical language to underscore the renunciation of language and metaphor and the prioritization of violence as a palpable message in itself. This paradox is aesthetic to the extent that it restores, at least in theory, the core element of aesthetics—aesthesis—to the very narrative of terrorist violence by ironically literalizing the metaphoric utterance of the terrorist. All of a sudden, words are not empty any more, while actions are meaningful by themselves. On second
thought, the disruption, rather than destruction, of the daily routine of civilians by the enemy-state may qualify as some kind of “rational” or meaningful action that can be legitimately articulated: “It is enough for us now to learn, for example, in reading the Jerusalem Post, that Mrs. Meir had to make her will before visiting Paris, or that Mr. Abba Eban had to travel with a false passport.”

Exactly how disruptive such action proves is a matter upon which every-day life practices will decide.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the propaganda of the deed—translated as exercising a violent transgression rather than dwelling for too long on the possibility of a harmonious co-existence between two communities—practically legitimized, at a certain level, the struggle of the Palestinians and broached the question of the future establishment of a Palestinian state. Such violent transgressions as the aforementioned hijackings or the bloodshed in the Olympic Village in Munich may not be deemed to have been absolute strategic successes, but they certainly forced the international community as well as all related parts to start thinking seriously about the problem of Palestine. Terrorist violence, in all its fearsome unexpectedness and political aspiration, managed to put its point across and bring back on the table problematic issues that were not even seen as such (as “problematic,” that is) before the exercise of violence:

Despite the human cost, over the next two decades the terrible price in lives and fear was in large part responsible for the political change which described the “Palestinian situation” and then the “Palestinian question” and the “Palestinian problem.” Western leaders, the Israelis, and the Arab states developed a much greater interest in providing a solution . . . because the Palestinians made it ever more costly for all parties to continue to ignore them.

In a communiqué that appeared in a Beirut newspaper a few days after the dramatic attack, the terrorists extolled their achievement as a product of communicational brilliance: “A bomb in the White House . . . an earthquake in Paris could not have echoed through the consciousness of every man in the world like the operation at Munich. . . . The choice of the Olympics, from the purely propagandistic view-point . . . was like painting the name of Palestine on a mountain . . . seen from the four corners of the earth.”

Whether or not the terrorists portray themselves as artists or painters painting the name and the future of Palestine on a mountain, we should not be led to believe
that violence naturally rights a wrong or that indiscriminate terrorist action is justified and necessary because it allegedly forces one to listen to and understand the plight of the oppressed (or, from the point-of-view of Israel, the duty of a people to resist terrorist destruction). One could argue that trying to really comprehend state terror—in this case, Israel’s violent reaction to Palestinian attacks—or anti-state one—Palestinian terrorism—leads one to directly fall into the unethical trap of rationalizing and eventually legitimizing violence and terror. The act of killing should always remain irrational and incomprehensible, impervious to any kind of reduction to socio-economic analyses and elaborations. Slavoj Zizek elucidates the imperative of irrationality:

In Palestine today, there are two opposing narratives with absolutely no common horizon, no “synthesis” in a wider metanarrative; thus the solution cannot be found in any all-encompassing narrative. This also means that when we consider this conflict we should stick to cold, ruthless standards, suspending the urge to try to “understand” the situation: we should unconditionally resist the temptation to “understand” Arab anti-Semitism (where we really encounter it) as a “natural” reaction to the sad plight of the Palestinians; or to “understand” the Israeli measures as a “natural” reaction against the background of the memory of the Holocaust.29

Zizek contends that sheer acts of brutal violence should be taken out of their supposed social or historical context in order to be judged more “objectively” for what they truly are: brutal acts for which there is no ethical justification, and which should therefore be unconditionally condemned. Of course, there always lurks in such a thought the danger of presenting oppositional narratives and practices of violence as exactly “equal” or identical to each other—which, in many cases, may be wrong and unjust to both narratives. Still, Zizek is right to emphasize the significance of the principle of irrationality when grappling with single outbursts of violence coming from either side. Unless we view each outburst as an irrational singularity, we cannot help but normalize within us the image of bloody conflict as a familiar, hence sadly acceptable motif, particularly by setting that image against a larger backdrop of war and atrocity.
3.3 Attractive terrorists: the feminine and the explosive

As we have emphasized so far, the aesthetic has been important not only to the representation of terrorism but also to the self-fashioning of terrorists. In some cases, aesthetic factors play key roles in the very fulfillment of their political aims. The aesthetics of feminine beauty, for instance, has occasionally affected terrorist strategies and methodologies. We have already seen how the Algerian revolutionary movement employed women to carry out attacks against the French, as it had realized that a female presence could much more easily go unnoticed amidst the unsuspicious crowd. But the image of the beautiful terrorist extends well beyond practical issues of operation and terrorist implementation. At times, an aesthetically appealing female figure serves to construct a much more humane and socially acceptable “face” for a terrorist organization to which that figure belongs. Or, more seriously, it serves to disseminate through its media representations a visually attractive, hence ethically flawless image of terrorist practice. Beauty may serve the aim of mystifying, or celebrating, the figure of the terrorist at large as well as her (or his) political objectives: if the terrorist is a beautiful woman, one might sense that her political objective is just as beautiful and legitimate, while her tactics are acceptable and understandable.

One of the persons involved in the famous 1969 hijacking incident described earlier was Leila Khaled, a charming member of the PFLP and a staunch supporter of the organization’s ideology and practices. Khaled might indeed be seen as the first case of “celebrity terrorism” in recent history. She quickly became an iconic figure and an embodiment of Leftist revolution around the world. Posters of her holding an AK-47 and smiling helped disseminate the image of a dangerous femme fatale with a terrifying, yet noble, agenda. You didn’t have to be an advocate of terrorism to be attracted to the idea that someone could be both beautiful and “deadly” at the same time. As a European journalist put it, female terrorists, “from Palestinian Leila Khaled to German Ulrike Meinhof [a leading figure of the Red Army Faction operating in West Germany], have long fascinated the popular imagination with their frequent combination of feminine charms and ability to kill in cold blood.” Khaled was described as a “trim and dark-eyed beauty with sex appeal. Even three decades after Khaled’s involvement in terrorism, reporters dwelled on the attention she received as the first female hijacker because of her ‘beauty,’ her ‘pin-up’ looks, and her ‘delicate
Audrey Hepburn face.”\textsuperscript{31} Others called her “the glamour girl of international terrorism” or “the hijack queen.”\textsuperscript{32}

What added to Khaled’s popularity was the fact that she was not implicated in any lethal PFLP bombing activity, nor was she involved in any targeted or indiscriminate killing. On the contrary, during the hijacking incidents she was extremely friendly towards the passengers albeit crystal clear about her serious intentions. Evidently, people around the world became fascinated with the beautiful young woman who had taken up arms without paradoxically renouncing her feminine and womanly looks or exhibiting a more “manly” or robust kind of attitude. To the European eyes, she seemed like an extraordinary woman with an unconventional professional career.\textsuperscript{33} For a long period, the media obsessed over Khaled, which is “testimony to the powerful magnetic attraction exercised by terrorists and terrorism . . . in even the most unlikely (and absurd) circumstances.”\textsuperscript{34} Bruce Hoffman reminds us that on 3 September 1997, in the immediate aftermath of Princess Diana’s death, the London \textit{Times} published on two consecutive days an article describing how Khaled was allegedly “touched” by the princess’s tragic loss, thus writing a poem dedicated to her, which she subsequently sent to the princess’s two sons.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, it sounds absurd to conflate two personalities that are famous for completely different reasons: on the one hand, Diana, associated with mitigating the pain of the weak and innocent, while on the other, Leila, the notorious hijacker who unhesitatingly jeopardized the lives of hundreds of innocent passengers to attract international attention to the Palestinian struggle. Obviously, the role of the media, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, is highly suspect when it comes to the question of how they cover or comment upon events or figures of positive or negative resonance. It’s safe to say that television and the press have traditionally succumbed to the aesthetic power and sex appeal of femininity (and masculinity) regardless of whether that femininity carried positive or negative (ethical or immoral) overtones.

Female terrorists like Leila Khaled or Ulrike Meinhof, from the Marxist RAF organization, shrank from renouncing their femininity and sex appeal. Far from revising traditional gender roles, [they] have played these same roles with greater fervor but in a different direction. Rather than being liberated from traditional sex roles, female terrorists replace the restrictions of marriage with extreme attachment to a leader or a cause. . . . [T]hey are burdened
with passionate concern for society at large. Female terrorists may be even more fanatic than males. In negating conventional roles, they turn their traditional roles against themselves. From the excerpt above one gathers that female terrorists, by underscoring their femininity and aesthetic dimension, paradoxically managed to reinforce their revolutionary dynamic—beauty at the service of the revolution. In Leila Khaled’s case, however, such a dynamic did not seem to be too dangerous or life-threatening in the eyes of distant viewers who had chosen to see Khaled as a beautiful rebel rather than a ruthless terrorist. If terrorism is terrifying by definition, then depriving it of the element of terror-inducing death (or the threat of an imminent death) inevitably transforms terrorism into an innocuous sublime performance, in Kant’s or Burke’s sense; a performance or image that appeals to spectators’ unconscious thoughts and fantasies concerning evil and the fascination the latter exerts on the mind.

Dr Mohammad al-Fadel, the attorney and future rector of Damascus University, with Leila Khaled. [Link](http://www.syrianhistory.com/content/dr-mohammad-al-fadel-attorney-and-future-rector-damascus-university-leila-khaled-member)
3.4 From the Weathermen to the Red Army Faction: democracy, boredom, and the call for action

In the 1970s and 1980s, Western publics had nearly identified terrorism with Marxist and Leftist organizations like the Weathermen in the USA, the Red Army Faction in Germany or the Red Brigades in Italy. Such groups were usually committed to universalist ideologies, as contrasted to the particularist ideologies espoused by ethnic/separatist or religious movements. Unlike particularist terrorist groups that “divide people according to whether they share the same ethnicity, belief or birthplace,” universalist groups prioritize universalist notions such as equality for all and questions of human value, dignity or human rights. This section deals with the universalism of the Weathermen and the Red Army Faction (RAF), and more specifically with their call for a shift from bourgeoisie apathy to the awakening of the political consciousness of the citizen in Western democracies. That call, in fact, constituted a demand not only for an actual political revolution—besides, Western democracies were supposedly already “democratic” in principle, an opinion that naturally was not shared by the majority of terrorist organizations—but also an aesthetic one. The individual, according to revolutionary ideology, needed to re-establish contact with the very feeling or aesthesis of democratic freedom by rendering notions such as dignity, personal instinct, equality of the sexes, etc., more meaningful and less theoretical or abstract.

The call for restoring deep meaning to empty notions amounted to a demand for turning words into action which people could really engage in, feel to their very bones, and understand emotionally rather than intellectually. Deeds should speak now louder than ever in order to awaken the subjects from their decades-long apolitical and anti-social sleep. We need to state, at this point, that such Leftist movements as the Weathermen or RAF did not just spring out of nowhere, nor were they impervious to major influences from nationalist or ethnic revolutionaries of the past. As is well-known, for instance, members of the Red Army Faction were actually trained in PLO paramilitary camps in Jordan in 1969, which shows that terrorist organizations
operating in Western democracies admired and imitated particularist militant insurgents of the Middle East, to the point of copying their methods. This propensity for imitation constitutes the so-called “contagion effect,” the notion that terrorists watch and learn from each other’s doings, successes and failures. So RAF, for example, is to a great extent indebted to the PLO for its own doings as well as the theoretical justifications that shore up those doings.

At the end of the 1960s, a new kind of propaganda by deed and word (or frequently, first word and then deed) emerged, this time in the USA. On 7 October 1969 a bomb explosion shattered a police monument in Chicago. A radical group called the “Weathermen” assumed responsibility for the attack and justified it through the circulation of leaflets explaining the purpose of the act:

> We move with the people of the world to seize power from those who now rule. We . . . expect the pig lackeys to come down on us. We’ve got to be ready for that. This is a war we can’t resist. We’ve got to actively fight. We’re going to bring the war home to the mother country of imperialism. AMERIKA: THE FINAL FRONT.

Bringing the war “home” meant exposing violently the average citizen of America to the atrocities of the U.S. in Vietnam, a country that was thousands of miles away. It also entailed that the radicals believed that either Americans had no idea about what had been going on in Vietnam or they simply did not care. The only way, then, to “force” them to care was through making them feel the pain not just of the Vietnamese but of all the peoples that had to suffer the American imperialist politics. The sensational tinge of the declaration (“AMERIKA: THE FINAL FRONT”) alongside its threatening aspects—the reference to an imminent war on American territory—was, paradoxically, even more shocking to middle-class America than the violent act itself. Later on, a bombing of the headquarters of the New York City Police was accompanied by the issuing of a communiqué, published by the so-called Weather Report (the “official” newspaper of the radical group), which virtually claimed responsibility for the attack: “The time is now. Political power grows out of a gun, a Molotov, a riot, a commune and from the soul of the people.” During a four-day period, recorded in history as the “Days of Rage,” there was a lot of fighting in the streets, smashing shop windows and setting vehicles on fire. The injunction not only to speak openly against the state but also act violently against it was probably without precedent in the recent history of the U.S., mainly because such incendiary
messages were coming not from the “underdogs” of society but from educated middle-class kids who had turned, almost overnight, from theoretical insurgents to real practitioners of violence. So the question is,

why did radical organizations turn to violence at all in a democratic, wealthy, and highly educated society? Moreover, why were the privileged children of middle and upper class families in the forefront of this violence? This was an era of transitions, and its cultural, social, and political ferment crystallized in what came to be known as the New Left.41

It had all then started in the early 1960s with the emergence of the New Left. Members of the New Left included young students and intellectuals loosely connected with American universities. One of the aims of the New Left was to wage war against the “imperialism” of the U.S. as well as racial discrimination, economic injustice and sexual oppression—allegedly endemic phenomena in the country. In essence, their enemy was America itself. Despite being radical, the New Left did not seek the fulfillment of its goals by resorting to violence. Neither was its main offspring, SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), particularly comfortable with the exercise of violence despite its activist character. On the contrary, SDS wanted to influence or transform American politics peacefully, by means of controlling, legally, the Democratic Party. Thus, it denounced extreme-left as well as extreme-right policies and ideologies, but still saw Marx with a sympathetic eye. Its constitution declared that SDS would be an organization of democrats, absolutely opposed to totalitarian principles and ideas, and very serious about the possibility of establishing a participatory democracy in America. SDS advocates were especially repulsed by the philosophy of violence “because it requires generally the transformation of . . . a human being or a community of people into a depersonalized object of hate.”42 An ethics/politics of nonviolence, therefore, was integral to the program of the student organization.

How then did we go from the philosophy of nonviolence to the complete espousal of violence and terrorism not as a necessary evil but rather a prerequisite of reforming and improving the society? How did we get from SDS to the Weathermen and subsequently to the latter’s final “mutation,” the “Weather Underground”? The Weathermen organization was the radical arm of SDS, but how did a radical branch even become part of a moderate student movement? In order for a small part of a
movement to radicalize itself, there has to already be some radicality in the very rhetoric and language employed by the “mother movement” itself. Already in 1963, “the young theoreticians of the New Left [and the SDS] started to refer to their activities as ‘insurgent politics’ . . . and to see ‘participatory democracy’ as an alternative type of democracy, thereby rejecting party and interest group politics.”

The outbreak of the Vietnam War and the frustration of student hopes (that there could be a peaceful and gradual development of society from more conservative and oppressive to more democratic and progressive) on the one hand, and on the other, the realization that protest marches and other lawful demonstrations of resistance did not make any real difference in how American politics was conducted led to the radicalization of a small section of SDS—what would be called the “Weathermen”—which embraced principles that were opposed to the ones embraced by its predecessor. If SDS supported the avoidance of violence as it led to dehumanization, the Weathermen adopted a “fight fire with fire” mentality by supporting the idea that you can only respond with violence to the violence of the state, and in addition, that in the dehumanizing context of contemporary America you cannot but turn, willfully, into a dehumanized as well as dehumanizing being, thus turning the tables on the system. The delegitimation of the system and the ruling regime in the case at hand started as a form of linguistic and symbolic debasement. The repressive “other,” that is, is no longer portrayed in human terms—the opponents are no longer human subjects or individuals—but in subhuman ones—they become objects, “pigs” or “lackeys” which might potentially be more easily terrorized or exterminated.

When the “Weather People” finally adopted a dehumanizing philosophy emanating from the concept of “barbarism,” they were suddenly just a small step away from consciously embracing terrorism. Bernardine Dohrn, one of the fiercest leaders of the group, touched upon the question of the applicability of a future revolution: white middle-class youths apparently took no risks in their lives and that had to change dramatically and spectacularly, otherwise no revolutionary change could be feasible or viable. Radicals were just beginning to spell the word “terrorism” in awe as well as sublime anticipation. This development was not a clear case of “propaganda of the deed”; it was words and insurgent rhetoric that subsequently led to taking up arms, not the other way round. If words turned fiery, so would the concomitant practices. But what is particularly important here is the manipulation of the concept of reality by the Weathermen. What was bourgeois, upper middle-class,
systemic and normative could not possibly be part of authentic reality according to them, consequently it had to be through the antinomian, the barbaric and the dehumanizing that they could allegedly retrieve a true sense of the real for themselves as well as for the American society.

Before the end of 1969, the Weathermen (or “Weatherman”) had already gone underground, forming The Weather Underground, small secret terrorist cells whose sole intention was to provoke damage to the ideological and moral structure of America and overthrow the government. “Barbarism” was the new buzzword in the circles of the collective: “The Weathermen see themselves as playing a role familiar to that of the barbaric tribes such as the Vandals and the Visigoths, who invade the decadent, corrupt Rome.” This dehumanization was not only ideological but also cultural and moral. The group assumed a “negative identity.” They created a new and all inclusive Weltanschauung of their own. Young couples living in [Weather cells] were required to [break free from] monogamy and to reject natural parenthood. . . . Private relations of love and affection were declared counterrevolutionary, because they represented bourgeois habits. . . . If a terror campaign against the outside world was to start soon, there could be no room for human compassion or exaggerated sensitivity. Everyone had to . . . be ready for the revolution. According to this logic, if sex is the ultimate form of intimacy in human relationships, it has to be demystified. Allegedly, affection, intimacy, privacy did not affirm the individual’s personal freedom but rather her psychological captivity. In other terms, that is, it was pure physicality, or a new kind of aesthetic sensibility stripped of its bourgeois attire, that the revolutionists wanted to promote. A new aesthetic revolution was at stake involving the awakening of the senses through acts of refamiliarizing oneself with the body, first as materiality and eventually as a brutal machine. In this lens, sexual liberation would prepare the ground for opening up to novel modes of physicality such as the violent engagement with governmental authorities and institutions. Of course, breaking free from monogamy, adopting an aesthetic attitude towards morality, and preparing the body for a future flirtation with physical violence do not automatically lead to an endorsement of terrorism; however, they did create the background against which the insurgent “Weather” mentality flourished.
Terrorist-like tactics might be said to have been introduced into the daily routine of the organization. Performing, for instance, a “gut check” challenge to see how violent members of the collective could get under various circumstances did constitute, if not a terrorist, at least a (para)military method. The idea behind gut checks was that the more violent a member could get the more revolutionary energy she could inject into the organism of the entire team or cell during a riot, insurgency or even a full-fledged revolution. Exhibiting a capacity to inflict pain upon one’s own self or upon one another was crucial to the would-revolutionaries insofar as it demonstrated, amongst other things, the degree in which they could expose themselves to reality as it really was: raw, unemotional, and ruthless. One should not overlook the fact that the Weather Underground comprised mostly middle-class youngsters largely unfamiliar with any kind of violence: those were the privileged and often wealthy youths with excellent education opportunities, and born of families that belonged to the political and social elite of the country. One can easily understand the magical influence that pure violence had upon such persons who, up to that point in time, had always led (or were meant to have led) a comfortable, protected, painless and “boring” life. It is logical to think that for such persons the sheer possibility of exercising real violence would make them feel as if an authentic sense of reality, indeed the very “thingness” of it, would be restored to them. The irresistible passion for tasting the real during the twentieth century, according to Zizek, is perfectly exemplified by the phenomenon of “cutters”—people who harbor an inexplicable desire to cut or hurt themselves so that they can feel alive:

Far from being suicidal . . . cutting is a radical attempt to (re)gain a hold on reality, or . . . to ground the ego firmly in bodily reality, against the unbearable anxiety of perceiving oneself as nonexistent. Cutters usually say that once they see the warm red blood flowing out of the self-inflicted wound, they feel alive again, firmly rooted in reality. So, although, of course, cutting is a pathological phenomenon, it is none the less an attempt at regaining some kind of normality. Of course, the question here is not cutting oneself but rather cutting “others.” Nonetheless, the aesthetic effect sought is uncannily similar: the more violent and terror-inducing the attack on the government the more successful one’s connection with flesh-and-blood reality.
The aesthetic immediacy of violence—either the one they would inflict or the one that others would inflict upon them—would likely turn the un-aesthesis into aesthesis again by converting tedious, middle-class nonreality into a fascinating landscape where something, rather than nothing at all, would be happening. It should not escape our attention that the occurrence of a political “something”—conceptualized as overthrowing habits of thought, cultural stereotypes, sterile political regimes and ethical imperatives—which would replace the a-political “nothing” was the top priority of the Weather Underground. From such a perspective, breaking away from social and political nothingness or unreality was a lot more than a philosophical and abstract question. The dehumanizing, because dehumanized, new “working-class,” living in conditions of fundamental unfreedom in “factory-like multiversities” that prevent free thinking, would have to strike violently back.48

Despite their radical rhetoric of revolution and violence, the Weather Underground did not turn out to be absolutely determined to take human lives. In their several attacks on buildings and institutions that symbolized the imperialist politics of America in Vietnam—the Capitol, the Pentagon, or even police stations—there were hardly any casualties, only property damage. This might have been due to their zeal to simply make the citizens of the country understand by sending them loud and clear messages about America’s (or rather, “Amerikkka””s49) supposed terrorist tactics both home and abroad. Still, their nonlethal hits were disproportionate to their extremely aggressive tone adopted in their bulletins and communiqués. Perhaps what they meant to do through the incendiary rhetoric was provoke the public to imitate them in committing analogous revolutionary acts of physical and symbolic violence against the representatives of the state. Sowing the seed of disquietude was identical to spreading uncertainty among the population as to the legitimacy of the government and the right of the ruling elites to encourage an ethics of compromise in the mind of the majority.

What seems ironic, which is also telling about the possibility of the group being uncomfortable contemplating and planning murder or assassination, is that three members of the Weather Underground actually died trying to construct a bomb (which accidentally went off) in Greenwich Village, New York, in March 1970. Metaphorically put, the brutal reality they were seeking for themselves and the public had blown up in their own faces. The Weather Underground might have posed
radical questions to the American public but it failed in radicalizing the majority of the people. Former student and middle-class activism evidently alienated large portions of the population that discerned in the call for revolution a quasi-elitist and, in some cases, utterly aesthetic urge. As was argued, “the revolutionary lifestyle was probably more important than participation in revolutionary violence.”\(^{50}\) The overall counter-hegemonic aesthetic of the Weather Underground was not totally irrelevant to the aesthetic claims that revolutionary art makes on life and the perception of reality. When Breton and Trotsky, in the “Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art,” declare that “the role of art is too high to refuse it an influence on the fate of society,” adding that “the supreme task of art . . . is to take part actively and consciously in the preparation of the revolution,” they virtually credit art with the ability to revolutionize or radicalize reality.\(^{51}\) In a similar fashion, the Weather Underground aspired to stimulate the revolutionary potential of reality by rehearsing artistically the revolution through smaller-scale antinomian and morally outrageous acts.

Another notorious terrorist organization *par excellence* that managed to spread uncertainty and fear among Western citizens in the 70s was the Red Army Faction (RAF) in West Germany. RAF shared some features in common with the Weathermen insofar as they, too, sprang from a student movement, had a middle-class upbringing, an aversion to conventional morality and a will to fight against a fascist state. In RAF’s mind, the German state was a literal embodiment of fascism and the Nazi ideology. Andreas Baader, leader of the group, once announced: “This fascist state means to kill us all! We must organize resistance. Violence is the only way to answer violence. This is the Auschwitz generation, and there’s no arguing with them!”\(^{52}\) Baader was referring to the fact that although democracy had been established in West Germany, former Nazis and fascists, still holding governmental posts, continued to rule the country. Another issue on which RAF and the Weathermen shared similar views was the possibility of sexual emancipation as a means of promoting the revolutionary struggle against both, the imperialism of states (the U.S. or the German state) and the “imperialism” of conventional and bourgeois mores that prevented people from rising up against social injustice, chauvinism, and exploitation. Baader had famously horrified members of the Organization of the Liberation of Palestine (PLO) by telling them that “fucking and shooting are the same thing!”\(^{53}\)
RAF, just like other left-wing terrorist groups operating in Western democracies, attracted publicity usually by kidnapping or assassinating persons who, in their opinion, symbolized the spirit of capitalism and exploitation. Unlike later terrorist organizations that were religiously motivated, they did not kill indiscriminately or haphazardly. Baader had something to say about that question too. You “can’t take your life and place it above that of children and Majorca holiday-makers and say: My life is valuable! That is elitarian madness, bordering on fascism,” he argued with regard to the phenomenon of hijacking planes to achieve certain political goals. The conscious choice to avoid unleashing indiscriminate violence and the “humane” face shown in such statements as the one above rendered the organization somewhat “likeable” to people of leftist orientation (but not exclusively) and more attractive to the eyes of the media that almost turned the leadership of RAF into popular icons.

Terrorism of the older era—before the advent of religious terror at the end of the twentieth century—is always very careful about the image it produces of itself. Left-wing terrorists are very much preoccupied with the question of whether their deeds seem legitimate or unethical to the general public. Accordingly, the “overriding tactical—and, indeed, ethical—imperative . . . has been the deliberate tailoring of their violent acts to appeal to their perceived ‘constituencies.’” If terrorists have an audience, they certainly do not want to lose it. A terrorist act relies upon the image it creates to have any lasting effect on its audience. That image needs to be able to attract attention, of course, but also to avoid sparking a public outrage or undermining the legitimacy of the terrorist act by provoking human decency or taste. A terrorist “craves for” the sympathy of the public/her audience. Similarly, she constructs her narrative diligently so that there are no loopholes or inconsistencies that might undermine the verisimilitude of her beliefs and jeopardize people’s sympathy.

RAF never hesitated to kill; and when it killed, it usually did so in an emphatic way. Consonant with their denouncement of American military presence on German territory, they bombed a U.S. base in Frankfurt in 1972, an attack that led to the death of four U.S. soldiers. A second generation of RAF radicals repeated the act thirteen years later (1985) by bombing the U.S. Rhein-Main Air Force Base, an attack resulting in the death of three persons—this time, civilians. As many as thirty-four deaths have been attributed to RAF activity before its dissolution in 1998. If a
“successful” terrorist organization manages to spread terror that stems from the unexpectedness of its attacks and its persistence in symbolic hits, RAF unquestionably qualified as such a group. More generally, West German terrorism has “instilled [terror] into almost every German heart—from the statesman to the common air traveler, from the business executive . . . to the military commander who, if he does not tremble for himself, does so for his personnel. . . . Thus the first successful effect is the feeling of insecurity created by the terrorists.” Such a feeling is, most of the times, an end in itself and not a means to an end: a terrorist attack is meant to be an aesthetic assault, first of all; a strike at the heart and the senses.

But what exactly did West Germany terrorists want? A comprehensive account of the desires and wishes of Western leftist terrorists, an account that generally fits the RAF profile too, was offered by philosophical writing:

[Terrorists] want The Revolution, a total transformation of all existing conditions, a new form of human existence, an entirely new relationship of people to each other . . . . They want the total and radical breach with all that is . . . . Without a doubt they are utopians. The source of their (self-provided) legitimacy is the utopia which they want to make real. . . . Inside their world . . . there is no voice that could call them back to reason. For them, there is no connection between the vision that drives them and the existing reality that, they feel, keeps them in chains; therefore destruction is the only form of freedom they can accept. . . . [T]he decision to become revolutionaries is the beginning of becoming human. . . . They are fascinated by the magic of the extremes, the hard and uncompromising either/or, life or death . . . “pig” or man—with nothing in between. This excerpt encapsulates felicitously the radical nature of modern Western terrorism, and more particularly, the nature of RAF’s philosophy. First of all, the terrorists’ utopian vision does not consist of their will to see society revert to an older, more traditional, and thus purer or “innocent” model of life; on the contrary, they aspire to a much better future society that will have done away with the moral and cultural precepts of the past and the present; one that will give humanity the opportunity to be reborn as a “new” kind of existence. Creating a new society rather than re-establishing a traditional mode of living was the explicit—utopian—demand articulated by
Baader’s female comrade Ulrike Meinhof, who shared with the other members a sentiment of demoralization “and a sense of hopelessness with the existing system. . . .”58 In the terrorist mind bridging the gap between “us” and “them” or between Western bourgeois hypocrisy and authentic existence (that the terrorists supposedly represent) is out of the question because there can be no negotiation between the two extremes. In other words, there is no metanarrative, a third option that could merge the two extremes politically and philosophically. Violence emerges as the only option that guarantees the substitution of the new for the old, and if peaceful “creation” is the language used by hegemonic and imperialist ideologies—even though their concomitant practices are hardly nonviolent—then, “disruption” and “destruction” should be the languages employed by revolutionary forces working against the status quo.

Arguably, the terrorist looks to destruction for an opportunity to redefine the human. Reacting naturally, that is, fiercely, to the ruling elites’ ideas and mentality is the only possible way (as terrorists think) to resist the masses’ dehumanized apathy. Seen through this lens, inhumanity lies with civility and indifference, whereas real humanity can only materialize through the disruption of civility and peace. Destruction is not an exclusively political statement in the case of RAF; it has aesthetic resonances as well. “There is no voice that could call them back to reason” (as the excerpt above states) entails that leftist terrorism depends abundantly upon intuition and imagination, a personal aesthetic and artistic instinct which does not necessarily have to do with the instinct for survival but rather with a primal urge to fantasize about an alternative state of things which might potentially be inaugurated—right here, right now—through radical action. Michael Baumann, strictly speaking not a member of RAF itself but of the 2 June Movement—another terrorist group which preceded RAF and which was eventually incorporated into it—recounts how he “would operate much more by feel” than “reason” when carrying out a transgressive act.59 No matter how crucial the “application” of political ideology to the act of transgression, Baumann and others discerned the unquestionably forceful presence of aesthetics in politically transgressive acts. In the following excerpt Baumann reveals unknowingly (?) that terrorist mentalities and practices may well feed upon aesthetic issues:

I was a completely normal person. With me it was like this: I suddenly saw a connection between my long hair and the problems that exist in
America. . . . And suddenly . . . I was like a black or Jew or leper. In any event, with long hair you were pushed into the position of an outcast. . . . I liked long hair. With long hair you get a different relationship with yourself, a new identity. . . . You develop a really healthy narcissism which you need simply to survive. After some early youthful confusion, you become more conscious and begin to like yourself.60

On reading Baumann’s words one is shocked to find out that ideology may not be so dominant in his relationship with society, the authorities or himself. It seems that his alternative looks—his long hair—end up shaping the worldview he would develop further only later. Just because he liked his own style, while also knowing that society would not accept his looks, he developed a healthy attitude towards himself (by becoming “wholesomely” narcissistic) as well as an “unhealthy” one towards the outside world. By liking himself, he disliked the others—by “others” we mean social and moral conventions, middle-class people, the authorities, etc. Now, by disliking the others he sought within himself the political reasons for that dislike. Such a simplistic kind of self-introspection may indeed serve to explain how, many times, behind serious political statements, theories and practices lie superficial or non-political motives and justifications.

Ulrike Meinhof, the celebrity terrorist of RAF, may be seen as someone who had constructed her political stance via a narcissistic view of the world. Meinhof was not militant in the beginning; she was an outspoken journalist fighting about issues related to the rights of women. She had devoted herself to a leftist but nonviolent ideology while moving freely in various sophisticated intellectual circles. Gradually though she slid into criminal acts and terrorism. Why? Could it be that one’s own fiery words and narratives may drive one to fall in love with one’s own intellect or beautiful mind? This is quite possible since she might have viewed herself as intellectually superior, one among a handful of “beacons of world revolution and the vanguards of global communism”; or one that “sneered at other intellectuals whose weapons were no more than pens.”61 Meinhof was crossing the line from theoretical insurgency to full-fledged terror when she was heard taking the possibility of murder very lightly. She once admitted that policemen “of course” “can be shot,” a declaration that surprisingly ran counter to her own subsequent practices since “she apparently never touched a gun herself, let alone pulled the trigger.”62
members of RAF, “everyday life [should be] war” against all forms of “Capitalist exploitation and consumerism.” Thus, from the symbolic targeting of specific individuals that supposedly stood for capitalism and consumerism they shifted to indiscriminate violence with just as symbolic a significance. Bombing department stores packed with people would gradually fall within their purview despite the almost certain loss of innocent lives, precisely because for them shopping in luxurious shops rendered those lives anything but “innocent.”

Interestingly, the deadliness of RAF and the lethality of its strikes were underpinned by a philosophy of destruction as a, paradoxically, creative kind of force. Bakunin’s motto that destruction is a creative passion seems to be rather close to the group’s quasi- artistic theory about the world. This theory, however, contained also vestiges of a potentially fascist interpretation of art and the world as inevitably violent, cruel and dehumanizing. One only has to be reminded of futurist Marinetti’s relevant ideas regarding the contiguity between art and violence. RAF’s cruel and fascist “art” spilt over into the real world in the form of a destructive artistic energy aiming at reforming reality and people’s awareness of it. The “utopian” (as it was previously called) vision of the group was artistically realized by the type of Surrealist acts that Andre Breton had in mind when he asked that we . . . casually pull the trigger at anyone who had not fantasized about destroying the petty system of debasement and cretinisation. (see the introduction).

The line separating art and terrorism is extremely thin. However, aside from issues related to art in the strict sense of the term, terrorism posits issues that often have more to do with terrorists’ inventiveness and flexibility when it comes to redefining or reconceptualizing their political goals. In more plain terms, terrorists rely heavily upon their own inventiveness and artistry as to finding a new reason to grapple violently with society. We have already established that terrorist organizations always search for a political aim that they seek to fulfill in a consistent fashion. RAF, just like the Weathermen in America, focused mainly upon the cruelty and inhumanity of the Vietnam War. With the end of the war, though, RAF needed a new cause to legitimize their political existence anew. So, they turned to the Palestinian problem. Baumann himself explained later that that option was consciously made since they needed a reason to continue to exist. It would not be too far-fetched, therefore, to say that there lies an inherently existential or narcissistic motivation in terrorists’ tendency to reconfigure their objectives and thus refashion
themselves.65 If we are to make such an assumption, we also have to be willing to argue that maybe terrorist organizations feed upon their own terrorist deeds to continue to exist, or that their political pronouncements serve as smokescreens behind which hide aesthetic concerns regarding their own self-presentation and their own image or representation as terrorist groups. In such a case, terrorist action is addressed more towards the terrorists themselves than the societal body they claim to reform or radicalize. As Jerrold M. Post asks rhetorically, what, after all, “are freedom fighters if they do not fight?” A terrorist group “needs to commit acts of terrorism in order to justify its existence. The wise leader . . . will plan an action so that the group’s members can reaffirm their identity. . . . This suggests a dynamic within the group pressing for the perpetuation of violence and leading toward ever-riskier decisions.”66

![FBI most wanted poster for Bernadine Dohrn](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120968398096261113.html?mod=Letters)

Published October 14, 1970


US Dept of Justice
Ulrike Meinhof, German journalist and member of the RAF

https://secure.wikimedia.org/otrs/index.pl?Action=AgentTicketZoom&TicketID=480111&ArticleID=598306&QueueID=7
Notes

1. The French authorities had contributed decisively to the apathy of the locals by inculcating in them a feeling of utter inability which was intensified by the exclusion of the indigenous masses from formal education and the suppression of their rights, including the right to the French citizenship.


4. “Outbidding” is not employed here in its original sense. Whereas it usually means the deliberate escalation of violence on the part of one terrorist group so that it has an advantage over a rival group, I use it, at this point, as a psychological tactic adopted by the ruling regime (the state) that wants to gain an advantage over a terrorist organization through not just responding to the latter’s activity by using equal violence but also by employing even harsher and more violent tactics than the terrorists. For the general meaning of “outbidding” see Peter R. Neumann, *Old and New Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 140-43.

5. The strategy of the FLN was very similar to the Cypriot revolutionary tactics of EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters) whose intention was to overthrow the British rule of the island. In fact, EOKA’s methods were imitated by the FLN. General Georgios Grivas, founder and leader of EOKA, had already, back in 1953, thought through and publicized his plan that involved sensitizing the international community to the Cypriot demand of liberation from Britain and unification with Greece. In the “Preparatory General Plan,” Grivas clearly emphasized the need to “arouse international public opinion . . . by deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice. . . .” (Charles Foley, ed., *The Memoirs of General Grivas* [London: Longmans, 1964], p. appendix 1, p. 204). As Grivas further explained, “our strategy consisted in turning the
whole island into a single field of battle in which there was no distinction between front and rear, so that the enemy should at no time and in no place feel himself secure. The enemy never knew where and when we might strike.

This strategy achieved the wearing down of the enemy’s forces.

(General Grivas, Guerilla Warfare and Eoka’s Struggle, trans. A.A Pallis [London: Longmans, 1964], p. 19). By focusing on an urban rather than military campaign, EOKA managed to attract the attention it needed through accessing the media as means of propagating its objectives.

6. The Wretched of the Earth, pp. 244-45.
7. Ibid., p. 245.
10. The postcolonial project posits that one should go beyond merely countering colonial ideologies and practices, namely beyond decolonization, and strive to attain a cultural identity that is neither pre-colonial nor anti-colonial (“national” and “nationalist,” respectively). That “third” option has been elaborated upon by Homi Bhabha in relation to the Algerian people’s liberation struggle from French imperialist politics. As he says, through the revolution they would become “bearers of a hybrid identity” by disrupting the homogeneity of the nationalist tradition underpinning the politics of resistance to colonialism. In this light, Algeria could never return to the state in which it was before French colonialism, but would rather occupy a “third space” of interculturality and internationality. See, Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 35-7. As Said contends, liberation is a “process” and not a “goal contained automatically by the newly independent nations” (Culture and Imperialism, p. 331).

11. After the war of 1948 Palestinians lived in refugee camps in Egypt (the so-called “Gaza Strip”), Jordan (the “West Bank”), Lebanon and southwestern Syria. It was Egypt’s second president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who had encouraged Palestinian nationalism by supporting the first generation of Palestinian terrorists (after 1948) seeking to subvert Israel. After the third Arab-Israeli War, also known as The Six-Day War, between a coalition of Arab states—Egypt, Syria and Jordan—and Israel, the territory that hosted
Palestinian refugees shrank even more: Israel ended up occupying the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Sinai Peninsula.

12. Law, p. 219.


14. Israel could not but respond on equal terms by attacking the Beirut airport and blowing up as many as thirteen jets that were property of Arab airlines.


19. Neumann, p. 141. Neumann brings up the example of Yasser Arafat who initially did not subscribe to the tactic of suicide bombing of civilian targets, but who was made to engage (as leader of Fatah) in such acts when he realized that the much more ruthless rival group Hamas was threatening his power (p. 141). In order not to be overshadowed by Habash and the Popular Front, Arafat had to demonstrate that he could carry out attacks that were just as lethal and attention-grabbing.

20. Quoted in Law, p. 223.


29. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, p. 165. Here, Zizek echoes Lyotard. The latter talks about how the lack of a metanarrative in an argument prevents the resolution of the conflict between two opposing narratives. Later on in his work, Zizek appears to contradict himself as far as the question of rationalizing is concerned, arguing that today’s societies are so depoliticized that violence is interpreted as something irrational—which it is not (p. 169). If violence is explainable, it might as well turn into something justifiable. Of course it must be stated here that Zizek’s comment on the irrationality of violence related mostly to late twentieth-century and turn-of-the-twenty-first-century violence and terrorism.
33. The extent of her “professionalism” and dedication to the terrorist cause can be seen also from a little detail: after her first hijacking mission, she suffered a plastic surgery that changed some of her facial characteristics so that she could freely participate in a second mission without being recognized. On the other hand, one might argue that her decision to change her looks does not necessarily prove dedication or “professionalism” but rather presumptuousness or self-absorption.
35. Hoffman, p. 194.
37. As noted above, Khaled never participated in an act that entailed the actual death of a hostage. In a sense, therefore, she did constitute a “sublime” figure—both repulsive and attractive to look at or learn of.
41. Law, p. 262.
46. Sprinzak, p. 69.
47. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, p. 11.
49. The triple K, which connotes the racist character of the status quo, was frequently used by the Weather Underground when referring to America.
50. Law, p. 265. What is implied here is the entire counter-cultural stance of the revolutionists, ranging from a rejection of private property to doing drugs or even participating in sex orgies—“immoral” activities intended to kill the bourgeois “virus” inside their pampered bodies!


61. Mahan and Griset, p. 255.


63. Mahan and Griset, p. 255.

64. On a theoretical level, there is a striking similarity between RAF’s ideas about the destructive reformation of the bourgeois world and the idea of a radical rethinking of the carefree consumerist world promoted by the Situationist International (SI), an International organization of social activism made up of
intellectuals and artists of the avant-garde. The Situationist International, whose area of focus was the creation of (potentially explosive) “situations,” was active from 1957 to 1972 and some of its ideas prefigure RAF philosophy as well as its aesthetics of destruction. For instance, the Situationists believe that up until their time—the 60s—artistic movements “have only been imaginary repercussions from an explosion that never took place.” They claim that they are the only movement able “to speak to the project of the authentic artist” “by incorporating the survival of art into the art of life.” See Ken Knabb, ed. and trans., Situationist International Anthology (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 139. The Situationists, just like the RAF terrorists and the Weathermen “vandals” after them, poured their aesthetic ideas and decadent lifestyle into the very philosophy of resistance they had adopted: “It also goes without saying that we unconditionally support all forms of liberated mores, everything that the bourgeois . . . call debauchery. It is obviously out of the question that we should pave the way for the revolution of everyday life with asceticism” (p. 141). Situationist posters created in the immediate aftermath of May 1968 in France even announced that “there is beauty in the streets!” Political action, in other words, was inextricably bound up with an aesthetic appreciation of the world.

65. Having made the point that Marxist RAF’s aesthetic concerns were not completely disengaged from a Futurist or fascist interpretation of reality, it would not be too extravagant to subscribe to the idea that “for many people, [for instance, leftist terrorists], the specific doctrines advanced in fascist and Marxist ideologies were less significant than the opportunity they offered for projects of self-fashioning.” See Jonathan Guy Allen, “Biting the Bullet: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Violence,” The Journal of Aesthetic Education, vol. 41, no. 2 (Summer 2007): p. 104.


