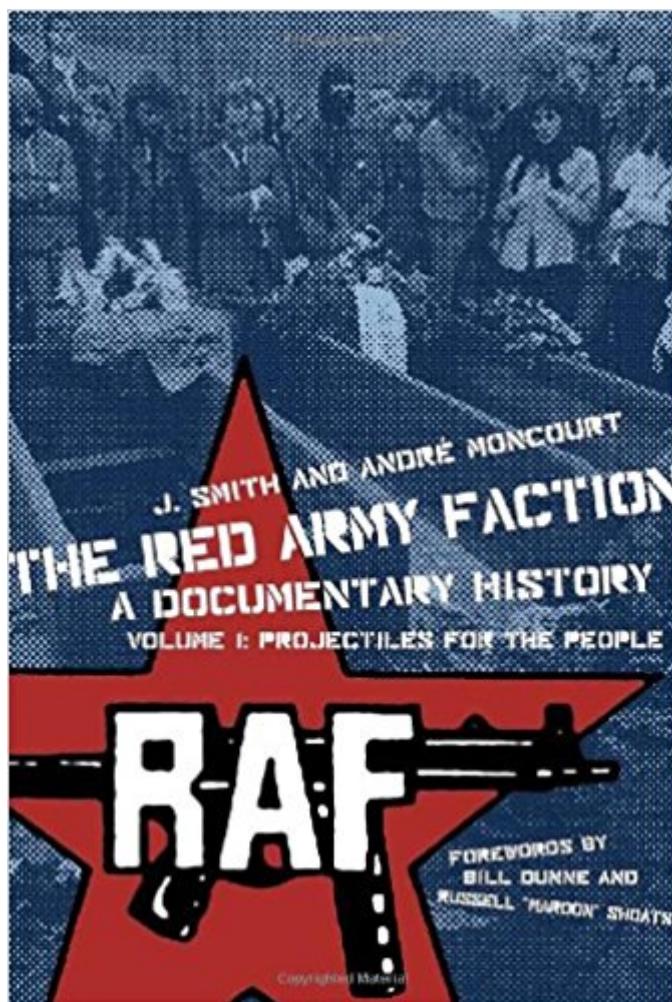


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The Red Army Faction: A Documentary History, Vol.1: Projectiles For The People



Synopsis

The first in a two-volume series, as part of a co-publishing project between PM Press and Kersplebedeb, is by far the most in-depth political history of the Red Army Faction ever made available in English. Projectiles for the People starts its story in the days following World War II, showing how American imperialism worked hand in glove with the old pro-Nazi ruling class, shaping West Germany into an authoritarian anti-communist bulwark and launching pad for its aggression against Third World nations. The volume also recounts the opposition that emerged from intellectuals, communists, independent leftists, and then – explosively – the radical student movement and countercultural revolt of the 1960s. It was from this revolt that the Red Army Faction emerged, an underground organization devoted to carrying out armed attacks within the Federal Republic of Germany, in the view of establishing a tradition of illegal, guerilla resistance to imperialism and state repression. Through its bombs and manifestos the RAF confronted the state with opposition at a level many activists today might find difficult to imagine. For the first time ever in English, this volume presents all of the manifestos and communiqués issued by the RAF between 1970 and 1977, from Andreas Baader's prison break, through the 1972 May Offensive and the 1974 hostage-taking in Stockholm, to the desperate, and tragic, events of the German Autumn of 1977. The RAF's three main manifestos – The Urban Guerilla Concept, Serve the People, and Black September – are included, as are important interviews with Spiegel and *le Monde Diplomatique*, and a number of communiqués and court statements explaining their actions. Providing the background information that readers will require to understand the context in which these events occurred, separate thematic sections deal with the 1976 murder of Ulrike Meinhof in prison, the 1977 Stammheim murders, the extensive use of psychological operations and false-flag attacks to discredit the guerilla, the state's use of sensory deprivation torture and isolation wings, and the prisoners' resistance to this, through which they inspired their own supporters and others on the left to take the plunge into revolutionary action. Drawing on both mainstream and movement sources, this book is intended as a contribution to the comrades of today – and to the comrades of tomorrow – both as testimony to those who struggled before and as an explanation as to how they saw the world, why they made the choices they made, and the price they were made to pay for having done so. With a preface by North American class war prisoner Bill Dunne, a revolutionary captured in 1979 following a shoot out with police in Seattle, Washington.

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Customer Reviews

The authors must be commended for putting together this very comprehensive collection of material on the RAF, as well as for wearing their bias on their sleeves, as this allows the collection to serve as invaluable source material for any historian of the period. While not strictly speaking a review matter, I do however wish to address one very specific issue in the book. In Appendix 1 the authors reproduce an extract in German from an article in the FAZ newspaper which was read by one English speaking commentator, George Watson, as demonstrating Ulrike Meinhof's (supposed) anti-semitism. The authors try to address this issue by quoting both Watson's translation of Meinhof's statement and providing their own translation, so as to demonstrate that Meinhof was mis-translated. Unfortunately, their own translation falls way short and doesn't resolve the issue at all, something I'd like to correct. Original quote from the FAZ: "Ausschwitz heit, da sechs Millionen Juden ermordet und auf die Mllkippen Europas gekarrt wurden als das, als was man sie ausgab - als Geldjuden." Watson's translation: "Ausschwitz means that six million Jews were killed, and thrown on the waste-heaps of Europe, for what they were: money-Jews." Smith and Moncourt's translation: "Ausschwitz means that six million Jews were murdered and carted off to Europe's garbage heap, dispensed with as money Jews." The key phrase is "als das, als was man sie ausgab", which Watson translates as "for what they were", and which Smith and Moncourt turn into "dispensed with as" (I have no idea where they got 'dispensed with' from). The meaning of the infinitive "ausgeben" in this context is "to pretend to be" or "to make out to be"!

Finally the factual documentary account is available for English readers. Excellent work of translation and factual background of the RAF and I recommend to anyone interested in the Cold War era, late US and German history, and social and economic justice. I recall watching the movie (Baader Meinhof Complex) when it was released and thinking that it really missed on many important facts and didn't seem like a true account to me, though my knowledge is more of the second generation. At the time there was no other material available on the RAF in English and my German reading and comprehension skills leave much to be desired. Besides, no one close to the story would use the term, "Baader-Meinhof gang" - they were the RAF and will always be the RAF. It was not a "gang" by any definition of the term. Perhaps the title was used only as a selling point. As a teenager and young adult in the Federal Republic, I lived on both sides of the fence, though at different times. My father was personal driver to several SACEURs and left the European Command shortly before US Army General Alexander Haig Jr. took over. I remained for many years thereafter and most of my friends were German nationals. The RAF had considerable support from the younger generation in the Federal Republic, at least during the years that I lived there. The era was tumultuous. The torture and suffering that RAF members and associates endured at the hands of the state is unimaginable for most people. For some the medical neglect, isolation, sensory deprivation, force-feeding, and other forms of torture eventually ended with death. This is not much unlike the treatment that prisoners at Guantanamo Bay camps receive from the US today and since the camps first opened.

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