CHAPTER 7

Global Responsibilities: 
In Search of Consumer Morality and Solidarity

“How can it be that in this world every two minutes a human being is dying from starvation while McDonald’s is dealing out one hundred million hamburgers each year?”
—Die 3 Tornados (1988)¹

During the 1970s, environmentalist discourse gained strength in left-wing politics, eventually surpassing socialism—and thus questions of distribution—as the key conception of the alternative milieu. An element of continuity lay in the idea of destruction that tied both concepts to issues of consumption. In addition to posing threats to localised social contexts, regimes of provision increasingly acquired the global dimension of endangering nature as such. If ecological problems were associated with violence, it was on a more abstract level. A moderating influence came from the fusion of left-wing ideas with bourgeois scepticism of growth, especially since the computer simulations of the Club of Rome² and the oil crisis.³

This debate was popularised by a book written by Herbert Gruhl, a member of the Bundestag for the CDU and cofounder of a nongovernmental environmental organisation, the Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND). In Ein Planet wird geplündert (A Planet Is Being Pillaged), the conservative politician came astonishingly close to leftist ideas of neocolonial wars for economic motives. The closing passage of this 1975 book argues that “wars will approach the faster the more people want ever more goods from the same earth. Hence all ‘fanatics of growth’ are by definition ‘war mongers.’”⁴

Four years later, when Gruhl had founded the ecological party Grüne Aktion

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¹. Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßnahmen, Wut, Witz, Widerstand, 50.
². Meadows and Meadows, Limits to Growth.
⁴. Gruhl, Ein Planet wird geplündert, 343.
Zukunft (GAZ), a forerunner of the Green Party, the notion of destruction was much more clearly focused on nature. In an essay with the incisive title “Consumption Is Also Destruction” for a volume on organic farming, there are no longer any mentions of forms of violence other than that against nature.

The 1980s and especially the second half of the decade saw a massive emergence of ecological approaches to economic questions. Green entrepreneurs took up ideas from the 1970s and turned them into alternative schemes and enterprises that won market share. A comprehensive bibliography on eco-marketing compiled in 1990 illustrates the chronological development: only 7.8 percent of the listed titles were published before 1980, 28.3 percent appeared between 1981 and 1985, and the remaining 63.9 percent originated between 1986 and 1990. A host of citizens’ initiatives pursued ecological matters from the standpoint of the consumer. The quarterly Consum Critik appeared between 1983 and 1989 and mainly focused on issues of harmful substances in food and other consumer goods and on the ecological consequences of industrial agriculture, occasionally invoking solidarity with the Third World. Questions of violence remained almost completely excluded from this discourse focused on German consumers’ health concerns.

Despite the fact that the ecological turn had, by and large, a moderating impact on more radical forms of social-revolutionary protest and facilitated their absorption by mainstream society, the emerging ecological consciousness also pioneered a new sensitivity to the destructive impact of certain consumer goods and their entanglement in complex commodity chains. Left-leaning intellectuals, political activists, and critical consumers drew on anti-imperialist antecedents and forged a political consciousness about regimes of provision on a global scale: peripheral economies tended to export low-cost primary goods—coffee, tobacco, sugar, and rubber—while importing military equipment and luxury goods for elite consumption. The mass consumer goods consumed by these elites and the inhabitants of the highly industrialised countries were produced predominantly with the latter’s capital. The environmental problems of the developed world had their structural counterparts in poverty, hunger, and unbalanced distribution in the Third World. The political thinkers and actors analysed in this chapter raised a fundamental question: Why could

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5. See Mende, “Nicht rechts, nicht links, sondern vorn.”
7. Ralf Antes and Petra Tiebler, Bibliographie Öko-Marketing (Oestrich-Winkel, 1990), 4–5, IISG, ID 314, BRO 708/16 FOL.
8. Consum Critik was merged into Verbraucher-Telegramm in 1989.
the imperative of economic growth not be replaced by a more balanced distribution of these problems via a focus on the production of certain goods that would fulfil basic needs around the world and ease industrial pressure on the environment? Many left-leaning intellectuals and political activists turned away from conventional modernisation theories and came to answer this question with the structuralist tools of some form of dependency theory, blaming the hierarchies within the world economic system for enriching industrialised countries at the expense of the continued impoverishment of developing countries. Developing countries seemed locked in a structure that forced them to export their natural resources at relatively low prices and import consumer goods that only local elites could afford. At the same time, most Western governments clung to neoliberal concepts of modernisation, warning against alterations in power structures that would lead to slowdowns in economic activity, causing crisis and widespread unemployment.

Within the context of such debates over global regimes of provision and power, various campaigns against complex economic patterns emerged that targeted concrete service and retail outlets—such as banking facilities, supermarkets, tourist agencies, petrol stations, McDonald’s branches, or coffee roasters. Since the 1970s, restaurants and luxury hotels have increasingly become the targets of urban collective action in the Middle East because “they represent visible and flagrant transgressions of culturally grounded notions of justice: international consumption styles, corruption, and gross inefficiency.” However, campaigns against localities of consumption—and the underlying connections between protests in the developed and the developing world—remain a thoroughly underresearched dimension of political violence. According to protesters, at such localities of consumption, European customers and consumers participated in destruction, exploitation, and murder in the Third World. Violent conflict and discourse on violence found their way into political protest on several levels as a consequence of a complex process of interaction. The critical debates and protests accompanying the meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in West Berlin in September 1988 emerge as a culmination of conflicts over global regimes of provision that followed on earlier traditions of anti-imperialism, boycotts, and fair trade. They are a fascinating precursor to later manifestations of the counterglobali-

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10. Dependency theory was introduced to Germany by Senghaas, Peripherer Kapitalismus.
sation movement. Anti-imperialist critiques of regimes of provision that contrasted consumerist affluence with hunger and militarism in developing countries are deeply rooted in left-wing political thought.\footnote{12.}{See Uta G. Poiger, “Imperialism and Consumption: Two Tropes in West German Radicalism,” in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola*, ed. Schildt and Siegfried, 161–72; Graf, “Vom Nein zum Ja,” 153–64.}

**International Regimes of Provision**

Defying neoliberal lines of reasoning, campaigns for solidarity with liberation struggles focused on the miserable fate of producers in the so-called Third World and the destructive potential of globalised consumer capitalism. Theoretical critiques of global regimes of provision and challenges to concrete manifestations of global commodity chains formed an important driving force in the politicisation of consumption. The idea that Europeans’ consumption of imported commodities went hand in hand with violent conflict in the context of imperialist exploitation formed a central backdrop to various efforts to delegitimise and alter global commodity chains. The aim was to enhance solidarity between consumers and producers. The latter were taken to be the workers who harvested or manufactured resources and products but suffered from immoral living and working conditions imposed by multinational companies, which were perceived as parasitic middlemen. The violence that political activists diagnosed in such relationships was the product of complex patterns of interaction between producers and consumers. The protesters sought to point out connections between seemingly separate and spatially far removed contexts of this interaction.

Scholarly knowledge of insurgent movements against the social repercussions of globalisation is largely focused on the period since the 1990s and on struggles in developing countries: protests against various World Bank–backed dam construction projects; fights to curb the activities of timber companies in tropical forests; movements to procure labour rights and/or women’s rights in developing countries; campaigns against IMF-imposed austerity programmes; and demonstrations against corporate globalisation in Seattle (1999) and Genoa (2001).\footnote{13.}{Harvey, *New Imperialism*, 166–67.} Much less is known about the 1980s, about the repercussions of Third World struggles in highly industrialised societies, and about the amalgamation of new forms of protests with older traditions harking back to anti-imperialism and 1968.
Especially during the second half of the 1980s, a consciousness of the destructive potential inherent in globalised consumer capitalism resulted in a wave of protest activities that were directed against multinationals and the institutions of global governance and that sought to further political consciousness. Protesters mounted fundamental challenges to local and global regimes of provision—and their interplay—when seeking to legitimise alternative economic infrastructures or concrete attacks against institutions of retail and services. Alternative scenarios of peaceful regimes of provision were pitted against images of violent consumption. Attention was drawn to the misery of low-wage labour and to the barbed wire that went along with tariff walls around free trade zones. Such arguments were part of an international movement seeking to establish solidarity with the anticolonial liberation struggles.

In July 1973, the title page of the “undogmatic” newspaper Der Lange Marsch (The Long March) showed a picture of three European couples in beachwear indulging in a lavish buffet below a tropical sunshade. In contrast, the bottom of the page, bore images of naked children suffering from kwashiorkor, profit forecasts for three German automobile companies, and images of heavily armed African soldiers. The collage sought to make visible the connections that commercial product communications systematically obscured. In one instance, a German sparkling wine company withdrew its advertising business from a newspaper that had put the company’s ad next to pictures of starving African children because the “context had become too risky.” The collage reveals the political versatility of polarising and somewhat fuzzy critiques of regimes of provision. They served as an idealistic agent that built bridges between diverse political contexts so that everyday acts of consumption could be pulled together with postcolonial wars. Such critiques of regimes of provision lend themselves to a quotidian and transnational mobilisation of solidarity networks. This was repeatedly realised in international boycott campaigns that aimed to establish a counterpublic against morally reprehensible regimes of provision. David Harvey’s Marxist interpretation suggests that an ongoing crisis of overaccumulation led to capitalism’s increasing reliance on what he calls “accumulation by dispossession”—that is,

16. Little general research has been done on boycotts as a historical phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s, although Friedman, Consumer Boycotts, 213–26, provides some historical perspective for the United States. On more recent boycott campaigns, see Micheletti, Political Virtue and Shopping; Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle, Politics, Products, and Markets; Trautmann, “Pourquoi boycotter?”; Hawkins, “Boycotts, Buycotts, and Consumer Activism.”
neoliberal policies resulting in the centralisation of wealth and power in the hands of a few and the suppression of alternative forms of consumption and production, especially after 1973. This idea refers to the privatisation and commodification of public assets, the financial sector becoming a centre of redistributive activity, and the institutions of global governance exerting pressure to open up markets, all backed by state power.17

Protest against these processes did not exhaust itself in boycotts or violent attacks but also sought a more constructive stance, establishing alternative commodity chains and economic infrastructures. Such impulses fostered the fair-trade movement, which emerged from religious and charitable roots after the Second World War and during the 1980s undertook various campaigns to enhance solidarity with producers of tea, coffee, and other colonial goods in countries such as India, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.18 Overall, politically coordinated consumer choices were supposed to trigger economic consequences, critical discourse, and movement mobilisation as a way to discipline, delegitimize, or overcome what were seen as morally reprehensible regimes of provision.

**Anti-Apartheid Campaigns**

The most prominent campaign of systematic boycotting developed in the context of the international anti-apartheid movement. The German anti-apartheid movement emerged comparatively late. In Britain, a large-scale boycott campaign materialised in 1959–60 when a group of South African exiles called for a boycott of fruits, cigarettes, and other goods that eventually won support from the Labour, Liberal, and Communist Parties. Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell went on television to ask viewers to refrain from buying South African goods, and countless local authorities and individuals heeded this call for a moral gesture flanked by solidarity demonstrations. The African National Congress embraced economic boycott as a political weapon after the South African government’s draconian measures outlawed almost all forms of conventional political activity. From a position of weakness, boycott became the chief leverage to campaign for international support. In December 1958, the All-African Peoples’ Conference in Accra called on all countries to impose

economic sanctions against South Africa. This effort eventually grew into the international anti-apartheid movement, backed by churches, labour unions, and other associations along with the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations. Boycotts operated in the areas of sports, academia, and business and were fuelled by perceptions of the South African government’s abuse of state violence as associated with Sharpeville and Soweto. Consumer activities came to focus on the role of banks, arms dealers, and fruit exporters in upholding the apartheid regime.

Although there had been some critical focus on South Africa in 1960s student politics, a more popular German anti-apartheid movement was not inaugurated until the 1970s and sprang mainly from church roots. In 1978, following the suggestions of South African women’s groups but not until five years after a widespread Dutch boycott of South African oranges, the Evangelische Frauenarbeit in Deutschland started issuing brochures that urged German consumers, “Don’t buy fruit from South Africa.” The German booklet took as a point of departure the words of South African prime minister J. B. Vorster, who had said in 1972, “Every time a South African product is bought, it is another brick in the wall of our continued existence.” Although the women’s organisation did not gain full support from their superiors in the Evangelical Church of Germany, more than ten thousand of the booklets were printed, and the campaign had considerable resonance among the liberal bourgeoisie. For countless women, the practical activity of politicising issues of daily shopping by putting up information stands in front of local supermarkets became an emancipatory experience.

A boycott campaign that gained partial support from trade unions and political parties only emerged in the second half of the 1980s, when German

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companies, especially banks, became crucial commercial partners for South Africa after the gradual withdrawal of investors from Britain and the United States. With Marxist militancy on the decline, boycotting South Africa promised a concrete project of emancipation that could be realized on a local scale. Refraining from South African consumer goods had a performative element, allowing people to mark their commitment to an issue of moral politics through individual choices of consumption. The fruit boycott was eventually effective enough that South African producers adopted a costly packaging system that systematically veiled the origin of their produce. After the World Council of Churches called on private customers to cancel their accounts with banks that provided South Africa with loans, the German anti-apartheid movement embraced the banking campaign, and in 1987, the Evangelical Church Congress, yielding to pressure from grassroots action groups, closed its accounts with Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank, and Commerzbank. Activists declared 27 May 1988 a nationwide “day of action against banks.” Mobilising for the event, the journal *Consum Critik* highlighted the fact that white South Africans enjoyed one of the highest living standards in the world. A decade earlier, South African activist Brigalia Bam had already emphasised in her preface to the first German fruit-boycott brochure that white South Africans were “bathing in luxury” while black children died of malnutrition and innocent people were thrown into jail. She saw the economic boycott as a final effort to avert “a terrible race war.”

The mainstream anti-apartheid movement, with its strong roots in church organisations, embraced a decidedly nonviolent outlook that emphasised the moral contrast between peaceful boycotts and the South African regime’s reliance on violence. However, during the second half of the 1980s, a militant branch of the movement emerged, chiefly represented by the *Revolutionäre Zellen* (RZ) and the autonomists. In the autumn of 1985, a revolutionary cell committed bomb attacks against Zahnradfabrik Friedrichshafen, a German company that exported parachutes and parts for armoured vehicles, and two branches of Daimler-Benz, which sold trucks and cross-country vehicles to the South African army. A claim of responsibility for the bombing started with the familiar battle cry, “Burn, baby, burn,” and pointed to those injured, interned, and executed by South African police forces. Applauding militant raids of white residential neighbourhoods in South Africa, the German activists hoped

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that the South African youth resistance movement would not contend them-

selves with fighting for the leftovers from the tables of the white masters but

would combine criminal appropriation with militant politics.\textsuperscript{27} Since German

companies continued to supply crucial parts to the South African apparatus of

oppression “in defiance of all talk of boycott [and] sanctions,”\textsuperscript{28} the RZ wanted
to go beyond mere solidarity campaigns and any “pseudo-ethical cosmetics,”
such as making South African gold coins an illegal import: “Our topic is not
disinvestment, minimum wages, an antiracist code of conduct, or hiding the
Krugerrand in the back drawers: we don’t want to urge fair business policies on
the almost 150 German multinationals linking the South African subcontinent
to the exploitation and capital flows of the metropoles. As part of a worldwide
imperialist structure of exploitation, they are to be attacked here as well as
there. . . . This must . . . produce conflagrations in their production halls and
under their consumer shit.”\textsuperscript{29}

Two years later, the RZ launched a bomb attack against the food store

chain REWE as part of a campaign against racism and sexism, destroying sev-

enteen trucks and trailers in the North Rhine-Westphalian city of Wesel in No-

vember 1987.\textsuperscript{30} A revolutionary cell’s statement claiming responsibility ac-
cused REWE of profiting from the suppression of African women by “bartering
away” South African fruits, vegetables, and canned goods in more than seven
thousand stores. The statement likened the exploitation in multinational facto-

 ries and plantations to early capitalism, with female agricultural labourers
working sixty to seventy hours per week, often forced to bring their children to
work, and receiving much lower pay than male workers: “The fruit offered in
our supermarket chains . . . is the product of women’s work under conditions
that represent the entire spectrum of capitalist and sexist oppression: the me-
chanisation of cultivation methods and subsequent reductions in labour require-
ments have reduced most female workers to the status of seasonal or day la-
bourers; at the same time they have to bear the health consequences of
capitalised farming operations with pesticides and artificial fertilisers that
cause diseases.” Moreover, the RZ pointed out, these women were subject to
the everyday violence of white overseers: according to the group, South Africa

\begin{footnotes}
\item[27.] “Anschlag gegen Brüggemann & Brandt, Hagen und Mercedes Lueg, Bochum,” December
\item[28.] “Aktion gegen die Zahnradfabrik, Friedrichshafen, und gegen Daimler, Schwäbisch-
Gmünder,” October 1985, in ibid., 530–32.
\item[29.] “Anschlag gegen Brüggemann & Brandt, Hagen, und Mercedes Lueg, Bochum,” in ibid.,
533.
\end{footnotes}
had the world’s highest incidence of rape. In an attempt to imitate and transfer the social and political struggles of South Africa to West Germany, the RZ applauded women’s roles in these struggles, in the strikes at Daimler-Benz’s South African plants, and when organising resistance against rent increases, boycotts, and raids on wholesalers. In contrast to their earlier statement, the feminist branch of the RZ explicitly commended German women’s church groups that had been supporting the boycott for years. The stated goal of the attack against REWE was simple: “We want the goods to disappear from the shelves.”

The RZ’s anti-apartheid campaign was probably inspired by the better-known arson attacks that the Dutch group RaRa (Revolutionary Antiracist Action) carried out against the supermarket chain Makro and Shell petrol stations beginning in September 1985. RaRa’s agenda was very clearly focused on the militant expression of opposition to South African apartheid. RaRa’s attacks—and the militant anti-apartheid campaign more generally—reached the German autonomist scene. Shell petrol stations were ubiquitous and therefore a relatively easy target. There is little evidence that autonomists got involved in the fruit boycott campaigns: a rare poster from West Berlin shows a drawing of a crowd demolishing goods in a supermarket. More prominent on the autonomists’ agenda were German companies’ South African business relations in the field of nuclear and military technology. Autonomous interpreted apartheid as war. Protests against banks were widespread. Commodity boycotts, however, were marginal to such direct action against multinationals carried out in the spirit of solidarity with South African workers’ liberation struggle.

**Anti-Zionist campaigns**

Only a small minority of German left-wing radicals were prepared to go so far as to put Israel on a level with South Africa and to subscribe to analogous calls

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35. Arbeitskreis Internationale Solidarität, *Shell raus aus Südafrika*. 
to boycott Israeli products. A precursor of such campaigns occurred when the *Revolutionäre Zellen* used boycotts and incendiary attacks against a cinematic rendering of their most controversial act: a collaboration with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) that resulted in the hijacking of an Air France plane to Uganda’s Entebbe Airport. The Israel Defence Forces staged a spectacular hostage rescue on 4 July 1976 that resulted in the deaths of three hostages; all of the hijackers, including two RZ members; the commander of the Israeli forces; and at least twenty Ugandan soldiers. More than one hundred hostages were rescued. Before the end of the year, Hollywood had released *Victory at Entebbe* [*Unternehmen Entebbe*], directed by Marvin J. Chomsky and starring Elizabeth Taylor, Kirk Douglas, Anthony Hopkins, and Burt Lancaster. The film particularly highlights what has become known as the “selection,” an incident in which the hijackers allegedly forced a Jewish couple holding Belgian passports to join the Israeli group, knocking the man to the ground and humiliating him on account of his Jewish-sounding name.

In January 1977, the RZ and Fighters for a Free Palestine tried to firebomb cinemas in Düsseldorf and Aachen where the film was being shown. Similar attacks had taken place in Rome the previous month. A flyer asking, “Who are the terrorists?” called on people to disturb screenings of the film. Testifying in court, the perpetrators apprehended in Aachen, Gerhard Albartus and Enno Schwall, argued that the film legitimised “racist suppression and murder of Palestinians and Africans.” The RZ statement stressed that the incendiary devices were not meant to injure anyone, likened the film to racist Nazi propaganda, and called for the immediate withdrawal of the film and a boycott of any future films about Entebbe.

Most accounts of the events put a distinct emphasis on the antisemitic

36. In the absence of a scholarly monograph on the topic, contemporary journalistic accounts that include transcripts of eyewitness testimony remain the most comprehensive secondary sources. See Stevenson, *90 Minutes at Entebbe*; Ben-Porat, Haber, and Schiff, *Entebbe Rescue*.


conduct of the German hijackers, an aspect that has come to dominate the debate, especially in Germany. Although the evidence is complicated by the existence of dual citizenship, evidence suggests that the “selection” at Entebbe did not take place in the way it is usually narrated. Ilan Hartuv, a former employee of the Israeli foreign ministry who was one of the hostages, stated unequivocally in a 2011 interview that the hostages were grouped “based on passports and ID cards. There was no selection of Jews versus non-Jews.” In itself, Hartuv’s account does not say much about the existence of antisemitic motivations—or lack thereof—among the RZ and the PFLP, but it does raise questions concerning the evidence on which charges of antisemitism against the radical Left are based. It is correct that Israeli citizens were detained at Entebbe and threatened with death, but many non-Israeli Jews were released, a fact that is usually omitted in descriptions of an Auschwitz-like selection.

Two years after the events at Entebbe, the RZ attacked the Frankfurt-based company Agrexco, owned by the state of Israel and Europe’s largest importer of Israeli fruit, causing damage to the building but no casualties. A statement tied the attack to alleged cases of Arab workers injecting mercury into Israeli oranges. Indeed, oranges injected with mercury had been found in Europe in January and February 1978, but it is doubtful that any Palestinian organisations were involved in these performative acts of poisoning. Evidence suggests that radical European solidarity groups—perhaps the RZ or similar Dutch groups—invented this form of protest. Letters threatening to poison Israeli agricultural products in the name of an otherwise obscure Arab Revolutionary Army were received in several European capitals and had been sent from Stuttgart. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the PFLP were initially not impressed with this new form of struggle because it had the potential to discredit the perpetrators and embraced it only later and on a very limited scale.

The RZ attack and June 1978 statement appear to constitute an attempt to
correct the public discourse that had unfolded in response to a wave of copycat citrus fruit poisonings throughout Europe that also affected non-Israeli oranges. The RZ pointed out such attempts were sabotage rather than poisoning, since the goal was to make the oranges unusable rather than to kill people, as evidenced by the fact that warnings had been issued (though they were ignored). Indeed, elemental mercury is poorly absorbed by ingestion, and toxicity from swallowing is rare. As a result, none of the fifty oranges found contaminated with mercury in various European cities threatened anyone’s life.45 However, the details of mercury’s health hazards are not widely known, and mercury, especially in its compounds, can have extremely toxic effects—for example, through long-term exposure to mercury vapour or consumption of contaminated fish. Thus, though the actual danger posed by mercury in citrus fruits was small, the incidents provoked a climate of fear, with detrimental effects on sales of fruit, the original intention of the perpetrators. The RZ suggested that only a lack of solidarity among the Left and a media smear campaign had raised suspicions of antisemitism, while no one had suffered any serious harm; moreover, the cell alleged, the “imperialist state” of Israel financed its army to no small degree from the export of citrus fruits. The RZ would no longer “idly watch” the “war of extermination against the Palestinians”; instead, the attack was meant as only a prelude to further measures in the commercial sphere: “boycott campaigns against Israeli goods, discussions with people doing their shopping, but also stink bombs and acid attacks against Israeli products, destroying the stocks of Israeli fruit displayed in every department store.” The RZ could not resist comparing what they perceived as the “expulsion, persecution, and extermination of an entire people” to the “blood and soil” politics of the Nazis. At the same time, they explicitly declared that their fight against Zionism was also a resolute fight against antisemitism in any form.46 The debate about similarities and differences between criticisms of Israel, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism or about structural affinities between anticolonialism and antisemitism was still in its infancy.47

The RZ continued the “campaign for the support of the Palestinian liberation struggle” a year later with a similar attack against another fruit importer,

45. Ibid.
Consumption and Violence

Hameico. The statement of responsibility again referred to a “fascist genocide against the Palestinian people” and accused Zionist arms exports of supporting “fascist regimes” in Nicaragua, South Africa, and Argentina. The radicals again demanded that companies withdraw Israeli produce and that “antifascist” activists provoke boycotts by injecting butyric acid into “Zionist fruits.”\textsuperscript{48} The RZ were early in taking up Israel as a target of their militant boycott campaigns. The British Palestine Solidarity Campaign did not embrace the Boycott Israeli Goods Campaign until 1982.\textsuperscript{49}

The Hafenstraße Mural

The precarious mixture of criticism of Israeli foreign politics, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism reemerged in the context of the First Intifada of the late 1980s when the “Antiimps,” a branch of the autonomist movement that declared itself loyal to the goals of the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF), subsumed solidarity with Palestine under a rather haphazard notion of anti-imperialism. Similar to the RZ, these groups maintained contacts with the PFLP, which had belatedly embraced the boycott as a means of winning European support for its fight against the Israeli state.\textsuperscript{50} In 1987, squatters from Hamburg’s Hafenstraße, where, unlike Berlin, the initial squats from 1981 remained a focal point of political conflict throughout the decade, painted a mural on the exterior wall of a tenement building dominated by the slogan, “Boycott ‘Israel’! Goods, kibbutzim, and beaches.”\textsuperscript{51} Above the words was the outline of a machine gun against the background of a giant Palestinian flag. To underline the allegedly illegitimate nature of the Zionist state, the word \textit{Israel} appeared in quotation marks, the same way the Springer press referred to the “DDR”.

Television footage of Israeli soldiers beating Palestinian children during the Intifada apparently had motivated activists to call attention to this conflict.

\textsuperscript{48} “Aktion gegen die Import-Firma Hameico Frankfurt,” June 1979, in \textit{Früchte des Zorns}, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 1:133.
\textsuperscript{49} Rosen, \textit{Mapping the Organizational Sources}, 30.
\textsuperscript{50} According to Graf, “Vom Ja zum Nein,” 155, the Israel boycott of the radical left started in the 1980s and reached a first climax in response to the Sabra and Shatila massacre followed by a second climax in support of the First Intifada in 1987. While these dates are not implausible, Graf does not support them with any empirical evidence. According to the evidence analysed here, there is no clear connection between boycott and the massacre during the Lebanese civil war. Before 1987, calls for boycotts remained marginal. See poster “Gegen Zionismus und Rassismus: Boykottiert Israel! Unterstützt die Intifada!” (1987), http://uke.nadir.org/nadir/plakat/cd/film230/230_10.jpg (accessed 31 January 2012).
\textsuperscript{51} Sigmund and Stroux, \textit{Zu bunt}, 27–31; Lehne, \textit{Konflikt um die Hafenstraße}.  


The boycott explicitly sought to bridge distance: “We wanted it to relate to here, something one could do here.”\(^{52}\) In addition to the Manichaean worldview betrayed by the sweeping condemnation of Israel, the fact that kibbutzim—collective communities rooted in utopian and socialist ideals—were targeted was especially curious. In the spring of 1988, this problematic message triggered grim controversies within and beyond the radical left about the extent to which it was antisemitic.\(^{53}\) A discussion meeting at Hafenstraße sought to establish the right to criticise the state of Israel without immediately being accused of antisemitism. A key speaker was Israeli civil rights activist and Fatah member Uri Davis, who had written a book arguing that Israel’s policies towards Palestinians were comparable to South Africa’s apartheid policies. Davis was also member of Return, a political group that also embraced boycott slogans.\(^{54}\)

Despite receiving immediate criticism, German activists unleashed a full-fledged campaign against Israeli goods in Hamburg and elsewhere. Orange crates were knocked over in supermarkets; at an open-air market, blood and red paint were poured over Israeli goods, actions understandably perceived as tasteless in light of the Nazis’ boycott campaigns.\(^{55}\) The Hamburg Antiimps, who uneasily noticed applause for their action coming from the far right, displayed a rather simplistic historical understanding of National Socialism, and their clumsy quotation marks implicitly questioned the state of Israel’s right to exist, thus venturing into discursive territory with antisemitic connotations. However, one important difference between the Antiimps and Nazi storm troopers lies in the fact that the left-wing anti-Zionists symbolically attacked goods of Israeli origin from a position of relative weakness and motivated by ideas of international solidarity, but they did not physically attack Jewish vendors by means of state-sponsored or paramilitary violence and backed by a pervasive eliminatory ideology. The same held true for the RZ’s April 1988 bomb attack on the administrative hub of the Hamburg transport and fruit import company Olff & Sohn. Ten years after the attack on Agrexco, the RZ combined boycott rhetoric directed against South Africa with that directed against Israel, branding Hamburg fruit merchants the accomplices of these regimes.\(^{56}\)

\(^{52}\) Sigmund and Stroux, \textit{Zu bunt}, 27.
\(^{53}\) Reemtsma, “Andere Wand.”
\(^{54}\) Sigmund and Stroux, \textit{Zu bunt}, 28–29; Davis, \textit{Israel}.
The Hamburg government had the mural painted over and threatened to evict the squatters should they resist. Activists only attached banners to the scaffolding, which opened another avenue of legitimisation in defence of the original message. Large letters painted on bedsheets quoted from United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379, adopted by a majority of Arab, Third World, and Eastern bloc countries on 10 November 1975, which determined that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination” and thus put Israel on a par with the apartheid states of South Africa and Rhodesia. The image of the Hafenstraße mural continued appearing on anti-Zionist posters and flyers. Other smaller murals with a similar message were also quickly painted over: a mural in St. Pauli’s Paul-Roosen-Straße showed an open mouth about to bite into a piece of “Jaffa” fruit, which mirrored a soldier with a machine gun standing in front of a doorway from which flowed blood. A copy of the Hafenstraße image was also painted on the walls of Göttingen’s autonomist centre, Juzi. The boycott campaign triggered by the Hafenstraße mural undoubtedly was a prominent part in German autonomist groups’ political repertoire, but a perusal of their journals and posters shows that more conventional protests against aspects of Israeli foreign policy—for example, the 1982 Lebanon War—were far more frequent.

Boycotts of Multinational Companies

Despite the prominence of the South African and, to a lesser extent, the Israeli case, the protest focus on multinational companies proved to be the more significant long-term effect in the politicisation of consumption. A pioneering case was the struggle against the questionable marketing of milk powder in less developed countries by the Swiss company Nestlé—one of the world’s largest food and nutrition corporations. A booklet called The Baby Killer published by the British aid organisation War on Want in 1974 and a slightly changed German translation opened an international campaign that sought to address the harmful consequences of breast milk substitutes under conditions of poverty. The campaign initially targeted several baby food companies, but increasingly

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58. Sigmund and Stroux, Zu bunt, 31.
focused on Nestlé since the Third World Action Group from Bern, which had undertaken the German translation, had chosen “Nestlé tötet Babies [Nestlé kills babies]” for a title, which provoked the incriminated company to sue for libel. An internationally highly publicised two-year trial ended with the court deciding in favour of Nestlé because they could not be held responsible for infant deaths in terms of criminal law. However, the outcome was widely seen as a moral victory for the defendants not only because of the rather mild fine, but due to the fact that they had succeeded in bringing across their moral and political arguments, which eventually triggered a long-lasting international boycott campaign.

These arguments were harking back to critiques of regimes of provision that the protest movements had pioneered since the late 1960s. Under the heading “Opium for babies,” the newspaper of the Offenbach Sozialistisches Büro assembled quotes from the trial: Nestlé’s chairman, who called his company the “most multinational of all multinational companies,” was likened to a heroin dealer who gave away the first shot for free calculating on the addiction that would set in. In the opinion of the Basler Nationalzeitung, Nestlé’s denial of any responsibility for the effects of feeding bottles was not unlike an arsonist blaming the matches. The journalist and SPD politician Freimut Duve highlighted a new group of victims and a “final and decisive step in the colonisation of consciousness” via advertisement: “a European export giant tries to market what has hitherto been closed off from the market: the giving relationship between mother and baby.”

The argument that the marketing of artificial substitutes for natural products created disastrous dependencies in less developed countries also featured in the early phase of protest against genetic engineering. In November 1984, a butyric acid attack against the office of two architects involved in the building of a research laboratory for the pharmaceutical company Schering in conjunction with Freie Universität Berlin was justified by pointing out that sterile wheat that did not produce seeds would help create monopolies putting Third World consumers at the mercy of American and European companies. In the eyes of the protesters this was a conscious strategy to put companies in a position “to decide on the existence or starvation of entire populations.”

In 1981, several groups advocating solidarity with El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua inaugurated a nation-wide boycott campaign against cof-

61. Duve, Exportinteressen gegen Muttermilch, 7.
fee companies. A flyer pointed out that while Germans enjoyed coffee as a matter of course, those who cultivated it could not even afford the drink: “Each attempt of the agricultural labourers to fight social injustice gets violently suppressed. [...] We, as consumers, are implicated in this system.” An autonomist group looted—or “dispossessed” as the activists put it—a Göttingen branch of the coffee roaster Eduscho: “This coffee is on its way back to El Salvador where it was stolen from its owners—the workers and Indios—for the price of poverty.” A commentary in the autonomist paper _radikal_ praised the act for combining the liberation struggle of the Salvadorian guerrilla with resistance in Germany. It was the ability to connect seemingly far removed conflicts that made boycotts of multinational companies an attractive resource of mobilisation.

**Feminist Solidarity**

Rote Zora, a branch of the _Revolutionäre Zellen_ embracing a more independent platform in the 1980s, stressed the feminist dimension of the fight against exploitation and violence in the global economy. Rote Zora formulated its critique of the interplay of regimes of provision and regimes of violence in a June 1984 interview for the feminist journal _Emma_: “When traffickers buy our sisters in the 3rd World and then sell them to German petit bourgeois, that’s legal. When women have to do the most monotonous work for subsistence level and thereby ruin their health, that’s legal. These are relations of violence that we are no longer prepared to accept. ... Denouncing them will not ... abolish them. ... This is why we sabotage, boycott, damage, avenge the violence and humiliation.” While fighting the “exploitation of women as commodities,” the militant women of Rote Zora described themselves as shopping in “disgusting supermarkets” and living in “ugly buildings” while they “liked to go for a walk or to the cinema, theatre or disco and enjoyed parties and the cultivation of idleness.”

Putting their focus on labour disputes, a classic topic of the Old Left, and thus reviving radical traditions on a global scale, Rote Zora committed a fire-

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bomb attack against the Berlin branch office of the textile manufacturer Adler on 11 September 1986, triggering a sea change in a labour dispute some eight thousand kilometres to the east. The management of the Adler subcontractor Flair-Fashion agreed to respond to some of the demands made by striking female textile workers at its plant in a South Korean free-trade zone. The industrial action initially had been put down violently. Complaints focused on over-long hours of work, low pay, the prevention of free unions and thus of protest and strike, and sexual harassment. Rote Zora’s militant attempt to radicalise a solidarity campaign for Third World low-wage workers immediately encountered criticism: a Berlin-based Korean women’s group and the human rights organisation Terre des Femmes feared the consequences of resorting to violent means.66 In June and August 1987, Rote Zora struck again: incendiary devices devastated ten Adler branch offices throughout West Germany. The statement of responsibility mocked Adler’s slogan, “Life with quality,” by asking whose quality of life was meant and arrived at a two-pronged critique: “The brittle peace between the classes in the metropole is only upheld via cheap consumer products. . . . Our privileges, of which consumption is one, are based on the exploitation, utilisation, and extermination of people on three continents. Consumption is foisted on us as a replacement for real life.” Adler’s cheap textiles were depicted as a shrewd strategy for giving even German welfare recipients the feeling of buying colourful and fashionable clothes, of having a place in consumer society, while in reality they destroyed subsistence economies in countries like Korea, leaving young women with a choice between prostitution—Rote Zora noted the forty thousand U.S. servicemen stationed in South Korea—and the starvation wages of world-market factories. This charge was woven into more general observations concerning capitalism’s commodification of all aspects of human life.67

On International Women’s Day 1983, Rote Zora attacked the car of a so-called marriage broker and the Philippine consulate in Bonn to make trafficking in women publicly visible. A statement traced the “sex boom” back to the U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia, where military bases attracted sex workers whose living conditions had been decimated by war. This was eventu-


ally transformed into the global business of sex tourism and trafficking in Asian women. But the root of the problem ultimately lay in impoverishment and indebtedness caused by imperialism. The militant German women declared their solidarity with the Philippine Far Left and accused agro-multinationals like Del Monte and Dole of relying on rapes and murders committed by paramilitary units that cleared tropical forests and delivered the survivors to the world market. Rote Zora assumed that more than two hundred West German enterprises were taking part in trafficking, advertising, and selling Asian women like merchandise. Hotels, airlines, and travel agents profited from the women’s economic distress. Rote Zora accused the Marcos regime in the Philippines of “selling out the country and people to make money out of it.” A similar attack against an airport shuttle bus operated by a trafficker in Münster followed in August 1983. The statement again focused on the degrading commodification of women, which was tolerated within the confines of German society’s relations of violence. Rote Zora contended that the enterprise that had been attacked even featured beds so that customers could “try out” the women. The radical feminists did not trust the declarations of German and Philippine authorities that illegal traffickers would face criminal prosecution since both governments contributed to what Rote Zora saw as the root causes of the problem.

The IMF and World Bank

The feminist plank was an important element in the broader criticism of the global economic order and the structure of global markets, which, by the late 1980s, had been condensed in a shared framing of diverse global problems among multifarious protest groups that social scientists have labelled the global justice movement. Protest against economic summit meetings was crucial to this process. The first important countersummit confronted the World Economic Summit at Bonn in May 1985. Approximately twenty-five thousand demonstrators, including members of various autonomist groups, sought to challenge those deemed responsible for “starvation, exploitation, and imperialism.” The emerging political focus on the global economy became

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more powerfully manifest when representatives of the World Bank and of the IMF met in West Berlin in September 1988. Critics of these institutions—some 150 ideologically diverse groups including environmental, autonomist, and Third World activists—organised a wealth of counterevents in West Berlin and other German cities, including a demonstration that drew eighty thousand people. During the protests, a significant number of attacks took place against shops and branch offices of international businesses, among them further attacks against Adler retailers that denounced the exploitation of female workers in South Korea. This time, an entire demonstration against low-cost production focused on an Adler outlet in a shopping arcade on the Kurfürstendamm. The autonomist women’s movement attacked pornographic movie theatres and travel agents that facilitated sex tourism. These forms of protest receive at most brief mention in the scarce literature on this remarkable anticipation of later patterns of globalisation protest. The ensuing debates featured rhetorical strategies that amplified the violence and moral infringement of the opposing side, coupled with arguments that justified and neutralised one’s own use of force. This reciprocal constellation between activists and security forces—operating with associations and comparisons on a global scale—was partly responsible for escalating developments.

The Third World debt crisis, which originated in the 1970s and erupted in 1982, gave the IMF and World Bank enormous power, enabling them to impose controversial free-market conditions on their loans to poor countries and on repayments. So-called structural-adjustment loans were meant to address developing countries’ lack of control over their budgets when printing money for government spending. The World Bank optimistically declared that such adjustments would take no longer than five years. The idea was that liberalised prices would attract private investments, which, in turn, would trigger growth and thus combat poverty. Conditions for these short-term adjustments in-

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73. IWF/Weltbank-Kampagne, Rundbrief 4, IISG, ID, ZK 48937.

74. See Gerhards, Neue Konfliktlinien; Gerhards, “Mobilisierung gegen die IWF- und Weltbanktagung”; Gerhards and Rucht, “Mesomobilization.” A standard work on developmental policy wrongly claims that mass demonstrations and violent protests against summit and IMF/World Bank meetings only emerged in the late 1990s: see Nuscheler, Lern- und Arbeitsbuch Entwicklungspolitik, 51.

volved reducing consumption, especially public consumption. IMF-induced currency devaluation led to the “dollarization” of domestic prices, which then triggered abrupt price hikes in basic commodities, including food, durables, and fuel. More direct repayment conditions curtailed governmental subsidies for basic foodstuffs and other vital goods. This tightening of the belt was supposed to ensure debt repayment. On the ground, however, these measures usually led to price increases for health care, education, public transport, and other public goods and consequently to sharp declines in most people’s use of these services. At the same time, the IMF failed to insist on higher taxes for those segments of the population that were in a position to tighten the belt. Moreover, the IMF favoured exports because consumer demand in rich countries promised higher revenues, but this approach stifled demand in less developed countries. Pockets of high-income consumption encompassed small segments of society, while the brunt of the IMF measures was borne by the weakest, who were least responsible for the debt crisis. Crime rates grew, and raids on supermarkets increased, often resulting in “austerity riots” or “IMF riots.” Protest waves occurred in at least thirty-nine of the roughly eighty debtor countries between 1976 and 1992.76 Walton and Seddon point out that acute starvation was less of a factor in causing these riots than was awareness of the international origins of austerity and indignation about the elimination of “paternalistic consumer protections,” which beneficiaries viewed and defended as their legitimate rights.77

That severe structural problems existed in the global financial system of the 1970s and 1980s has been acknowledged by a number of experts, both at the time and subsequently. Even UNICEF and the WTO accused the IMF of massive abuses of social human rights.78 Critics pointed out that the financial system amounted to a large-scale “transfer of economic resources” from debtor to creditor countries.79 In the eyes of their critics, IMF bureaucrats illegitimately presumed to determine food prices, bus fares, and school fees in far-away countries. The consequences of repayment conditions became the focal point of a far-reaching critique that sought to point out violations of human rights and thus give the lie to the benign intentions to which the leaders of the richest countries solemnly confessed at their meetings.

76. Gailus, Contentious Food Politics, 53.
77. Walton and Seddon, Free Markets and Food Riots, 50–52.
78. See Körner et al., Im Teufelskreis der Verschuldung; Schubert, Internationale Verschuldung; Nuscheler, Lern- und Arbeitsbuch Entwicklungspolitik, 367–70; Joseph E. Stiglitz, Globalization and Its Discontents (New York, 2002).
79. Chossudovsky, Globalisation of Poverty, 78.
At the second G7 summit meeting, held in Puerto Rico in June 1976, leaders declared that they sought “sustained economic expansion and the resultant increase in individual wellbeing” with the “long-term goal of a maximum expansion of trade.” The question was whose wellbeing they had in mind. At least rhetorically, the free-trade message applied to all countries, as any shrinkage of world trade was deemed to hurt all countries. This mind-set, together with the relative strength of the developing countries after the oil crisis, led the IMF and World Bank to hand out generous loans to southern countries during the 1970s, involving them in the global financial economy to an unprecedented extent.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s speech at the opening of the West Berlin IMF and World Bank meeting in 1988 touched only very indirectly on critiques or protest, citing only the risk of the destruction of nature: “It would certainly be a Pyrrhic victory if an increase in prosperity was only to be achieved at the cost of destroying nature.” The chancellor then paid lip service to a goal that allegedly united all delegates: “to make living conditions possible all over the world that can actually be called humane.” He said nothing about living conditions during the process that was supposed to enable prosperity for all. Mauricio Rosencof, a member of the Uruguayan Tupamaros, accused the Western industrial nations of turning “Latin America into a factory for bananas, coffee, and beef, killing more people than smallpox.” However, criticism was not limited to radical forces. Hans Matthöfer (SPD), the German federal minister of finance between 1978 and 1982, warned that “capital flight, corruption, and consumption of imported luxuries by the upper classes constituted a Bermuda triangle that would drain any capital injection however large.”

Autonomists against Global Governance

German autonomist groups started their explicit analysis of IMF policies in 1985, when West Berlin was first mentioned as a candidate to host the 1988 meeting. A brochure subtitled “There is method to this destruction” provided

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an interpretation of the mechanisms behind the debt crisis, highlighting the fact that military purchases and imports of luxury goods for the rich were usually exempt from IMF savings measures. National elites and the maintenance of their power enjoyed priority. The authors could have carried this point even further by pointing out that IMF loans were frequently used to purchase arms that were then employed against protesters and the domestic opposition. At the lower end of the social spectrum, price increases entailed a drastic decline in standards of living, to the point of starvation, the spread of diseases, and high infant mortality. The mandated wage freezes and currency devaluation as well as the preferential treatment accorded to export industries further widened social inequalities. These measures frequently encountered resistance and were forced through by authoritarian local elites leaning on police and military. The authors listed a series of “IMF revolts”: Peru, Egypt (1977); Sudan, Liberia (1979); Bolivia, Turkey (1980); Morocco (1981); Ecuador, Sudan, Bolivia (1982); Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador (1983); Tunisia, Morocco, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Peru (1984); Bolivia, Sudan, Dominican Republic, Ecuador (1985). A detailed report described the events in Brazil in 1983, where the looting of hundreds of supermarkets and the building of barricades against the police were interpreted as resistance to the IMF and its henchmen in the Brazilian elite. The analysis given is informative and sober-minded, though it does not disguise the authors’ political views. The victims of the IMF are measured in the thousands. This differed starkly from the concluding remarks of the brochure, whose authors believed that “hunger crises are strategically and soberly contrived by office-chair killers [Schreibtischtäter]; hundreds of thousands of victims are calculated at the conference table.”

The diffuse notion of the global financial system’s responsibility for unfathomable depths of suffering was carried into the actual protest campaign. The call for an “International Counter-Congress,” signed by a wide range of opposition groups including the Green Party, compared the calamity of the international debt crisis with the historical event that epitomised human loss and

suffering of the highest magnitude: “Each year the silent dying in the ‘Third World’ claims as many victims as the Second World War.”\textsuperscript{89} However, no statistics were cited to back up this claim.

A year and a half before the congress, a pamphlet by an autonomist group interpreted the capitalist penetration of preindustrial regions as an act of destruction and extermination comparable to National Socialism: “Millions are . . . driven into starvation. This is no different from genocide.”\textsuperscript{90} Another pamphlet of the West Berlin Autonomen pointed out that global capital had disengaged from the legal constraints of the nation-state. The 15.5 million tons of soya that Brazil exported might eliminate malnutrition in that country if it were not exported to rich nations to be processed into animal feed. At the same time, the Autonomen likened the American-dominated institutions of global governance to Nazi plans for a New Order of Europe. The Bretton Woods Agreement, which had established the IMF and World Bank, sought to outdo the Nazis’ plans for an economic empire that would have guaranteed the German people “maximum consumption of goods” by exterminating all “unprofitable eaters.” Lines of continuity were insinuated via leading German businessmen who had played key roles in the economic design of both Nazism and postwar reconstruction (for example, Hermann Josef Abs and Friedrich Flick) and via American companies such as IBM, ITT, and General Motors that were involved in the technological equipment of the German war machinery. This amalgamation of valid observations, half-truths, and airy conclusions by analogy with Nazi Germany produced a rallying cry: “The enforced starvation and the worldwide genocide in the regions stricken by famine is the intentional result of an economy of destruction! When it is expected that the people’s misery is threatening to erupt in rebellion, arms, police equipment and counterinsurgency specialists will be sent into the country! This is yet another source of profit for arms producers in the U.S. and their Israeli and West German cronies.”\textsuperscript{91}

Against this backdrop, activists accused the IMF and World Bank of systematically “organising the poverty” of developing countries. The title page of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89} “Für die Überwindung der Schuldenkrise: Für eine gerechte Weltwirtschaftsordnung,” \textit{Dritte Welt} 7 (1988): 45.
\end{itemize}
a brochure for the protest campaign showed a clenched fist breaking off a profit curve. Another title page showed the skyline of New York with the Empire State Building and Chrysler Building—not the World Trade Centre—engulfed by giant waterfalls. Activists highlighted the dimension of legitimisation as central for their endeavour, which identified the customers of banks as a large target group: “Banks are particularly reliant on customer trust, and they conduct elaborate advertisement and legitimisation campaigns. We can challenge them on this level.” The role model was the anti-apartheid campaign. Although autonomist groups and more moderate parts of the opposition disputed the expediency of certain forms of protest, especially violence, a certain consensus ensured a good deal of cooperation in the planning of protest activities that were, by and large, perceived as coming from a more or less united front of IMF/World Bank opponents.

The protests explicitly sought to have a “broad democratic public” withdraw its support from the IMF and World Bank. Contrasting regimes of provision were part and parcel of the imagery the protesters invoked: “Protest must reveal the misery that is hiding behind the balance sheets and statistics: ... poverty in the ‘Third World,’ increasing unemployment and new poverty in the industrial countries are the basis for their overloaded tables at the gala dinners.” An example sought to make the consequences of repayment arrangements tangible in terms of household statistics: an average Peruvian working-class family would consume 225 bread rolls per month, down from 448, and 4.1 kilograms of pasta instead of 6.8, a decrease of 690 kcal and 30 g of protein per person per day. Addressing imbalances in global distribution, the journal of the Alternative Liste, West Berlin’s Green Party, which had entered parliament in 1981 and held 10.6 percent of the seats at the time of the IMF meeting, employed images of prostitution to note the presence of Asian sex workers in the streets and nightclubs of West Berlin: “Who are the gentlemen who will fill the brothels and other entertainment venues in late Septem-

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ber?” Some of them would be “parasitic elites” from debtor countries that benefited from IMF and World Bank loans. Economic analysis sought to address the violence inherent in the monetary system: “These two most powerful institutions . . . proved that money in the sense of capital profits could not only be the carrot but also the deadly stick; . . . they cannily organised the murderous effects of their policy, the poverty and the hunger, death and ecological destruction behind the debit and credit of the balance sheet and thus made them anonymous.” In this reading, the enormous security measures taken in West Berlin during the meeting testified to the need to suppress the realities and to stage an impression of popular consent.

The ecological dimension of global trade patterns, especially the destruction of tropical rain forests, played a prominent role in the criticism that politicians from the Green Party and representatives of other ecological initiatives lodged against the IMF and German consumers. The latter’s demand for hamburgers, instant beef stock, canned animal food, pineapple, cocoa, bananas, rubber, furniture, and paper were driving the destruction of this ecosystem. Fast-food chains appeared to be responsible for overexploitation. The IMF’s debt policy reinforced southern governments’ commercial destruction of rain forests from access roads to large-scale dam projects. Taken together, these practices threatened not only biodiversity but also the livelihood of populations increasingly robbed of traditional sources of income, as local economies became increasingly dependent on export cash crops to generate profits that went largely to companies in highly industrialised countries. With a dose of idealism, the traditional lifestyles of indigenous populations appeared to be superior regimes of provision that if undisturbed were capable of upholding a sustainable symbiosis between humans and rain forests. Economic development favoured large landowners, wood export companies, and gold miners, preventing indigenous tribes from cultivating what they wanted to consume and forcing them to grow what the populations of industrialised countries wanted to consume. In 1987–88 the Penan and Punan people of the Malaysian state of Sarawak in northern Borneo fought the wood companies with sit-in blockades of access roads. Greenpeace distributed their appeal to consumers in industrial countries: “Stop buying tropical woods from our forest and from the lands of other forest peoples.” Protesters called on consumers to exert political pres-

98. “Sie kommen!,” Stachel 82 (September 1988): 1, WZB-IWF.
100. IWF/Weltbank-Kampagne, Rundbrief 4:16.
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Sure on the German government, which supported the IMF/World Bank debt policy, to boycott international companies implicated in this business and to abstain from products that originated from commodity chains based on the problematic felling and farming.103 Ecologists criticised the old Socialist Left for clinging to the historical workers’ movement, which “seems easier than changing one’s own habits of consumption.”104

The RAF against Global Governance

A week before the opening of the West Berlin meeting, the third generation of the RAF attempted an attack on the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Hans Tietmeyer, who was responsible for international monetary policy and the organisation of economic summits. The machine gun jammed, and the car carrying the future president of the Deutsche Bundesbank was hit only by a few cartridge cases.

The RAF had first mentioned the IMF and World Bank in their lengthy statement at the January 1976 Stammheim trial. Well before the actual debt crisis, the first generation of the RAF invoked “the resistance of the . . . third world against being plundered by world bank loans.” They regarded the institutions of global governance as tools in an American-ruled global economic system whose dictates the developing countries could not evade.105 In 1984, a hunger strike statement by RAF inmates advanced a rather compact analysis of the debt crisis, arguing that societies of developing countries were being organised “between barracks, the IMF, and ultimately the use of hunger as a weapon against millions of people so that they won’t pose a threat to plans for world domination.”106 The French revolutionary guerrilla group Action Directe (AD), allied with the RAF in 1985, targeted the World Bank’s European headquarters and IMF offices in Paris in June 1982 and again in April 1985. AD also bombed companies with commercial links to South Africa and the Citrus Marketing

104. Roland Bunzenthal, “Nie schuldeten so viele so wenigen soviel,” Frankfurter Rundschau, 26 September 1988, WZB-IWF.
Board of Israel. The RAF’s French comrades sought a theoretical grasp of the dimensions of consumption in contemporary imperialism, assuming a “system of determinants centred on technological power and the deculturation of the dominated through a Westernized model of production and consumption. . . . when Western cultural norms have succeeded in crushing all resistance, the popular classes will accede to it while sacrificing their entire lives to the dream: the residents of Latin American shantytowns often possess a TV and a pickup . . . ; at the same time, their children die of hunger and adolescents turn to prostitution.”

The RAF’s statement on the assassination attempt on Tietmeyer accused him of being “responsible for genocide and widespread poverty in the 3rd world.” As an organiser of IMF and economic summit meetings, he was held responsible for an “imperialist policy of destruction via hunger and counterinsurgency” for the sake of profit and power. This policy meant death and misery for the majority of the people living in southern countries. The statement offered little analysis but tried-and-tested enemy images. In an attempt to bridge the old gap between metropole and Third World, the RAF was ready to lump together everything from the economic crisis in Ireland to genocide in the developing world as destroying “the livelihood of millions of people.” Ultimately, the activists sought to blame Tietmeyer and other leaders for all of the world’s economic misery. Remarkably, the statement made no reference to the impending West Berlin meeting.

The RZ against Global Governance

The Revolutionäre Zellen focused more extensively than the RAF on the IMF and the rich countries’ role in the global economy. Well before their militant attacks against fruit imports from South Africa and Israel, the RZ identified the IMF and World Bank as key enemies: “The centralisation of political and economic power doesn’t happen at a European Council or a European Parliament . . . but within the framework of new transnational sovereignties . . . like

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the International Monetary Fund . . . or the Trilateral Commission.”¹¹⁰ Like the RAF, the Revolutionary Cells identified *Konsum*—that is, Western affluence—as something to be overcome by entering a revolutionary struggle.¹¹¹ Like the RAF, the revolutionary cells had their own interpretation of the history of West German consumer society, though it was less theory-loaded. They interpreted the high profit rates of the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s as the origin of a “societal consensus,” especially among skilled workers and employees. They considered the consumer needs of the middle classes oversatisfied, but more important, their critique focused on the economic sectors involving “governmental consumption”—that is, the armaments and building industries.¹¹²

Ever since their emergence in the 1970s, the RZ focused on the economic crisis in an attempt to foster a revolutionary situation. According to their analysis, young people, workers, employees, women, foreigners, and the proverbial “Auntie Emma,” the owner of an old-fashioned small corner shop, had to pay the bill for scheming capitalists.¹¹³ The RZ saw their 1974 incendiary attacks on various trade associations as attempts “to keep up the crisis, build up an alternative, and transform the economic crisis into a political one.”¹¹⁴ This approach produced a critique of the RAF’s notion of a pervasive embourgeoisement of the masses. Reminiscent of Ulrike Meinhof, the RZ argued in December 1976 that society had not succeeded in “bribing the masses,” as evidenced by the wave of militant acts in various contexts, including fare increase protests and squatting. In the spirit of solidarity, the RZ acknowledged that important impulses for this development originated with the RAF.¹¹⁵

In January 1978, a revolutionary cell diagnosed a shift in the economic policies among the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, away from the consumer-oriented growth of the postwar period and towards securing the Western industrial countries’ dominance. This went hand in hand with high unemployment, sinking real wages, and decreasing living standards: “Overproduction and underconsumption appeared simultaneously.”¹¹⁶ Seeking to justify a June 1978 bomb attack on the U.S. Army’s Officers’ Mess at the Rhein-Main Airbase that injured seven peo-

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¹¹⁴ “Revolutionärer Zorn 1,” May 1975, in ibid., 95.

¹¹⁵ “Brief an alle Genossen aus der RAF,” December 1976, in ibid., 175.

ple, the RZ explained that the Carter administration had used new weapons of economic warfare: “The world market that no one can avoid, the credits of the International Monetary Fund that no one can repay. This way, dependencies are created that are much more effective and destructive than military subjugation.” The worldwide capitalization of agriculture destroyed the remaining areas of subsistence economy, driving the rural proletariat to the cities and creating 250 million homeless people in the Third World. Drawing on Cheryl Payer’s critical book about the IMF, the RZ concluded that the IMF’s power even surpassed that of the United States.

In the early 1980s, members of the RZ saw the IMF and international finance more generally as the actual superpower, dominated by the United States but with growing influence by West Germany and France. Ultimately, this economic analogue to NATO dwarfed and controlled not only national parliaments but also the eastern Cold War camp, thus fatally undermining any claims for a communist alternative: “Today the board of directors of Deutsche Bank or IMF takes part in deciding whether or not a five-year plan can be accomplished. The economic policy of the Comecon countries has degenerated from the balancing of shortages between planned and demand economy to mere competition for Western credits.” In the developing world, indigenous elites were complicit in this global conspiracy. The latter’s complaints about the IMF needed to be seen critically, since they intended to remove “themselves from the line of fire as they participate in and benefit from the ruination of their people.” The RZ blamed the International Development Association—the World Bank’s special branch for lending to the world’s poorest countries—for the 1973 famine in Ethiopia that killed one hundred thousand people and asked why the news that 450 million people were permanently starving did not trigger the same kind of resistance as brought on by the Vietnam War. The RZ’s answer: a loss of tradition, partly as a result of a historiographical tendency that “posthumously turned the student movement into a movement of cultural revolution,” neglecting its anti-imperialism. Long before such reasoning became a standard facet of critical consumer thinking, the RZ imagined a shirt that could speak, telling its wearer about its own “history”—the conditions that had gone

121. Ibid., 476.
into its making, which normally remained obscure at the consumers’ end. Such conditions included the low wages of the Korean seamstresses who produced it and the discrepancy between the German retail price and the price that the multinational company paid to Indian farmers for the raw materials.\textsuperscript{122}

The RZ sought to address the members of the West German population, including leftists, who profited from the worldwide imperialist power structures and the exploitation of the developing world. In a rare reference to Herbert Marcuse, they claimed that “social relations of bourgeois society . . . are so saturated with commodity relations as to rule out any compromise.”\textsuperscript{123} Consumption and careers were temptations that chained people to the global debt nexus “based on wars of extermination, famines, and unspeakable poverty.” At the same time, the RZ explicitly rejected “the anticipated realm of freedom” desired by the guerrillas of the RAF. Instead, the RZ envisioned a “long way of subversion, of destruction, of a real break with society.”\textsuperscript{124} In March 1984, a revolutionary cell attacked what it saw as West German capital’s analogue to the IMF, the Deutsche Entwicklungsgesellschaft in Cologne, an arm of the federal government that financed private companies’ investments in developing economies.\textsuperscript{125}

Hermann Feiling, one of the very few members of the revolutionary cells brought to trial, declared in court that the bloody persecution of the opposition in Latin American countries was intrinsically linked to “an economic policy that means economic genocide for large segments of the population, opening the door for the corporations. This policy is enforced by the World Monetary Fund [sic], which ties the crisis to political conditions that, for example, in Peru lead to 109 out of 1,000 children dying before they are able to walk.”\textsuperscript{126} This observation had a rather delicate subtext since Feiling himself was unable to walk, having lost both his legs and his eyes during the accidental detonation of an explosive device he had intended to place at the Argentine consulate in Munich during the 1978 FIFA World Cup. Despite his severe injuries, the prosecuting authorities subjected him—heavily doped with painkillers and without legal assistance—to a legally questionable interrogation, obtaining more than a thousand pages of information. His testimony provided authorities with their

\textsuperscript{122.} “Revolutionärer Zorn Nr. 6,” January 1981, in ibid., 1:294–95. A more recent variant of this perspective is Korn, Weltreise einer Fleeceweste.

\textsuperscript{123.} “Revolutionärer Zorn Nr. 6,” January 1981, in Früchte des Zorns, ed. ID-Archiv im IISG, 1:, 268.

\textsuperscript{124.} Ibid., 272–73.


\textsuperscript{126.} “Prozeßerklärung Hermann Feilings,” September 1980, in ibid., 2:677–79.
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first real insight into the Revolutionary Cells’ internal structures and enabled the sentencing of the RZ members who had been arrested in the aftermath of the attacks against cinemas showing the Entebbe film. This was the first time section 129a of the Criminal Code (Forming terrorist organisations), introduced in August 1976, had effectively been applied. This legal construction allowed the authorities to hold the defendants responsible for other acts of the RZ well beyond the evidence that proved their individual involvement in the firebombing of cinemas.127

Members of the RZ were very careful to point out that their political anti-imperialism against U.S. targets should not be mistaken for cultural anti-Americanism, explaining that they attacked the Officers’ Mess rather than ordinary soldiers or supermarkets, undertaking “campaigns aimed at military fuel depots, but not petrol stations in American residential neighbourhoods. After all we had good reason to take Reagan’s visit to Europe and the NATO summit as occasions of a series of militant action, and not a concert by Sammy Davis jr or the continued screening of [the television show] Dallas. . . . It makes an enormous difference whether we understand MacDonald [sic] as a U.S. nutrition company that has pioneered intensive low-salary labour and worldwide agro-business or as an expression of . . . Yankee culture.” The RZ distanced themselves from the “demonisation of blue jeans or Negro music,” preemptively answering the sort of charges of anti-Americanism that were regularly levelled against the left.128 Nevertheless, the RZ maintained in 1978 that “U.S. imperialism” provided the backbone for the IMF’s ruinous policies towards developing countries, highlighting the point that Robert McNamara, the former U.S. secretary of defense, who had played a large role in escalating U.S. involvement in Vietnam before he became president of the World Bank in 1968, served as a “guarantor of continuity in a strategy of destruction at all costs.”129 This revolutionary perspective did not acknowledge that McNamara had shifted the World Bank’s focus towards targeted poverty reduction.

A critical focus on McNamara as a representative of the World Bank had been established many years earlier. In June 1970, his participation at a confer-

ence on development aid at Heidelberg—alongside militant criticism of the large-scale hydroelectric generating station at Cahora Bassa in Portuguese Mozambique—provoked violent skirmishes between police and demonstrators. Between six hundred and two thousand protesters faced off against five hundred police officers in a street battle pitting tear gas, water cannons, and batons against paint bombs, wooden slats, iron rods, and cobblestones leaving seventy-seven officers and fifty demonstrators injured. When the dust settled, a second battle broke out in the media, as each side used the vocabulary of “terror” and “civil war” in blaming the other for the conflict’s escalation. As a result of this violent demonstration, the Interior Ministry of Baden-Württemberg banned the Heidelberg unit of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, which had outlasted the federal organisation, dissolved in March 1970. Controversy arose about whether the fact that members of an organisation committed criminal offences implied that the entire organisation’s purpose was illegal. In drawn-out criminal proceedings five protesters were sentenced to between five and twelve months in prison.\textsuperscript{130} The RAF’s “Urban Guerrilla Concept” explicitly applauded the Heidelberg demonstration’s anticolonial focus.\textsuperscript{131}

\textbf{West Berlin, September 1988}

The RAF’s attack on Tietmeyer triggered a further step in the mobilisation of the security forces before and during the September 1988 West Berlin IMF/World Bank meeting, leading to what the spokesperson for the city’s police called its largest operation since the war, with more than ten thousand policemen from throughout West Germany on duty. Although numerous skirmishes broke out between police and protesters, the large-scale riots and bomb attacks that press and police had envisioned did not materialise. Journalists had been quick to put protest into the context of terrorism. The liberal newspaper \textit{Der Tagesspiegel} reported in May 1988 that radicals planned arson and bomb attacks on hotels, public buildings, and banks.\textsuperscript{132} A spokesperson for the Federal Criminal Police Office declared that “terrorist circles” had “a strong interest in calling attention to the alleged exploitation of the Third World by the rich in-


\textsuperscript{131} “Das Konzept Stadtguerilla,” in \textit{Rote Armee Fraktion}, ed. ID-Verlag, 41.

Police searched several houses on the basis of section 129a StGB, which allowed the authorities to prosecute political activists who supported and advertised terrorist organisations even if they had committed no other offence. Another controversial legal framework (section 111 StPO) allowed police to erect so-called control points anywhere in the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin, subjecting people to personal security checks and storing any personal data thus obtained. Officially, this measure was meant to support the search for members of the RAF. However, the exceptional arrangement lasted from 24 May until 2 October—when the IMF meeting was over. This particular measure was applicable only in conjunction with sections 129a or 89a StGB (preparation of a serious violent offence endangering the state)—that is, with the most severe political offences. During the protests, police initially arrested 624 people, 501 of whom were taken into custody under police law. Of the 123 individuals whom the police then officially suspected of crimes, only 7 received a warrant of arrest from a criminal court. The high numbers of initial arrest were immediately publicised in the press leaving the impression that a lot of criminals had been caught. Much less publicity was given to the aftermath when it turned out that only a small fraction of those arrested had actually committed something that a criminal court thought worth pursuing further.

From the protesters’ perspective, the real violence took place elsewhere. Activists interpreted food riots and looting in developing countries as evidence of resistance to IMF policies. In an effort to create a “new internationalism,” the protesters’ campaign against the IMF, which in some respects mimicked these forms of protest, was intended to overcome the old divisions between revolutionary campaigns in the metropole and on the periphery, especially since capitalism’s methods increasingly circumvented such distinctions. The Autonomen emphasised individual liberation, not some abstract principle of international solidarity: “We are part of the exploitative relations here and are thus fighting here with the claim to our own liberation.” As a consequence, activists sought to attach their protest against this abstract nexus to tangible objects of everyday experience: “The murderous international monetary system . . . is manifesting itself everywhere—i.e., also everywhere in Berlin

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(West) ... and ... Berlin is open around the clock. This means sufficient space and time to make this system visible, smellable, closable, blockable. For 4 days, in all ends and corners, spanners into the works of capitalist everyday life.” An autonomist group planning protest activities deemed the slogan “Profit, misery, resistance” too abstract and quickly substituted “Attack imperialism in everyday life.” This change allowed them to embrace six somewhat more concrete action points, of which four were clearly directed at commercial contexts. The first one invoked “collective appropriation—‘let’s take what belongs to us anyway.’” Second, they wanted to disrupt the operations of “the system.” The remaining four points named tangible objects of protest: Siemens, police and immigration authorities, department stores, and public transport fare dodging.

The next step in the autonomist protest strategy was to familiarise people with concrete addresses of multinational corporations by means of what they called “anti-imperialist city tours.” These four-hour coach trips were directed against “white-collar murderers” and went by a number of branch offices, among them Siemens and AEG. They pointed out the lesser-known production plants of Philip Morris and Jacobs Suchard and asked where the tobacco and coffee originated. The police subjected these tours to regular security checks, claiming that they helped in preparing criminal acts.

Protest action against Siemens built an important bridge to the antinuclear-power movement. A perspective on issues of consumption played a crucial role. Siemens was seen to produce goods “that are of no use to us and threaten our livelihood” (that is, nuclear and military technology), while the company’s electronic articles of daily use were believed to lead to a “further alienation of our lives.” These allegations rested on export deals and the exploitation of low-wage labour in developing countries. Pointers to Latin American dictatorships and South Africa brought in the dimension of abusive state violence. Autonomist antinuclear groups attached a very broad meaning to the concept of energy, as can be obtained from a call for protest action on the occasion of the IMF meeting: “On the one hand, energy is our own labour, our fantasy, our agility, which capital seeks to commercialise; on the other hand, energy is our own labour, our fantasy, our agility, which capital seeks to commercialise; on the other hand,
energy is a commodity that we have to buy so that we don’t freeze off our ass in winter. But energy is also our love of life, our refusal, our resisting power against the high-performance society that devours ever more energy to assemble their junk like tanks, microchips, plastic bags, genetically engineered plant varieties, turbo cows, nuclear power stations.”

During the protest weeks in September 1988, retail and commerce again became the focus. Demonstrations and happenings took place in or in front of supermarkets, department stores, shopping centres, clothes shops, amusement arcades, pornographic movie theatres, travel agents, airline offices, banks, insurance offices, coffee roasters, fast food restaurants, and petrol stations. Windows were smashed at the high-end Hotel Interconti, which hosted convention delegates, apparently in retaliation for the arrest of some protesters. Branch offices of banks and the Europa Center were attacked with stink bombs. Expensive-looking cars were vandalised or set alight. Hundreds of policemen in riot gear shielded the windows along shopping streets. The organisers of demonstrations complained that they were marching through “deserted streets, along barricaded shops.”

KaDeWe, like many other stores, barred its windows with wooden panels, some of which displayed signs that read “We decorate.” A happening with pig’s blood and fake dollar bills in front of KaDeWe sought to symbolise the blood allegedly stuck to the goods offered within. Department store employees decided who could enter the building, banning about one hundred individuals, while police filmed the event as evidence. Police ultimately surrounded the protesters and, with some use of the baton, escorted them away from the department store. In the following days, a picture circulated that created the impression of a burning KaDeWe. In reality, however, a burning waste container had been photographed from the opposite side of the street to suggest a department store engulfed with flames. Through the clouds of smoke one could see a row of security personnel on the roof of the department store.

146. Ibid., 32.
term for policeman—showed an officer in riot gear in front of a supermarket’s shop window, where a poster advertised an exceptional offer of meat “frisch aus der Bullenkeule” (fresh from the bull’s shank).148

During one demonstration, the windows of a McDonald’s were smashed. A request to hold a rally in front of McDonald’s to protest the company’s role in destroying tropical rain forests had been turned down, so a “puke-in” had been staged in front of the fast food restaurant.149 Two years earlier, a London group had released a critical pamphlet that became famous and eventually led to the monumental “McLibel case.”150 The anarchist cabaret group Die 3 Tornados sarcastically addressed different levels of consumption: “Dear creditors! . . . How can it be that in this world every two minutes a human being is dying from starvation, while McDonald’s is dealing out one hundred million hamburgers each year? Don’t these people know the way to the McDonald’s that would save them? . . . Appalled, we are confronted with the bullet-riddled bodies of those lost souls who, in the face of hunger, took up the gun instead of the saving plough.”151 Improvised theatre in front of banks and department stores sought to relate everyday purchases such as cheap T-shirts from South Korea to conditions in the developing world.152 People distributing the protest campaign’s daily newspaper, Zahltag (Payday), were arrested because of an announcement that read, “We want to meet at KaDeWe, Wertheim, and Bilka . . . for a department store inspection. . . . E.g.: spray paint goods from South Africa and Israel, distribute flyers, perform invisible theatre, annoy detectives, use the chaos to line our pockets, sabotage cash registers.”153

A rally of 250 lesbians left broken windows at numerous porn shops, marking sex work and sex tourism as important topics in critiques of regimes of provision.154 One slogan proclaimed, “Thailand’s contribution to the global market: 1,000,000 prostitutes.”155 A carefully documented brochure recycled some material from Rote Zora’s earlier statements. World Bank money was

149. Ibid., 42.
150. Greenpeace (London), What’s Wrong with McDonald’s? See also John Vidal, McLibel: Burger Culture on Trial (London, 1997).
depicted as a necessary ingredient in large-scale sexual exploitation, with foreign investment pumped into hotels, bars, discos, and brothels. The authors calculated that of the seventy U.S. dollars a tourist paid for a night with a sex worker, fifty-nine dollars flowed into the hands of foreign entrepreneurs and thus partially back to the rich countries. They also pointed out that large-scale demonstrations against sex tourism had taken place in the Philippines and Thailand during the early 1980s.156

On 16 September 1988, a rally on “women’s work and the department store” took place in front of a Hertie branch in the working-class district of Neukölln. Half an hour later, the crowd reassembled in front of McDonald’s to protest low-wage labour. Flyers emphasised that saleswomen working in German retail suffered from the same rationalisation drive that inspired global financial politics, creating “flexible” forms of employment with higher performance pressure and lower social security. The newly introduced bar-code cash registers served as a tangible example of technological innovation that threatened jobs while making work more monotonous.157 The Revolutionary Cells had already highlighted this dimension in a 1985 statement concerning their nighttime bomb attack against the offices of two software consulting companies in Hamburg and Dortmund: “Plans for the information-technology-led restructuring of department store companies are engineered, . . . confronting the workforce, mainly women, in the form of precarious employment, perfected surveillance equipment, and the intensified exploitation of labour.”158

West Berlin experienced a wave of firebombings. An autonomist group left an incendiary device at a Bolle supermarket in the Zehlendorf district. Police deactivated the device, and the group’s statement explained that the store had been targeted because it was located in a particularly well-to-do area and continued to sell products from South Africa, Israel, Chile, and El Salvador.159 A REWE supermarket in the southern part of the city and a Shell petrol station were also firebombed.160 On 27 September, the sprinkler system extin-
guished fires on three floors of a Karstadt department store in Charlottenburg caused by small-scale incendiary devices that caused only minor damage to property. An admission statement signed “Autonomous Cell, dept. Consumer Protection” protested Konsumterror and the “stupefaction of the masses,” calling the department store a “symbol of this beat-up two-thirds society [Zweidrittelgesellschaft].” The term had emerged in discussions regarding a new type of poverty: the proportion of permanently un- and underemployed people increased despite the fact that statistics showed that affluence was on the rise. As a result, about two-thirds of the population had secure jobs, while the remainder had no or precarious employment and remained more or less excluded from economic growth. The brief statement also pointed to the “permanent repression of elementary needs” when cashiers were toiling while store detectives received bonuses for catching people who were only taking what was rightfully theirs. A very brief news item covering the arson reported only the anti-imperialist part of the statement, which claimed that Karstadt was a “guarantor of dirty export business with Chile, South Africa, Israel” and called for a boycott of goods from those countries.161

It is remarkable how little public attention department store arson generated in 1988, especially compared to 1968. Perpetrators probably picked smaller devices to avoid the “malicious and life-threatening arson” charges that had been levelled at the Frankfurt arsonists. However, journalists and perhaps even law enforcement officers seem to have had a tacit understanding that arsonists should not receive a public platform to share their views lest they attract copycats and create bad publicity for the host city of the IMF meeting or discredit more moderate forms of protest. Nevertheless, the day after the incendiary attack on Karstadt, there were thirteen bomb threats against pornographic movie theatres and the Europa Center, which was evacuated and cordoned off. An anonymous statement protested sexism and the exploitation of women. Police closed in on a feminist demonstration and arrested dozens of protesters, keeping them in custody overnight.162

The inversionary nature of legitimising enemy images can be obtained from a statement by the West Berlin Association of Merchants and Industrial-


ists: “Who are these travelling ruffians whose brutality is incredible and who
are no different from violent criminals—who is funding these people? On
closer inspection, we see that they, too, live on the social blessings of our
state.”163 A much-publicised picture of a masked autonomist pushing a shop-
ing trolley converted into a mobile container for dozens of cobblestone pro-
jectiles testifies to a far-reaching inversion of values.164 While protesters
shouted the rhyming slogan “IWF—Mördertreff!” (IMF—meeting of murder-
ers!), the merchants and industrialists reciprocated their challengers’ accusa-
tions: each depicted the opposing side as mere criminals profiting via illicit
channels. Both perspectives sought to deny the other’s actions any political
character and thus legitimacy. For some autonomist activists, rampages and
rioting became a ritual, a permanent component of an identity-generating life-
style that was easily refreshed on an everyday basis by smashing shop win-
dows or looting supermarkets. If this was the case—as during countless May
Day demonstrations in Berlin—the communicative nexus between different
levels of violence receded into the background, and observers found it exceed-
ingly difficult to identify any political message in what seemed mere indul-
gence in violence.

In September 1988, the international nature of the debt crisis provided for
countless regional and national scenarios where a critical economic and politi-
cal analysis could address connections between regimes of violence and re-
gimes of provision. As a consequence of the large number of Turkish and
Kurdish immigrants in West Germany, developments in Turkey were a particu-
larly interesting case. Left-wing critics charged that the IMF’s familiar de-
mands for cuts in public expenditures had negative consequences for social,
health, and educational services. At the same time, it seemed to be in the IMF’s
interest to increase government spending on military and police forces to fight
internal unrest—especially the insurgency of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party,
which had begun in 1984—and the arms buildup in NATO’s strategically im-
portant easternmost member state. Critics pointed to the stark contrast between
this military wealth and weak infrastructures: several towns had running water
only at night or once a week, and mortality rates for both the general public and
infants in particular were high as a consequence of the lack of physicians and
hospitals. German companies such as Siemens, AEG, Mannesmann, Daimler-
Benz, Hoechst, and Bayer made large profits in Turkey and were held respon-

163. “Stellungnahme des Vereins zur IWF-Tagung,” Mitteilungen des Vereins Berliner
sible for “mass poverty, extreme exploitation, and oppression.”\textsuperscript{165} In hindsight, it appears that the liberalisation of the Turkish economy during the 1980s ultimately led the country to enjoy stronger economic growth and greater political stability. At the time, however, the critical argument was that development went hand in hand with violence. A rougher and catchier rendering of this idea found expression in a widespread rallying cry of the protest movement: “Deutsche Waffen, deutsches Geld morden mit in aller Welt!” (German arms, German money join murder around the world!).

This slogan was not intended to apply to address German leftists collecting money under the slogan “Weapons for El Salvador.” Side by side with the article castigating conditions in Turkey, an appeal for donations reported that more than four million deutsche marks had been collected to support the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front.\textsuperscript{166} Seven years earlier, Movement 2 June member Klaus Viehmann had self-confidently explained the difference, referring to the consumer and to global regimes of provision: “some people . . . even reject fund-raising campaigns for the liberation movement in El Salvador with the argument that this money supported violence, breeding new violence. There is a certain cynicism behind this since everyone who pays taxes here, or even drinks a cup of coffee—imported from el salvador—supports the war of the junta against the people of el salvador. . . . concerns about the use of violence only set in when it comes to arming the people against their murderers, not at the point when the murderers slaughter the unarmed people.”\textsuperscript{167}

Militant protest against the IMF and World Bank received notice in developing countries. The\textit{ New Nigerian} wrote somewhat optimistically, “Perhaps the conscience of the international bankers will respond faster to the bombs and guns of European leftist radicals than to the wailing of impoverished and dying African children.” Refuting the widespread argument of economic mismanagement as the cause of the debt crisis, the article pointed to “decades of economic parasitism.”\textsuperscript{168} A Pakistani commentator underlined that debt management forced alien regimes of provision on societies that had become addicted to aid. This entailed “the obligation to import military hardware, goods and commodities from the same source . . . promoting false standards of living and perverse values.”\textsuperscript{169} The\textit{ International Herald Tribune} highlighted the re-

\textsuperscript{168} Clipping from\textit{ New Nigerian} 7005 (6 October 1988), WZB-IWF.
\textsuperscript{169} Bashir Ahmed, “Aid for Pakistan,”\textit{ Pakistan Times}, 9 October 1988, WZB-IWF.
ciprocal effect in highly industrialised countries: according to this interpretation of Ronald Reagan’s supply-side economics, controlled debt made them ever richer.\textsuperscript{170} The Herald from Harare, Zimbabwe, put the two developments into one disturbing argument: “There is something seriously wrong with a world economy, in which most of the world’s inhabitants face poverty, starvation, and general deprivation while the minority sit on food mountains and more expensive consumer goodies than they know what to do with.”\textsuperscript{171} This uneasiness surfaced in Berlin when critics reported on lavish banquets for IMF delegates protected by large numbers of security forces.\textsuperscript{172}

During and after the IMF meeting, controversies regarding the handling of the security authorities emerged. Many small-scale protest events had been prohibited via traffic laws, and even liberal commentators questioned whether West Berlin’s minister of the interior, Wilhelm Kewenig (CDU), had been right to subordinate the right to demonstrate to the right to conduct unobstructed commerce at the Kurfürstendamm.\textsuperscript{173} Minister of finance Günter Rexrodt (FDP) calculated that the twelve thousand people who came to West Berlin for the IMF meeting spent between forty and fifty million deutsche marks. And politicians did their best to use the occasion to advertise West Berlin as a business location.\textsuperscript{174} A special investigative unit of the West Berlin police, the Einheit für besondere Lagen und einsatzbezogenes Training, added to its robust reputation for brutal conduct during demonstrations. Undercover members of the unit had penetrated the autonomist scene, a practice that operated in a legal grey zone, since such investigations of “extremist” groups had hitherto been the prerogative of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutz), which was required by law to limit itself to observation and could not use physical force.\textsuperscript{175} In several cases, journalists were maltreated by police, triggering indignant complaints by the Deutsche Presse Agentur, As-

\textsuperscript{170} “Bankers in Berlin,” International Herald Tribune, 28 September 1988, WZB-IWF.

\textsuperscript{171} “West Berlin Cash Talks,” Herald, Harare, 23 September 1988, WZB-IWF.


\textsuperscript{173} “Behinderung und Gefährdung,” Der Tagesspiegel, 29 September 1988, WZB-IWF.

\textsuperscript{174} Martina Ohm, “Mammutmesse der Finanzen,” Der Tagesspiegel, 4 September 1988, Sunday supp. Weltpiegel, 1 October 1988, WZB-IWF.

\textsuperscript{175} “IWF-Nachlese,” 88–89. This article downplays militant forms of protest during the IMF meeting, claiming that they amounted only to a few smashed windows and bent car aerials (91). See also “Polizei: Knochen in Gips,” Der Spiegel 42 (17 October 1988): 42–44; Wolfgang Gast, “Skandaleinheit der Berliner Polizei spielt 007: Sondereinheit EbLT infiltrierte illegal autonome Szene,” taz, 17 October 1988, 1–2; Alternative Liste, Freiheit im Würgegriff. IISG, ID 892, BRO 1623/12.
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associated Press, Reuters, and others.176 Following a citizen’s complaint, the Federal Court of Justice retrospectively declared illegal the special control points that police had erected throughout the Federal Government and West Berlin before and during the IMF meeting. The court ruled that the Federal Criminal Police Office’s reading of sections 129s StGB and 111 StPO had unduly stretched the laws.177

Anti-apartheid protest in the commercial sphere did not subside when the IMF/World Bank meeting ended. In December 1988, protesters released dozens of mice—some of them marked “RSA”—in the food hall of a Karstadt department store. After the management of Bolle supermarkets had become subject to a preliminary investigation for having advertised and labelled asparagus from South Africa as originating in Argentina, the windows of a branch in Berlin’s Tempelhof district were smashed.178

While these skirmishes continued, one of the most striking examples of the problematic consequences of IMF-imposed neoliberal reforms unfolded in Venezuela with the Caracazo, a wave of protests, riots, and looting that culminated in a February 1989 massacre in the country’s capital. As many as three thousand people were killed, mostly by security forces. In his populist presidential election campaign, Social Democrat Carlos Andrés Pérez had denounced the IMF for practising “an economic totalitarianism which kills not with bullets but with famine.” In February 1989, the victorious Pérez accepted an IMF proposal along the lines of the Washington Consensus in return for a loan of 4.5 billion U.S. dollars. The agreement required increases in petrol prices, which also caused rises in public transport fares, triggering massive popular protests.179 These events and the fact that Pérez continued to blame the IMF and the rich industrial countries for the violent escalation were noticed in the German press, but no further protest activities ensued.180

Boycott and fair trade campaigns served activists as a performative signifier of commitment. Especially in comparison with earlier anti-imperialist campaigns, which had been more clearly motivated by socialist or communist ideals, these campaigns mirrored the growing sense of individualism espoused by contemporary neoliberalism. Ultimately, fair trade and ethical marketing did not pose a fundamental threat to the capitalist system. The fact that consumers were willing to pay more for products manufactured and distributed under conditions complying with their moral convictions provided a business model that contributed to the dynamism of the capitalist diversification of markets.\footnote{Stehr, \textit{Moralisierung der Märkte}. Stehr’s account does not investigate the dimension of violence in the moralisation of the markets. He attributes it to increased incomes and more comprehensive knowledge and information on available commodities.}

At the same time, militant groups wanted to go beyond such ethically reflective consumerism, which they saw as politically limited. The legitimising narrative of the early critics of globalisation aimed at the responsibility of political and economic decision makers and their institutions of global governance, whose base motives allegedly turned them into exploiters and murderers. Some of these arguments operated at a high level of abstraction. In the process, recourse to interpretive elites—critical scholars and experts—offered the possibility of investing the “frame” of the social movements that criticised regimes of provision with a particular legitimacy. The argumentative potential of this precursor to later global justice movements and critiques of “globalisation”—the term appeared only very sporadically in 1988—was used to rationalise illegal protest acts and symbolic violence against what were perceived as tangible manifestations of questionable global regimes of provision. Ideological justifications for throwing stones through shop windows or placing incendiary devices in department stores maintained a difficult balancing act between friendly and hostile consumption. The morally questionable and arguably parasitic consumption of the global system of capitalism was supposed to be attacked and overcome in favour of the legitimate consumption interests of the inhabitants of developing countries or of consumers of alternative products based on fair trade practices and international solidarity. Under international pressure, IMF repayment conditions indeed changed during the 1990s to take into account the social interests of receiving societies.\footnote{Nuscheler, \textit{Lern- und Arbeitsbuch Entwicklungspolitik}, 368–70.}

The militant protest action of the Revolutionary Cells mirrored a paradigm shift away from a classical anti-imperialism based on Third World liberation movements and towards a global perspective on the injustices of the economic process that focused on social struggles and the institutions of global
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governance. Campaigns against the industrial economies of South Africa and Israel reflected the development of solidarity between the German activists and the African National Congress and the PFLP, on the one hand, and the emerging focus on IMF and World Bank, on the other. The strategy of militant boycott campaigns represented a move away from large-scale terrorist acts on the international stage following the public relations disaster of the Entebbe hijacking. From then on, the RZ concentrated on a global process of economic restructuring that was manifested in the creeping financial erosion of the Eastern Bloc, the forced capitalisation of agriculture, and the far-reaching uncoupling of the African continent from the profits of world trade. Within this context, the victims of apartheid and racism, especially women, became the subjects of revolutionary struggle. The RZ sought to bring these conflicts home to West Germany, increasingly attacking German institutions to point out their international entanglement and the role of “governmental consumption”—for example, in armament industries. The Israeli economy remained a target for the RZ, but it was just one of many targets: overall, less than 5 percent of the RZ’s militant attacks were directed against Israel. The United States played a major role in their critical worldview, but the RZ deliberately steered clear of any cultural anti-Americanism not firmly established in a critique of global economic structures. The Rote Zora, concentrating on women’s working conditions in the global economy—from factory seamstresses to sex workers—introduced the important feminist plank to the radical mobilisation of discontent among West German consumers.

Attacks against retail and service institutions sought to make a moral comparison between violence against things in a rich industrial country and the violence that reigned in developing countries, assuming that both contexts were tied into global economic networks. The strategy of legitimisation was to let the attack on a supermarket or a petrol station appear negligible in comparison to global injustices such as war and genocide. Pointers to misery, uproar, and food riots in the Third World were supposed to excuse violence against global corporations. The strategy of legitimisation thus rested on shifting attention away from violent forms of protest and towards the conduct of global economic and governmental institutions. This approach was intended to shake a narrow definition of violence resting on national, governmental, and criminological foundations. Moreover, militant protest highlighted the lack of an effective monopoly on violence in large parts of the world, especially concerning the global economic process. In a certain sense, such reasoning also shook an influential theoretical critique of violence—as put forward by Hannah Arendt in the tradition of Thomas Hobbes—that rested on a theory of the
state that made an effective enforcement of governmental power, a lasting peace, and legal norms the precondition for the excision of violence from the political space. Such, however, was not the case in the sphere of action of a spatially unbound global economy.

For the most part, the legitimisation of violent protest against a global economic nexus was not a question of a fundamental justification of political violence or terrorism. It was, rather, the fragmentary legitimisation that could be gained from pointers to the violence of the opposing side and from appeals to the guilty consciences of affluent consumers, which were effective in mobilising the movement and in propagating alternative regimes of provision. Attacks on global regimes of provision and their moral deficits shifted the onus of legitimisation onto the opposing side. The boycott campaigns followed a pattern of calling attention to the destruction and violence that went hand in hand with the production or marketing of consumer goods in faraway countries. Violence against objects emerged as a militant variation of this type of protest.

In another protest scenario, not explicitly discussed in this chapter despite its many bridges to the protests against the global economic order, the trajectory went the opposite way: consumer boycotts were instituted only in response to violence that threatened to make protest impossible. The earliest antinuclear energy protests hardly adopted the viewpoint of the consumer, since lobbyists for the energy industry had claimed the consumers’ perspective in the early 1970s debates about nuclear energy. Shortages and rising prices in the wake of the oil crisis allowed industry proponents to present nuclear energy as the cleaner and cheaper alternative, entirely in consumers’ interests. A challenge to this position was mounted only in response to the major violent confrontations that occurred in November 1976 between police and protesters at the site where the Brokdorf nuclear power plant was under construction. The idea of boycotting electricity companies was developed with the explicit aim of finding ways to continue nonviolent protest after the failure of violent confrontation. The main goal was public visibility rather than economic pressure. In some respects, this strategy pointed the way to a practice that became commonplace with the liberalisation of the energy market: consumers could simply subscribe to delivery packages from companies that did not use nuclear power. Up to that point, German consumers had been bound to their local provider, one of the eight oligopolistic consortia of the West German energy industry that enjoyed comfortable market conditions based on the Energy Industry Act of 1935. The

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183. See Arendt, On Violence.
example of electricity boycotts not only highlights the difficulties consumer protest faced in this situation but also provides an interesting case where the trajectory went the other way: violence was not the product of an eventual radicalisation of protest; rather, boycotts were embraced only in response to violence that threatened to make protest impossible.

Although radical and militant groups eventually lost influence on the global justice movements, they played a large role in the unprecedented major mobilisations of the 1980s. The discourse on global distributive justice went hand in hand with transnational advocacy and a “postnational” understanding of politics. Such patterns of perception had been pioneered by the radical Left since the late 1960s. Their spread into the wider political spectrum made human catastrophes that occurred in developing countries more visible and amplified their impact on domestic politics. At the heart of this process lay a transmission of political consciousness from critical intellectuals via political activists to ethically motivated consumers. The process was thus a quantitative widening and proliferation of critiques of regimes of provision that accompanied a qualitative dilution of more radical alternative regimes of provision. As in most other highly industrialised countries, West Germany saw increasing percentages of consumers participating or expressing a willingness to participate in boycotts, from just under a third of the population in 1974 to almost half in 1990. The anti-apartheid, anti-Nestlé, and anti-IMF campaigns were important steps in this popularisation of “moral economies” via purchase decisions based on ethical criteria, preparing the way for a new type of capitalism in which the image of politically and ecologically responsible production became ever more important.

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186. See *Ethical Consumer*, ed. Harrison, Newholm, and Shaw; Heidbrink and Schmidt, “Neue Verantwortung.”