

## Is “Warmth” a Mode of Social Behaviour?

### Considerations on a Cultural History of the Left-Alternative Milieu from the Late 1960s to the Mid 1980s

Sven Reichardt

#### Abstract:

The article deals with the comprehensive counter-cultural milieu from the late 1960s until the early 1980s. Life style and *habitus* within this undogmatic and widely peaceful radical leftist milieu were practised according to a conduct of warmth. This alternative conduct of warmth corresponded with developments in the increasing individualized consumer society of the Federal Republic of Germany. The counter-cultural social behaviour was neither a departure into the land of freedom nor into a reign of normlessness. It was a form of self-guidance and governmentality with its own contradictions and coercions.

**Keywords:** counterculture; German left; 1970s;  
cultural history

**Sven Reichardt**, Professor of Contemporary History, University of Konstanz; Research on fascism, civil society, and counterculture(s) in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

**E-Mail:** [sven.reichardt@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:sven.reichardt@uni-konstanz.de)



Some fifteen years ago, in his book *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte*, Helmut Lethen concluded on the basis of the *Neue-Sachlichkeit* literature that among leftist authors such as Bertolt Brecht and Helmuth Plessner, but also among rightist ones such as Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt, the metaphor of coldness expressed an affirmation of the modern era. They used the image of coldness to describe the rationalization, alienation and secularization processes of the modern age. Their unconditional praise of modernity expressed itself in a praise of coldness, in which they connected the cult of coldness with objective heroism and keen thinking, and included a rejection of the 19<sup>th</sup> century cult of conscience (Lethen 1994).

To what extent can this approach be useful for a treatment of the cultural history of post-war West Germany? To what extent is the metaphor of “warmth” useful for an analysis of a certain mode of social behaviour in the left-alternative milieu and counterculture of the 1970s – between the leftists from the 1960s and the postmodern neon kids of the late 1980s?

## Concepts of Warmth and Coldness

Physically, warmth (or heat) describes the kinetic energy of the atoms and molecules of a body. Knowledge of energy and heat was moved forward considerably by 19th century thermodynamics. Warmth here means not only motion and exchange but a conception and practice of interchange and sociability, connected to self-realization and self-reflexive introspection (Neswald 2006).

According to the *Dictionary of Symbols* by Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *chaleur* has since Plutarch been physically associated with sun and light. C. G. Jung then made the connection between warmth and love of intuition, libido and organic life, with major consequences. In Far Eastern Buddhism, warmth is associated with breathing, fertilization and mental activity. In yoga, warmth (*tapas*) means the inner fire and the intellectual flame. Finally, the concept of human warmth refers to the ideal of Christian charity (Chevalier/Gheerbrant 1982, 202 p.).

Describing societies as “warm” or “cold” and then using these assessments as political weaponry has a tradition in the history of political thought in Germany going back to the rhetoric of the *Vormärz*, the era prior to the 1848 revolution. Thus the *Ancien Régime* was described by Ferdinand Freiligrath as an “ice palace” and by Hölderlin as an “ice-cold zone”, because of its restorationist stiffness (Lethen 1987, 297). The triumphal march of capitalism in the 19th century strengthened those voices that saw either a social idyll destroyed or the dynamics of progress realized. Thus Adam Müller complained, from a conservative viewpoint, of “the freezing of the soul”, while Karl Marx was

praising the “ice-cold waters of egoistical calculation” as a necessary step towards social progress (Gebhardt 1999, 167 p.).

The concept of “warmth” became normatively charged, certainly, with the publication of Ferdinand Tönnies’ book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* in 1887. Consequently, the warmth of social conditions – both positive and negative – was understood as a feeling connected to the community.

After World War II, as early as 1947 the American columnist Walter Lippmann coined the phrase “Cold War” in a series for the *New York Herald Tribune*, while the ordo-liberals, arguing for their model of a welfare-state, an interventionist variant of Rhenish capitalism and a social market economy, evoked the image of German *Gemütlichkeit*, as opposed to the American dynamics of a free market economy. Their message was: warmth is worth it.

In the left-alternative milieu moreover, the reference to interpersonal warmth and closeness, to “warming cohesion” in opposition to the “frosty distance” of “industrialized society”, was all but ubiquitous. In 1972 for example, Thomas Knauf wrote in his alternative Berlin counter-cultural monthly publication *Hundert Blumen*: “Life means warmth, and we’re fighting because they’re trying to wrap us up in coldness, and because many have already been wrapped in this cocoon of coldness” (*Hundert Blumen* 1972, 8).

## Some elements of left-alternative milieu

The extent to which the concept of warmth influenced the behaviour of people in the left-alternative milieu can be seen in a wide variety of the milieu’s practice, from the leftist pub through the flat-sharing community, “project” work, alternative psycho-workshops and men’s groups all the way to the newspapers and periodicals with an alternative readership. These spaces of the practice of “governmentality” and the spectrum of left-alternative communalization cannot be comprehensively described here, any more than the socio-historical foundation of the alternative milieu can. Its localization as a political conflict group with various factions – the feminist movement, the ecology movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the peace movement, etc. – will also remain beyond the scope of this sketch (for the praxeology-approach see: Reckwitz 2003; Reichardt 2007; for the concept governmentality: Foucault 2004a and 2004b; Lemke 1997; Bröckling et al. 2001; for a comprehensive study of the left-alternative milieu: Reichardt 2010).

The self-descriptions of the left-alternative milieu of the 1970s have nevertheless influenced their forms of intercourse, just as, conversely, their behaviour has had an effect on these descriptions. So it

was, as Klaus Laermann wrote in 1974 in the journal *Kursbuch*, that in the leftist pub one would escape the constraints of the discursive structure of communication – which demanded the better argument – into the arms of a grouping that remained undefined but was characterised by a “kind of confidentiality”, “a diffuse consciousness of tenderness” and the ubiquitous “use of the ‘thou’ form”. Pub conversations in this subculture were, he stated, characterized “by mutual respect, confidentiality and warmth” (Laermann 1974).

The Berlin counterculture was underpinned by the foundation of city magazines such as *Tip* and *Zitty* (in 1972 and in 1977, respectively), just as the alternative milieu in Frankfurt was by the *Pflasterstrand* (founded in 1976) or that in Munich by the *Blatt* (founded in 1973); all classified-ad papers for alternative cabaret and left off-culture, in which meditation, Asian wisdom, rock music or American freak philosophy were discussed. A left-alternative press emerged not only in these three urban centres of alternative culture but also in many university towns; there were some 390 different titles, the total monthly circulation of which in 1980 came to 1.6 million copies. The number of alternative publications increased by leaps and bounds between the mid-70s and the mid-80s; thanks to the boom in city magazines and newspapers, circulation in 1986 was probably two and a half times what it had been in 1979 (Rösch-Sondermann 1988, 54; Holtz-Bacha 1999, 340).

Events listings and classified-ad sections spread the aura of a “warmth-flux of holistic visions” for depth, realness and meaning (Mohr 1992, 40, 42). In the personal ads for flats, a trend towards cosy and unconventional *Gemütlichkeit* emerged. Ads such as the following from the Munich *Blatt* in 1973 were no rarity: “Seeking friendly girls to start flat-sharing community. Wanted: interest in social policy, humanist psychology (consciousness-raising, Encounter, psychology, psychology of being) and the need to experience joy in a group, or to regain it. Maybe you could bring along some human warmth and an effort for honesty and openness” (Sonner 2005, 10). This imagination, this episodic communalization manifested a self-image of warmth, which in turn established behavioural regularities, patterns of action and social relationships in these social communities organized by personal networks, through which it was possible to mutually recognize each other. By means of a process of selection – whether through visits to the pub, through choice of clothing or through reading specific newspapers and periodicals, a condensed form of communication and social proximity arose and confirmed itself, which provided the members of the milieu with behavioural security and condensed their relationships of interaction within their *Lebenswelt*.

Of course, this applied in special measure to the common life in flat-sharing communities. In the flat, Wolfgang Spindler wrote in *Kursbuch* in 1978, life is romantic: it smells sweetly of joss sticks, tea pastries are served. Cheap bookshelves, a couple of record albums on the floor, an old untidy desk, a couple of deep-lying seats, a few mattresses with unobtrusive bedspreads and cheap furs. A little table with grandma's doiley, and a few ashtrays and vases round out the picture: "One is conscious of one's flight from civilization, and of the romantic vein" (Spindler 1978, 6f.). In the flat-sharing community, communications and intimacy merged, it was a field of action and sanctuary in one.

The flat-sharing community, primarily a student phenomenon, was less widespread in practice than in its imagination. In 1969, fully a quarter of all 16 to 34-year-olds wanted to live in flat-sharing communities, while less than five per cent actually did so at that time. The estimates are that there were some 2,000 flat-sharing communities in 1971 and approx. 40,000 with roughly 200,000 occupants in 1980. Despite all the pragmatization and depoliticization in the course of the history of flat-sharing communities, the motive of experiencing social integration and personal enrichment going beyond a circle of friends in everyday life was at least just as strong as the financially favourable generosity of the flats in the old buildings (Reichardt 2010, 183f.). The flat-sharing community was moreover "a refuge from the narrowness of the parental home and the dreary perspective of *spießiges* togetherness, as well as a social base for the conquest of new living environments and also the source of a 'second, political socialization'" (Mohr 1992, 51). The "destruction of privacy" or "smash the bourgeois family" were slogans with which, it was imagined, one might counteract authoritarian character formation and late-capitalist isolation. The fixation on parental authority – and the corresponding training, bourgeois correct behaviour and obsessive cleanliness – were the opposite of left-alternative forms of living in which private disputes between lovers were "fully discussed" and "worked through" in group meetings. However, although flat-sharing communities were conceived as the counter-model to the coercive community of the nuclear family, the group pressure within them and the compulsion to adapt were apparently so great that contemporary sociological studies observed a high rate of fluctuation (for further reading see Reichardt 2010, 177-248).

Despite this conflict-prone life practice, the do-it-yourself aesthetics of the flat-sharing communities, with their handicrafting of transitional solutions, of re-use and self-sufficiency, the cosy environments of high-platform beds as nests of warmth and *Gemütlichkeit*, the many plants and the casual rules of orderliness exuded warmth, as did the kitchen-table discussion culture (Tränkle 1986,

201-208). Within this warmth, the members of the flat-sharing community committed themselves to a practice of a good lifestyle and developed techniques of self-transformation in which the subjects understood themselves and realized themselves through their own actions.

## **The meaning of the joy of communication and small-scaleness**

The Berlin sociologist Claus Offe noted in 1998 that what the rebels of '68 had demanded "was happening anyway; they were only pushing at things that were going to topple anyway" (Offe 1998, 552). This applied, too, to the condensed social forms of the 1970s, the motto of which was "small is beautiful" – and not only in the left-alternative milieu: everywhere, communalization was small, networked and freely selectable. The impulse towards the warmth-flux of niche existence was thus not invented by the left subculture, but it was dramatized, radicalized and politicized by it. Although the left alternative wished to move away from the career-oriented values, the narrow-minded life plans and the consumption orientation of their parents' generation, the fact is that they to a large extent merely helped to implement what was in any case establishing itself societally.

Family life became more multifarious, contacts to neighbours more numerous, friends and acquaintances were more important, and membership in associations increased. Although or precisely because families became smaller, living together in extended families was becoming more exceptional, and ever more single-person households arose, conversations with people outside the family developed and intensified – not only in the left-alternative milieu. In surveys conducted by public-opinion polls, ever more people identified "their most trusted friends" as people outside their families. In 1953, 28 per cent stated that their preferred conversation partner was not a family member, but "somebody with whom I have common interests". In 1979, 41 per cent of those asked already gave that answer, and this response was now the peak. In 1953, only 31 per cent of people polled paid visits to friends and acquaintances outside their families; by the end of the 70s, this had risen to 64 per cent, or more than doubled. During the 1970s, people generally tended to be more enterprising than during the 50s and 60s. In 1976, the general level of trust in one's fellow human beings was higher than ever before in the history of West Germany (Noelle-Neumann et al. 1983, 80; Noelle-Neumann 1976, 18).

These attitudes and practices corresponded to the esteem that was accorded to sociability. In a survey conducted in August 1975 for example, a question was asked as to the qualities that were particularly valued in others. The absolute leader, with 71 per cent, and thus with a lead of 14 percentage

points over the next-best quality, was sociability (Noelle-Neumann 1976, 20). This increased score for sociability went hand-in-hand with the medialization of society and the breakthrough phase of mass television. The content conveyed in the media on the one hand provided topics of conversation and spurred everyday communication; on the other, this content itself preached a condensation of communication in discussion rounds and talk shows (cf. Verheyen 2010).

Not only the increase of sociability but also the small-scale-ness in which the left alternatives organized their lives indicated a general trend. Again, opinion polls show that small-scale social relationships in the home and leisure areas increased during the 1970s and were subjectively regarded as ever more important. Small-scale networks grew considerably in the form of neighbourhood contacts and organizational memberships. Regular conversational contacts with neighbours increased from 51 per cent in 1953 to 74 per cent in 1979 (Klages 1983, 65-69; Lindquist 1975). Evidently, integration in small-scale networks provided the possibility to connect self-reference and self-realization with social relationships.

## **The warmth of “concrete experience” and the coldness of theory**

“Inwardness”, as Hermann Glaser wrote, “was a refuge for the new-old romantic longing for a pristine world. [...] The new code words were: Nature, closeness, security, feelings, happiness, play, parties, imagination, artistic, simple” (Glaser 2000, 370f.). This emotionality contrasts strikingly to the “cold persona” of the 1920s described by Helmut Lethen. In the literature and art of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (“new objectivity”), people were seen as “motion machines” and “characters as masks” (Lethen 1994, 29). People were controlled not from the inside, but from the outside, supervised not by introspection, but by the eyes of others. Instead of repentance and confession, what was important was ritual and penance. The felt sanction of the 1920s was social fear, that of the 1970s the pang of conscience, so that the good conscience of the latter was juxtaposed to the correct behaviour of the former (cf. Neckel 1991).

*Erfahrungshunger* [Hunger for Experience], Michael Rutschky’s classic essay about the 1970s, describes that decade as a time of a warm fog, in which pressure to achieve, effort, austerity, self-restraint and delayed reward were seen as relics from the arsenal of bourgeois respectability, now replaced by relaxation, zest for life, spontaneity, casualness, and pleasure. The “utopia of general concepts” and the planning euphoria of the 1960s were abandoned. Abstract conceptuality, marked by “a special kind of coldness”, had designed a “rigid society”. The goal was to abandon the societal institutions that exuded

“a climate of coldness”, separated with great effort from the “emotional inner world”. The search was on for a “life context in which [one] might explain oneself personally, in which [one] might tell and interpret one’s own biography, and would want to do so [...]”. The hostile outside world subjects those who step outside of the inner world to its patterns of action, its irreversible stipulations and limitations.” The “search movement” and the “longing” of the individual yearned to escape from the “unreality of life during the seventies”. The retreat into inwardness made the outside world appear unreal, laconic, far away, schematized in a fog (Rutschky 1980, 38, 57, 69, 112, 114).

In 1979, Jürgen Habermas characterized this relationship of cold objectivity and cool abstraction and the warmth of the living environment as a non-stop train running through the social sciences and liberal arts, the arts and religion during the 1970s: “Doubts about the avant-garde movements of the modern age, rejection of functionalism and new objectivity, devaluation of the great theories, a turning away from the universalism of the enlightenment; and instead the turn towards traditional forms and towards subjectivism in tales and novels, towards historicism in urban development and architecture, towards everyday life in sociology, towards late-expressionism in film, towards new religions and pietism in the churches, towards the narrative style in history, and towards existential topics in philosophy. A cult of immediacy, a deflation of high forms, an anarchism of the soul, a celebration of the concrete down the line, relativism even in scientific theory, and the replacement of Oedipus with Narcissus as the symbolic figure of cultural criticism” (Habermas 1979, 30f.).

Precisely this clash between the coldness of abstract theory on the one hand and the warmth of politics of immediate experience on the other also took place during the 1970s in the left-alternative milieu, in the form of ever sharper conflicts between the old 1960s theorists from the student movement and later the “K-groups” – the mostly Maoist revolutionary groupings – on the one hand, and the “undogmatic” or “hedonistic” leftists on the other. In an exemplary settling of accounts, the 1960s veteran Wolfgang Kraushaar in 1978 described the Frankfurt alternative movement as an “escape movement” which had insulated itself in a counter-cultural realm. The “exclusive character” of this “subculturally disguised small-town mafia” not only standardized their behaviour, language and clothing; in addition, “the compulsion to immediacy” had even led to the loss of the political momentum. “The rebellion of the senses” was, he said, also becoming an end in itself, the emphatically repeated magic formula “experience” was, removed from its overall capitalist context, becoming a kind of “autistic” – a “sect of the ideology of immediacy” (Kraushaar 1978, 8-67). Only some years before, Sennett (1974) identified such processes on a more general level as the “tyranny of intimacy” which destroys the public space.



Although Marxist and anarchistic thought was also present in the new social movements and the alternative subculture, along with culture-critical considerations, life-philosophical and existentialist approaches, all in all, compared with the “K-groups” of the seventies, the ideas were oriented towards immediate *Betroffenheit* (concern) and emotional “hunger for experience” (see Steffen 2002; Kühn 2005). A trend towards concreteness was apparent even in the language of the alternative movement, which explicitly broke with abstract language colouring. One now “dug” (*schnallte*; lit.: to “buckle”) things instead of “understanding” them; one was “limped out” (*abgeschlafft*) rather than “exhausted”; instead of “leaving things be” you had to “wipe them away” (*abschminken*; lit.: to “remove make-up”). In this alternative language, corporeality, feelings and concretization all joined in an alliance in which complex grammar were the exception. With their wealth of exaggerated expressions (many superlatives, frequent use of words like “far out”, “really”, “weird” etc.), their tendency toward emphasizing feelings “I’m feeling mellow” (“*ich bin gut drauf*”), “I really can’t deal with this”, “good feeling”, “that turns me on” (the latter two using the English words), the adaptation of the written to the spoken language when writing such neologisms as “connections” or “chauvi” (short for “[male] chauvinist”) in German phonetics (“*Konnäktschens*”; “*Schowi*”), as well as inaccuracy and fuzziness of expression (“somehow”, “sort of”), their language showed a tendency towards the priority of feeling and concretization over conceptually precise theoretical terms (Stubenrauch 1978; Czubayko 1997). Similarly, the “scene” favoured music and body feeling over the written word and textuality.

The Frankfurt Spontis – short for “spontaneists” – were in a sense the hinge between the Maoist “K-Groups” and the left-alternative subculture of the late 1970s, in that they preferred a verbal culture of theory and textuality. They worked at the Opel car factory in Rüsselsheim in order to penetrate and revolutionize the “proletarian life context”, following the example of the militant factory and street battles in Italy. An almost closed-off biotope of flat-sharing communities, alternative projects and initiatives developed. The Spontis were the incarnation of the semi-politicized homo ludens, which, as Gerd Koenen wrote, united to form “excitement communities”. As the ex-Maoist sums it up: “The movement was everything, the goal would emerge one way or another: A different life with ‘new emotional relationships’” (Kraushaar 2004; compare also Koenen 2001, 327).

On the other hand, the Sponti movement heaped scorn on the “wooden dogmatism” of the “egg-headed, anti-pleasure, theory fetishists” in the Maoist and communist theory groups and cadre parties. They wanted “to deal with real, concrete, practical stuff, and not this abstract bullshit” (Becker 1984, 108, 112). In political issues, your own feelings were your point of departure; at least one wanted to

“express them”, as a certificate of the genuineness of one’s own demands. “The political”, the cult cartoonist Chlodwig Poth wrote in 1983, is what emerges from your own concern [Betroffenheit]” (Poth 1983, 17). In spite of extensive personal overlappings between the old 1960s leftists and left alternatives, there was a more or less permanent process of raising the issue of one’s personal past, and the transition from the one grouping to the other was “ritually worked through” in countless group conversations.

## “Hot” terrorism

RAF or “Bewegung 2. Juni”, both social-revolutionary groups established out of the collapsed student movement during the seventies, understood their “propaganda of the deed” as a provocation strategy in order to exceed and destroy the state and its repressive infrastructure. With the alternative lefties they shared the interest in concrete actions and the disdain in theoretical analysis. But their obstruction was absolute, brutal and without compromise – it was a hostile to the state and society. They shared the anti-authoritarian anarchism of the left-alternatives, but for them it was more a prospective utopia and not a present living experience. Due to this attitude their practice was hot, direct and resolute.

Terrorism oscillates between the coldness of the decision-making, of choosing between killing for the sake of eliminating enemies, and the killing to provoke a response from the state (hot terrorism).

Even the determined terrorists were dependent on society and especially on the established media structure. The communicative interplay between terrorism and media followed the same rules of attention on both sides. Both followed the logic of the spectacular, both awarded unambiguousness and emotionality, both were newsworthy, focused on the closeness to the audience/reader. Both shared the focus on elites and prominence. The anarchists of the late 19th century had already exploited the mass media for their strategy of provocation. They were as skilful in handling dynamite as in handling the emerging yellow press. This proximity is demonstrated by the previous journalistic experience of important RAF terrorists such as Ulrike Meinhof or Holger Meins as well as by the anecdote, that even the RAF logo is said to have been tested for its effects by the professional commercial artist Holm von Czettritz (Elter 2006, 1060-1074; Elter 2008). The RAF terrorists followed the impact of their actions in the media attentively and made videotapes of their victims in the course of the Schleyer kidnapping, which they transmitted to TV channels for broadcasting. But interplay also worked the other way around: the press took advantage of exclusive stories, interviews and pictures they were able to pro-

duce with and about the terrorists. It is no coincidence that the sensation-seeking yellow press consolidated and expanded along with the terrorism and increased its print run enormously during the 1970s. Also the investigative, time-critical and left-liberal journalism – which attended the student movement with critical sympathy – had established itself in the 1970s press and TV (Hodenberg 2006, 361-439). The political overestimation and the media exaggeration of this terrorism are likewise due to this development.

The years before 1977, the media mainly reported the hot “terror-war” in the tenor of combat journalism. In fact, the commemoration of war played a decisive role among the leading protagonists in politics, terrorist organization and the media (Musloff 2006, 302-319). This shows how long the shadow cast by World War II was, which, as well as the anti-communist tenor of the early Federal Republic, added to an overestimation and exaggeration of the terrorist hazard. The Manichean discourse pattern in politics and media also appeared in the “sympathizer” discourse, which confirmed the exclusion of the non-governmental left from the political mainstream (cf. Balz 2008).

## Concluding remarks

Left-alternative “concretization” always meant uncovering the concern and the emotional relevance of an issue for one’s own life. Holism, as a combination of body, mind and feelings, loomed large here, as a substantial moral concept. There was a turning away from meta-theories and a gaining of playful liberties in such forums as the Frankfurt *Pflasterstrand*, founded in 1976, which laid claim to responsibility for a certain spectrum, “ranging from the revolutionary cells to the macrobioticists” (*Pflasterstrand* 1976, no. 0: 2). This was true in a similar manner for many alternative newspapers, which wanted to virtually merge with their readerships. They claimed not to want to prescribe any programme or objective, but rather strove to depict the multi-coloured variety, and hence gave plenty of space to reader reactions and articles by freelancers. It was their claim to authenticity, too, that provided the basis for their power of governmentality (on the alternative press, cf. Reichardt 2010, 480-540; Dorsch 1981).

The decisive rejection of the euphoria of ultra-modern good planning and rationality of the state’s reform policies of the 1960s, and the rejection of theoretical work and faith in abstraction in parts of the student movement and the K-Groups was an important characteristic of left-alternative “warmth”. But left-alternatives, K-Groups and terrorists also had things in common: mainly their massive criticism of the state. The common protest against the “Berufsverbot” (occupational ban) from January 1972 was a

good example of their attitude and self-description as victims and haunted innocents. Indeed, between 1973 and 1975 alone, 430,000 people were put under the scrutiny of governmental institutions – 236 of them were dismissed jobs as civil servants (Reichardt 2010, 115-118). Applicants for civil-service jobs were checked for involvement in “anti-constitutional activities”. In the course of this the applicant was asked, for example, if and to what extent they had contacts with the GDR, the KPD (German Communist Party) or communist groups and whether they were ideologically close to radical organizations. Under this decree, suspects could be kept under surveillance by the “Verfassungsschutz“ (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), sometimes for years. However, after a decision of the “Bundesverfassungsgericht“ (Federal Constitutional Court) in May 1975, the decree was gradually and by the 1980s the first federal states had repealed it. Despite these rapid improvements, the view of the state became manifest: for them the state was equated with repression, military, police, surveillance and suppression.

The heroic self-characterization as a victim of the West German police regime in all of the three radical, left-wing groups can be understood as an instrument to distinguish oneself from the West-German culture of shame, in the first place to get into a position to broach the guilt of West German society. The protagonists distanced themselves from the reputedly authoritarian society and from their parent generation’s culture of shame. The left-alternatives transformed their suffering under their parents, from their resentments, their historical amnesia and their emotionally entrenched manners, into an attitude of emotional inwardness, while the terrorists reacted with burning hate and the K-groups with cool dissociating analysis. The parents, seen as unduly rigid and authoritarian, became the new “fascists” for all three groups. The symbolic assumption of the victimhood was a turn against their parents’ denial of guilt, but at the same time an updating of Nazi history.

To conclude: During the 1970s, sociability and inwardness merged; freedom from coercion and involvement with the self became their bywords. In politics and in everyday life, a “fundamental liberalization” of West Germany came about – in a process that was certainly conflict-ridden. Despite the overall acceleration of political-cultural change during the 1970s, the similarities between the left-alternative subculture on the one hand and the mass culture on the other can certainly not be characterized as being driven by the same dynamics. The alternatives did not per se adopt a position against the narrow-minded bourgeoisie of their own time. Their long-term societal success – at least in comparison to the limited influence of the K-groups and the terrorist organizations – is explainable if it is seen as an expression of a mass culture of warmth-flux. Their counter-culture was not as radically oppositional as its “drop-out” philosophies may have suggested.

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