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# Bonn gets warning of more bombings

May 28 1972: Neal Ascherson reports on the mood of panic across West Germany as Baader-Meinhof conduct a wave of attacks

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Neal Ascherson  
The Observer, Saturday 27 May 1972

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The wave of bombings in West Germany, culminating on Wednesday in the death of three American soldiers when a parked car exploded at the United States Army headquarters at Heidelberg, may not yet have reached its peak.

An urban guerrilla 'commando' has warned that there will be attacks in major cities next Friday, and proclaimed: 'The armed struggle has begun...only violence can help, when violence rules.'

The attacks are deeply alarming the Government. Herr Genscher, Minister of the Interior, said that counter-intelligence squads would be enlarged. The head of the Federal Criminal Office booked 10 minutes of television on Thursday night to appeal to the public to act as detectives against the bombers.

On Friday, Chancellor Brandt called an emergency conference of provincial Ministers of the Interior to study the problem. It seems likely that the urban guerrilla groups loosely united in the 'Red Army Faction' have become stronger in spite of a three-year manhunt.

The nucleus was the group led by Ulrike Meinhof and Andreas Baader, both still at large although several members of the band have been killed in gun battles, captured or have given themselves up. No direct evidence connects either Ulrike Meinhof or Baader with the present series of explosions, but the police are assuming that they are behind the affair.

The first blast of this series killed an American major in Frankfurt on 9 May. Then police headquarters in Augsburg and Munich were bombed.

On 15 May the wife of a judge investigating the Baader-Meinhof group was injured in Karlsruhe when a charge exploded as she turned the ignition key of her car.

On 19 May 17 people were hurt, two gravely, when bombs went off in the Hamburg offices of the right-wing Axel Springer newspaper empire.

After the Frankfurt explosion a message from the 'Petra Schelm Commando' of the Faction claimed that the bomb was a reprisal for American air attacks in Vietnam. Petra Schelm, a 20-year-old hairdresser, was killed last July in Hamburg during a machine-gun battle with the police.

The warning for next Friday comes from a 'Thomas Weisbecker Commando' named after another 'Red Army' member shot in Augsburg this March.

The sinister glamour of the original Baader-Meinhof group has created a legend and panic. Ulrike Meinhof, a dignified woman of 37, who once was a pacifist and edited a magazine in Hamburg, was converted to the doctrine of armed struggle by her experiences working with delinquent girls in Berlin.

Andreas Baader, imprisoned for attempting to set fire to a department store in Frankfurt, was set free by a daring raid in Berlin several years ago. Both were among 'Red Army' members who escaped to Jordan and received training with the National Liberation Front before returning to Germany.

So far, police have not caught any of the authors of this month's bombing campaign. But the

explosions are speeding up the Government's already toughening policy on internal security. While passing 'liberal' foreign policy measures like the Warsaw and Moscow Treaties, the Social Democrat-Free Democrat Government has been systematically fighting what it calls 'the inner enemy'.

Early this year, the provincial Prime Ministers passed the so-called Radicals Resolution, making it easier to ban from any sort of public post applicants who were connected with any group or party whose loyalty to the constitution could be considered doubtful.

This is primarily intended to keep left-wingers out of the teaching profession. Hamburg has banned Communists and National Democrats (extreme rightists) from the Civil Service.

In fact, both the German Communist Party (DKP) and most of the left-wing revolutionary groups strongly disapprove of urban guerrilla tactics. They have always feared that they would have to pay the bill for the violent exploits of the 'Red Army Faction' which has declared war on the whole apparatus of capitalist society.

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