



Bundeskriminalamt

**60 Years of the BKA:
The Field of Contention between Freedom and Security**

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**The German autumn of 1977 –
RAF terror and state reaction from a contemporary
witness's standpoint**

Abstract

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The author provides a short summary of the RAF history starting with the birth of this terrorist organisation, namely the spectacular “freeing of Baader“ in May 1970, until the abandonment of the armed fight announced in writing in April 1998.

He does not only cite facts, names and data of the attacks committed by the group but also illustrates intellectual contexts and chains of argumentation regarding the crimes. In this connection, he depicts the intellectual roots of the attackers, who themselves regarded the student protest movement and the *Extra-parliamentary Opposition* as their intellectual background.

But not only the „actions“ of the Baader-Meinhof group are described but also previous provoking attacks such as the arson of the department store in Frankfurt/Main in April 1968.

It is the author’s goal to call the victims of the terror by name. But nor does he forget the names of the people losing their lives as members of the militant groups. Furthermore, he comprehensively discusses two events especially contributing to the radicalisation of the terrorists: the shooting of the student Benno Ohnesorg during the Shah visit to Berlin and the pistol attack on the student leader Rudi Dutschke, who was considered a leading figure of the Extra-parliamentary Opposition.

The German Democratic Republic’s role towards the RAF is also interesting. It offered the “armed fighters” the opportunity to undergo training in guerilla techniques and to travel to Middle East countries and the Balkan states. Later on, the German Democratic Republic granted shelter to former RAF members.

Ultimately, he elucidates the reactions of the state in terms of counter-terrorism acts and executive measures. Were these measures overdone or were they necessary and legitimate?

On the whole, the author’s presentation is not only characterised by detailed insider knowledge but also impresses through the personal experience of a contemporary witness, who met the most important protagonists of this eventful time in person, both the left-wing extremist violent offenders and the leading figures of the State Security Authorities.