AN INTIMATE REVOLUTION

FASCISM, SEXUALITY, AND
KOMMUNE I IN 1960S WEST GERMANY

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A note on translation:

All translations from German are my own.
INTRODUCTION

Sex is not just sex. To talk of sex is never to talk of sex alone. In the 1960s, when nudity became a mass commodity, when cries for sexual revolution echoed throughout the Western world, when the “love-in” became a form of protest, the volume of discussion about sexuality reached unprecedented heights. The youth’s insistent demand for free love was not about sexual pleasure alone, but was also about power, authoritarianism, repression, and happiness. In West Germany, discourse on sexuality had especially dark undertones. Bound up in talk of sex was the stark fact of Germany’s recent past of totalitarianism and organised extermination of human life. The loudest, brashest voice inciting Germans to speak about sex in the late 1960s came from the infamous Kommune I. This collective of young men and women founded a commune in West Berlin and developed their own radical sexual politics. In particular, their disavowal of monogamy and the traditional family subverted bourgeois norms and provoked outrage. By assaulting the strict border between the public and private spheres and so noticeably denouncing West German sexual mores as repressive, the communards opened a new way to talk about the unspeakable: the terrors of National Socialism and the Holocaust.

Kommune I emerged within West Germany’s wider antiauthoritarian movement of 1967 and 1968 which was, in turn, part of a global popular uprising encapsulated in the single term

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1 It was Michel Foucault who so startlingly pointed out this idea: Michel Foucault, The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality, Volume 1 (London: Penguin Books, [1976] 1998). The sociologist Jeffrey Weeks puts it thus: ‘Discussions of sexuality are always more than that; they are discussions of social relations, the surrogate medium through which other intractable battles could be fought.’ Jeffrey Weeks, Sexuality and its Discontents: Meanings, Myths, and Modern Sexualities (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1985), p. 74.

2 This thesis deals exclusively with the Bundesrepublik, and therefore when “Germany” is used, it refers either to Germany pre-1949, West Germany between 1949 and 1989, or post-reunification Germany. Similarly, “Berlin” never refers to East Berlin. Bundesrepublik is shorthand for Bundesrepublik Deutschland, which translates as the Federal Republic of Germany, the name given to the state of West Germany between 1949 and 1990. In order to avoid the wordier English, I have adopted the German term throughout. Generally on translation, I have only left the German in its original when it expresses an idea without an appropriate translation in English, or when the German refers to something very specific. For example, Kontinuitätsfrage means “continuity question” in English, but refers to the very specific question of continuity between different incarnations of the German state.
The broad narrative of West Germany’s “1968” is well established. A “New Left” emerged at the beginnings of the 1960s, disenchanted with dogmatic Marxism and the Stalinist incarnation of communism. The New Left broadened its analysis beyond economics to include politics and culture. Accordingly, it reoriented socialism, shifting the focus from the working class towards intellectuals and students as fertile ground for revolution. In 1966, political protest began to ferment, sparked by the introduction of *numerus clausus* in universities, West Germany’s support for the ongoing war in Vietnam, and the government’s planned emergency laws. Student unrest began to stir in West Berlin, particularly at the Free University, where new protest strategies such as the “sit-in” were adopted. When the two major parties, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), united in November 1966 to form a Grand Coalition, only a very small number seats in the West German Parliament were occupied by the only remaining parliamentary opposition, the Free Democratic Party. As a response to the Grand Coalition and its echoes of totalitarianism, the *Außerparlamentarische*...
Opposition (extra-parliamentary opposition; APO) emerged. The APO was not a unified organisation: APO was an umbrella term which encompassed those who protested against the “establishment” in the late 1960s. The movement reached its first climax in mid-1967. On June 2, Benno Ohnesorg, a student bystander at protests against the visiting Iranian Shah, was shot dead by a policeman. Police, politicians and the mainstream media blamed the students for the death, and the policeman was not punished. The students, however, interpreted the shooting as political murder. In the following week, over one hundred thousand students demonstrated throughout West Germany. The atmosphere in the Bundesrepublik, and particularly in West Berlin, remained turbulent. Following a period of demonisation by the conservative Springer Press and its newspapers Bild and B.Z., who had dubbed him “red Rudi”, the leader of the student movement Rudi Dutschke was shot in the head three times in April 1968. Unrest again flared up until the end of May, which marked the watershed for the APO.

While “1968” was certainly a transnational phenomenon, this should not obscure our view of the specificities of the movement in each country. The importance of the events signified by “1968” is undeniable but there is disagreement as to how to write them into Germany’s ruptured, troubled national narrative. Was it a first moment of democracy, or was it

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9 The term “APO” lacks a stable historical definition. Burns and van der Will limit the scope of the APO’s opposition to the emergency laws, thus distinguishing the APO from the student movement, which engaged in a broader critique of West German society: Burns and van der Will, Protest and Democracy in West Germany, p. 99. Others, such as Markovits and Gorski, see the APO as a collection of broad forces of opposition from 1959 until 1969. According to Markovits and Gorski, ‘the term APO never designated a single organisation or tendency. Rather, APO was a loosely constituted negative alliance between a diffuse array of groups united against a shared “opponent.”’ Markovits and Gorski, The German Left, p. 47. Similarly, Karl A. Otto writes that the opposition of the APO encompassed the emergency laws, university politics, and German involvement in Vietnam: Karl A. Otto, ‘Introduction’ in his APO: Die außerparlamentarische Opposition in Quellen und Dokumenten (1960-1970) (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1989), pp. 9-46.

10 Markovits and Gorski, The German Left, p. 56.

11 Ibid, p. 57.

the sudden disintegration of a steady liberalisation? Was it a historical caesura like 1949 and 1989, or was it the mass expression of trends that had already been developing in West Germany for some time? Contemporary debates about the value of “1968” are particularly political in Germany, because “1968” was itself a battle over the past. Dissatisfaction with the way the Bundesrepublik was perceived to sweep National Socialism under the proverbial rug in the 1950s and 1960s is widely recognised as a catalyst for the protest movement in West Germany. Amidst this context, the New Left’s denunciation of authoritarianism in West German society was often either an explicit or implicit response to the Third Reich. The 68ers’ horror at the Holocaust and the 45ers’ resolute determination not to speak of it soured the relationship between the generations. The Kontinuitätsfrage, or question of continuity from the Third Reich to the Bundesrepublik, coloured the critical gaze the APO cast over its society and added moral force to calls for democratisation. West Germany’s “1968” was therefore unique in its moral politics.

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17 On the approach of the 45er generation of intellectuals to the National Socialist past, see A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The simplicity of calling the transnational “1968” a generational conflict has been called into question: Detlef Siegfried, ‘Understanding 1968: Youth Rebellion, Generational Change and Postindustrial Society’ in Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (eds.), *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), pp. 59-81. However, in view of the very different experiences the two generations had growing up and the invocation of National Socialism and the Holocaust in “1968”, I see it as a valid interpretation of the German “1968”.
and the dark past underlying its protest. While antiauthoritarianism is a constant in the transnational “1968”, only in Germany had authoritarianism led to genocide.

Traditional political protest and demands for democratisation were not the 68ers’ only avenues for addressing their opposition to the National Socialist past. Sexuality became a newly politicised arena in which the New Left talked about and denounced Germany’s recent history. New Left intellectuals revived a theoretical tradition which involved marrying Freud’s adoption of sexuality as a central part of the human psyche with Marx’s structural critique of capitalism. The main proponent of this psycho-Marxist theory had been Wilhelm Reich, who in the 1930s attributed the rise of fascism to the sexual repression nurtured by capitalism. In capitalism sexual repression was a crucial tool of the authorities to maintain dominion. Assisted by the analysis of authoritarianism developed by members of the Frankfurt School of Sociology, and under the influence of Frankfurt School theorist Herbert Marcuse in particular, the New Left revitalised the Reichian approach to fascism in new political, social, and cultural circumstances. To New Left critics, National Socialism appeared as capitalism at its peak. It had demanded, and sprung from, a repressive sexual morality. The Bundesrepublik, like the Third Reich, was characterised by authoritarianism and repressed sexuality, and was therefore at risk of fascism’s re-emergence. On this analysis, open and free sexuality was imperative for a democratised West Germany and to avoid the recurrence of fascism. The 1960s thus saw two separate revolutions: a commercialised Sexwelle (“sex wave”), which involved a more open discussion of sex and a dramatic rise in nudity in the media, and a theoretically grounded attempt to liberate sexuality in order to fight off the possibility of fascism’s return.

While the 68ers’ outrage at the National Socialist past is well documented, historians’ focus on other trends within the antiauthoritarian movement has obscured the significant developments in sexual discourse and practice. The Sexwelle is certainly present within histories
that deal with the tumult of 1960s Germany, but it is largely ornamental, a signifier of the rapidly changing values of the 1960s.\(^{18}\) It does not seem to merit the serious historical inquiry accorded to the simultaneous protests,\(^ {19} \) left-wing violence,\(^ {20} \) and artistic developments.\(^ {21} \) Meanwhile, histories of German sexuality consistently narrow in on the sexual permissiveness or conservatism of the era of National Socialism.\(^ {22} \) The result is a historiographical lacuna: the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s and 1970s is acknowledged but not explored.

The historian Dagmar Herzog forms the exception. Herzog has elevated the liberalisation of sexuality during the 1960s and 1970s to an object of historical inquiry.\(^ {23} \) Invaluably, she has made serious efforts to tease out the connection between sexuality and National Socialism posited by the New Left’s rhetoric. According to Herzog, West Germany’s sexual revolution was an attempt to break with what had caused German fascism: not just capitalist imperialism, but also bourgeois familial arrangements.\(^ {24} \) However, although she has written extensively on New Left sexual politics, Herzog’s primary interest is really in National Socialism’s attitude towards...

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\(^ {18} \) Even histories that attempt to incorporate sexuality into their study of the protest movement are rarely thorough. Eckhard Siepmann’s edited volume *CheSchahShit: Die sechziger Jahre zwischen Cocktail und Molotow.* McCornick and Von Dirke also mention sexuality and the commune movement, reading them as artistic movements: McCornick, *Politics of the Self;* Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!*


\(^ {21} \) McCornick, *Politics of the Self;* Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!*


\(^ {24} \) Herzog, ‘Pleasure, Sex and Politics,’ p. 396.
sexuality.\textsuperscript{25} She therefore tests the validity of the 68ers’ portrayal of National Socialist sexual mores, taking issue with their ‘false memory of Nazism as sexually repressive.’\textsuperscript{26} According to Herzog, conservative sexual mores solidified in the 1950s, when 68ers were growing up, and it was this repressive environment against which they were unknowingly rebelling.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, for Herzog, the discourse surrounding sexuality in the 1960s and 1970s is valuable for what we can learn about sexuality during the Third Reich and the way it has been remembered. Ultimately, she is interested in this field for the questions about history and memory it raises.

Herzog’s work is indispensable. She is the first historian to look seriously at the German sexual revolution, and she is also the first to shed light upon the important connection between the New Left’s discourse on sexuality and its discourse on National Socialism. Her argument that 1960s leftist intellectuals saw sexual emancipation as an antifascist imperative is indeed the starting point for this thesis. Yet her intention to discredit the view of National Socialism as entirely repressive means she curtails her examination of the nuances and context of the New Left analysis of the links between sexuality and fascism. For Herzog, the most significant consequence of the 1960s discourse on sexuality is the propagation of a false understanding of sexuality in the Third Reich.\textsuperscript{28}

It is not my intention to investigate whether the New Left claims about repressive Nazi sexuality hold true. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to assess the 68ers on their understanding of the past. Whether or not the New Left’s understanding of the past was facile, an opposition to National Socialism and the Holocaust undoubtedly influenced their actions.\textsuperscript{29} The 68ers were intent on ridding West German society of the authoritarianism that had

\textsuperscript{25} She has published on this topic: Herzog (ed.), \textit{Sexuality and German Fascism}. However, this focus is also evident within her work ostensibly about 1960s sexuality.

\textsuperscript{26} Herzog, ‘Sexuality, Memory, Morality,’ p. 239.

\textsuperscript{27} ‘Much of what the 68ers were actually rebelling against were their own experiences in the postfascist 1950s and the interpretations of Nazism’s sexual legacies proffered by parents and political and religious leaders in that decade.’ Herzog, ‘Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together,’ p. 396.

\textsuperscript{28} As Herzog writes in \textit{Sex after Fascism}: ‘The generation of 1968 had a profoundly distorted understanding of the national past, and precisely this faulty paradigm informed so many of the projects it pursued with such ardour.’ Herzog, \textit{Sex after Fascism}, p. 183.

\textsuperscript{29} Herzog describes the 68ers’ relationship with the Holocaust as facile yet obsessive: Herzog, ‘Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together,’ p. 443.
manifested itself in National Socialism. This thesis investigates the ways this intention led 68ers to try to change their society by breaking down the barrier between public life and private life.

*Kommune I* is significant to the investigation of the Nazi past’s role in 1960s discourse on sexuality as it was the first and most prominent effort to turn theory into practice. As Herzog’s interest in 1960s sexuality is focused on the ideas and theories disseminated by the New Left, she brushes over the real-life practice of the commune. The short shrift she lends the commune is not unusual. The contemporary popular response to the commune as ‘infantile fun-havers’ and a ‘disturbed hormone household’ has to some extent been replicated in the scholarship.30 *Kommune I* has fallen foul of the “1968” dichotomy between historicisation and memorialisation.31 The commune has a strong presence in “1968” retrospectives but lurks on the fringe of histories of the same period.32 Tellingly, while several ex-communards have published memoirs of their time in the commune, no single volume has ever been dedicated to the history of the commune.33 Despite being one of the protagonists of the German “1968”, the commune is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world. Historians have largely forgotten *Kommune I*.

Where *Kommune I* is mentioned in any detail, two readings dominate. The first presents the commune as a countercultural rebellion against the hegemonic culture of the Bundesrepublik. This reading relies on flyers the communards disseminated, interpreting a fatal fire in Brussels as a protest against the war in Vietnam and satirically calling for similar protest in West Berlin. The philologist Sara Hakemi argues that the pastiche of different literary styles within these flyers was

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31 Sarah Waters points to relentless memorialisation of “1968” as a roadblock on the way to historicisation, describing the tension between the two forces that are oddly out of synch: Sarah Waters, ‘Introduction: 1968 in Memory and Place,’ p. 1 in Cornils and Waters, *Memories of 1968*.

32 For example ‘Die Tage der Kommune,’ *Der Spiegel* (30 June 1997), pp. 100-109 and ‘Die Tage der Kommune,’ *Der Spiegel* (29 January 2007), pp. 136-152, in which *Kommune I* appears as the symbol for youth rebellion and counterculture in the 1960s.

a subversion of mainstream culture. She looks at the communards’ insubordinate behaviour in their interactions with the justice system in order to present them as an artist avant-garde, much like the surrealists of the 1920s.\(^{34}\) The historian Wilfried Mausbach also interprets Kommune I as a cultural movement, focussing on the Brussels flyers, and describing them as the exemplification of the “1968” counterculture and its opposition to consumer society.\(^{35}\) The communards’ relationship with the mass media is important to sustain this reading. Both Detlef Siegfried and Stefan Aust are in agreement that this relationship was complicated: while the communards simultaneously criticised media organisations and used them to disseminate their political ideas, this commercialised their cultural revolution and hindered radicalisation.\(^{36}\)

The second reading sees Kommune I as the vanguard of a more specific revolt: the sexual revolution. When historians mention Kommune I’s sexual politics, this is usually an offhand sentence or two describing the commune as the practical dimension of Wilhelm Reich’s theory of sexuality and the bourgeois family.\(^{37}\) The historian Stefan Micheler has offered the most sustained analysis of the communards’ sexual politics. Within his exploration of the discourse on sexuality within the 1960s student movement, Micheler portrays Kommune I as hypocritical. For Micheler, the communards’ approach to sexuality was as repressive as it was liberating. They measured satisfaction in quantity rather than quality, separating emotion from the sexual act. The by-product of this attitude, writes Micheler, was the continuing marginalisation and

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objectification of women. Importantly, Micheler does not misstate the aims of the commune’s sexual revolution, but he argues that the communards fell very short of these aims.

This thesis does not neglect the commune’s notorious flyers or their relationship with the media, but it resituates them in a new interpretation of the commune as a response to National Socialism and the Holocaust in which their sexual politics was fundamental. Their flyers are relevant insofar as they represent a fracturing of the commune’s focus on sexuality and the drift towards cheap provocation. But they are also worthy of investigation because the communards’ subsequent arrest and trial for inciting arson provided them with an unparalleled opportunity to challenge authoritarianism and repression, the very elements of the Bundesrepublik at which their sexual politics was aimed. Similarly, the role of the media cannot be ignored, because it was through the media that Kommune I agitation West German society into talking about the practice of free sexuality. I also argue that it was the media’s refusal to take the communards seriously that has prevented them from assuming a more central role in the history of German protest.

Like Micheler, I look at Kommune I in relation to broader discourse on sexuality in the 1960s, and explore the intentions and consequences of the communards’ call for a non-repressive sexuality. However, I argue that his strong scepticism of the sincerity of the commune’s sexual project is based on a misreading of his sources. The communards delighted in toying with public expectation of their promiscuity and stubbornly refused to speak earnestly about their sexual politics, leaving room for negative interpretations like Micheler’s. This thesis looks at the way sexuality was practised and theorised by the communards and their peers, and the way that this new openness about sexuality was received in the public eye. It attempts to redress the inadequacy of the present historiography in neglecting to acknowledge the political significance of Kommune I and the wider commune movement.

This is a sexual history, but it does not chart changing sexual practice. Instead it tracks the conversation about sex in a particular society at a particular time and searches for the kernel of the conversation. What is really being discussed? And how does its discussion change people’s lives? Kommune I’s attempts to subvert bourgeois society through its development of a sexual politics, and the outrage these attempts provoked, accord it significance beyond its short lifespan and paucity of members. In its relentless questioning of fundamental assumptions about the division between private and public upon which German society was based, the commune opened up a new way to talk about the recent German past, and a unique way to respond to its horrors.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter traces the psycho-Marxist discourse on sexuality that developed in the New Left in the 1960s. This discourse attributed repressive sexuality with a generous share of the blame for the emergence of National Socialism and the Holocaust. By examining New Left journals and monographs throughout the decade, this chapter reveals how theorists constructed a chain of causation linking repression, authoritarianism, capitalism, and fascism. This theory is placed in the broader social context of increasing knowledge of the details of the Holocaust, calls to accept collective guilt, and the anxious search for signs of continuity between the Third Reich and the Bundesrepublik. Read in this context, it is clear that calls to revolutionise the bourgeois family and to liberate sexuality were at once responses to the Judeocide and attempts to prevent the return of fascism.

The second chapter narrows in focus, turning to Kommune I. It reads Kommune I as the practical response to the New Left psycho-Marxist theories of fascism. The communards never offered an earnest explanation for their lifestyle and behaviour. This chapter attempts to fill in this silence by looking at the connections between the communards’ activities and the theory explained in the previous chapter, investigating the ideology of groups that preceded Kommune I’s existence, and exploring statements that the communards made at the time and have made since. The commune was a dedicated attempt to destroy the authoritarian character, which had enabled
fascism to take hold, by changing the way Germans interacted with each other, both in the family and in the sphere of sexuality. This chapter opens the discussion of the difficulties of putting an intimate revolution like this into place, including the contested value of sexuality to politics.

The final chapter examines Kommune I’s fading focus on sexuality and the communards’ turn to more attention-seeking actions like the Brussels flyers. It provides a detailed analysis of the power play between the justice system and the communards that was acted out in the communards’ criminal trial for inciting arson. The trial, the growing celebrity of the communards and the antagonistic relationship between the communards and the media further reveal the difficulties of enacting their planned revolution. The unequal gender roles within Kommune I further complicate their original claims to abolish authoritarianism in the family. This last part of the commune’s lifespan shows a disintegration of their theoretical foundation, leading to widespread accusations of failure.

I have consulted a wide range of sources in order to understand Kommune I in its social and intellectual context. The communards themselves issued several publications, including the book *Klaau Mich*, and the lengthy handbooks *Quellen zur Kommuneforschung* (“Sources for Researching the Commune”) and *Gesammelte Werke gegen uns* (“Collected Works against Us”).¹⁹ *Klaau Mich* reproduces the transcript from the communards’ arson trial, as well as a number of articles responding to the commune from 1967 and 1968. The two handbooks, which I obtained digitally from the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, reproduce the commune’s flyers and correspondence. These materials, which historians have previously used only sparingly, are accompanied by the communards’ sparse commentary and illustrations. Ex-communards’ memoirs’ have also proved useful, as has the tome published by Kommune I’s less

extroverted counterpart, Kommune 2.\textsuperscript{40} I have also looked at original materials published by the communes’ predecessor organisations. By examining the writing of New Left and Frankfurt School theorists in the 1960s, as well as Reich’s earlier writing, I have been able to place the communards in their proper intellectual context.

In order to piece together West German society’s response to Kommune I, I have looked at a variety of print media sources. Unfortunately, only Der Spiegel has made its issues from the 1960s available digitally. However, as a mainstream weekly current affairs magazine with a readership of about five million, it is safe to assume that its reaction to Kommune I was reasonably representative of broader views.\textsuperscript{41} I have had more limited access to the left-wing youth magazine konkret, the satirical magazine Pardon and the centrist weekly newspaper Die Zeit. I have also relied on the articles reproduced in the commune’s own Klau Mich. The majority of these articles come from Springer Press publications, the conservative media company that was the subject of the student protest movement’s ire. They are therefore a counterpoint to the less partisan Der Spiegel.

This thesis argues that Kommune I was not the comical sideshow to the main event, as the historiography suggests. Instead, Kommune I was the most dedicated effort in the German “1968” to break with the Nazi past and to lead the creation of a new kind of society. The communards’ attempts to break down the demarcation between public and private sphere was a shock to the Bundesrepublik, as was their imperative to reintroduce intimacy into sexuality and the family by removing their authoritarian characteristics. While the fewer than twenty communards pale in comparison to the hundreds of thousands marching on the streets in June 1967, their revolution was no less significant.

\textsuperscript{40} Kommune 2, Versuch der Revolutionierung des bürgerlichen Individuums: Kollektives Leben mit politischer Arbeit verbinden! (Berlin: Oberbaumpresse, 1969).
\textsuperscript{41} Graf, The German Left Since 1945, p. 252.
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SOCIALISM WITH A SEXY FACE

NEW LEFT IDEAS ABOUT SEXUALITY AND AUTHORITARIANISM

In August of 1966 the weekly current affairs magazine Der Spiegel published a twenty-page report called ‘Fallen Nature’. Its opening paragraphs depicted a new and overwhelming world of nubile women and unavoidable promiscuity:

The girls show off their navels as if they were the Hope Diamond. They let their hair blow in their face and carry their upper girth in front of them like a cake tray.

They do it in the sand, in the snow, in the bedroom – and particularly in four-colour print.

From the kiosks and poster-walls their pubescent faces push themselves into the conscious world of their witnesses, until…every last man notices what rubbish he has at home.¹

The Sexwelle was rolling into West Germany.

The 1960s was the decade in which sex stepped out of the shadows and marched into the centre of the public sphere. Although Der Spiegel’s hesitance to embrace the liberalisation of sexual mores was in step with other popular publications, it could not deny the growth of a more permissive sexual morality. The buzzword Sexwelle became shorthand for the vast increase in nude or semi-nude images in the popular media (even in “serious” publications like Der Stern), the relaxation of taboos surrounding pre- and extra-marital sex fuelled in part by the newly available contraceptive pill, and the prominence of sexuality and promiscuity in the media’s discussions of contemporary German culture.² The Sexwelle’s significance can also be measured by its considerable commercial success, as it allowed entrepreneurs like Beate Uhse and Oswalt

Kolle to make their fortunes selling sex toys and sex education. Such ventures only increased Germans’ exposure to public discussions and displays of sex, sex paraphernalia and sexual images. The *Sexwelle* was a revolution of German sexual culture with a highly visible effect upon sexual practice and popular discourse.4

As the hubbub around sexuality crescendoed in the popular press, so too did the theoretical treatment of sexuality in New Left circles. The decade of the *Sexwelle* was also the decade in which New Left intellectuals made a concerted effort to accord sexuality significance beyond its reproductive and recreational functions.5 Sexuality became political. Reviving intellectual movements that National Socialism had arrested, members of the German New Left claimed that the repression of sexuality led to authoritarianism, aggression, and sadism. Amidst an intelligentsia desperately searching for the social causes of fascism, this argument suggested a possible answer. Its advocates politicised sexuality by claiming that its stigmatisation led to the horrors of the Third Reich. This strong accusation was also a platform from which the New Left could criticise their own society’s sexual mores. By teasing out links between repressive sexual morality and the events of Germany’s recent past, these intellectuals sounded a theoretical and moral call for sexual revolution.

This chapter’s starting point is the argument that a strand of the West German New Left believed that sexual repression had contributed materially to National Socialism. The historians Ulrike Heider and Dagmar Herzog have previously canvassed this argument.6 However, by reading the original texts of Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse closely, and by consulting a


5 It must be noted that the New Left was not a homogenous group, and that not all New Leftists were interested in sexual theories of fascism. This chapter traces one of several strands of discourse developing within the New Left in the 1960s.

wider array of New Left writings, I provide a much more detailed explanation of the way the New Left understood this connection. This detail can help us understand why Kommune I later pursued its opposition to the bourgeois family and sexual repression so wholeheartedly. This chapter also diverges from Herzog and Heider in the way it situates the psycho-Marxist theory amidst broader social developments in understanding the Holocaust and concerns about the resemblance between the Bundesrepublik and the Third Reich. Looking at intellectual and social developments in tandem illuminates the wider significance of the theory and reveals the moral force propelling Kommune I’s project.

Sexual repression

The West German New Left shook free of the shackles of a singular focus on economics, embracing sexuality as an important site of analysis. Leftist intellectuals in the 1960s painted sexual repression as a tool of capitalist domination that could have dire effects on individuals and society as a whole. The psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich and critical theorist Herbert Marcuse, both intellectual idols of the Left and later of the antiauthoritarian protest movement, led New Left theorists to the conviction that sexuality was not merely a personal experience. Instead, it was a building block of society, worthy of serious intellectual investigation. Reich and Marcuse exerted their influence over the principal actors of West Germany’s “1968” directly as students and intellectuals eagerly devoured their writings. They also indirectly shaped the thoughts and actions of the protesters as prominent German writers built upon their ideas in Leftist publications.

The Reichian revival propelled sexual repression to a position of prominence among West German New Left concerns. Reich had left Germany prior to World War II and was

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7 The German historian Kristina Schulz has rightly called Reich’s Sexuelle Revolution a cult book for the antiauthoritarian movement between June 1967 and May 1968. She also describes Marcuse as the ‘star and spiritual father of the youth revolt in the entire world’: Schulz, ‘1968: Lesarten der “sexuellen Revolution,”’ pp. 123 and 125. Eckhard Siepmann refers to Reich and Marcuse as the grandfathers of the sexual revolution: Siepmann, ‘Genital versus Prägenital: Die Größwäter der sexuellen Revolution’ in Siepmann, CheSchahShit, p. 101. Burns and van der Will describe Marcuse as ‘the theorist who, more than any other, inspired and helped sustain the anti-authoritarian phase of the student movement’; Burns and van der Will, Protest and Democracy in West Germany, p. 119. Chapter Two will detail the two thinkers’ influence on Kommune I in particular.
subsequently thrown out of the German Communist Party and the International Psychoanalytical Association for his unorthodox approach to both ideologies. He died in exile in 1957 before the emergence of the antiauthoritarian movement. Reich extended Freud’s proposal that sexuality was a key component of human psychology, developing it within the Marxian framework of analysing society on a structural level. This intellectual synthesis took Reich beyond individualist psychoanalytic therapy to a theory of a mass psychology. Reich practised what he termed “sex-economic sociology”, which sought the sociological reasons sexuality was suppressed by society and repressed by the individual. Sexual repression, the prevention of the attainment of natural gratification, was a defining feature of capitalism. This was no coincidence: wide-scale sexual repression was an instrument of Herrschaft, or rule. Reich thus drew attention to the ruling class’ ability to influence citizens’ private lives and to disturb their happiness in order to maintain the political order.

Like Reich, Herbert Marcuse viewed sexual repression as a tool of capitalism. Marcuse, a prominent member of the Frankfurt School for Sociology, had migrated from Germany to California in the 1930s. He was not a practising psychoanalyst but a critical theorist. Marcuse agreed with Freud’s proposition that civilisation required some level of repression. He deviated from Freud, however, with his claim that the quantity of repression varied as the capitalist system developed. His concept of “surplus repression” designated the amount of repression necessitated by a particular historical form of civilisation. In a Reichian manoeuvre, Marcuse

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8 Reich also developed new methods of psychoanalytic therapy and even invented a machine called the Orgone Accumulator, which was intended to charge the body with orgone energy. For this thesis, however, only his sociological-political developments are relevant. On his other work, see Paul A. Robinson, *The Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Geza Roheim, Herbert Marcuse* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 9-74; Leo Raditsa, *Some Sense about Wilhelm Reich*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1978). The antiauthoritarian movement followed his earlier work.  
described surplus repression as the restriction of sexuality instated by capitalist authority in order to maintain itself.\textsuperscript{13} Going beyond Reich’s analysis of sexual repression, Marcuse also introduced the concept of the “performance principle”, which was the prevailing variant of Freud’s reality principle.\textsuperscript{14} Whereas surplus repression was quantitative, the performance principle described the \textit{quality} of repression required by the capitalist system. Consequently, the various modes of domination resulted in the various historical forms of the reality principle.\textsuperscript{15} The value in these two concepts lay particularly in the attempt to historicise sexual repression, as they contained the notion that repression altered with the political form it was serving to maintain.\textsuperscript{16}

Reich and Marcuse shared the conviction that sexuality affected the very structure of society. Paul A. Robinson, who first called Reich and Marcuse the “Freudian Left”, incisively identified the common denominator between the two as sexual radicalism: their “unqualified enthusiasm for sex, their belief that sexual pleasure is the ultimate measure of human happiness, and their pronounced hostility to the sexual repressiveness of modern civilisation.”\textsuperscript{17} More than this, they both politicised sexuality by claiming that such repression was enacted deliberately for political purposes. This critique appealed to, and stirred, the New Left’s anti-authoritarian leanings. Moreover, the connection both theorists made between advanced capitalism and authoritarian repression made particular sense to a German audience because of the country’s

\textsuperscript{13} Robinson, \textit{The Freudian Left}, p. 202. Marcuse draws a distinction between “basic repression” and “surplus repression”. Basic repression is “the “modifications” of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilisation, whereas surplus repression is restrictions necessitated by social domination: Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization}, p. 35. Robinson suggests that Marcuse’s argument that surplus repression designated a quantitative dimension of sexual repression made necessary by the interests of domination was an argument identical to Reich’s: Robinson, \textit{The Freudian Left}, p. 205.

\textsuperscript{14} Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization}, p. 35. The reality principle is the ego’s control of the id’s pleasure impulses in order to defer instant gratification and meet the demands of the external world. Marcuse explains the concept of the performance principle thus: “The various modes of domination result in various historical forms of the reality principle…While any form of the reality principle demands a considerable degree and scope of repressive control over the instincts, the specific historical institutions of the reality principle and the specific interests of domination introduce additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilised human association. Those additional controls arising form the specific institutions of domination are what we denote as surplus-repression.” Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization}, p. 37.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, p. 37.

\textsuperscript{16} Generally on Marcuse’s influence on the German New Left, see Ingo Juchler, \textit{Rebellische Subjektivität und Internationalismus: Der Einfluß Herbert Marcuses und die nationalen Befreiungsbewegungen in der sogenannten Dritten Welt auf die Studentenbewegung in der BRD} (Marburg: Verlag Arbeiterbewegung und Gesellschaftswissenschaften, 1989); Uwe Schlicht, \textit{Vom Burschenschafter bis zum Sponti: Studentische Opposition gestern und heute} (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1980), pp. 76-79.

\textsuperscript{17} Robinson, \textit{The Freudian Left}, p. 5.
history of advanced industrial development and extreme authoritarianism. Reich and Marcuse offered an explanation of capitalist dominion that placed sexuality at its centre, an explanation which the German New Left keenly adopted.

The consequences of sexual repression

Fascism

The New Left vigorously denounced capitalist sexual repression because, they claimed, it could lead and indeed had led to fascism. 1960s theorists adapted their understanding of the connection between sexual repression and fascism from Wilhelm Reich. Writing in 1933, Reich himself had applied his theory to the nascent phenomenon of fascism, weaving sexuality into his explanation for its allure.18 Reich’s radical redefinition of fascism configured it not as a political system endemic to a particular nation, but as a quality of man’s psyche: “fascism” is the basic emotional attitude of the suppressed man of our authoritarian machine civilisation.19 In his The Mass Psychology of Fascism, fascism appeared as the apotheosis of sexually repressive and authoritarian capitalist society. The psychological structure created by the bourgeois family rendered Germans susceptible to fanatical excitement about Adolf Hitler and receptivity to his ideology.20 National Socialism preyed upon an authoritarian mindset already created by the sexual repression of children.21 This analysis led Reich to the conclusion that fascism was not the act of a Hitler or a Mussolini, but that it was the ‘expression of the irrational structure of mass man.’22 Fascism, then, was neither historically nor geographically contingent. Its outbreak was a threat immanent in capitalism.

Reich’s psychology of fascism rested upon an analysis of the authoritarian family. Reich characterised the bourgeois family as authoritarian society’s most valuable tool, the ‘factory in
which the state’s structure and ideology are moulded.” The family was the institution best able to combat the sexuality of children and adolescents, and it was the site of the consequent struggle in one’s own ego. The inability of young people to express their desires because of the bourgeois family strengthened the Oedipus complex, disabling them from defying their parents and from feeling pleasure. The suppression of natural sexuality inevitably created an authoritarian character structure: the child became submissive, fearful of authority, and incapable of rebellion. The nuclear family was thus the primary breeding ground of fascism.

The Marxist philosopher Wolfgang Fritz Haug declared in 1969 that ‘fascism demonstrated to what extent people ruled in their entire social existence by sexual repression, and therefore by sexual fears and pressures, can be subdued and manipulated against their interests.’ This statement represented the crux of the New Left psychological analysis that had developed throughout the 1960s. The West German New Left, already preoccupied with the search for the underlying cause of fascism, seized upon Reich’s endeavours to find the pre-conditions for fascism in the structure of the human psyche. The journal Das Argument, which Haug edited, was the chief forum for Leftist exploration of theories of fascism. Between 1964 and 1968 the quarterly journal dedicated no less than five issues to the discussion of theories of fascism, and psychological theories of fascism constituted a strong strand of the scholarship. In 1965, Haug explicitly acknowledged the debt the New Left owed Wilhelm Reich, stating that Reich had defined the sociological scope in which subsequent psychological theories of fascism had to operate.

24 Ibid, p. 56.
Continuing the work of Wilhelm Reich, the New Left described the bourgeois family as an institution with an authoritarian power structure. In the paradigmatic psychoanalytic Argument article, ‘Psychological Theories about Fascism’, Reinhart Westphal wrote that the history of the family and its changing economic function in capitalism was the pre-history of the personality basis of fascism. Like Reich, Westphal saw the family as a tool of a higher social authority: the family implemented the broader social demand that children renounce their impulses. According to Westphal, the family was organised by a patriarchal authority. The father’s regimented upbringing of the child required the repression of impulses and their sublimation into the work of capitalism. The patriarchal authority’s suppression of sexual urges set in play an unhappy psychological process which left the child vulnerable to a fascist mindset. Repression inspired hatred of the father, and, inasmuch as the father personified it, of the entire bourgeois sphere. Yet this animosity was unable to spill over into rebellion, because patriarchal authority had been strongly impressed into the child’s superego from early youth. The tension between the child’s rejection of the father and the impossibility of expressing this rejection outright led to deep feelings of guilt. The ensuing psychological state, characterised by profound resignation and

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29 The West German New Left characterised capitalist and fascist family and society as being ruled by authority, but they used two alternate terms which both translate into English as “authority”. The first was Herrschaft, which can also be translated as dominion, rule, or the ruling class. Inasmuch as it denoted the ruling class, it was a Marxian concept. The second term was Autorität, an idea that the Frankfurt School had promoted to an important concept of analysis through their works on the authoritarian (autoritär) state, family, and personality. Autorität too suggested an element of dominion, but authoritarianism was an abstract concept that could describe a kind of psyche as well as the power relationships in a certain kind of structure of society. In the case of the individual, it indicated a willingness to submit to authority and a willingness to exert authority over others. According to Theodor Adorno, ‘Authoritarian personalities identify themselves with real-existing power per se, prior to any particular contents. Basically, they possess weak egos and therefore require the compensation of identifying themselves with, and finding security in, great collectives.’ Adorno, ‘The Meaning of Working through the Past’ (translation of ‘Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit,’ Radio Lecture, Hessischer Rundfunk, February 7, 1960), in Theodor W. Adorno, Guilt and Defense: On the Legacies of National Socialism in Postwar Germany (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 218. An authoritarian society had a dominant, if abstract, ruling class, and raised children to have an authoritarian mindset. There was some overlap between Autorität and Herrschaft. Indeed, both were defined in Das Argument as ‘the opposite of freedom’. Robert Wiegand described Herrschaft in 1964 thus: Robert Wiegand, “Herrschaft” und “Entfremdung”. Zwei Begriffe für eine Theorie über den Faschismus,’ Das Argument 30 (1964), p. 138. Three years earlier, Metscher used the same definition for Autorität: Thomas Metscher, ‘Zum Strukturwandel von Autorität und Familie,’ Das Argument 22 (1962), p. 26. For the Frankfurt School’s work on Autorität and authoritarianism, see Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, Studien über Autorität und Familie (Paris: Alcan, 1936); T.W. Adorno et al., The Authoritarian Personality (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1950).


31 Sublimation refers to the diversion of impulses into socially acceptable activity like work. Sublimation of the libido into labour is the reason that sexual repression is a useful tool for capitalism.
animosity towards sexuality, was ‘the best foundation for Hitler’s actions.’ While the protagonists of Nazism were certainly figures of opprobrium, fascism appeared to the New Left as a broader threat, with its roots in the psychological structure of the German masses.

The Marcusian view of authority allowed the New Left to nuance Reich’s original explanation of the relationship between the bourgeois family and the fascist state. Writing in *Das Argument*, Thomas Metscher described a resemblance between the bourgeois family and the fascist state that mirrored Reich’s view of the family as the ‘authoritarian state in miniature’. Metscher claimed that the bourgeois family was organised by a principle of irrational authority. Fascism raised the family’s principle of irrational authority to a systemic level. Metscher went beyond Reich in describing a change in the quality of authority between the family and system: whereas the family’s authority was concrete, the authority of fascism and of the *Führer* was abstract. Contained within this argument was the notion that abstract authority was more difficult both to detect and to overcome. Thus fascism strove for the total abstraction of authority, in order to establish authority totally. Metscher’s distinction between concrete and abstract authority recalled Marcuse’s argument that advanced industrial society had progressed to the point where people did not detect their own repression, an argument with particular application to Germany as one of the most advanced industrial states. Reading Reich and Marcuse together, Metscher was able to complicate Reich’s portrayal of authority in the bourgeois family and the fascist state. Three years later, Wiegand clarified Metscher’s complicated argument. When authority became abstract, orders and prohibitions did not need to be spoken anew, but instead solidified into a system of institutionalised values and norms, so

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34 Metscher, ‘Zum Strukturwandel von Autorität und Familie,’ p. 33. The type of authority he was talking about here is *Herrschaft*.
35 This idea would receive its fullest treatment in *One-Dimensional Man*, whose main theme was the near impossibility of recognising repression in advanced industrial society.
that people did not recognise them as external pressures but instead experienced them as the
voice of their consciences. Abstract authority was a latent threat, and crucial to the maintenance
of fascism.\textsuperscript{36} The relevance of this picture of authority for the German New Left was in its
implication that even if people were conscious of their sexual repression, it would be difficult to
attribute this to an abstract authority, and rebellion would be impossible. The difficulty of
recognising authority would lend credence to the suggestion that revolution of people’s
consciousness was the necessary precursor to any wider antiauthoritarian revolution.

The New Left’s search for the psychological causes of fascism painted a bleak picture of
German society. The Adenauer government had consciously endeavoured to reconstruct and
stabilise German society by supporting the private sphere of the family in the 1950s after the
disaster of the war.\textsuperscript{37} Now, the West German New Left claimed that this venerated institution
was actually a threat. Portrayed as a factory of repressive morality and a crucial instrument for
the development of fascism, the bourgeois family now appeared as a centre of bitter resentment
and fundamental unhappiness. Parents were not figures of support, but the principal
manipulators of their children. In turn, parents had unwittingly been manipulated by the abstract
authority of society as a whole. As one writer put it, ‘the authority relationship is to be seen as
the underlying structure of the bourgeois family’, and it was this authoritarianism that led to the
German population’s abject psychological state.\textsuperscript{38} The effect was that in capitalist society,
interpersonal relationships had been co-opted and tarnished by the system. These competing
conceptions of the role of the family epitomise the New Left’s relationship to mainstream
German society at the beginning of the 1960s. The Adenauer years were a time of rebuilding

\textsuperscript{36} Wiegand, “‘Herrschaft’” und “Entfremdung”, pp. 138-144.
\textsuperscript{37} On the reconstruction of the family in the 1950s see Robert G. Moeller, ‘Reconstructing the Family in
\textit{West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era} (Michigan: The University of Michigan
Press, 1970), pp. 109-134. See also Julia Paulus, ‘Familienrollen und Geschlechterverhältnisse im Wandel’ in Frese,
\textsuperscript{38} Metscher, ‘Zum Strukturwandel von Autorität und Familie,’ p. 29.
fundamental institutions, like the family, and were characterised by the search for stability. The New Left subverted this desire for stability by interrogating the institutions the government sought to reinstate and support.

Fascism appeared as an imminent threat as long as capitalism survived. The argument that fascism had a psychological basis, rather than just an economic one, allowed the New Left to draw out the similarities between ordinary capitalist and fascist societies. Metscher had argued that capitalism had similar structures of authoritarianism to fascism, claiming that authoritarian powers in capitalist democracies could not be located in an authority. Like fascist authority, capitalist authority was abstract.\(^{39}\) Westphal likewise emphasised the anonymity of authority within late capitalism.\(^{40}\) In New Left psychological writing, fascism and capitalist democracy did not appear as antonyms. Instead, fascism was the endpoint to which capitalism travelled.\(^{41}\) The implication was that the family and relationships in general had to be revolutionised in order to prevent fascism’s recurrence. The Bundesrepublik was not safe from fascism.

**The Holocaust**

The most significant difference between Reich’s writing on sexual repression and that of the New Left was not in the way they narrated the process of repression, but in the moral urgency that accompanied their calls for sexual revolution. Reich had developed his psychological theory of fascism as National Socialism was incipient, whereas those writing in the 1960s had lived through its twelve years, as well as its demise in 1945. Reich may have known that anti-Semitism was a key feature of German fascism, but he was ignorant of the programmatic extermination of the Jews that was carried out under Hitler’s reign. The full, grim

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\(^{39}\) Ibid, p. 33.  
\(^{40}\) Westphal, ‘Psychologische Theorien über den Faschismus,’ p. 35. Here he was referring to *Herrschaft* rather than *Autorität*.  
\(^{41}\) The theorists Reimut Reiche and Bernhard Blanke were explicit in their view that capitalism and fascism were immediate relatives. They analysed theories of fascism that classed fascism as the opposite of democracy, and claimed that fascism damaged the democratic structure. Reiche and Blanke concluded that such theories were fallacious, in that capitalism itself is based on suppression, and is therefore of a similar ilk to fascism: Reimut Reiche and Bernhard Blanke, ‘Kapitalismus, Faschismus und Demokratie,’ *Das Argument* 32 (1965), pp. 12-30.
picture of the Holocaust only began to emerge to the German population in the early 1960s, just as psychological explanations of fascism were undergoing a revival. Nazism’s crimes had been visually absent since the war’s end, but photographs of the Nazis’ crimes re-entered the German public sphere between 1955 and 1965.\textsuperscript{42} In 1963, a quarter of the West German population watched a fifteen-episode television series on the Third Reich.\textsuperscript{43} Trials of individual wrongdoers in the first half of the decade also brought disturbing details to the attention of the public, bringing to an end the “communicative silence” of the 1950s in relation to the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{44} The criminality of fascism had become horrifically clear, amplifying calls for a more distinctive break with the past.

The Holocaust underpinned much of the work in the 1960s on the nexus between sexuality and fascism. By logical extension of Reich’s original thesis, some in the New Left suggested that the Holocaust could also be traced back to the repression of sexuality. A preoccupation with the Holocaust in the public sphere corresponded to an intensified focus on the role of aggression in the fascist psyche. 1960s theorists highlighted the emergence of aggression consequent to sexual repression. Reich had already suggested that the repression of sexuality meant that this impulse sought expression elsewhere. Sexuality was forced to seek substitute gratifications in place of natural gratification, a process by which natural aggression, for instance, could be distorted into sadism.\textsuperscript{45} However, New Left intellectuals devoted much more attention to the connection between sexual repression and aggression than Reich had done.\textsuperscript{46} Westphal claimed that fascists’ authoritarian upbringing led both to aggression and to

\textsuperscript{42} Habbo Knoch, “The Return of the Images: Photographs of Nazi Crimes and the West German Public in the “Long 1960s”” in Gassert and Steinweis, Coping with the Nazi Past, pp. 31-49.

\textsuperscript{43} Jarausch, ‘Critical Memory and Civil Society,’ p. 20.

\textsuperscript{44} Lübbe introduced the concept of “communicative silence”, acknowledging that Germans were hesitant to speak of National Socialism in the 1950s but arguing that this was their way to work through the past: Hermann Lübbe, ‘Der Nationalsozialismus im deutschen Nachkriegsbewußtsein,’ Historische Zeitschrift 236, no. 3 (1983), pp. 579-599. In 1961, Adolf Eichmann’s trial in Jerusalem was heavily publicised. In February of 1964 over a dozen Nazi war criminals were convicted in highly publicised trials in Frankfurt. Major newspapers had reported daily on these trials: Markovits and Gorski, The German Left, p. 52; Herzog, ‘Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together,’ p. 402.

\textsuperscript{45} Reich, The Mass Psychology of Fascism, p. 31.

sexual impotence. The strict control of these strong impulses distorted them into sadistic rage. Wiegand elaborated upon this proposition. Those raised in an authoritarian family felt powerless against orders coming from above. This feeling transformed into aggression, as the subject searched for victims on which to assert one’s own strength. In the context of National Socialism, the suppressed subject had reacted against the persistence of an authority that had lost its legitimacy in economic crisis, but which had become so abstract that the average consciousness could hardly perceive it any more. The consequence in this case was anti-Semitism: aggression against a fictional external enemy. Westphal agreed that authoritarianism had created the aggression that reached its zenith with the Holocaust, and also charged this structure of authority with doing away with guilt. ‘The identification with a strong power, where one only does one’s “duty”,’ he wrote, ‘enables destructive impulses to run riot without any feelings of guilt.’ The prominent psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich similarly opined that repression of childhood sexuality led to aggression and lessened the guilt when the aggression was eventually expressed.

The sadism of the Holocaust differentiated German fascism from other incarnations of fascism. Despite this obvious fact and the increased focus on aggression, the psycho-Marxist theories of fascism expounded in Das Argument treated fascism as a broad phenomenon unrestricted by national borders. They did not characterise the German family or sexual morality

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47 Westphal, ‘Psychologische Theorien über den Faschismus,’ p. 34.
48 Wiegand, ‘“Herrschaft” und “Entfremdung”,’ p. 140.
49 Ibid, p. 141.
51 Mitscherlich provided the clearest description of the causal link between sexual repression and sadism. In preventing children in the pre-genital phase of sexuality from expressing their aggression or libido, children became unable to associate their drives with feelings. They received no proper guidance about finding a satisfactory, socially acceptable outlet for their instincts. The disconnect between instincts and feelings led to a split in the personality. Further, it was only true unification of the personality that made it possible to prevent behaviour from ending in guilt, callousness, antisocial behaviour, or, in the extreme, “killing with a good conscience”. The guilt and fear associated with tabooed instinctual drives prepared the way for destructive trends. Denying the essential drives caused disintegration of the identity, and forced them to seek satisfaction by circuitous routes. According to Mitscherlich, ‘some of these circuitous routes may be valuable, but others are inevitably the violent and fearful ones from which humanity suffers.’ Alexander Mitscherlich, Society without the Father: A Contribution to Social Psychology (London: Tavistock Publications, [1963] 1969), pp. 81-82.
as uniquely repressive. However, the inevitable implication of the Holocaust’s brutality was that there was indeed something different about German fascism, and therefore about German society. The philosopher Arno Plack, whose book *Society and Evil* grappled with the connection between the repression of sexuality and sadism, concluded that ‘it would be wrong to say that everything that happened at Auschwitz was typically German. It is typical for a society that suppresses sexuality.’52 This formulation suggests why theorists may have shied away from addressing the question of German specificity. Certainly the Holocaust had been the consequence of sexual repression. However, sexual repression was not distinctively German. Theorists wanted to blame the mechanism of sexual repression for the Holocaust, rather than philosophise on why it had happened in Germany and not elsewhere.

It is important to note that these psychological theories of fascism were pseudo-historical. While theorists purported to look back at the past and did refer, broadly, to the facts of Nazism and the Holocaust, they never conducted a thorough investigation into the sexual mores of the 1930s and 1940s, seemingly ignoring the sexual hedonism of the Weimar Republic. Discussion in *Das Argument* remained theoretical, hesitating even to address the specificities of German fascism. The central assumption that the Third Reich had been sexually repressive underlay the work, but was never interrogated.53 Dagmar Herzog has refuted the argument that National Socialism was sexually repressive, claiming that it was the very opposite.54 According to Herzog, the New Left was not rebelling against a repressive sexuality of the 1930s and 1940s, but of the Adenauer era in the 1950s.55 Nevertheless, even if this is the case, what is important for this thesis is that the West German New Left perceived the Third Reich to have been a time of sexual

52 Plack, *Die Gesellschaft und das Böse*, p. 309.
53 Der Spiegel, relating the history of German attitudes towards sex, provides the most explicit statement of this underlying assumption. Quoting a paragraph of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* that bemoaned the increasing licentiousness of the 1920s, the magazine suggested that Hitler was in favour of a conservative sexual morality, and that the vast majority of the population agreed with him. ‘Die gefallene Natur,’ p. 57.
54 See Dagmar Herzog, ‘Hubris and Hypocrisy, Incitement and Disavowal’ in Herzog (ed.), *Sexuality and German Fascism*, pp. 1-21.
repression. Indeed, Herzog is probably the first to question this characterisation. Efforts to stage a sexual revolution were configured as responses to Nazism and the Holocaust, whether or not this was based on a false premise. The suggestion that sexual repression caused the Holocaust lent a moral urgency to these calls for liberation.

New Left psychological theories of fascism sat in contradiction with contemporary calls for collective guilty.\(^{56}\) Liberal critics were insistent that any theory of fascism that attributed causation to the magnetism of Hitler or Mussolini’s personality was insufficient. Robert Neumann epitomised this sentiment with his declaration in the pop-political magazine \textit{konkret} that ‘it would be incorrect to say: Hitler, he was the Third Reich.’\(^{57}\) In the broadly left-wing magazine for politics and culture, \textit{Der Monat}, Gert Kalow claimed that while there were very different levels of guilt, no one was innocent. He spoke of the \textit{Führer} having taken responsibility for thinking from a mass of puerile citizens, of millions of neurotics.\(^{58}\) The psychoanalyst couple the Mitscherlichs added their voices to the call for collective guilt.\(^{59}\)

This push to assume collective guilt clashed with an older narrative which had most Germans appear as victims of both Hitler and the Allies.\(^{60}\) The journalist Rolv Heuer neatly summarised this narrative in \textit{konkret}: ‘In the Third Reich the Germans were first seduced and then plundered.’ Heuer went on to claim that while the Auschwitz trials shed light on the realities of the Holocaust and caused people to admit that National Socialism was criminal, the


\(^{57}\) Robert Neumann, ‘Wir sind wieder wer,’ \textit{konkret} (May 1967), p. 21. Neumann also expressed the fear that plagued the New Left: that fascism could happen again.


\(^{60}\) According to the historian Norbert Frei, ascribing the horrors of the Third Reich to Hitler and a small clique of “major war criminals” was a basic element of mid-1950s public West German awareness. The majority of Germans thus saw themselves as politically "seduced", rendered martyrs by the war and its consequences. Norbert Frei, \textit{Adenauer’s Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amenity and Integration} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 311 Bodo von Borries suggests that history textbooks from mid-1950s demonstrated the same tendency to blame Hitler for nationalism, barely mentioning the Judeocide: ‘The Third Reich in German History Textbooks since 1945,’ \textit{Journal of Contemporary History} 38, no. 1 (January, 2003), p. 51.
Auschwitz trials allowed that criminality to be personified in Concentration Camps criminals, in ‘greater’ demons like Eichmann. The dogged persistence of the German population in evading guilt meant that it was not considered a truism in 1970 to write that ‘the phenomenon of the “Third Reich” can only be explained as the development of the whole German society…. There is no part of the German population that is not a bit guilty.’

While the psychoanalytic wing of the New Left did see fascism as a development of the whole German society and refused to pin the blame on Hitler alone, its theory of fascism absolved the majority of Germans of any real guilt. By claiming that sexual repression enacted by an abstract authority created the preconditions for fascism, it posited the underclasses, and indeed the theorists themselves, as victims of authoritarianism. This placed the blame for the brutalities of National Socialism squarely on the shoulders of an abstract authority. Thus sidestepping the taint of collective guilt, New Left intellectuals could keep up their critique of contemporary and past Germany without sacrificing any moral authority. Nevertheless, psycho-Marxist theories of fascism did preserve the idea that each individual did carry the cause of fascism within them: the authoritarian character. These theories were therefore consistent with the notion of collective responsibility without going so far as to assume collective guilt.

A further implication of New Left psychological theories was that, by stifling adolescent sexuality, capitalist and fascist authority had not just allowed terrible crimes to happen, but had caused deep, personal misery in its citizens. The idea that authoritarian powers had insidiously involved themselves in German intimacy personalised politics, and only intensified the moral indignation that accompanied the invocation of the Holocaust. In this way, the New Left at once claimed moral authority for itself and derided the ruling powers as immoral. Furthermore, the theories of the New Left tended to speak about sexual repression and fascism in scientific terms, with the process of impulse-repression leading to aggression like a predictable chemical reaction.

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This language bestowed a different kind of authority upon the writers: it suggested that theorists were able to prescribe a “cure” for fascism. The vaunted solution, sexual revolution, was therefore buoyed by the New Left’s moral and pseudo-scientific clout.

The Bundesrepublik

If sexual repression in service of capitalism had played a role in leading to National Socialism, then fascism was a risk built in to capitalism. This New Left logic meant that psychological theories of fascism necessarily led to an examination of contemporary capitalist society, the Bundesrepublik. A feature of the New Left was its preoccupation with the Kontinuitätsfrage (“continuity question”), the search for continuity between the Third Reich and the Bundesrepublik. The focus was twofold: concrete continuity of personnel, and the more abstract continuity of authoritarianism. The concern that old Nazis were able to continue successful careers in the Federal Republic was well founded. The historian Norbert Frei has described Adenauer’s policy for the past as amnestying and integrating former supporters of the Third Reich on the one hand and completing a normative separation from Nazism on the other. Public servants who had worked under the Third Reich were given priority, and several politicians were accused of involvement in the Nazi Party. The integration of possible war

63 The Kontinuitätsfrage was a strong theme within “1968” but it predated the protest movement. A recent trend in the historiography is to undermine the 68ers’ claims that they were the first to talk about National Socialism. See Knoch, ‘The Return of the Images’; Jarausch, ‘Critical Memory and Civil Society’; Franz-Werner Kersting, ‘Unruhediskurs’. Zeitgenössische Deutungen der 68er-Bewegung’ in Frese, Paulus and Teppe, Demokratisierung und gesellschaftlicher Aufbruch, p. 718; Bernd-A. Rusinek, ‘Von der Entdeckung der NS-Vergangenheit zum generellen Faschismusverdacht – akademische Diskurse in der Bundesrepublik der 60er Jahre’ in Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammers (eds.), Dynamische Zeiten: die 60er Jahre in der beiden deutschen Gesellschaften (Hamburg: Christians, 2000), p. 118.

64 According to Frei, ‘these measures clearly served to satisfy the collective psychic needs of a society that had gone through an unparalleled political and moral catastrophe in the 1940s, a society whose memory since then concealed deep-seated experiences of disintegration.’ Frei, Adenauer’s Germany and the Nazi Past, p. 307. Jarausch interprets the Adenauer policy similarly: Jarausch, ‘Critical Memory and Civil Society,’ p. 18.

65 Adenauer gave priority to former civil servants when staffing federal ministries, even though they had usually belonged to the Nazi Party and some had been directly involved in the crimes of National Socialism: Curt Garner, ‘Public Service Personnel in West Germany in the 1950s: Controversial Policy Decisions and their Effects on Social Composition, Gender Structure, and the Role of Former Nazis’ in Moeller, West Germany under Construction, p. 139. Even Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger and President Heinrich Lübke were charged with collaboration. Kiesinger had been an advisor in the Broadcast Department of the Third Reich’s Foreign Office, and Lübke was accused by student protesters of drawing up plans for concentration camps. See Heuer, ‘Kiesinger,’ p. 24.
criminals into public institutions revealed that the *Bundesrepublik* was not prepared fully to
denounce and make a break with the past.

Harmut von Hentig’s 1967 statement that ‘in 1945 there was no tradition in Germany that
Nazism had not dragged into misery’ epitomised the New Left sentiment that the continuity of
National Socialism was not confined to its personnel but had infiltrated every aspect of German
society, including sexual relations. The Frankfurt School sociologist Theodor Adorno made a
speech in 1960 in which he articulately voiced the anxiety that would plague the New Left for
the next decade:

> National Socialism lives on, and even today we still do not know whether it is merely the ghost of
what was so monstrous that it lingers on after its own death, or whether it has not yet died at all,
whether the willingness to commit the unspeakable survives in people as well as in the conditions
that enclose them.

The concern was that the conditions that enabled the Holocaust were still festering in the
*Bundesrepublik*, in both its institutions and its people. Adorno’s fear was sharpened by the obvious
authoritarianism of the *Bundesrepublik* in the 1960s that recalled the political situation of National
Socialism. The “*Spiegel Affair*” of 1962 involved the extension of executive power: defence
minister Franz-Josef Strauss ordered an illegal search-and-seizure action in the offices of *Der
Spiegel*, in an abuse of civil rights. Emergency laws proposed by the ruling CDU party in 1966
and eventually enacted in the Spring of 1968 gave the executive the power to censor the press,
ban the opposition and suspend the right to strike if the *Bundesrepublik* reached a vaguely defined
“state of emergency”.

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68 Markovits and Gorski, *The German Left*, p. 47. *Der Spiegel* had an estimated readership of five million and was
frequently referred to as the *Bundesrepublik’s* real “loyal opposition” because of its exposure of corruption in
government, its criticism of the ruling political parties and its repeated revelations of facts unpleasant to the
government. The *Spiegel* Affair invoked considerable protest from student bodies, leading writers and intellectuals.
69 Graf, *The German Left Since 1945*, p. 250; Markovits and Gorski, *The German Left*, p. 54. They were aimed at
potential domestic opposition, and enhancing the powers and security of the upper social classes and government
bureaucracy in the event of a profound economic or social upheaval: Graf, *The German Left Since 1945*, p. 251.
70 Konrad Adenauer resigned his chancellorship in 1963 after over a decade in office, and his successor Ludwig
Erhard, also from the CDU party was in office until 1966. The party was in power for twenty years until the election
both its personnel and in its more abstract authoritarianism, the Bundesrepublik looked worryingly like the Third Reich. This only exacerbated New Left fears of the return of fascism.

The analysis of the psychological causes of fascism implied that fascism was an ongoing threat within capitalism. Accordingly, the New Left argued that the Bundesrepublik was a sexually repressive society, like the Third Reich had been. Commentators sustained this critique of contemporary sexual morality even in the face of obviously greater permissiveness. A 1967 article in konkret entitled ‘Sex at 17’ illustrates how intellectuals pulled off this theoretical manoeuvre. The article told the story of a seventeen-year-old German schoolgirl who excused herself to go to the bathroom, to return to the classroom a while later. After a few days, the baby she had given birth to was discovered dead in the toilet bowl. The author used this disturbing tale to warn of the sexual problems of young people in a society ‘characterised equally by bigoted moral standards and a commercial sexualisation of public life’. The article acknowledged the arrival of a commercial Sexwelle and a quantitative increase in sexual intercourse, especially for young people. However, a qualitative change in sexual morality was still needed. Klaus Horn suggested that the Sexwelle was not the sexual revolution for which the New Left was hoping. While teachers were teaching their students about sex, newspapers were discussing penis sizes, and films included nudity, Horn described these phenomena as part of a ‘commercialised enlightenment-wave, that only considers the isolated genital zone, but hardly sees sexuality as a psychosexual social phenomenon.’ Where sexuality was configured as a social phenomenon, it was seen as dangerous.

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of Willy Brandt’s SPD government in 1969. According to Markovits and Gorski, the two giants of the Left, the SPD and the German Trade Union Federation, had become so firmly integrated into the social and political system of the Federal Republic by the early-to-mid 1960s that they could no longer represent or absorb the utopian aspirations of middle-class radicals. Markovits and Gorski, The German Left, p. 47. This state of affairs recalls Marcuse’s critique of bipartisanship as repressive and dangerous. Marcuse dedicated a chapter of One-Dimensional Man to ‘the closing of the political universe’. See Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, pp. 19-55.

73 Ibid, p. 73.
The silent hero of Horn’s distinction between the Sexwelle and the sexual revolution was Herbert Marcuse. In One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse had portrayed advanced industrial society as irrational, its growth dependent upon repression. With its ever-growing capabilities, society’s dominion over the individual had also expanded. However, the vast majority of the population was under the sway of a false consciousness, which made it accept this irrational society. While sexual mores may have relaxed, this was merely a tool of society to maintain total control over the individual. Sexuality was only liberated in socially constructive forms, and the erotic was reduced to sexual experience and satisfaction. ‘Thus diminishing erotic and intensifying sexual energy, the technological reality limits the scope of sublimation,’ Marcuse wrote. ‘It also reduces the need for sublimation.’ Marcuse thus portrayed modern industrial society as one characterised by “repressive desublimation”: while sex might have been everywhere, it was repressive rather than liberating.

German theorists applied Marcuse’s broader critique to the Bundesrepublik. The student leader and sexual theorist Reimut Reiche provided an analysis of the relationship between the Sexwelle and the proper sexual revolution that echoed Horn’s article. He believed that the demand for sexual liberation (the demand for an improvement in the technical and social conditions for the practice of sexuality) had been absorbed by the system of partial satisfaction.

The whole sphere of sexuality is today biased in favour of the system. Sex is reduced to a commodity, the human body is de-eroticized, and a false sexuality imposed on life in general and on

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74 Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, p. ix.
75 Ibid, p. x.
76 Ibid, p. xiii.
77 Ibid, pp. 72-73.
78 Ibid, p. 73. Emphasis in original
79 In the capitalist world of repressive desublimation, the environment was de-eroticised: ‘Sex is integrated into work and public relations and is thus made more susceptible to (controlled) satisfaction.’ Ibid, p. 149. People were superficially satisfied by their repressive society: ‘Loss of conscience due to the satisfactory liberties granted by an unfree society makes for a happy consciousness which facilitates acceptance of the misdeeds of this society.’ Ibid, p. 76. Emphasis in original.
80 Reiche, Sexuality and Class Struggle, p. 16. This work was originally published in German as Sexualität und Klassekampf - Zur Abwehr repressiver Entsublimierung.
people’s relation to their products; the free expression of instinctual drives is turned into controlled aggression.\textsuperscript{81}

Reiche argued that while Wilhelm Reich had been correct in identifying sexual repression as a tool of capitalism, his theories were not fully applicable to modern-day society: the nature of repression had changed. People could no longer see their own sexual repression as obviously, as it was not as direct and brutal.\textsuperscript{82} What Marcuse, Horn and Reiche shared was the belief that an influx of nude images in the media and more open discussion of sex did not entail the freedom from repression for which Wilhelm Reich and Marcuse hoped. The \textit{Sexwelle} was not the sexual revolution.

A more obvious kind of sexual repression lurked beside the \textit{Sexwelle}. Between 1953 and 1965, 38 000 people were convicted for homosexuality, more than were even prosecuted in the Third Reich.\textsuperscript{83} Strict pimping laws meant that parents who let their son or daughter’s partner stay the night could go to prison for five years, while infidelity leading to divorce was also grounds for a prison sentence.\textsuperscript{84} The conservative media also strongly opposed the new wave of sexual enlightenment, particularly for young people.\textsuperscript{85} Furthermore, the intellectual renaissance of Reichian theories suggests that German intellectuals did subjectively feel sexually repressed. The commercial sex wave belied a \textit{Bundesrepublik} still rigorously enforcing a strict conception of sexual normality.

\textbf{Sexual revolution}

The outcome of New Left analysis of repressive sexuality and authoritarianism within the Third Reich and the \textit{Bundesrepublik} was a strong call for a wholesale sexual revolution. In order

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, p. 25. See also ‘Wilhelm Reich: Die sexuelle Revolution,’ \textit{neue kritik} 48/49 (1968), pp. 92-101 for similar ideas.
\textsuperscript{82} Reiche, ‘Wilhelm Reich,’ p. 97.
\textsuperscript{83} Moeller, ‘The Homosexual Man is a “Man,”’ the Homosexual Woman Is a “Woman”: Sex, Society, and the Law in Postwar West Germany’ in Moeller, \textit{West Germany under Construction}, p. 282.
\textsuperscript{84} ‘Was für Zeiten,’ \textit{Der Spiegel} (18 November 1968), p. 54.
\textsuperscript{85} When a sex survey was handed out at a Frankfurt high school, the Springer newspaper \textit{Bild} turned it into a dramatic news story. See Michael Luft, ‘Die Pille under der Schulbank,’ \textit{konkrete} (April, 1967), pp. 21-24.
to prevent the recurrence of fascism, and to destroy the possibility of an atrocity like the Holocaust ever happening again, sexuality had to be liberated. Although Reich and Marcuse were very different theorists, they both shared a cautious optimism that the New Left adopted. They suggested that it was possible for society to develop out of the repressive environments they identified. Reich himself tried to start the sexual revolution in the 1930s, leading the SexPol movement, which campaigned for law reform under the banner of the German Communist Party. As the historian Sabine von Dirke has correctly pointed out, Marcuse was searching for the psychological foundation of a non-repressive culture that the same time did not fall prey to repressive desublimation. Importantly, Marcuse did not call for an overthrow of the capitalist economic system: the development of technology meant that it was possible to preserve the mode of production without repressing sexuality. However, capitalism’s dominion was currently repressive. This control was abstract and difficult to recognise, which meant that fringe groups had to work to change the consciousness and needs of the majority. Instead of the working class, these outsiders became the revolutionary subject. In seeking to achieve this “new sensibility”, these fringe groups would have to “drop out” of society in a “Great Refusal”. Thus Marcuse prescribed a cultural revolution as the necessary response to the repressive desublimation of sexuality.

It was Kommune I who most convincingly answered Marcuse’s call for a cultural revolution. These young men and women from Berlin were familiar with the theoretical movement that

86 Although in Marcuse’s writing One-Dimensional Man was much more pessimistic than the hopeful Eros and Civilisation. Nevertheless, his concept of the Great Refusal did leave some optimism that repressive society could be overcome.
87 Von Dirke, All Power to the Imagination!, p. 389.
88 This was the main thrust of Eros and Civilisation.
90 The Great Refusal was introduced in One-Dimensional Man and developed in An Essay on Liberation. In One-Dimensional Man, Marcuse wrote that ‘underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable…The fact that they start refusing to play the game may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period’: Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, pp. 256-257. See also Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (London: The Penguin Press, 1969).
91 Rudi Dutschke in Uwe Bergmann, Rudi Dutschke, Wolfgang Lefevre and Bernd Rabehl, Rebellion der Studenten oder Die neue Opposition (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1968), p. 91.
suggested repressive sexuality and the bourgeois family had led to National Socialism and the Holocaust. They lived in a time when fascism was seen as an ongoing threat in capitalism and particularly in the Bundesrepublik. Further, they were surrounded by a society that they perceived to be sexually repressive. They were equipped with the theoretical impetus and the moral outrage to carry out a revolution. From this intellectual and social milieu, *Kommune I* sprung forth.
A COMMUNE WITH A VIEW

THE BEGINNINGS OF KOMMUNE I

‘What do I care about Vietnam? I’m having orgasm troubles!’ The communard Dieter Kunzelmann’s legendary exclamation contains the abrasive egotism and coarse frankness that earned West Berlin’s Kommune I its many detractors. His dictum dragged his audience from its world of comfortably bifurcated public and private spheres into the commune’s realm where such a division did not exist. Illuminating the illogic of engaging with political problems while disregarding deep personal unhappiness, the exclamation hinted at the commune’s project of transforming sexuality from a silent resident of the private sphere into a public talking point and a serious political tool. The collective represents the most profound attempt within the West German “1968” to transform the individual and society by reconfiguring the role, practice and perception of sex and sexuality. As a reaction to the capitalist state’s authoritarianism and repression, and their influence on the personal realm, the commune was a direct response to the perceived continuity between the Third Reich and the Bundesrepublik, and to the fear that fascism could re-emerge.

This chapter follows Kommune I from its long incubation period in the early 1960s, to its eventual foundation in February 1967, until mid-1967, just before the commune reached the heights of its notoriety. The chapter interprets the commune’s project in light of the developing theoretical discourse on sexuality and fascism as an attempted revolution of intimacy. Kommune I’s intention was to change fundamentally the way people interacted, both sexually and within the family. This was a moral response to the authoritarianism and alienation of capitalism, which had so recently expressed itself in the form of National Socialism. This reading of the

commune’s aims opens the inquiry into the difficulties of putting theory into practice. The communards’ “Pudding Assassination” attempt on the visiting United States Vice-President, a deviation from their renovation of everyday private life, further illustrates the quandaries of practice. But the responses to the event also justify the commune’s concerns about authoritarianism in the Bundesrepublik. Finally, the expulsion of the communards from the SDS, the student socialist organisation, in May 1967 is investigated for its broader implications about the role of the private sphere in the wider protest movement, and the variety of meanings sexuality had for different players. Kommune I’s radical response to the lingering National Socialist past was a committed moral, personal and theoretical project, but its practice was troubled from the outset.

The origins of Kommune I

Kommune I’s ideological and political orientation is clearest when the commune appears as the final form of a series of antiauthoritarian groups in 1960s West Germany. The maverick Dieter Kunzelmann, the chief theorist of Kommune I, had assiduously critiqued the authoritarianism of West German society since the early 1960s as a member of Gruppe SPUR and Subversive Aktion, while antiauthoritarianism was flourishing as a theoretical theme within the New Left. Gruppe SPUR, the German chapter of the collective Situationist International, united artists in Dada-esque fashion in their subversion and critique of contemporary culture. Subversive Aktion, which Kunzelmann left Gruppe SPUR to found in 1962, shared Gruppe SPUR’s dissatisfaction with what it saw as the consumerist, repressive nature of German society. While Subversive Aktion was certainly focused on action in the form of protest and subversive flyers, a sharpening interest in psychology, particularly in the works of Freud, Reich and Marcuse, shaped

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2 Fichter and Lönnendonker, Kleine Geschichte des SDS, p. 78.
its brand of antiauthoritarianism. The influence of Marcuse in particular, whose writing Kunzelmann had discovered in 1962, was manifest in the group’s publications, in particular in its disapproval of alienation in the bureaucratised world and its belief that people feel a false sense of freedom and therefore do not recognise their repression. These same ideas would find their fullest response in Kommune I.

The early organisations shared the conviction that sexual norms acted as a barometer for the nature of society. This Freudian extrapolation was the basis of the psycho-Marxist theories of fascism published in Das Argument and would be a foundational principle for Kommune I. Already in 1961 Gruppe SPUR ranked sexual suppression as one of the world’s great problems, alongside more traditionally political concerns like the Congo crisis and the Cold War. These two groups condemned contemporary capitalist society for its repressive sexual morality. In the first edition of Subversive Aktion’s journal, sex appeared as an important weapon in the maintenance of the authority’s control.

The prohibition or limitation of an impulse by an arbitrary authority does not necessarily decrease the impulse-readiness and does not stop the execution of the impulse-action, but instead denounces the

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6 Like in the work of the New Left scholars discussed in Chapter One, the word “authority” is ambiguous in the statements and writings of Gruppe SPUR, Subversive Aktion and Kommune I. It is unclear if it refers to people or institutions. It is also unclear if repression is consciously enforced upon citizens by authorities, or whether it is an unconscious function of capitalism.
behaviour as a taboo…The steadily increasing guilt obliges the person to the authority…all the more intimately…. Sex, denounced as a taboo, guarantees the internal cooperation of society.7

This complex mechanism of control was so reprehensible because it caused deep suffering in its objects. Subversive Aktion even equated the denial of sex with ‘the denial of self-realisation,’ condemning sexual repression for causing great personal sorrow.8 These early groups were explicit in their opposition to sexual repression and their conviction that the authoritarian Bundesrepublik was indeed repressive. These twin beliefs would shape Kommune I’s attempted revolution of the private sphere.

Kommune I grew out of both the personnel and the theoretical milieu of Subversive Aktion. When Subversive Aktion fell apart, its members migrated to the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (Socialist German Student Organisation; SDS), which until 1961 had been the student chapter of West Germany’s Social Democratic Party.9 The move to the SDS was an important catalyst for the creation of the commune. It gave the Subversive Aktion members contact with students who shared their opposition to capitalism, were fluent in socialist theory, and who were young enough to believe in the possibility of revolution.10 In June 1966, a group of nine men, five women and two children, including Dieter Kunzelmann and other members of Subversive Aktion and the SDS, spent a week on the Kochelsee in Bavaria, discussing and devising a collective living project.11 The work of Wilhelm Reich and the Frankfurt School critical theorists was at play during the formulation of the project: the future leader of the student protests, Rudi Dutschke, had just returned from the Netherlands where he had discovered Wilhelm Reich’s

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7 My emphasis. ‘Abrechnung’ in Unverbindliche Richtlinien 1, reproduced in Böckelmann and Nagel, Subversive Aktion, p. 75. The language of Subversive Aktion suggests familiarity with the psycho-Marxist theory explained in Chapter One. This excerpt in particular recalls the misery and frustrating inability to rebel described by Reich, Westphal and Wiegand.
8 ‘Repressive Aktion’ in Baldeney, Unverbindliche Richtlinien 2, reproduced in Goechel, Richtlinien und Anschläge, p. 49.
9 Fichter and Lönnendonker, Kleine Geschichte des SDS, p. 81.
11 Kießling, Die antiautoritäre Revolte der 68er, p. 39.
Function of the Orgasm, newly published in Amsterdam in 1964, as well as the Dutch anarchistic “Provo” movement. The participants decided to base their collective in West Berlin, where police had recently responded heavy-handedly to protesters throwing eggs at the American Embassy. This incident explained the allure of Berlin: the group was drawn to the epicentre of authoritarianism. Like the Provos, the future communards intended to provoke authority into revealing its true repressive face to citizens trapped by a false sense of their own freedom.

A sense of urgency characterised the pre-commune planning sessions. Kunzelmann urged his peers to commence action without getting bogged down in the mud of theory, having previously warned of the Frankfurt School’s tendency to favour theory over practice. The group reached consensus that they ought to begin soon. However, this urgency did not mean that the participants had a clear idea about the form of practice to pursue: according to later members of Kommune 2 who participated in the pre-commune discussions, ‘only unclear, contradictory ideas existed about the form of practice.’ This meant that further discussions continued in Berlin throughout autumn and winter, in which more than twenty people were now participating. In November 1966, Kunzelmann disseminated a short essay entitled ‘Notes on the Foundation of Revolutionary Communes in the Metropolises.’ This text figures in the historiography as Kommune I’s founding manifesto, but the document markedly eschewed setting

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12 Enzensberger, Die Jahre der Kommune I, p. 52.
14 ‘I decidedly resist against the apologetics of the Frankfurt School if it leads to the justification of our own impotence. We must get out of the habit of acting like the aficionados of this society because what we know is the theory of people who, exactly like us, have no idea about actual practice.’ Dieter Kunzelmann to the Berlin chapter of Subversive Aktion (9 March 1965), reproduced in Wolschner, Studentenleben p. 246. Kunzelmann maintained this critique of the Frankfurt School later in his life, arguing in 1980 that the danger of the Frankfurt School lay in the way it closed itself off from broader society: Kunzelmann, ‘Die KI war eine Zelle im besten kommunistischen Sinne,’ p. 247.
15 Members of the later Kommune 2 were present at the discussions on the Kochelsee and in Berlin and they describe the planning process in their book. ‘Finally to begin, to wait no longer – on that, everyone in the group agreed,’ they wrote of the mood at the Kochelsee meeting. Kommune 2, Versuch der Revolutionierung des bürglerlichen Individuums, p. 20.
16 Ibid, p. 20.
out a specific programme.\textsuperscript{19} It reads instead as a testament to the group’s frustration with talk and pure theory.\textsuperscript{20} Kunzelmann acknowledged that the group’s ideas were vague, but urged an immediate start and advocated an improvisatory approach. ‘The commune is not the concrete experiment to see whether practice is possible,’ he forcefully declared, ‘instead, we make the commune in order to make practice now.’\textsuperscript{21} Kunzelmann’s insistence, combined with the worrying December 1 formation of the Grand Coalition between the two major federal parties, the CDU and SPD, catalysed the formation of Kommune I. On New Year’s Eve of 1966, the group met. Twelve declared that they were prepared to move into an apartment together. By the end of February, eight adults and two children had moved into an apartment together on Berlin’s Fregestraße.\textsuperscript{22}

The fervent determination with which the communards made their ideas reality betrays their sense that the project was morally and personally imperative. They turned to this new form of protest because they saw traditional politics as an insufficient way to deal with problems of repression and authoritarianism they perceived as real and distressing. Their perseverance indicates that each communard not only understood the repression they denounced on a theoretical level, but that they also perceived it personally. While the length of the pre-commune discussions means that the communards must have contemplated seriously the nature of the repression they were fighting against, they still lacked a defined plan for their practice. Nevertheless, they came to see this lack of plan as a strength, allowing them to improvise, to

\textsuperscript{19} Reimann refers to the text’s ‘legendary status’ as the commune’s founding manifesto: Reimann, \textit{Dieter Kunzelmann}, p. 133. Simon Kießling describes the ‘Notes’ as the theoretical result of the discussions: Kießling, \textit{Die antiautoritative Revolte der 68er}, p. 39. Kunzelmann has described the paper as his attempt to summarise the results of the discussions: Kunzelmann, ‘Die KI war eine Zelle im besten kommunistischen Sinne,’ p. 243.

\textsuperscript{20} As the ex-communard Ulrich Enzensberger has stressed, the key idea in the ‘Notes’ was the ‘little word “practice”:’ ‘We had had enough of the endless cant about emergency plans, Vietnam, old Nazis and so on: we wanted to do something.’ Enzensberger, \textit{Die Jahre der Kommune I}, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{21} Kunzelmann, ‘Notizen zur Gründung revolutionärer Kommunen in den Metropolen’ in Kraushaar, \textit{Frankfurter Schule and Studentenbewegung}, p. 214.

\textsuperscript{22} Enzensberger, \textit{Die Jahre der Kommune I}, p. 105.
begin sooner, and to take advantage of this historic moment.\textsuperscript{23} Galvanised by both theoretical and personal experience, the communards sacrificed strategy for spontaneity in their endeavour to achieve their revolution.

\textbf{The theory behind \textit{Kommune I}}

Responding to the SDS’s claim that \textit{Kommune I} was an obnoxious thorn in the side of serious leftist politics, the communard Rainer Langhans wrote an impassioned defence of his group’s project for the student newspaper \textit{FU-Spiegel} in May 1967. In the \textit{Bundesrepublik} Langhans described, young people had few choices and little joy.

How is it with you? Why are you satisfied that you can’t properly sleep with each other…that you cannot talk properly with each other? Or why do monogamous relationships always go wrong – no matter whether they hold up, which is worse, - or not?\textsuperscript{24}

In this unusually frank piece, Langhans eloquently argued that the problems of society manifest themselves on a personal level – in stifling relationships, an inability to talk to one another, an overwhelming dependence on parents, and unhappy marriages of convenience and material comfort.\textsuperscript{25} The communard’s essay was the most explicit expression of the theoretical and moral foundation of a lifestyle and movement that so baffled many observers. Within its own circle, \textit{Kommune I} rescripted traditional family relationships and imagined a non-repressive, erotic environment. This powerful attempt to introduce intimacy back into German society was both a political struggle to ensure National Socialism could not re-emerge, and a personal response to childhoods trapped in silence.

\textsuperscript{23} Even the title of Kunzelmann’s ‘Notes on the Foundation of Revolutionary Communes in the Metropolises’ suggested that he believed his commune would be the leader of a history-changing revolutionary movement, and he posited himself as the leader of this revolution. The ‘I’ in \textit{Kommune I} adds to this impression.

\textsuperscript{24} The communards rarely used the word “monogamy”, instead preferring to talk of \textit{Zweierbeziehungen}, or two-person relationships. I have chosen to translate \textit{Zweierbeziehung} as “monogamous relationship” because it makes more sense in English. The use of insistent questions in this excerpt is typical of \textit{Kommune I}, as they force the readers to survey their own private lives, instead of merely reading the article without understanding its relevance to their own personal experiences.

Kommune I’s preference for developing practice over theory meant that it never directly explained the reasons behind its highly original collective lifestyle. The communards frequently spoke to the press, but they expressed their scepticism of the mass media by making statements that were frequently coy, sarcastic, or hostile. The historiography has done little to fill in the gap. When histories go beyond the famous Pudding Assassination and Brussels flyers, they tend to acknowledge the influence of Wilhelm Reich without fully exploring the form of his influence. Otherwise, scraps of the theory behind the communal project are scattered throughout different works: the opposition to the institution of marriage, the public discussion of neuroses, and the collective childrearing. Stefan Micheler has provided the most accurate account of the group’s aims, writing that they tried ‘to break down the personal distance between each other and transfer political demands into their own life-practice.’ This statement is essentially correct but Micheler does not explain in any detail how or why the communards aimed to do this. A more complete picture emerges from a comprehensive survey of the communards’ activities, interviews taken during and after the time of the commune, communards’ memoirs, and the New Left intellectual context.

Kommune I used psychoanalytic and Marxist tools to analyse the repressive nature of its society. The commune’s debt to Wilhelm Reich was no secret: they paid their own rent by peddling bootleg copies of works by Reich and Erich Fromm on the topics of Marxism and

26 Burns and van der Will portray Kommune I as notorious pranksters, without mentioning their sexual politics: Burns and van der Will, Protest and Democracy in West Germany, p. 109. Markovits and Gorski simply write that Kommune I dropped out of society and turned to drugs, jumping straight to the end of 1968 without even mentioning the Brussels flyers or the communards’ liberated sexuality: Markovits and Gorski, The German Left, p. 58. Mausbach reads the Brussels flyers as an exemplar of the West German counterculture, but does not extend his analysis beyond this: Mausbach, ‘Burn, ware-house, burn!’: Herzog writes that Kommune I operated on Reichian assumptions but then immediately undermines any serious value in their practice by relating an incident when an associate of the communards defecated in a courtroom: Herzog, ‘Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together,’ p. 404. Micheler also writes that Reich was the theoretical foundation of the commune’s project: Micheler, ‘Der Sexualitätsdiskurs in der deutschen Studierendenbewegung,’ p. 15.


psychoanalysis.\textsuperscript{29} Indeed, \textit{Kommune I} was in part responsible for the popular revival of Reich, as their bootlegs were the first editions published in the post-war period.\textsuperscript{30} They first title they reproduced was \textit{Die Funktion des Orgasmus} and the second was \textit{The Mass Psychology of Fascism}.\textsuperscript{30} The communards eagerly adopted Reich’s insistence on the primacy of sexuality and his analysis of sexual repression as a form of systemic control. Langhans later pithily précised the communards’ understanding of Reich’s theory when he wrote that ‘in the form of sexual relationships it is decided in the long run how repressive a system is.’\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Kommune I} found hope that collective life could revitalise interpersonal relationships in Reich’s \textit{Sexual Revolution}.\textsuperscript{32} Examining Russian communes he considered to have failed, Reich maintained his belief that the commune was ‘the “family form” of the future, the future unit of social living’.\textsuperscript{33} Though the communards were never to express this explicitly, Reich also gave them the idea that the fight against repressive sexuality was the fight against fascism. Langhans in particular would have been well versed in this theory: he was a member of the Argument Club at the Free University, the discussion group that published \textit{Das Argument}.\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Kommune I} was an attempt to put Reich’s fundamental ideas about repressive sexuality, authoritarianism and fascism into practice.

Herbert Marcuse was a second strong influence upon the commune. In Berlin in July 1967 Marcuse even paid the commune a visit.\textsuperscript{35} Reich’s influence was in the relationship between capitalism, fascism and sexual repression, and Marcuse covered similar themes. However, Marcuse’s primary influence was over the function of the commune. Marcuse viewed advanced industrial capitalism as imbued with a repression people failed to recognise, which included the repressive desublimation of sexual impulses. In order to overcome this authoritarian repression, Marcuse believed that fringe groups needed to work to create a new subjectivity. As part of a “Great Refusal” to play along with authoritarianism, these fringe groups would ‘change the

\textsuperscript{29} They first title they reproduced was \textit{Die Funktion des Orgasmus} and the second was \textit{The Mass Psychology of Fascism}. Eckhard Siepmann, ‘Genital versus Prägenital,’ p. 101.
\textsuperscript{30} Micheler, ‘Der Sexualitätsdiskurs in der deutschen Studierendenbewegung,’ p. 11.
\textsuperscript{31} Langhans, \textit{Ich bin’s}, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, p. 219.
\textsuperscript{34} Langhans, \textit{Ich bin’s}, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{35} Enzensberger, \textit{Die Jahre der Kommune I}, p. 186.
people in their attitudes, their instincts, their goals and their values.\textsuperscript{36} Kommune I clearly considered itself to be one of these fringe groups, fashioning itself as the vanguard of the revolution. By creating a new lifestyle, liberating sexuality and eradicating the nuclear family, the communards would create a new subjectivity that would eventually save the German capitalism from its authoritarianism.

The family

Langhans’ article exhibited the commune’s anxiety that there was something deeply wrong with human interaction in the Bundesrepublik. The commune was an attempt to find different forms of interpersonal interactions and this manifested itself in an opposition to the bourgeois nuclear family. As former communard Ulrich Enzensberger wrote retrospectively in 2006, ‘in our eyes, the family as an institution had gone bankrupt as the original stronghold of human values, due to the relationships it had brought out.’\textsuperscript{37} The commune presented itself as a \textit{Großfamilie} (big family), subverting the strict authoritarianism of the \textit{Kleinfamilie} (small or nuclear family), which Reich and New Left theorists had decried.\textsuperscript{38} Two children lived with the adults of Kommune I, with the adults sharing childcare duties. The children’s biological parents refused to conform to the traditional roles of mother and father: raising the children was a collective task. Patriarchal authority lost its economic basis as the communards surrendered individual earnings to collective coffers. Housework was also shared. The large number of photos of the communards in their apartment shaped the public’s impression of the commune as an alternative to the bourgeois family, depicting with the adults and children in their apartment, often around the dining table (see Figure 1).\textsuperscript{39} Kommune I intended to preserve the domesticity of the nuclear

\textsuperscript{36} Herbert Marcuse, ‘Der Zwang, ein freier Mensch zu sein’, interview in \textit{Twen} (June 1969), reproduced in Kraushaar, \textit{Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung}, p. 643. Marcuse explained the ideas of the new subjectivity and the Great Refusal in \textit{An Essay on Liberation}, but introduced the idea in \textit{One-Dimensional Man}.

\textsuperscript{37} Enzensberger, \textit{Die Jahre der Kommune I}, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{38} On Kommune I as a \textit{Großfamilie} see ‘Die Ehe ist tot: wohin treibt die Familie?’, \textit{Pardon} (May, 1969), pp. 22-43.

\textsuperscript{39} For an excellent visual history of Kommune I, see Rainer Langhans and Christa Ritter, \textit{KI – Das Bilderbuch der Kommune} (Munich: Blumenbar Verlag, 2008).
family, but to rid it of its self-perpetuating cycle of authoritarianism, repression, guilt and resentment.

The commune’s opposition to traditional family structures was a twofold response to National Socialism. Former communards have since expressed the belief that the bourgeois family could claim partial responsibility for National Socialism, echoing the writing of New Left theorists of the 1960s. As Rainer Langhans recounted in his memoir:

It was clear to us that the fascist murderers of the Third Reich came from the nuclear-family-socialisation and it would be mad simply to continue on with this bourgeois model, which had made a mass murder possible…It is not capitalism that enables genocide, but its core. And the core of the state – in this we agreed with the conservatives – was the family. 40

Langhans’ formulation makes it clear that the communards not only accepted Reich’s views on the psychological causes of fascism, but that they were also very mindful of the murderous consequences of Germany’s incarnation of fascism. The disavowal of the Kleinfamilie in favour of the Großfamilie was a moral response to the Holocaust, and an attempt to ensure that genocide could not happen again.

More indirectly, the communards’ overhaul of traditional family structures indicated their personal dissatisfaction with their own families. The communards would not have pursued their new form of family with such tenacity if they had not found their own bourgeois families uncommunicative and stifling. Their dissatisfaction can be traced back to the older generation’s refusal to speak about National Socialism and the Third Reich. 41 As Langhans wrote of the older generation’s attempt to deal with National Socialism: ‘We lived in a world that remained silent and did not speak with us.’ 42 The inability to be open with one’s parents about and because of the Nazi past provoked the commune’s particular form of protest. According to Langhans, the

40 Langhans, *Ich bin’s*, p. 44 and 48.
41 The Mitscherlichs explained at length the older generation’s refusal to talk about the Third Reich: Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn*.
communards’ inability to confront their own parents led to them confronting society and changing themselves. Fascism had only increased the alienation between Germans. The communards’ project was therefore both a way to prevent fascism from reoccurring, and to help Germany recover from its aftereffects.

*Kommune I* pursued its opposition to the bourgeois private sphere ruthlessly, reimagining the domestic space. Life in the commune was to be truly collective: everything was to be shared. Even bathroom doors created private sphere and were therefore to be removed. Communards did not have their own beds, but instead slept on mattresses tiled upon the floor (see Figure 3). Possessions and money were shared. This collective life was an intimidating prospect. Although twelve people had declared themselves ready to join the commune on December 31 1966, the following morning five had changed their minds. The loss of private sphere and of private property were daunting, according to *Kommune 2*, and the fear of having to give up ‘the psychic protection of their own apartment’ overwhelmed the fear of being shut out of future collective living experiments. Langhans has described his shock when he had just moved in and saw a fellow communard wearing his shirt – ‘*his* shirt!’ Even this small surrender of private property was unsettling. The decision to move into the commune and adopt the collective lifestyle was enormous, and Kunzelmann believed that simply to move in was the beginning of the revolution. This step ‘set free immense forces in everyone.’ This language is reminiscent of Marcuse’s Great Refusal: by refusing to play along with the normal rules of capitalism, the communards were creating a new subjectivity for themselves. The living arrangement of the commune was therefore in itself political: an attempt to dismantle the way the post-fascist capitalist authority had stifled relationships.

43 Langhans, ‘Du must den Dingen ihre eigene Melodie vorspielen,’ p. 311.
44 Rainer Langhans has said of toilet doors that ‘they allow you to retreat, they create the private sphere. We wanted to destroy the private sphere.’ Rainer Langhans quoted in ‘Die Tage der Kommune,’ *Der Spiegel* (30 June 1997), p. 100.
46 Ibid.
47 Langhans, *Ich bin’s*, p. 47.
Sexuality

The second prong of Kommune I’s attempt to revitalise interpersonal relationships was its much-maligned approach to liberating sexuality. The commune firmly aligned itself with the group in the New Left that saw sexuality as a central category of human life, and indeed open and free sexuality would come to define Kommune I in the public eye. The commune’s foreswearing of monogamy was its most original moment. While Reich and Marcuse influenced the way they saw repression operating, the communards’ solution was novel. Neither Reich nor Marcuse had ever advocated the dissolution of monogamous relationships. However, the communards saw marriage and monogamy as authoritarian, deformed by capitalist notions of ownership and domination. Kunzelmann had been the strongest advocate of dismantling monogamy. In the course of planning the commune, Kunzelmann had told his interlocutors: ‘You must uproot yourselves!...out of your monogamous relationships! Don’t look for your security and your possession in the other! Be an open personality!’ The communards opposed monogamy because it carried the stain of ownership: it was the sexual manifestation of private property possession in capitalism. Further, the communards saw monogamous relationships in much the same way as they saw the nuclear family: spoiled by capitalism and dangerous in their authoritarianism. The recently divorced Dagrun Enzensberger said in an interview that in marriage one party always tyrannises the other. This miserable appraisal of monogamy

49 Reich was not against monogamy when it was connected to love. ‘It has been shown that people with the capacity for orgasmic gratification are considerably better adjusted to monogamous relationships than those whose orgasmic function is disturbed. However, their monogamous attitude rests not on inhibited polygamous impulses or moralistic considerations but on the sex-economic ability to experience pleasure repeatedly with the same partner.’ Moreover, Reich only thought a monogamous relationship should last as long as sexual gratification lasted: Reich, *The Sexual Revolution*, p. 7. For the majority, promiscuity in sexual relationships resulted from sexual disturbance, and when they settled down in lifelong marriage, fidelity depended on moral inhibitions rather than sexual gratification: p. 8. Marcuse criticised promiscuity as non-erotic: it was part of repressive sexual morality. He reminded the communards of this when he visited them in 1967: Enzensberger, *Die Jahre der Kommune I*, p. 186.


51 Langhans mentioned refer to ‘private sexual property-relationships’ in ‘Aus der Kommune’. 

52 Dagrun Enzensberger in Werner Kraeling, ‘Die Wahrheit über die Liebes-Kommune in Berlin,’ *Neue Welt in Klaus Mich*, n.d., n.p. Enzensberger had been married to the writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger and was now his younger brother Ulrich Enzensberger’s girlfriend.
resembled the psycho-Marxist view of patriarchal authority within the family: fear and guilt replaced love. Tyranny on a personal level fostered the authoritarian character, exposing society to the risk of fascism.

A further aspect of Kommune I’s approach to sexuality was the open discussion of sexual problems and neuroses, epitomised by Kunzelmann’s complaint of orgasm troubles. Not only were the communards to share their clothes and wallets, but they were also to share their most intimate experiences and fears. According to the historian Klaus Hartung, who knew the communards, Langhans had tried to talk about his girl problems with others in the SDS, but his fellow students were not interested. In Kommune I he was finally able to share his feelings. Hartung explains that the communards developed a provocative thesis, that:

He who suffers has something to say. Not the intellectually armed political functionary has something to say, but instead he who has difficulties in articulating himself, who is fearful, he should go the podium…the collective is only strong when it listens to the weak.

Although the Sexwelle meant that it was becoming more permissible to speak of sexuality, the communards’ openness was still shocking. The 1950s had been characterised by silence about sexuality. Open discussion was something the commune did well, and not just in relation to sex. Their candidness and ignorance of taboos would later play out remarkably in the communards’ trial for inciting arson. The desire to talk publicly was the commune’s insignia, and in itself it was already political. As Kunzelmann has said, ‘we were no longer prepared to perceive political life and private life as separate categories.’ Kommune I may have involved a revolution of the domestic sphere, but from the outset the communards intended to ensure that their activities would not be known to themselves alone.

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54 Ibid, p. 105.
57 Kommune 2 had similar ambitions to Kommune I, sharing their sexual problems and psychoanalysing each other daily. However, they did not share Kommune I’s belief that these needed to be communicated brashly to the public,
These new models of the family and sexuality aimed to create a new kind of individual. Kommune I always intended to be two interrelated revolutions: the interior revolution of the individual, to be achieved through collective life, and an exterior revolution of society, to be achieved by revolutionising the individual. To Kunzelmann, personal revolution was the condition precedent of social revolution. In his ‘Notes’, Kunzelmann had attributed the failure of similar collective experiments to their unsatisfactory attempts to abolish multiple individual histories and create a new history together. ‘The commune is only able to initiate system-disrupting practice directed towards the exterior,’ he wrote, ‘when individuals within the commune have changed themselves effectively.’58 This was a Marcusian idea. Speaking to the youth magazine Twen in 1969, Marcuse extrapolated upon his idea of the new subjectivity. ‘The revolution requires before all else the emergence of a new type of human,’ he claimed, ‘with needs and desires that are qualitatively different from the aggressive and repressive needs and desires of the established society.’59 Operating on Reichian and Marcusian assumptions, the communards were trying to create a new type of person, a character that was not authoritarian. This attempt was predicated on the argument developed by the psychoanalytic theorists in the New Left: that political dangers, like fascism, came from within.

Kommune I’s new lifestyle can be read as part of the global counterculture that developed around “1968”. The term counterculture, originally developed in 1968, indicates a “way of life” that is cultivated in express opposition to the dominant or hegemonic culture, even when it does

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59 Marcuse, ‘Der Zwang, ein freier Mensch zu sein,’ p. 643.
not take the form of an overtly political response. According to the term’s neologist, a counterculture is a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of a barbaric institution. In the 1960s, the Western counterculture questioned the basic assumptions about the “good life” that underpinned social order. As a result, mainstream culture viewed even explicitly non-political aspects of the middle-class counterculture as political and potentially dangerous for its hegemony. Kommune I, with its collective lifestyle, radical views on sex and utopian dreams of a non-repressive society, falls readily into this broad definition of the 1960s counterculture. This could suggest that we ought to read Kommune I in its transnational context, weakening our focus on specifically German catalysts of the commune and the specifically German discourses into which it dived. However, to persist with a transnational approach would be to obscure the full meaning of Kommune I. It certainly played with themes that other countercultures would develop: antiauthoritarianism, free sexuality, non-conformist appearances, and later on, drugs. However, opposition to the hegemonic culture in Germany had different implications to opposition to the hegemonic culture in other European countries. While all countercultures are moral opposition to the dominant culture, this was most true in Germany.

The German hegemonic culture was identified with National Socialism, and therefore dissent against it necessarily resonated in broader discourse about the Nazi past. Furthermore, while the student protests of “1968” were characterised by their theoretical engagement throughout the globe, the same cannot be said for “1968” counterculture. This West German incarnation of the “1968” counterculture was particularly theoretical, and it was unique in its committed


63 Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination!*, p. 4.

64 Wilfried Mausbach correctly identifies Kommune I as the exemplification of the West German “1968” counterculture. Mausbach, ‘Burn, ware-house, burn!’, p. 176.
engagement with the ideas of Wilhelm Reich. Finally, to speak of a transnational “1968” can make time seem static, as the one term knits together all the interrelated events of the years between 1967 and 1969. “1968” as a signifier seems to get rid of the need for chronology. However, emerging at the beginning of 1967, the commune was a very early outbreak of “1968” counterculture, and certainly the first example within Germany that could be termed countercultural, rather than subcultural. Its earliness means that it was all the more original, and all the more subversive. While it can be useful to apply the general term “counterculture” to Kommune I, we must not ignore its very German specificities.

The revolution the commune imagined was ostensibly a revolution of the Bundesrepublik, but it was also a response to National Socialism and fear of its re-emergence. Personal horror at the Third Reich was a key catalyst for several of the communards’ entry into political life. Increased awareness of the past had politicised the communards, like many 68ers. Fritz Teufel, for instance, became a protester at the time of West Germany’s series of trials against the murderers of Auschwitz, whose sadism had horrified him. Horror at the past led in turn to dissatisfaction with contemporary Germany. According to Enzensberger, the communards were not happy with the way their society was processing the Nazi past. “The clearer it became that we could not speak of de-Nazification in the Federal Republic [because Nazis had not been punished] the more pressing the question of the deeper causes of National Socialism became.” This dissatisfaction was also directed, more personally, at the communards’ own parents. Since the time of Kommune I, numerous participants have discussed their concern about their fathers’

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65 Subcultures are typically working-class, whereas countercultures are middle-class. Subcultures accept the values of the hegemonic culture in relation to work time, but not in their leisure time. Countercultures do not accept the values of the hegemonic culture even during work time, which means they are more threatening: Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination*, p. 4.

66 ‘Knisterndes Gefühl,’ *Der Spiegel* (26 June 1967), p. 34. Enzensberger has also written that the communard Dagmar Seehuber learnt about the Holocaust for the first time while working as an au pair with a Jewish family. When she became involved in Vietnam protest circles, she was ‘finally with people who were of the opinion that what had happened with the Jews was terrible.’ Dagmar Seehuber, interview by Ulrich Enzensberger, *Die Jahre der Kommune I*, p. 44.

roles in the war and in the Third Reich. Langhans has directly addressed the way the communards’ concern about their parents’ participation in National Socialism affected their project.

“We were very conscious that we had murderer parents…. We lived in the knowledge that they had something like an evil gene that could break out again at some other time. That we would also carry it on. Or, to say it now directly, that we could not be happy…but we could not directly attack our own parents.”

Langhans’ imagery suggests that the communards felt that the horrifying past was within them. The Kontinuitätsfrage was actually an intimate problem, for which they had to revolutionise their own personalities.

The historian would do well to question after-the-fact accounts that depict opposition to National Socialism as a central catalyst for Kommune I. Enzensberger and Langhans certainly discuss the Third Reich in their memoirs far more than they did in 1967. Could this not be a crafty ploy to recast a bunch of provocative hooligans as the moral trailblazers of 1960s Germany? I offer two reasons why we should not be overly sceptical. The first is that even without these memoirs we could read the commune as a response to National Socialism. The general public was becoming increasingly aware of the details of the past in the early- to mid-1960s. The communards’ outrage was not an isolated phenomenon. Further, the Kontinuitätsfrage was becoming a strong theme in Leftist and liberal publications, as was the theoretical connection between sexuality and fascism. The communards consumed such ideas through the writings of Reich and Marcuse, and through exposure to the Argument Club and the psychological theories of fascism it explored.

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68 Ibid, pp. 11 and 38; Langhans, Ich bin’s, pp. 48-9.
70 Both establish very early on in their memoirs that they opposed National Socialism and its continuity in the Bundesrepublik, and develop the Nazi past as an ongoing theme in their books.
The second reason is that, at the time, it is unlikely that the commune was a fully conscious response to National Socialism. The communards did occasionally refer to National Socialism and the Kontinuitätsfrage was explicitly at play within the SDS. However, the communards probably often saw themselves as responding to existing authority structures rather than directly addressing the past. But, whether willed or not, strong actions against the existing authorities and a denunciation of the reigning sexual morality as repressive were statements against National Socialism, especially in light of the intellectual milieu outlined in Chapter One. Rather than rewriting history, the communards are likely drawing attention to themes that were immanent in the commune, even when they were forgotten or overlooked. It would be an exaggeration to claim that Kommune I constantly and explicitly styled itself as a political response to National Socialism and an attempt to prevent the reappearance of fascism. However, the commune’s theoretical undercurrents and the lingering spectre of continuity meant that the communards' actions were not only a response to the Bundesrepublik, but to the overwhelming horrors that had come before it.

The Pudding Assassination

Kommune I set out as a lifestyle project, trying to reintroduce intimacy into the family and sexuality, but it only arose to nationwide prominence after the communards’ first dramatic encounter with the law. On April 5, eleven communards were arrested for a planned assassination of the visiting U.S. Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. The following morning the conservative Springer boulevard newspaper Bild's hefty headline announced that the communards had conspired to assassinate Vice-President Humphrey in a bomb attack.71 The report was detailed and frightening: Berlin extremists had prepared an attack on ‘the guest of our city’ with bombs and highly explosive chemicals, explosive-filled plastic bags – called “Mao-

Cocktails” by the terrorists – and stones.\textsuperscript{72} In the same edition, \textit{Bild} published an open letter to Vice-President Humphrey, urging him not to take the communards seriously, and disassociating ‘democratic Germany’ from their ‘crazy’ activities.\textsuperscript{73} This letter fashioned the image of \textit{Kommune I} that the conservative press would perpetuate over the next year. It rendered the communards as irrational and constructed them as an aberration, representative of no wider social change. The letter’s tone was of assumed moral superiority, and its saccharine sycophantism towards the visiting American suggested an uncritical support for this world power, positing Germany as its obedient servant. In at once asserting the newspaper’s ascendancy over the communards and revealing its obsequious attitude towards the United States, the letter betrayed the authoritarianism the communards opposed.

\textit{Bild}’s moral authority was shaken when it was revealed the assassination report was untrue. Rather than explosives, the communards had been preparing pudding, yoghurt, eggs and smoke bombs to throw at the Vice-President. Concerned that their preoccupation with themselves was closing them off from the wider society, the communards had decided to launch anarchistic campaigns against the establishment.\textsuperscript{74} Their intention was, in the style of the Amsterdam Provos, to reduce authorities by making them \textit{lächerlich} (laughable).\textsuperscript{75} The incident soon became known as by the ironic name \textit{Pudding-Attentat} (“Pudding Assassination”), whose use reminded people of \textit{Bild}’s hysterical first reaction. The communards relished the attention the false charge had won for them: when they were set free, they held a press conference and gleefully re-enacted the making of the pudding for television cameras.\textsuperscript{76} The initial horror at a planned assassination

\begin{enumerate}
\item[Ibid.]
\item Enzensberger, \textit{Die Jahre der Kommune I}, p. 110.
\item Kunzelmann, Dorothea Ridder, Fritz Teufel, Dagmar Seehuber, Ulrich Enzensberger and Hans-Joachim Hameister held a press conference after they were released. They claimed that the Pudding Assassination was not an “aggressive act” but that they had intended to make Vice-President Humphrey \textit{lächerlich}. The communards quoted in Disciplinary Investigation Officer to Volker Gebbert, 5 May 1967, reproduced in Kommune I, \textit{Gesammelte Werke gegen uns}, p. 6.
\item The regional television channel in Berlin (\textit{SFB}) invited the group to reconstruct the bombs once again, this time in the presence of a filming camera. They communards agreed. Kathrin Fahlenbrach, ‘The Aesthetics of Protest in the Media of 1968 in Germany,’ lecture given at the Ninth International Conference of the International Society for
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and the subsequent humorous revelation that the weapon of choice was an innocuous dessert had drawn the nation’s attention to Kommune I.

Although the communards were never to throw pudding at Vice-President Humphrey, the Pudding Assassination was nevertheless a success. The Vice-President may not have been made lächerlich, but the communards had provoked the police and the Springer Press into acting in a manner which seemed ridiculous. This was a remarkable strike against a strong authority in the media: Springer’s firm controlled 40 per cent of the West German press, including 80 per cent of all regional dailies and 90 of all Sunday editions. Bild had a daily circulation of four million copies.77 Der Spiegel picked up on Bild’s reprehensible reportage, condemning the conservative press for being in thrall of the police. It argued that the false reportage in the immediate aftermath of the arrests showed a dangerous, uninquisitive dependence on this arm of the state: ‘Our best papers made the police report their own, as if they themselves had experienced everything that the police reported.’78 It was evident to the German public that beneath the humour of the Pudding Assassination lay a serious warning about the monolithic nature of authority in West Germany.

The commune not only goaded the conservative press into publishing a report which was ludicrously untrue, they also invoked the ire of their learning institutions and families. Volker Gebbert was suspended from the Free University, and Ulrich Enzensberger had a disciplinary hearing.79 Most members of the commune received worried or angry letters from their families, who had been visited by police, ensuring that the details about their lives given to them by the communards were true. Kunzelmann’s father wrote heatedly to him that he was a ‘case for the

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77 Stuart J. Hilwig, ‘The Revolt Against the Establishment: Students versus the Press in West Germany and Italy’ in Fink, Gassert and Junker, 1968: The World Transformed, p. 326.
psychiatrist. Volker Gebbert’s father agreed that the capitalist system was suspect, but objected to his son’s mode of protest:

If you want to achieve something, then only go through the purposeful propaganda within the framework and under the wings of the SDS. But do so in a more serious way. – At the moment everyone sees you as grubby, lazy deadbeats. All the squalid things written about you can only damage your idea.

The communards appear to have chalked this up as a victory, later publishing the letters from the Free University and their families in their handbook *Collected Works against Us*, as evidence of authority showing its true face. The communards did not even hesitate to publish the letters from their families, casting them as an authority on the same level as the university, the police, the government and the justice system.

The Pudding Assassination was far removed from the commune’s original intention of revolutionising sexuality, and the event reveals a difficulty with its revolutionary project. The communards had lived together since February, trying to create a new mode of existence. They had not appeared in the media since November 1966, when several members of the pre-commune discussion group stormed the stage as the Chancellor of the Free University was making a speech. Marcuse had written that the culture revolution had to emerge from fringe groups, but *Kommune I* was perhaps too fringe: it consisted of less than twenty people and without media attention would have very little influence beyond their own circle. *Kommune 2*, which also tried to reform interpersonal relationships, never engaged in provocative actions in the style of the Pudding Assassination, and consequently received negligible attention.

*Kommune I*’s relationship with the mass media was crucial to the success of their project. As the journalist Stefan Aust has insightfully remarked of the German 68ers in general, they realised

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82 This action and the newspaper reports about it were described by the communards as their ‘entry into world history’: Langhans and Teufel, *Klau Mich*, n.p.
that the media only reacted when something spectacular happened. The Pudding Assassination proved this to be true. The danger in such provocation was that it detracted from the commune’s sexual revolution. However, although throwing pudding at the Vice-President was not a sexual act, it won substantial public interest in the commune’s sexual project. As the historian Kathrin Fahlenbrach has argued, the West German protest movement was ‘a revolt against the media and as a revolt within the media.’ The media was a particularly effective tool for Kommune I, because the German media personalised the student movement by referring to the commune. Without the mass media, they could never have commanded the attention of all West Germany. While actions like the Pudding Assassination may have provoked the reportage, the real fascination lay with the commune’s views on sexuality. Some publications, like the influential Der Spiegel, were sympathetic to Kommune I, and it was through such publications that Kommune I was able to disseminate its call for the revolution of sexuality and interpersonal relationships. Nevertheless, despite the opportunity for publicity the Pudding Assassination provided, it did not attack the core of the problem. It did nothing to address the ‘evil gene’ within the West German people that Langhans described.

Kommune I and the Left

Bringing sexuality into the open was a politically suspect move. Volker Gebbert’s father’s entreaty to his son to be more ‘serious’ foreshadowed the deep splits Kommune I would create within the Left. Kommune I and the student leader Rudi Dutschke came to personalise the broader student protest movement within the media. However, the commune’s mode of practice

85 Ibid, p. 4.
86 For example, an article following the Pudding Assassination described the fundamental worldview of the ‘curious circle’ thus: ‘I have orgasm troubles, and I want this to be communicated to the public.’ This formulation suggested that what really interested people was the commune’s sexual politics: ‘Rauch und Rahm,’ Der Spiegel (10 April 1967), p. 34.
87 Although Der Spiegel certainly found the commune amusing, it did not misrepresent its aims. After the arson trial, for instance, it reported that ‘[the communards] want to provoke the public sphere and make the authority lächerlich’: ‘…Und abends sind Sie nett zu ihrer Frau,’ Der Spiegel (10 July 1967), p. 27.
was suspect within the protest milieu: it was not serious enough. In her editorial in the May 1967 edition of *konkret*, the well-known Hamburg journalist Ulrike Meinhof objected to *Kommune I*.\(^88\) While she acknowledged that the commune’s form of collective life had its own purpose for the communards, she did not recognise it as having a significance beyond their own circle. On this reading, the publicity *Kommune I* received in the wake of the Pudding Assassination was a missed opportunity. ‘They are using their sudden publicity only for their private exhibitionism,’ Meinhof lamented. To Meinhof, the Pudding Assassination was a landmark moment, when the communards brought down the silence propagated by the Springer Press that had existed about oppositional activity in the Bundesrepublik. In the aftermath, when they ought to have talked about Vietnam, they talked about themselves instead:

> Regarding their pudding action, it proved a particularly brilliant means above all to irritate the police, press and politicians, to provoke them into a knee-jerk reaction, in which their whole moral and political unsteadiness with regards to the Vietnam War made itself clear.\(^89\)

Even within the Left, the publicity of sexuality was questionable. Meinhof’s editorial represents was a symptom of a wider trend within the Left: the inability to see that talking about personal problems had merits as a political action.

In a more direct reprobation, the West Berlin SDS suspended and then expelled the communards from their organisation in May 1967.\(^90\) The ostensible catalyst for the vote was *Kommune I*’s unauthorised dissemination of leaflets signed off by the SDS. However, the SDS’ dissatisfaction ran deeper: the SDS President Wolfgang Lefèvre’s speech justifying the expulsion ran for a full thirty minutes.\(^91\) The brunt of his criticism was directed at the form of *Kommune I*’s activities. In their ‘flight from reality’, the communards focused too heavily on themselves and were not sufficiently political. According to Lefèvre, the communards practised a ‘schizophrenic’


\(^89\) Meinhof, ‘Napalm und Pudding,’ p. 2.


\(^91\) Mosler, *Was wir wollten, was wir wurden*, p. 112.
and ‘false’ brand of anarchism, which in itself reproduced the system of references of the ruling social structure. The ‘blind actions’ of these ‘pseudo-leftists’ were not a challenge to fight, but were instead the refusal to change anything. Lefèvre conceded that the SDS could tolerate and even welcome some of this anarchism, if Kommune I did not besmirch the name of the SDS in the process. For the SDS, the personal was not political. The personal undermined the political.

The divisions between Kommune I and the SDS evidence the wider divisions between different conceptions of what politics was, what it could be, and what it ought to be. In 1977, Rudi Dutschke described the commune’s expulsion from the SDS as ‘a further tense attempt to hold on political credibility as socialists.’ The SDS attempted to straddle the political worlds of the Old and New Left. Despite espousing extra-parliamentarism, the SDS viewed itself as a traditional force of opposition, volunteering a coherent theoretical critique of the ruling powers. While the West Berlin SDS went so far as adapting new forms of protest from the United States, such as the “sit-in”, it failed to subscribe fully to the notion that the personal was political, preferring the political to remain political. Accordingly, the SDS’ way of addressing the Kontinuitätsfrage was at once more direct and more superficial than Kommune I’s intimate revolution. The SDS attempted to expose professors who had not opposed the Nazi regime, as well as loudly pointing to the involvement of politicians like President Lübke and Chancellor Kiesinger in the bureaucracy of the Third Reich. The exposure of the continuity of personnel was an exercise firmly rooted in the public sphere. The SDS neglected to ask about the deeper causes of fascism or acknowledge that they could have any fascist qualities themselves.

93 The exclusion of the commune from the SDS led some to speculate the KI’s days were numbered. ‘Die letzten Tage der Kommune?’ Extra-Blatt (6 May 1967), reproduced in Langhans and Teufel, Klau Mich, n.p.
94 Rudi Dutschke quoted in Fichter and Lönnendonker, Kleine Geschichte des SDS, p. 105.
Kommune I publicly revelled in their rejection. Instead of seeking reconciliation and solidarity with the SDS, the communards cultivated the antagonism. Communard Hans-Joachim Hameister said of the SDS:

The reason the SDS’s members joined the SDS is that there is nothing else aside from the SDS.

They do not have the same sense of purpose. Their sense of purpose is the SDS. This feeling remains…It happens thus: individuals, gathered together in the name of the working class, remain unknown to themselves and to others…The SDS is an uncommitted sect.96

This criticism mirrored the SDS’ own criticism of Kommune I: that the communards refused to change anything. The difference lay in the “anything” the two groups thought needed changing. Hameister suggested that did nothing to break down the alienation of West German society, betraying a more personal view of the problems with the Bundesrepublik. In a similarly disparaging assessment of the SDS, Volker Gebbert claimed that ‘aggression against reformers does not make up for not having one’s own concept. For the commune, the SDS is only a place of potential members of interest.’97 Tellingly, Kommune I referred to the SDS as the “Seriöser Deutscher Studentenbund” (“serious German student federation”), replacing the usual “Socialist” with “Serious”.98 To the communards, the old-school politics of the SDS was insufficient. It superficially skirted around the real questions of German society while posing as serious.

The communards believed that, unlike the SDS, their commune could reach the heart of the problems of the Bundesrepublik. Langhans’ article in the FU-Spiegel communicated a similar idea. ‘In demonstrations,’ Langhans wrote, ‘we feel as if we belong together and can finally talk to each other properly.’ But this feeling was short-lived. The commune was the apotheosis of the change that demonstrations brought: it overcame alienation and enabled real, open communication.99 Despite the communards’ play on words, in many ways Kommune I took

98 Mosler, Was wir wollten, was wir wurden, p. 114.
politics and protest more seriously than did the members of the SDS. Communards differentiated themselves from “seminar Marxists” – those protesters who could demonstrate in the day, and then retreat into the private sphere.\footnote{Enzensberger, \textit{Die Jahre der Kommune I}, p. 296; Kommune I, ‘Zirkular über unsere bisherige Entwicklung’ (January 29 1967), reproduced in Kommune I, \textit{Quellen zur Kommuneforschung}, n.p.} For these communards, the creation or maintenance of an apolitical private sphere signalled a hesitance to fully commit to revolution, both of the self and of society. By contrast, the communards’ moral opposition to the \textit{Bundesrepublik} was so fiery that they saw an imperative to live the protest, to commit their entire lives to revolution. The idea of a “live-in revolutionary” is a notion that would have doubtless drawn the ire of the SDS, but one that at least at times the communards successfully embodied.

Like so many of Kommune I’s utterances, Kunzelmann’s comment that he did not care about the war in Vietnam because of his orgasm troubles was tongue in cheek. The comment was easily interpreted as the depoliticisation of Kommune I.\footnote{Micheler, ‘Der Sexualitätsdiskurs in der deutschen Studierendenbewegung,’ p. 15.} However, it was exactly the opposite. The communards were deeply dissatisfied with the repressive nature of the \textit{Bundesrepublik}. The lingering presence of and concomitant silence about the National Socialist past led the communards to believe they needed to change radically the way they lived. Their attempts to bring private problems into the open were a committed and moral response to a society still shaped by its past. Nevertheless, the publicity the communards received for their Pudding Assassination and the Left’s inability to see what private life had to do with politics were early indications that Kommune I’s intimate revolution would be difficult to carry out.
PROMISCUITY AND PROVOCATION

A CRUMBLING REVOLUTION

NEW! UNCONVENTIONAL! NEW! UNCONVENTIONAL!

Why are you burning, consumer?

NEW! BREATHTAKING! NEW! BREATHTAKING! NEW! BREATHTAKING!...

With a new gag in the varied history of American methods of advertising an American Week was just opened in Brussels: an unusual play presented itself on Monday to the inhabitants of the Belgian metropolis:

A burning shopping centre with burning people conveyed, for the first time in a major European city, that sizzling Vietnam feeling (to be there and to burn along with them), which we have so far had to do without in Berlin....

Kommune I, *Flyer* 7

When will the Berlin shopping centres burn?...

If it burns somewhere very soon, if somewhere a barracks goes into the air, if somewhere in a stadium the grandstand collapses, please do not be surprised. As unsurprised as you were at the Americans exceeding the demarcation line, at the bombardment of the city centre of Hanoi, at the invasion of the marines into China

Brussels gave us the only answer:

burn, ware-house, burn!

Kommune I, *Flyer* 8

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2 ‘Wann brennen die Berliner Kaufhäuser?...Wenn es irgendwo brennt in der nächsten Zeit, wenn irgendwo eine Kaserne in die Luft geht, wenn irgendwo in einem Stadion die Tribüne einstürzt, seid bitte nicht überrascht. Genausowenig wie beim Überschreiten der Demarkationslinie durch die Amis, der Bombardierung des Stadtzentrums von Hanoi, dem Einmarsch der Marines nach China Brüssel hat uns die einzige Antwort darauf geben:

As the flames of a fire that had killed 400 people still licked the charred shell of a Brussels shopping centre, Kommune I was distributing flyers that co-opted the tragedy for their own political purpose. Satirically interpreting the conflagration as a left-wing protest against the war in Vietnam, they ominously hinted that the commune would set fire to a shopping centre in Berlin in a similar demonstration. Promising to convey ‘that sizzling Vietnam feeling’ of crackling human flesh, the communards flippantly evoked the traumatic memory of the Dresden firebombing and introduced a discourse of violence into the German protest movement for the first time. With the query ‘Why are you burning, consumer?’ and the dark repetition ‘burn, warehouse, burn’ the communards turned themselves from victims of a repressive and authoritarian society into a hostile and highly subversive group. The abstract threat that their sexual politics had posed to the stability of the Bundesrepublik now seemed violent and corporal.

While Kommune I originated as a theoretically grounded project of sexual revolution confronting the authoritarianism of the bourgeois family, by mid-1967 this focus had dimmed in favour of blunt provocation. This chapter explores this shift in focus, adopting the Brussels flyers as the starting point. The black humour of the flyers attracted almost universal condemnation and muddied the waters of Kommune I’s moral and sexual politics. However, the ensuing criminal trial of Rainer Langhans and Fritz Teufel was a lofty stage on which the communards were able to perform their disavowal of authority with all of Germany as their audience. The communards’ comic insubordination made Berlin’s serious and authoritarian justice system into a joke. Although the media eagerly reported the embarrassment of the courts, this did not mean the communards were praised. Instead, newspapers built up the celebrity of Langhans and Teufel and simultaneously ridiculed and caricatured them. While the communards’ liberal approach to sexuality remained well known as their star grew, the media handled this topic with a superficiality that missed the core point. This period of Kommune I’s lifespan illustrates the difficulties of sustaining a focus on sexual liberation and reveals the troubling dulling of the communards’ moral authority. Known throughout Germany and highly successful
in some of their antiauthoritarian activities, the communards still failed to transform sexuality as they had dreamed.

The heady rush of attention the Pudding Assassination earned *Kommune I* derailed the commune’s original focus on revolutionising interpersonal relationships. Chasing publicity, the communards began to agitate society more directly, turning from the interior to the exterior. While their approach to sexuality and the family was provocative in itself, the paradox was that without media attention their sexual revolution would languish in their shared apartment. The proposed dissolution of monogamous relationships was an entertaining story, but it had lost its novelty by mid-1967. *Kommune I*’s improvised experiment had allowed them, almost accidentally, to become the public face of the insubordination and public rebellion of the youth. Understandably for an antiauthoritarian group, they did not want to relinquish this position as chief antagonist. While their infamy was a sign of success, it was also dangerously distracting.

The founding member Antje Krüger’s retrospective comment that the ‘wildest fun was of course reading the paper the next morning to see how the press reacted to [our actions]’ suggests that the commune’s public image gradually became more interesting to the communards than their considered and original focus on sexuality and the family.³

The provocative actions and campaigns the communards undertook were still broadly consistent with *Kommune I*’s antiauthoritarian position. As Rainer Langhans has written:

> Our actions served to make inhibited energies of the citizens visible and to release them...We intended more than to liberate only sex. That was part of it, but strictly speaking it was about the human as a whole. About a tender feeling for each other.⁴

The communards could still rationalise their theatrics in the same general terms as their original project of sexual revolution. Taking their vocabulary from Marcuse, their provocation aimed to change the subjectivity of the individual, to make them see the authoritarianism around them and

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realise their own potential. However, this broadened the commune’s originally precise antiauthoritarianism. The transformation from the interiority of their lifestyle revolution to the extroverted campaigns of provocation was not in line with the Reichian revelation that repression of the libido and aggression by a repressive sexual morality and the bourgeois family created the authoritarian character. By losing sight of sexuality, the communards were turning away from what they had originally seen as the root of the problem.

The Brussels flyers

*Kommune I*’s Brussels flyers propelled the communards to the height of their infamy, diverting attention away from their sexual politics. On May 24, 1967, the communards distributed these flyers, numbered 6 to 8, outside the cafeteria at the Free University. In an obvious attack on Springer newspapers, Flyer 6 adopted a journalistic style, attributing responsibility for the arson to a leftist group. The fire was a ‘new form of demonstration’: a “happening” in protest against the war in Vietnam. Flyer 7 (Figure 5) adopted the persuasive, upbeat language of an advertisement. It explained the function of the happening mentioned in Flyer 7: the fire was meant to convey ‘that sizzling Vietnam feeling’, to invoke the napalm unleashed upon the Vietnamese, and to invite sympathy for the Third World from the First World. Flyer 8 was written in yet another style, this time with the standard tropes of a protester’s flyer. It threatened that this fiery method of demonstration would soon come to Berlin and ended with the foreboding exclamation ‘burn, ware-house, burn!’ Read together, the pastiche of the flyers satirically derided the conservative press’ hysterical reaction to the student protest movement. By suggesting that left-wing protesters would go to murderous lengths in their objection to the Vietnam War, the flyers mocked the way the mass media built up the threat protesters posed to

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6 The word ‘ware-house’ did not actually mean warehouse, but the orthographically similar *Warenhaus* – department store. This was “Kunzelmann English”: *Nilpferd des böslichen Urwalds*, p. 217. For a detailed analysis of the literary techniques employed in the commune’s flyers, see Hakemi, *Anschlag und Spektakel*, pp. 32-57.
German society, casting them as public enemy number one. The flyers were also a fairly opaque protest against the hypocrisy of West German society, which would be appalled at the death of middle-class consumers but not at the slaughter of civilians in Vietnam. As Mausbach convincingly argues in his study of youth counterculture, the recycling of aspects of consumer society in the language and form of the flyers was an ironic comment on the apathy of West Germans in the face of Vietnamese suffering.\(^7\) The Brussels flyers were a new form of dissent, taking aim at the dominant culture of the Bundesrepublik.

Predictably, the Springer Press overlooked the irony. The Springer newspaper \textit{B.Z.} took the communards at their satirical word, publishing the headline: ‘400 dead – for them a happening’.\(^9\) Like the reports in \textit{Bild} at the time of the Pudding Assassination, the article portrayed the communards as dangerous, a somewhat demented ‘leftist club made up of boys and girls with the disturbed hormone household.’ The media company again aligned itself with the police and state, urging the police and state prosecutor to direct every energy to finding the authors of these flyers (even though they were explicitly signed off with “\textit{Kommune I}”).\(^10\) The paper persisted in its literal reading of the flyers the following day, positing links between \textit{Kommune I} and Brussels.\(^11\) The police duly arrested two communards, Rainer Langhans and Fritz Teufel, and charged them with inciting arson.\(^12\) The Springer Press’ scare campaign and the

\(^7\) The historian Richard Langston has expressed a similar idea in his study of the development of “happenings” in the 1960s. According to Langston, ‘by resignifying a real-life tragedy as a happening, the communards displaced onto others an idea otherwise reserved by the mass media for undercutting the student movement.’ Richard Langston, \textit{Visions of Violence: German Avant-Gardes After Fascism} (Evanston and Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2008), p. 132. This mockery could only operate as the protest movement was still non-violent and the terrorism of the Red Army Faction was inconceivable.

\(^8\) Mausbach, ‘Burn, ware-house, burn!’, p.178.

\(^9\) A “happening” was an event that was equal parts spectacle and protest. On the role of the happening in 1960s Germany, see Langston, \textit{Visions of Violence}, pp. 130-161.


\(^12\) It is unclear why only two were arrested given that the communards prepared and distributed the flyers collectively. Indeed, the other communards wrote to the Public Prosecutor requesting that they too be arrested and charged with inciting arson: ‘At the moment we don’t have any money anyway – it would be great to go to prison. But two is not enough – it has to be all of us…So please be so polite as to try to lock us all up.’ Dieter Kunzelmann, Volker Gebbert, Gertrud Hemmer, and Ulrich Enzensberger to the Public Prosecutor, n.d. Reproduced in \textit{Kommune I}, \textit{Gesammelte Werke gegen uns}, p. 30. The Public Prosecutor wrote to these four at the end of July 1967, claiming that he was leading an investigation: ‘In order to give you an opportunity to confess your responsibility, I have requested a judicial hearing at the District Court in Tiergarten’. Attendance at this hearing was, bizarrely, optional and the communards did not show up. Letter reproduced in \textit{Kommune I}, \textit{Gesammelte Werke gegen uns}, p. 46.
justice system’s criminal charges meant that Kommune I had provoked the powers of the Bundesrepublik to respond to these short flyers with full force.

The Brussels flyers complicated Kommune I’s relationship with mainstream West German society. The commune had begun as a small group of outsiders who were passionately attempting to overcome the alienation they believed characterised relationships in West Germany. This effort was a reaction against a society which the commune believed still resembled the Third Reich, and a struggle to make sure that the macabre ambitions of National Socialism remained in the past. Their critique was a deeply moral one, going to the intimate core of the person, and it was given weight by the enormity of the Holocaust. Moral authority was therefore hugely important to the commune. Their opposition to the family and monogamy implicitly cast them as victims of a sexually repressive society shaped by the remnants of a regime in which they had not participated. Theirs was a cry for freedom and autonomy, for guilt-free love and truly erotic pleasure. While the Pudding Assassination meant that some questioned their political clout, Bild’s demonisation of the communards only strengthened their moral authority, as it showed that the Bundesrepublik was indeed flawed. The event also drew considerable attention to their project of sexual revolution.

However, the flyers altered this position. This attempt to deride the immorality of West German apathy in fact led to the weakening of the communards’ own moral authority. Those who missed the irony, like the Springer Press and the Berlin Public Prosecutor, read the flyers as dangerous and deranged. Yet even as satire the flyers were questionable. To use a mass death by fire for their political purposes was particularly problematic given the important role of the Dresden firebombing in the national narrative, symbolising German victimhood in World War II. Although the flyers were not literal, the communards portrayed themselves as the threat and German society as their burning victims. They could no longer claim the discourse of
victimhood that had run through their antiauthoritarianism. Hypocritically, they betrayed the same callous disregard of the fact of death of which they accused their parents’ generation.

Those who did not take the flyers literally saw them as tasteless and even dangerous. Langhans and Teufel asked several intellectuals to write appraisals of the flyers in their defence, but a number refused. The academic Hans Werner Richter derided the flyers as un-literary, and reiterated the SDS’ concerns about the communards’ politics. ‘They play at revolution and at the same time discredit all revolutionary efforts,’ he wrote in reply to the entreaty. ‘They play revolutionaries and serve the reactionaries.’ The Frankfurt School sociologist Theodor Adorno also declined to write an appraisal, writing to Max Horkheimer that the line ‘had now really been crossed.’ Previously, the strongest criticism made of the communards was that their project was not properly political. Now they could be called immoral. The left-wing writer Günter Grass’ refusal was the most bitter. He claimed that the ‘pseudo-revolutionary’ flyers displayed post-fascist tendencies: ‘The language of advertising, the language of B.Z. and the language of the commune demonstrate fascist symptoms in equal measure.’ For Grass, the danger of the flyers lay not in their ‘verbal play with fire’ but in their disparagement of democracy. The most fundamental criticism Kommune I made of the Bundesrepublik was that it betrayed fascist tendencies. Now this same accusation could be levelled against the communards. By deviating from their initial limited focus on interpersonal relationships and alienation, the communards had confused their critique and weakened their position of morality.

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13 Even those who agreed did not endorse the flyers. They expressed their personal distaste but provided a technical explanation of the satire. For example, the professor of literature Peter Szondi wrote that he did not like the insults, tastelessness and bawdiness of the flyers, but this was irrelevant to the literary analysis the court required. His appraisal was reproduced in Der Monat: Peter Szondi, ‘Aufforderung zur Brandstiftung? Ein Gutachten im Prozess Langhans/Teufel,’ Der Monat 227 (August, 1967), pp. 24-29.
14 ‘Literature-wise they are unspeakable, politically they offer a confused conglomerate of pubescent, anarchist revolutionary romanticism, bourgeois dreams of youth. These are texts from posers, dumb, arrogant, tasteless, texts of a poorly made and miserably written rag magazine.’ Hans Werner Richter to Horst Mahler, n.d., reproduced in Kommune I, Gesammelte Werke gegen uns, p. 43.
17 Ibid, p. 45.
The Moabit Soap Opera

The arson trial at the District Court in Moabit at once deflected attention away from the commune’s sexual politics and sharpened the public focus on its moral politics.\textsuperscript{18} The courtroom became a stage in which the broad themes of the anti-authoritarian movement – the generational conflict, provocation, and the National Socialist past – were acted out under intense public scrutiny. The communards exploited this pedestal of public interest by drawing damning comparisons between West German institutions of authority and the institutions of National Socialism. While the trial was frequently farcical, the fading of the sexuality theme in relation to the commune meant that the communards’ anti-authoritarianism was taken more seriously. Their antagonisms with the justice system also meant that the commune was the subject of more sustained public attention: over a year and a half, no fewer than seven articles were dedicated to Teufel’s legal troubles in \textit{Der Spiegel}.\textsuperscript{19}

The communards subverted the usual order of a criminal trial, refusing to defend themselves in traditional style. This Great Refusal in miniature revealed the absurdity of the trial and made the pomp and ritual of the courtroom seem ludicrous.\textsuperscript{20} When asked if he did not think someone might take his flyer literally and commit arson, Teufel responded tartly. ‘I must

\textsuperscript{18} The transcript of the trial is reproduced in Langhans and Teufel, \textit{Klau Mich}. There were actually two trials: the first was broken off so that the court’s psychiatrist could prepare a report on the communards. The second took place in March 1968. The communards labelled these trials as the “First Moabit Soap Opera” and “Second Moabit Soap Opera” in \textit{Klau Mich}. In order to avoid confusion and because the two trials were similar in tone and power dynamics, the thesis does not distinguish between the trials. Moabit was the area of Berlin in which the court was. When in the following text the trial transcript is quoted, the source of the quote is always \textit{Klau Mich}.

\textsuperscript{19} ‘Knisterndes Gefühl,’ \textit{Der Spiegel} (26 June 1967), pp. 32-34; ‘…Und abends sind Sie nett zu ihrer Frau,’ \textit{Der Spiegel} (10 July 1967), pp. 27-28; ‘Tatverdacht, nun doch anfassbar,’ \textit{Der Spiegel} (7 August 1967), p. 14; ‘Fürs Vaterland hingestellt,’ \textit{Der Spiegel} (4 December 1967), pp. 65-67; ‘7 x 2 bis 3,’ \textit{Der Spiegel} (1 January 1968), pp. 38-39; “Sie kommen mir so bekannt vor,” \textit{Der Spiegel} (11 March 1968), pp. 68-71; “Beiträge zur Strafprozessordnung,”’ \textit{Der Spiegel} (23 September 1968), pp. 74-75. Not only was Fritz Teufel the co-accused in the arson case, but he was also charged with disturbing the peace. On the evening of the protests against the Iranian Shah during which Benno Ohnesorg was killed on June 2, Teufel was arrested for throwing stones, which he denied. He was the only protester arrested who was kept in prison until his trial. He was imprisoned for eighty days before his acquittal. His imprisonment inspired the commune’s “Freedom for Teufel” campaign, and when he was released Berlin’s students celebrated with a “love-in” festival on the Kurfürstendamm, West Berlin’s biggest road.

\textsuperscript{20} We will recall that Marcuse wrote of the Great Refusal: ‘The fact that [fringe groups] start refusing to play the game may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period’: Marcuse, \textit{One-Dimensional Man}, p. 257.
say,’ he replied, ‘no one came to the idea that they could do that – until the prosecutor did. He, however, didn’t actually do it, but instead wrote an indictment.’ Refusing to submit to the expectation that defendants be subservient to judges and the court, Langhans called the court foolish, and suggested that the members of the court should undergo both a psychiatric evaluation and an intelligence test. Teufel was ejected from the courtroom for talking, and the court frequently issued *Ordnungsstrafe(n)* (‘order-punishments’) in the form of one day’s imprisonment. But these traditional penalties failed to deter the communards. Completely disregarding courtroom etiquette and declining to defer to the so-called authorities, Langhans and Teufel refused to abide by the norms of legal procedure.

The defendants’ disobedience confounded the legal authorities and inverted the power relationship between the judge, prosecutor and defendants. This revealed how much their authority relied on its unquestioning acceptance. The judge and prosecutor attempted to play along with the communards. When the prosecutor asked Langhans a question in a loud voice, Langhans answered ‘Don’t shout so!’ The prosecutor responded in the facetious style that was the communards’ trademark. ‘I thought you heard badly under your hair’, he retorted, referring to Langhans’ long curls. The judge too adopted the communards’ informal style. Asked what an expert’s testimony had to do with the trial, the judge responded with a riposte favoured by the communards: ‘We are only doing it because we find it fun.’ Such adaptation of the commune’s cheek was intended to show that the prosecutor and judge “got it” and that the communards had not completely baffled them. However, the counterpoint of these attempts at badinage with the stern issuing of *Ordnungsstrafen* and the sharp rebuke of actions like reading a newspaper in the court attracted was dissonant. The communards’ disobedience deflated the authority of the court.

Langhans and Teufel made it clear that this antiauthoritarianism was not merely youthful disrespect, but a moral and political statement against Germany’s National Socialist past. They
objected to the continuous strand of authoritarianism running between the Third Reich and the Bundesrepublik. In order to make this objection concrete, they aligned the authority of the court with National Socialism. The defence lawyer Horst Mahler made this comparison most explicitly when he compared the court to a *Volksgerichtshof* (Nazi People’s Court). In their response to questioning, the two defendants developed the *Kontinuitätsfrage* into a central theme of the trial.

When asked why they had distributed the flyers, Teufel replied: ‘We were provoked to cause the moral outrage of the people who were never outraged when they read about Vietnam or other terrible things in the morning paper.’ Questioned further, Teufel volunteered another explanation:

> The Germans are a democratic, free, capable people. They killed a great many Jews, but for that
> Arabs are now being killed with German weapons, that is a sort of atonement…the more black or yellow people cark it down below, the better it is for us.

Teufel’s coldly matter-of-fact allusion to the Holocaust was his mimesis of the way Germans were able to separate public and private, and therefore fail to engage fully with the National Socialist past. The allusion also reminded observers where authoritarianism had taken Germany in the recent past and suggested that little had changed. The communards used the opportunity of the trial to make their key argument: that the outbreak of National Socialism could be traced back to the core of the German people, and that it had not occurred by some political chance.

Described as sexually abnormal by the court’s psychiatrist, Teufel asked: ‘If our antiauthoritarian attitude…. is a sign of…abnormality – is authoritarian behaviour and National Socialism a consequence of the healthy normality of the German race?’ With this question, Teufel spoke against rationalising National Socialism as an aberration, positing it instead as an almost inevitable consequence of the German psyche. The way the communards alleged continuity between the Third Reich and the Bundesrepublik suggested that the horrific past necessitated more than a merely political reconstruction of institutions and bureaucracy. Instead, a more fundamental, personal change was imperative. Langhans and Teufel used the trial in which they
were accused criminals as an unparalleled opportunity to make their most unsettling charge against German society.

The communards insisted that Germans should adopt their guiding ideology of the last six months: that private and public must not be separated. Leading by example, they brought up their private lives and sexual problems even at an ostensibly unrelated arson trial. In response to a comment Langhans made about his personal life, the judge responded tellingly: ‘Your private life does not interest me.’ In a heartfelt moment, Langhans replied: ‘but it should interest you – here you are a judge, and in the evening you are nice to your wife. We want no division between our political engagement and the personal. I cannot beat my child at home and otherwise lead a kindergarten.’ For Langhans, destroying the division between public and private life was about sincerity and candour. In order to act morally and consistently, people should not apply two sets of standards to their lives. The split was artificial, and insofar as it stopped people from truly communicating, and from recognising the significance of the Nazi past to their own personal lives, it was dangerous. The topic turned specifically to sex. Later on that day, the judge said begrudgingly: ‘Mr Langhans, I actually did not want to deal with this topic. But because you yourself this morning spoke of sexual difficulties, what do you mean by that and what does it relate to?’ Langhans relished the opportunity.

Yes, that is not just about the members of the commune, but also about you…. It concerns every one of us, it comes from our upbringing: how one deals with girls, orgasm difficulties, disturbances of concentration and neuroses, the difficulty is in dealing with oneself and others properly.

The judge asked how this manifested itself. Langhans replied insubordinately. ‘Can’t you imagine that at all? Or do you have none? That would be amazing!’ Langhans’ suggestion that the judge might share his neuroses was not a way to delegitimise him, as Micheler has argued.21 To the communards, sexual difficulties were not a personal failing but instead a widespread

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manifestation of the repressive sexuality of the Bundesrepublik. This was an attempt to invert the scorn and stigma surrounding the topic of sexual neuroses. They were a common problem, a symptom of authoritarianism, which could be solved collectively. Langhans’ question was also the perfect indication of the opportunity that the trial presented. In the very hall of authority, a courtroom, the communards confronted Germany with the concerns fundamental to their political project.

Like the Pudding Assassination, the criminal trial had made the authorities lächerlich in their irrationality. Media interest in the arson trial and Teufel’s separate trial for breaching the peace was high, with the unanimous assessment being that they had weakened the institutions of the law. Teufel’s trial was not remarkable for ‘the conduct of the curly-bearded defendant’ but for ‘the behaviour of the West Berlin justice system.’\textsuperscript{22} The more conservative Die Zeit similarly reported that the arson trial had embarrassed the justice system.\textsuperscript{23} Even the Springer Press admitted the damage that Langhans and Teufel had done to the justice system. According to B.Z., the court had degraded itself by prosecuting Teufel for disturbing the peace, and by not punishing him further for his insubordination in the courtroom. This introduced a double standard: only Teufel could get away with this behaviour.\textsuperscript{24} B.Z. reported that Teufel did everything to injure the reputation and dignity of the court.\textsuperscript{25} Ironically, Bild agreed with the communards that it was illogical that only Langhans and Teufel were arrested for the Brussels

\textsuperscript{22} ‘7 x 2 bis 3,’ p. 33.
\textsuperscript{24} ‘Justiz im Teufelskreis,’ B.Z. (18 August 1967), reproduced in Langhans and Teufel, Klau Mich, n.p. This article played on Teufel’s surname, which means “devil” in German. The title translate as “The justice system in a vicious cycle”, but the word for “vicious cycle” is Teufelskreis. Similarly, the article often referred to him as “der Teufel” with the definite article, which is occasionally used with people’s names. This could translate as “the devil” or simply “Teufel”. Bild was so incensed about Teufel’s insubordination that it even published a story with the headline ‘Fritz Teufel wanted to eat his breakfast in the courtroom.’ ‘Fritz Teufel wollte im Gericht frühstücken,’ Bild (12 December 1967), reproduced in Langhans and Teufel, Klau Mich, n.p.
flyers, which the communards had prepared and distributed collectively.\textsuperscript{26} Finally and crucially, at least Der Spiegel accurately reported the communards’ fundamental belief: ‘The student Langhans is of the opinion that one should not be a public servant in working hours and in the evenings be a human and also sometimes politically interested.’\textsuperscript{27} The troubling Brussels flyers had then been a partial success: Langhans and Teufel had succeeded in drawing attention to the authoritarianism of the justice system.

The ongoing role of sexuality

Langhans and Teufel had revealed the law’s authoritarianism, but their crucial argument that authoritarianism was born in repressive relationships was lost in a fog of celebrity and the media’s superficial understanding of what sexuality could mean. Asked directly at the arson trial about the aims of the commune, Teufel responded nebulously: ‘The substantial points are probably that we live together, that we make economy together, that we discuss.’ The communards refused to speak directly about their project because they saw themselves as provoking an authoritarianism that would make itself obvious. This authoritarianism was latent in the Bundesrepublik and needed only to be stirred to make itself obvious to the public. At the end of the reproduction of the trial transcript in their book Klau Mich, Langhans and Teufel wrote that they saw their role in the trial as that of the spectator ‘who intervened occasionally if it was fun.’\textsuperscript{28} For the communards, the real show was the authoritarianism of the justice system. However, although they were making the authority less abstract and more recognisable, the very factory of authoritarianism – the family – was left alone. Furthermore, in refusing to speak clearly for themselves, the communards allowed the media to lay their own interpretations on the commune’s actions. Their approach thus meant that their original focus on repressive sexuality, authoritarianism and fascism was lost.

\textsuperscript{26} ‘Wesentliches Ergebnis der Ermittlungen,’ \textit{Extra-B.Z.} (26 July 1967), reproduced in Kommune I, \textit{Quellen zur Kommunalforschung}, n.p. See also note 12 above.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
Although the communards’ experiences with the justice system led to widespread rebuke of the legal system from the media, the media refused to side with the communards. The commune’s public image was still shaped by their liberal sexual attitudes, which meant that the media constantly patronised them. B.Z.’s description of the commune as a ‘disturbed hormone household’ was emblematic. It referred to the ‘dear child’ Fritz Teufel by the diminutive “Fritzchen”. According to other news outlets, the communards were ‘infantile fun-havers’ and ‘expert do-nothings’ with a messy apartment. The mainstream media portrayed the communards as puerile and sex-obsessed, revealing the resolute intolerance of deviation from the sexual norm in the Bundesrepublik. ‘They spread childlike things and talk only about sex, sex, sex,’ Neue Welt reported. ‘They whine like boys who are still in the development years.’

Even the political youth magazine konkret, which was left-wing and relentlessly pushed for more liberated sexuality, was patronising towards Kommune I and questioned their rejection of monogamy. In the judgment of editor-in-chief Klaus Rainer Röhl, the communards’ language was ‘like that of a school student. They are inhibited children with castration complexes, penis envy and fear of the mother.’ By constantly suggesting that the commune was a centre of neurosis and depravity, the media revealed sexual norms to be steadfast. Deviation from them was seen as a sign of juvenility. Ironically, this very attitude was evidence of the need for Kommune I’s supposedly adolescent sexual politics.

When reports did not make fun of the focus on sex, the media perceived the commune’s sexual politics as an insulting attack on German society. Even when the press understood and reported the aims of the commune, they did not engage with them. Neuer Weser Kurier was able to identify the commune’s aims as ‘the revolution of everyday life, universal sexuality through the

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31 Kraeling, ‘Die Wahrheit über die Liebes-Kommune in Berlin’.
32 Klaus Rainer Röhl, ‘Sie küßten und sie trennten sich,’ konkret (August, 1967), p. 3.
dissolution of private relationships, dissolution of sexual problems in unforced swapping of partners and communal discussion of individual behaviours. But it refused to discuss them any further: the paper would not discuss sexuality on the commune’s terms. Instead it derided the communards as ‘the most famous lice in the fur of West Germany society.’ Neue Welt published a similar article, which quoted the communards speaking about the benefits of their approach to sexuality. ‘Sexual problems are relaxed here in the commune’, claimed one. ‘The bourgeois shrinkage to a two-person-relationship is intolerable and produces only two corpses’ another was quoted as saying. While it accurately presented the commune’s view of sexuality, the report was entirely negative. The communards’ comments were ‘overblown and insulting nonsense’ and the communards ‘obviously never understood anything about love.’ This report’s hostility is a reminder of the implications of Kommune I’s original sexual politics for the ordinary German: that their sex lives were unsatisfactory and were not properly connected to emotions. The media either distorted the commune’s focus on sex, presenting it as evidence of their pubescence, or they presented it properly but interpreted it as offensive.

The communards’ turbulent relationship with the justice system indeed further inhibited the media from talking seriously about the communards’ sexual politics. Langhans and Teufel’s departure from the behaviour usually expected of defendants drew considerable media attention, and the trial was the first time the communards had spoken individually. The “Moabit Soap Opera”, as the media dubbed the trial, had elevated Langhans and Teufel to celebrity status. The historian Detlef Siegfried argues convincingly that the communards’ celebrity was an opportunity for them to undermine the authoritarianism of the legal system. However, with two identifiable stars to represent the commune in the media, it became much easier to caricature Kommune I.

34 Ibid.
35 Kraebling, ‘Die Wahrheit über die Liebes-Kommune in Berlin.’
36 Siegfried, ‘Stars der Revolte,’ p. 236.
Langhans and Teufel’s appearances invited attention: Langhans had a mop of unusually long curly hair, and Teufel’s scraggly beard was seen as a symbol of subversion, becoming the subject of its own media attention.37 Kommune I had originally been about collective life, but media attention was now directed towards the communards rather than the commune. The media frequently approached Kommune I as an amusement, but little more. The sarcastic description of the communards as ‘exotics scholars of anarchy’ was typical.38 In August 1967, Die Welt published a spoof of the commune, entitled ‘Kommune III’, which described a commune whose members got up early to read Marcuse obsessively.39 The commune had become a national punch line. When a serious political magazine Der Spiegel could publish a report that Teufel had shaved off his beard, it was clear that the communards occupied the role of court jester rather than serious provocateur. The creation of celebrities out of the communards made them seem like eccentrics, rather than the leaders of a serious revolution of capitalism, and prevented their project from being viewed as a considered response to National Socialism.

The commune’s focus on sex produced an unfortunate dichotomy in the press. The communards’ sexual politics led to their alternate portrayal as comical adolescents or as dangerous deviants. Both approaches meant that the commune’s ideas reached the public in a severely diluted form. Within six months, the group had gone through a frustrating planning stage, moved in together, and startlingly quickly had become famous throughout Germany due to their media presence. It was a cruel paradox that the media, which had made it seem as if the communards had a chance of truly changing the consciousness of their fellow Germans, was also the reason Germans were unlikely to take them seriously at all.

Gender

The other major problem that emerged with the commune’s sexual project was the inequality between the male and female communards. The antiauthoritarian postures of Kommune I certainly become less credible when we turn to the gender relations within the group. Though the women’s movement had not gathered force, the emancipation of women was becoming a strong theme within the New Left. As early as 1962 Marcuse had given an interview to Das Argument on the topic in a whole edition dedicated to the issue. The sidelining of women within protest circles is a trope of “1968” historiography, but it is a particularly damning accusation to make of a group who explicitly decried authoritarianism and who focussed on the private sphere, identifying the family as a key locus of repression.

The gender dynamic in Kommune I is as interesting for what it reveals about popular attitudes towards women as for the hypocrisy within the commune. The apparent persistence of patriarchy even within the antiauthoritarian commune was the subject of mockery in the contemporary press. Several articles declared that the women in the commune had run away from the men due to ill treatment. Klaus Rainer Röhl wrote that ‘their relationship to women is like their relationship to objects you can exchange.’ Röhl framed his critique as a moral one, appearing to argue for women’s rights. However, while writers like Röhl explicitly criticised the male communards for treating women like sex objects, their articles betrayed a similar misogyny on the journalists’ behalf. Reports seemed to assume that the sexually ravenous male communards had really begun this project in order to be able legitimately to sleep with more

40 Herbert Marcuse, ‘Emanzipation der Frau,’ interview by Wolfgang Fritz Haug, Das Argument 23 (1962), pp. 2-11. The theme of the entire issue 23 was “Emanzipation of the Woman”, and the previous issue had the same theme.


43 Röhl wrote that ‘sentences like “I would like to eat that one up” and “That one would suit me” are very telling.’ The German phrasing of these incriminating sentences was “Die möcht ich mal vernaschen” and “Das wär meine Kragenweite”. The German word vernaschen literally means eating something delicious or sweet (i.e. an object), but also functions as a euphemism for sex. “Das wär meine Kragenweite” literally means “that would be my collar size”, and therefore has implications of clothing (again an object), but the in this construction it is an idiom that means “That one would suit me”. Röhl accused the male communards of falling into the capitalist trap of valuing their women as they would commodities: Röhl, ‘Sie küßten und sie trennten sich,’ p. 3.
women. When it became clear that male communards outnumbered the females, the media seized upon this gleefully, because it meant that male promiscuity within the commune was limited. When only one woman remained in Kommune I, journalists (pre-emptively) declared the end of the commune. The suggestion was, with a verbal wink to the male communards, that it was not worth sustaining calls for sexual revolution and new modes of interaction if there was only one woman left to share. With this interpretation of the commune’s project, reporters privileged male desire over female and attributed little agency to the women. Whereas the males were “men”, frequently the females were “girls”. The women were not among the celebrities of the commune and they figured differently in reporting, described only in terms that indicated their sexual use to the men. One by-line marked Gertrud out as a religion student, giving her an air of chaste piety. Röhl described the remaining women as ‘not aired out and swollen-looking’ and claimed that they inspired ‘little appetite to even imagine collective love.’ On the other hand, a Spiegel reporter described Dagmar Seehuber more alluringly as a blonde with ‘velvet pants and velvet skin.’ Whether or not the male reporters found the women appealing, their sex appeal was the standard by which they were to be judged.

Despite contradictions within media reports on gender relations within Kommune I, it is clear that there was something in the criticism. Reforming the authoritarian relationship between the genders had certainly been an early intention of the communards. The shared housework and childrearing was intended to destabilise the traditional roles of men and women within the family. At least one flyer penned by Kommune I challenged the dominant West German view that women were less capable than men. Furthermore, the communards’ apparently sexist

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44 Ibid; ‘Wenn Agathe nicht mehr mitmacht’.
45 ‘Wenn Agathe nicht mehr mitmacht’.
46 Röhl, ‘Sie küßten und sie trennten sich,’ p. 3.
48 ‘Girls just cannot make flyers. Girls just cannot be political. Girls have it good with us – nothing happens to them.’ This flyer was disseminated after the girls were released before the men were after the Pudding Assassination and were not arrested for the Brussels flyers. ‘Notiz: Mädchen haben es schwer’ in Kommune I, Gesammelte Werke gegen uns, p. 36.
statements that are often raised as evidence of their hypocrisy must be read in the same sardonic voice as the Brussels flyers: certainly tasteless, probably offensive, but not at all sincere.\footnote{Micheler points to explicit cartoons of women scribbled in the commune’s publication \textit{Klau Mich} and one communard’s remark that the best way to deal with a woman is to break her in like a horse, enjoy her, and then leave her. However, representations such as these cannot be read literally. The communards delighted in toying with public expectations of their promiscuity and stubbornly refused to speak earnestly about their sexual politics. Such wilful obfuscation was part of their antiauthoritarianism. Micheler, ‘Der Sexualitätsdiskurs in der deutschen Studierendenbewegung,’ p. 15.} However, it appears that men did dominate within the commune. At some time in the middle of 1967, the communard Dagmar Seehuber fell pregnant. Kunzelmann was the father. He told her to obtain an abortion: there was no place for a new child in the commune. ‘I still remember when I woke from the full anaesthesia bowling,’ she has recalled. ‘He sat at the harmonium and played.’\footnote{Interview with Dagmar Przytulla in Ute Krätzel, \textit{Die 68erinnen}, pp. 201-219, p. 212; quoted in Enzensberger, \textit{Die Jahre der Kommune I}, p. 135.} Instead of discussing it as equals, Kunzelmann laid out an order. Both Seehuber and Dagrun Enzensberger eventually moved out of \textit{Kommune I} because they were not taken seriously: as women, they were the only ones without their own desks in the study.\footnote{Enzensberger, \textit{Die Jahre der Kommune I}, p. 162.} Kunzelmann has since admitted that although the communards had some ideas about emancipating women in their head, the men dominated. However, he justified this by saying that there was not really a strong women’s movement at the time.\footnote{Kunzelmann, ‘Die KI war eine Zelle im besten kommunistischen Sinne,’ p. 251.} In the end, hypocritically authoritarian gender relations become one of the most stinging criticisms we can make of \textit{Kommune I}.

By the time Langhans and Teufel were acquitted in March 1968, commentators were unanimous in declaring \textit{Kommune I} a failure. For most in the mainstream media, the commune failed around August 1967, when it became clear that the males outnumbered the females. Although there were still a number of communards living together, the gender imbalance meant that it could not be the location of the sexual hedonism the German public imagined.

However, in light of our view of \textit{Kommune I} as a theoretically grounded project, we need to assess its success or failure in terms of its original intentions. In 1968, the sexual theorist Reimut
Reiche did just that. To Reiche, the commune had failed to revolutionise the sexual attitudes of society and the sexuality of their own members, or to incorporate the necessity of such a revolution into a programme of political enlightenment.\textsuperscript{53} The sexual character of those the communards tried to revolutionise was already formed, and this meant that it had ‘failed to produce anything indicative of its original revolutionary intention.’\textsuperscript{54} Reiche’s assessment of the communards’ failure must be taken seriously as it proceeds on the basis of \textit{Kommune I}’s actual aims of sexual revolution. A 1968 report on communes in \textit{konkret} similarly claimed that pre-formed sexual characters had hampered the communards’ own personal revolutions. ‘The communards could not bring their theoretical programme into agreement with their personalities, which were still to a large extent shaped by their bourgeois upbringing,’’ the reporters wrote.\textsuperscript{55} The reigning sexual morality was too powerful for the communards to overcome. The authoritarianism and repression the communards so rigorously opposed was too deeply rooted in the German mass psychology.

Sex sells, and it sold in the 1960s. \textit{Kommune I} was a successful commercial product. The communards had a strong presence in the German media and were able to command fees for interviews and make a living by selling brochures and their book \textit{Klaus Mich}. However, amidst this commercialisation all the subtleties of their original project were lost. What had been a strong and considered theoretical and moral response to the lingering ghost of fascism and genocide in the Bundesrepublik, buoyed by a decade of New Left psycho-Marxist theory, became superficial entertainment. The commune became part of the Sexwelle, contributing to rather than combating the commercialisation of sex in the Bundesrepublik.

This failure must not be attributed to a lack of sincerity on the part of the communards. In setting up the commune as a project directed both towards the interior and the exterior, instead of simply dropping out of society completely, the communards expressed their love of Germany.

\textsuperscript{53} Reiche, \textit{Sexuality and Class Struggle}, p. 14
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, pp. 14 and 148.
\textsuperscript{55} Wolfgang Röhl and Detlef Schneider, ‘Kommunen in Deutschland,’ \textit{konkrete} (December, 1968), pp. 20-25.
But their love was not for Germany as it was, but for a new Germany, a different Germany. The *Bundesrepublik* desperately needed rebirth and revolution, so that Germans could finally break the bonds of authoritarianism that led directly back to National Socialism. Despite their ambition, *Kommune I* has become a sobering reminder of the difficulties of putting theory into practice. The communards were trailblazers with strong and important ideas, but no example to follow. Navigating an authoritarian society and a media that resolutely resisted engaging with their serious sexual politics, they became caught up in the allure of celebrity and failed to recognise the persistence of patriarchy even within their own circle. They were unable to liberate sexuality in the way they desired: monogamy and the bourgeois family proved resilient.
CONCLUSION: SEXUAL REVOLUTION?

In 1970, *Der Spiegel* published an update on the *Sexwelle*. The magazine’s attitude to the sexualisation of German popular culture had changed remarkably since the trepidation of 1966. No longer did the pervasive nude images of the sex wave provoke anxiety or appear destabilising. The *Sexwelle* was shocking only in its impotence.

It is correct that the *Sexwelle* can liberate many individual citizens from their sexual anxiety, but it neither reforms nor revolutionises the bourgeois society or sexuality as a whole. The sex cult compensates for the sexual liberation that does not exist.¹ The 1960s dream of a Germany that was truly sexually liberated had not become reality.

The unique battle with the justice system that occupied the communards between mid-1967 and mid-1968 marked the high point of their notoriety. Exhausted by the unrelenting duties of revolution, the second half of 1968 saw Kommune I descend into the late 1960s cliché of hallucinogenic drugs, models, and hedonism.² Unable to maintain their spot in the limelight and frustrated that the Bundesrepublik had not changed even after the assassination attempt on the student leader Rudi Dutschke, the communards took up heavy smoking and LSD.³ Rather than persisting with their dogged attempts to rid German society of its authoritarianism, the communards chose to drop out of mainstream culture entirely.⁴ The commune became an entertainment venue rather than a centre of political activity: communards entertained so many guests that they rented an empty factory building, planning to transform the ground floor into a nightclub, and to furnish the first floor with enough mattresses for all their guests to sleep on.⁵

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⁴ Markovits and Gorski, *The German Left*, p. 58.
⁵ Koenen, *Das rote Jahrzehnt*, p. 171.
One by one, the communards left. This first spectacular experiment in communal living was over not 35 months after it began.6

Like the Sexwelle, Kommune I failed to liberate German society or sexuality as a whole. The commune failed politically. But its cultural legacy is manifest. The communards’ insistent demand that the private was political was most obviously and lastingly embodied by the women’s movement of the 1970s. A more specifically German development was the popular movement of antiauthoritarian childrearing and its collective kindergartens known as Kinderläden.7 Communal living also gained popularity in the 1970s: by 1978 there were about 10 000 Wohngemeinschaften (flat shares) in West Germany, in which about 80 000 people lived.8 The German examples inspired communes in Britain and America.9 Meanwhile, in high politics, the Social Democrat Willy Brandt took over the German Chancellorship in 1969, interrupting two decades of conservative CDU rule. With time, the SPD government reformed laws pertaining to adultery and divorce, male homosexuality, pornography, prostitution and abortion.10 As the vanguard of German counterculture and role models for rebellion, Kommune I was at least partly responsible for a concrete cultural change in West Germany. By the mid-1970s, the Bundesrepublik was a society in which the Kontinuitätsfrage was no longer relevant.

Sex in the 1960s was not just sex. Conversations about sex were not just about sex. They were conversations about interpersonal relationships, the meaning of politics, the right to pleasure, freedom, morality, and authority. And in West Germany, they were conversations about Germany’s recent past of totalitarianism and genocide. Kommune I may have been a failed

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7 See Schulz, ‘1968,’ p. 128; Hans-Jochem Gamm and Friedrich Koch (eds.), Bilanz der Sexualpädagogik (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1977); Hille Jan Breitenreicher et. al., Kinderläden: Revolution der Erziehung oder Erziehung zur Revolution? (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1971). The authors attribute the Kommune movement with being a catalyst (pp. 24-26).
10 Herzog, Sex after Fascism, p. 142.
political experiment, but it spoke the opening line in many important conversations that would gradually change the face and culture of Germany.
APPENDIX

Figure 1
Kommune I at Kaiser-Friedrich-Straße 54a. The children are Nessim (son of Agathe Hemmer who moved in after Dagrun Enzensberger moved out) and Grischa (Kunzelmann’s daughter).

Figure 2
Fritz Teufel does an interview while sitting with his co-communards.
Figure 3

Tiled mattresses in the commune at its Moabit address.


Figure 4

Rainer Langhans (left) and Fritz Teufel (right) at their trial for inciting arson. Evident in this image is the keen media interest in the communards’ struggles with the justice system.

NEU! UNKONVENTIONELL! NEU! UNKONVENTIONELL! NEU! UNK

Warum brennt Du, Konsument?
NEU! ATEMBERAUBEND! NEU! ATEMBERAUBEND! NEU! ATEMBERAUBEND!

Die Leistungsfähigkeit der amerikanischen Industrie wird
elektroplanmäßig nur noch vom Einfallsreichtum der amerikan-
sischen Werbung übertroffen. Coca-Cola und Hiroshima, das
deutsche Wirtschaftswunder und der vietnamesische Krieg,
die Freie Universität und die Universität von Teheran
zeigen die faszinierenden und erregenden Leistungen und
weltweit bekannten Güterzeichen-amerikanischen Tatendranges
und amerikanischen Erfindergierls; wenden diese und
jene für Mauer, Stacheldraht und Vorhang für freedom
and Democracy.

Mit einem neuen gag in der vielseitigen Geschichte ameri-
kanischer Werbemethoden wurde jetzt in Brüssel eine ameri-
kanische Woche eröffnet; ein ungewöhnliches Schauspiel bot
sich am Montag den Einwohnern der belgischen Metropole:

Ein brennendes Kaufhaus mit brennenden Menschen vermittel-
te zum erstenmal in einer europäischen Großstadt jenes
knisternde Vietnamgefuhl (dabei zusehen und mitschreiben),
das wir in Berlin bislang noch nichts müssn.

Skeptiker mögen davor warnen, 'König Kunde', den Konsumen-
ten, den in unserer Gesellschaft so eindeutig bevorzugten
und Umworbenen, einfach zu verbrennen.

Schwarzseher mögen schon unsere so überaus komplizierte
und kompliziert zu lenkende hochentwickelte Wirtschaft in
Gefahr sehen.

So sehr wir den Schmerz der Hinterbliebenen in Brüssel mit-
empfinden, wir, die wir dem Namen aufgeschlossen sind, Kö-
nen, solange das rechte Mass nicht überschritten wird, dem
Kühnen und Unkonventionellen, das, bei aller menschlichen Tragik,
in Brüsseler Kaufhausbrand steckt, unsere Bewunderung nicht
versagen.

Auch der Umstand, dass man dieses Feuerwerk Anti-Vietnam+De-
emonstranten anlichten will, vermag uns nicht irrezu führen.
Wir kennen diese weltfremden jungen Leute, die immer die
(Plakate) von gestern tragen, und wir wissen, dass sie trotz
aller abstrakten Bücherweise und romantischer Träumereien
noch immer an unserer dynamischen-amerikanischen Wirklichkeit
vorbeigegangen sind.

Kommune I (24.5.1967)

Figure 5
Kommune I’s Flyer 7
Source: Langhans and Ritter, KI – Das Bilderbuch der Kommune, p. 46.
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