

Faces of Ulrike Meinhof



'Resistance is if I make certain something which does not suit me no longer occurs . . . Naturally shooting is permitted'

By WELLINGTON LONG

BONN (UPI) — Fast cars, hair-raising escapes from police traps, lots of money stolen from capitalist banks and political excuses provided by leftist intellectual admirers marked Ulrike Meinhof's path for two frantic years.

But she was reduced to traveling by streetcar before her arrest in a bleak Hanover suburb Thursday evening.

The German workers whose interests Meinhof claimed to represent rejected her from the start, and at the end her left-wing intellectual protectors fell away, too. One of the latter, whose apartment she used as a hideout, betrayed her to police.

Lived by Motto

Police took the star of West Germany's urban guerrillas into custody on warrants alleging attempted murder, assisting a prisoner to escape, bank robberies and membership in a criminal conspiracy.

By Ulrike Meinhof's own standards, she was only trying to change an oppressive society.

"Resistance is if I make certain that something which does not suit me no longer occurs," Meinhof wrote in May 1968.

She has lived by that motto most of her life, certainly since she abandoned husband and twin daughters four years ago, and turned her back on legal political activity as doomed to failure.

Until May 14, 1970, Ulrike Meinhof enjoyed a reputation as a left-wing journalist and pamphleteer, television playwright and university lecturer. On that day, police allege, she turned to violence by helping free Andreas Baader from West Berlin police custody. Baader's liberators shot and wounded three persons.

Communist Home

A month later, Meinhof gave an interview to French journalist Michele Ray, during which she explained her aim in these words:

"What we are doing and simultaneously want to demonstrate is that armed altercations can be carried through, that it is possible to undertake actions in which we and not the other side are victorious . . . Naturally, shooting is permitted."

Meinhof grew up in a Communist home in Mannheim, later married Klaus Rainer Roehl, publisher of the left-wing magazine Konkret, and became his co-editor. Ten years ago, at age 27, she gave birth to twin daughters, Regina and Bettina.

The 1960s saw the rise and fall of Germany's self-styled "extraparliamentary opposition," a student movement that rejected action within the usual parliamentary framework but nevertheless attempted to keep within legal bounds.

But the "extraparliamentary opposi-

tion" collapsed as a mass movement after it suffered a couple of deaths during five days of rioting over Easter, 1968. Meinhof and others decided underground violence remained the only effective course.

Andreas Baader, a previously convicted car thief with experience in other petty crimes and barroom brawling, provided the technical expertise lacked by the intellectual revolutionaries who in turn furnished Baader with a glorifying political alibi.

Meinhof planned and participated in the freeing of Baader from police custody in West Berlin, police allege. From then on, their group was tagged the "Baader-Meinhof gang," or simply "BM."

Karl-Heinz Ruhland, an early member, testified to a Duesseldorf court that Meinhof and Baader decided first priority must go to accumulation of funds. A wave of bank robberies resulted. They also broke into a number of official registries to steal passports and stamps with which to forge identity cards.

Swift BMW cars, said to have the highest rate of acceleration of any automobile available in Germany, were the gang's favored means of transport.

Dozen Nabbed in Berlin

Innocent couples riding in cars of this model repeatedly found themselves caught up in police sweeps and detained until they proved they were not Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof. But sometimes, the BMWs did contain gang members and the results were wild shooting exchanges.

At the end of 1970, police succeeded in capturing half a dozen members of the gang in West Berlin. Four more were taken into custody in West Germany in 1971 and several more early this year.

In May, Baader and Meinhof, now styling themselves the "Red Army Faction," struck with a series of bomb attacks, including two against American Army headquarters. One U.S. Army colonel, a captain and two American soldiers died. The wife of a supreme court justice was injured by a bomb meant for her husband. Bombs damaged police stations in Munich and Augsburg and injured more than a score of persons in a Hamburg printing shop belonging to Axel Springer, West Germany's largest newspaper publisher.

Boell Was Apologist

Heinz Ruhnau, Hamburg's senator for interior affairs, noted a curious fact, that Baader and Meinhof enjoyed the sympathy of a certain number of persons from what he described as "the upper middle class."

Ruhnau identified these persons as "professors, doctors, journalists and writers," and noted Ruhland's testimony that the gang's members often were sheltered in apartments owned by left-wing intellectuals. Some of those Ruhland named, including a university pro-

fessor in Hanover, lost their jobs as a result of his testimony.

Best known of Meinhof's apologists was Heinrich Boell, one of West Germany's leading postwar writers and this year president of PEN International, whose membership includes leading writers from throughout the world. Boell described Meinhof and her group as "despairing theoreticians . . . whose theories sound a lot more violent than they are in practice, and who shot only when shot at."

Boell was wrong, said Diether Posser, a Social Democrat who won a legal reputation by defending Communists during the 1950s. He was a law partner of President Gustav Heinemann and is now a member of the North Rhine-Westphalian state cabinet.

Underworld Provided Tips

"In truth, members of this group always shoot first," Posser said and listed the dates and places. Boell backed down, saying he was only appealing to reason "and I showed my emotions, although emotions here seem to be deemed a kind of a syphilis of the soul."

After the recent bombing attacks, police reported a wave of tips from the public concerning the gang's movements. Workers never had supported the group, and in West Berlin even had beaten some of the old "extraparliamentary opposition" members when they demonstrated against U.S. Army units stationed there.

Now, reported Horst Herold, president of the federal criminal police, even the criminal underworld was helping in the search for Baader and Meinhof.

Burglars and thieves despise the bombers," Herold said. "These people are particularly interested in helping us catch the Baader-Meinhof gang because they are bothered by our national police sweeps for its members."

Neighbor Informed Police

Police captured Baader and two others in a shootout in Frankfurt at the beginning of June. A man living next to one of their secret bomb caches tipped authorities.

On Thursday, Hanover police received a telephoned tip that Meinhof and a young man were hiding in a suburban apartment. Policemen captured the young man, apparently acting as Meinhof's bodyguard, when he left the apartment to make a phone call, then rang the doorbell and overpowered Meinhof before she could use any of the guns, bombs or grenades she had carried on a streetcar ride to reach the apartment.

The apartment belonged to Fritz Rodewald, national chairman of the working committee of teachers of the Teachers' and Scientists' Union.

Rodewald told a television interviewer he was approached by a woman he had never previously met who said she had two friends who needed a place to stay and wanted to use his apartment. He

said he agreed to let the two strangers stay with him, but later developed second thoughts and went to the police.

"I do not believe that Mrs. Meinhof's methods are calculated to bring about the changes obviously necessary in Germany," Rodewald said. He kept his face hidden from the camera because, he said, he feared Meinhof's friends might try to take revenge on him.

Police said in Bonn Sunday that they have imposed additional security measures at West German airports following a new warning that Arab guerrillas may try to hijack a passenger plane to win release of Baader-Meinhof gang members.

A police spokesman declined to say what these additional security measures are.

Baader was reported to have fled to Jordan and made friends with Arab guerrillas after other gang members freed him from police custody in Berlin in May 1970.

Police said they also questioned "several persons" over the weekend in the wake of information that Arab guerrillas may try to hijack passenger planes and take hostages to bargain for the release of their captured German friends.

All But One Caught

With the capture of Meinhof, all but one of the hard core of the band of urban guerrillas were behind bars awaiting trial.

In Karlsruhe, a spokesman for the federal attorney's office declined to comment on newspaper reports that Meinhof's capture had led to the arrest of other suspected gang members.

"In the interest of the investigations which are still going on, we have nothing to say on these reports for the time being," the spokesman said.

The Koelnische Rundschau and other newspapers reported that a notebook found in Meinhof's possession led to the questioning of 150 persons in Frankfurt alone.

The federal attorney's office also declined to comment on a report in the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that another jailed gang member, Gudrun Ensslin, in a letter smuggled out of prison, asked Meinhof to kidnap a "prominent person" to gain freedom for the imprisoned anarchists.

Search Goes On

The reports said the letter was found in Meinhof's possession at the time of her arrest Thursday.

Miss Ensslin, 31, a Protestant pastor's daughter and reputed to be a girl friend of Baader, was arrested in a downtown Hamburg boutique June 7.

Interior Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher observed Sunday, "With the arrest of Ulrike Meinhof, the last leading member of the band is now behind bars. But the search for those still on the wanted list will go on unabatedly."