

wrinkle her skin. Then each of the men uses one of her stockings as a burglar's mask. In broad daylight, they carry a ladder around the outside of the house and try to enter an upper window. Later they tramp noisily through the house. When the owner appears, a woman, she merely

orders the robbers to leave, which they do not. They stuff her in a wardrobe, where she smothers, but her death does not seem any more real than all the rest. It is as if she were merely playing dead as part of this spoof.

In Godard's first feature, *Breathless*,

made in 1960 and as vital as ever, he used some of the stylistics of the past, particularly of Renoir—for his own ends, of course. Still, he used them. From then on, he attacked or ignored them, often quite lightheartedly. *Band of Outsiders* is a revolutionary soufflé. ■

From the radicalism of the '60s to the interventionism of the '90s.

## The Passion of Joschka Fischer

By PAUL BERMAN

I.

**L**AST JANUARY, *Stern* magazine in Germany published a set of five grainy photographs of Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister and vice chancellor, as a young bully in a street battle in Frankfurt. It was April 1973. The photos showed: a figure in a black motorcycle helmet, labeled as Fischer, facing off against another figure in a white policeman's helmet, with a dented Volkswagen squatting in the background; the black-helmeted Fischer drawing near, and a skinny girl or maybe a long-haired boy (this was an androgynous era) running to join him; Fischer and other people on the attack, the white-helmeted cop going into a crouch; Fischer's black-gloved fist raised as if to punch the crouching cop on the back, Fischer's comrades crowding around; the cop huddled on the ground, Fischer and his comrades appearing to kick him, with two additional people watching. And no more dented Volkswagen. The photographer has evidently been circling around the skirmish, snapping his camera in what must have been a frenzy of adrenaline, each picture taken from a different angle.

Those were brutal photographs. One glance at them and you were back in the days of left-wing street fighting from the late 1960s and 1970s, when young militants in West Germany were always pouring into the streets, and Volkswagens were getting dented right and left. And the photographs, having conjured the past, provoked an outcry. The Joschka Fischer of 2001 was a member of the party called, in expressively anti-bureaucratic fashion, "the Greens"—a man of the left on its hipper, friskier side. He happened to be the very first Green to hold a ministry in Ger-

many's federal government, let alone the foreign ministry. A powerful man, therefore a man with enemies. The photographs gazed bleakly at the world from the semi-glossy pages of *Stern*, and flames of Christian Democratic wrath erupted at once from those many partisan enemies. Germany's foreign minister had disgraced himself in those photographs; had embarrassed his nation; had lost the ability to represent Germany to the world; ought to be investigated, to be indicted, to resign.

The street battles of 1973 took place long ago, and it could have been supposed that Fischer's enemies, having given vent to a thousand pent-up furies and Christian Democratic resentments, would eventually calm down, and the scandal of those ancient photographs would fade. The editors of *Stern* seem to have anticipated that sort of development. The magazine advertised its photographs on the cover with a quotation from Fischer ("Ja, ich war militant"), but the big story in that week's issue was Europe's meat crisis, illustrated by a giant sausage skewered on the tines of an oversized barbecue fork. Mad cow disease, now *that* was a lasting story.

The weeks went by, though, and the Fischer affair, instead of fading, grew in intensity and scale. Like the broken tape on the door at the Watergate, or the girlish confessions on Linda Tripp's treacherous recording, the photographs in *Stern* seemed to pull slowly at a curtain that, as it opened, revealed ever more distant peaks of unsuspected scandals (or non-scandals, depending on your interpretation). The controversy spread to France. In London, *The Observer*, playing the part of the yellow press, gave the polemic a slightly demented sexual twist. The Italians weighed in. The Fischer affair achieved at last a large enough dimension and a sufficiently accusatory tone to be described rather grandly but not inaccurately as "the trial of the generation of 1968" by the editors of the Paris daily *Libération* (who know something about

the generation of 1968)—an unforeseeably rich and vivid scandal, fecund with implications for Europe and modern life and thirty or forty years of history.

**T**HE PHOTOGRAPHS WERE delivered to *Stern* by a thirty-eight-year-old woman named Bettina Röhl, who described herself as an "independent journalist" but whose notoriety was owed mostly to her family background, which could hardly have been more sensational. Bettina Röhl was the daughter of Ulrike Meinhof. In the heyday of the left-wing movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, Ulrike Meinhof was more than well-known in West Germany. She was a militant and a political theorist on the left's leftmost wing—one of the crazies, you would have to say, except that craziness and sanity were very much under interrogation.

In 1970, Ulrike Meinhof staged an armed jailbreak to free an imprisoned comrade named Andreas Baader, who was serving three years for his own violent antics. (He had set fire to a Frankfurt department store.) Baader and Meinhof, together with Horst Mahler and a few other desperadoes of the revolutionary left, organized what became casually known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang, but was more formally and correctly called the Red Army Fraction. In American English, the German word *Fraktion* is usually rendered as "faction," which falls easily on the ear; but anyone who remembers the old Communist phrase book will recognize that "fraction," in English, used to be a perfectly legitimate and precise term, connoting a disciplined party unit akin to a cell—the opposite of a faction, which is a party unit that has escaped the party's discipline. A Marxist-Leninist party does not have factions, unless the party is in disarray. But a Marxist-Leninist party does have fractions, or party units that go out into the world and militate as best they can, according to plan.

PAUL BERMAN is the author of *A Tale of Two Utopias: The Political Journey of the Generation of 1968* (Norton).



Bettina Röhl's photographs of Joschka Fischer (in black helmet) attacking a policeman, Frankfurt, April 1973

Baader and Meinhof's Red Army Fraction was tiny. But it went out into the world and proved to be extremely violent. Kidnappings, bank holdups, murders: the group refrained from nothing. A bombing in 1972 killed four American soldiers. A few years later someone machine-gunned to death the prosecutor who wanted to try the group for killing the soldiers. Reprisals were a specialty. The Red Army Fraction was hardy, too. The West German authorities did their repressive best, but the guerrilla organization managed to keep itself alive, recruiting new members from ever younger generations to replace the fallen, and persisting in its killings and kidnappings from decade to decade into the mid-1990s—a long run in a well-ordered place such as Germany.

Even today, a political legacy from the old Baader-Meinhof tendency has managed to linger on, though without a clandestine wing, or so it is said. The Red Army Fraction remained strong during those many years because its leaders were clever and its militants fanatical, but also because it enjoyed the secret backing of the government of East Germany, meaning the Soviet bloc, for as long as there was a Soviet bloc, which gave the group a real institutional power. (The Red Army Fraction was tiny, but the Red Army was not.) Yet the organization clung to life mainly for another reason, which lay at the heart of the several scandals that flooded outward from the grainy photographs in *Stern* this year.

The radical student movement during the years around 1968—I will call it the New Left, using the American and English term—was never especially powerful in the Federal Republic of Germany as a whole, not compared to the big political parties and the industrial groups and the trade unions. But in the world of the university students and the young people's neighborhoods and the younger intellectuals, the New Left was a gigantic presence. And the Red Army Fraction grew naturally from that soil. Ulrike Meinhof herself was by all accounts an intelligent and articulate leader, a woman already thirty-seven years old when she helped to

organize her guerrilla army, which meant that, in matters of age, she towered over the New Left's rank and file, the student naïfs. She knew how to drape the grand ideals of German philosophy across her organization and its doings. To be sure, her guerrilla army was reviled by an overwhelming majority of West Germans, the put-upon bystanders and potential victims and frightened citizens.

But in the universities and the counter-cultural districts in Frankfurt and Berlin and a few other places, her tiny organization drew on the active and even enthusiastic support of a not-so-small number of people, plus the passive support of far larger numbers, the leftists who would never have endorsed a program of violence and who wanted nothing to do with murders, but who would have said that, even so, the Red Army Fraction did have reason to despise German bourgeois society, and Marxist revolution was an excellent idea, and state repression posed a greater threat to society than any guerrilla resistance from the left. And shouldn't we progressives and reasonable leftists worry chiefly about civil liberties? And so forth: the many arguments and apologetics that people offer in circumstances when, out of confusion and moral timidity, they are too frightened to applaud the murders and the kidnappings, and too frightened to condemn them.

The Red Army Fraction claimed a fraternity with the new breed of revolutionary groups around the world. "We must learn," Meinhof said in her original manifesto back in 1970, "from the revolutionary movements of the world—the Vietcong, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Tupamaros [of Uruguay], the Black Panthers." But mostly her organization resembled several other guerrilla currents that got their start in the New Left upsurges of Europe in those same years: the Red Brigades in Italy; the Irish Republican Army in its modern, Marxist version (which revived a defunct military organization from many years before); the Corsican nationalist guerrillas; and the Basque ETA—small groups each and every one, but tough, and with a degree of popular

support that made each of those groups nearly indestructible during the next decades.

The Red Army Fraction was not exactly invulnerable. In 1972, the West German police did manage to arrest a number of key warriors. They arrested Meinhof herself. But arrests only rendered the group fashionable. Jean-Paul Sartre expressed an admiring appreciation—a cagey admiration, designed to leave him unstained by any crimes that the guerrillas might commit. Meinhof wrote the famous philosopher a letter, inviting him to visit Baader in jail, "to give us the protection of your name and your gifts as a Marxist, philosopher, journalist and moralist." Sartre came. But the martyrdom only deepened. One of the imprisoned warriors had already committed suicide by the time of Sartre's visit, and in 1976 Meinhof likewise committed suicide in her maximum-security cell—though some people suspected an official murder.

Her death was followed the next year by the suicides of Baader and two others in the same jail, which even more people suspected was official murder. And the deaths, as they piled up, radiated a morbid glamour. It was a highbrow glamour—the kind of glamour that, as Peter Wollen pointed out in *The London Review of Books*, would by 1995 lead New York's Museum of Modern Art to devote an exhibition to paintings of those suicides (assuming they were suicides), a sacralization in high art. But it was also a street glamour. The death of Meinhof alone, back in 1976, was enough to send crowds of young people swarming into the West German streets, enraged at the jails and at the revolutionary defeats and at the thousand injustices of modern life.

**J**OSCHKA FISCHER WAS among those angry crowds. He was a young firebrand in Frankfurt. At one of the Meinhof demonstrations, somebody tossed a Molotov cocktail at a policeman and burned him nearly to death. Fischer and a dozen other radicals were arrested and jailed for two days, though no charges were ever lodged against them.

Fischer was not especially famous at the time, outside of the radical left, and in later years, as he rose in national politics, not many people remembered that he had spent those days in jail or had been under any suspicion at all. Still, some people, the left-wing insiders, not to mention the policeman and his friends, did retain the memory. And in those first days of 2001, when *Stern* published the photographs from 1973, Meinhof's daughter, Röhl, revived the accusation against him. She insisted that Fischer did, in fact, bear a responsibility for the Molotov cocktail and the policeman's injuries.

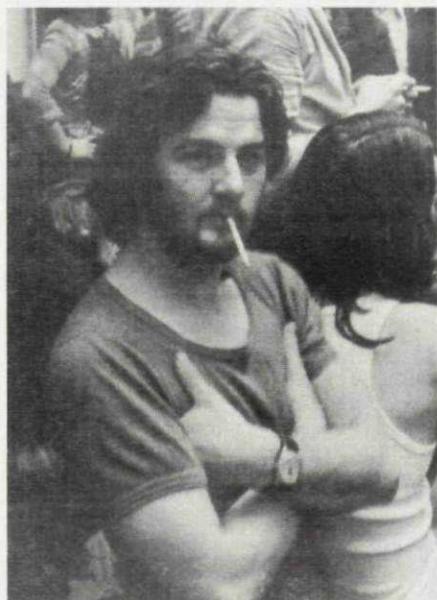
A couple of participants in the radical movement from those days backed her up, too, and said that, in planning the particular demonstration in which the policeman was attacked, Fischer had never ruled out the use of Molotovs and may even have favored it. A retired colleague of the injured policeman was adamant about Fischer's responsibility. No one came up with any sort of indisputable confirmation. But Fischer was obliged to rise from his seat once again and, in his dignity as foreign minister, deny all connection to a very ugly event from long ago ("*Definitiv nein!*" he told *Stern*)—which would have been unpleasant under any circumstances but must have been doubly so in the light of the photographs, the five atrocious photographs that made him seem all too capable in his younger years of having organized a Molotov cocktail attack.

There was another accusation. Fischer was said to have tossed stones and Molotov cocktails during yet a different raucous demonstration, this one in 1975 at the Spanish Embassy—an angry protest against Generalissimo Franco and Spanish fascism. Fischer denied that accusation, too, though he did acknowledge through his spokesman at the Foreign Ministry that he had participated in the event, which had never been a secret anyway. The spokesman reminded the German public that demonstrating against Franco and fascism was nothing to be ashamed of. A good point: something to be proud of, at last!

Then another accusation: Fischer was accused of having attended a meeting of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Algiers back in 1969, at which the PLO adopted a resolution to achieve final victory, which is to say, the destruction of Israel. That was not so good, and seemed triply bad for a future foreign minister of Germany, even if no one threw rocks or bombs. The ministry spokesman conceded that Fischer did attend the conference; but, doing his best to cope with one more embarrassing revelation, the spokesman made the mistake of adding that Fischer had spent only an hour there, which was

like admitting to using marijuana but not to inhaling it. And, of course, the part about spending only an hour turned out to be untrue, and the spokesman, backtracking, had to acknowledge that, yes, Fischer had participated throughout. (Which no one should have doubted. The man is a born politician. He loves meetings.) And still more accusations from New Left days of yore came raining down on Joschka Fischer's respectable middle-aged head.

IT WAS NOT instantly obvious what drove Bettina Röhl to deliver the photographs to *Stern* and to dredge up her several hair-raising accusations. I looked at different European papers during the course of the affair, and I found a certain amount of political speculation, as could have been expected. Fischer's enemies in the Bundestag and at *Stern* tended



Joschka Fischer at a teach-in, 1973

to be, as I say, worthies of the conservative cause, who must have taken a fine partisan pleasure in making life miserable for a Green foreign minister. Yet the complications of contemporary politics are such that, on the left, too, Fischer had his enemies, who may have regarded him with an even deeper loathing.

Fischer had entered the government in 1998 as part of what is called the Red-Green coalition, meaning the alliance of the very big Social Democratic Party, the ancient Reds (whose organization was founded in 1875), and the much smaller Greens (whose organization was founded in 1979). To have forced the powerful and venerable Social Democrats into a coalition was, from the Green point of view, a great victory, and Fischer's arrival at the foreign ministry was bound to arouse jubilant expectations from the hardworking party activists. But here was the left-

wing difficulty. The Greens had made their way in German politics by sticking to their twin principles of ecology and anti-militarism. They were the enemies of the military policies of the United States, beginning in the days of President Reagan and advancing through the Gulf war of 1991 and onward to the present. Yet their year of political triumph, 1998, was not a happy one for the anti-militarist cause. The wars of Serbian nationalism had been getting grimmer and grimmer, and in 1998 the massacres took still another bad turn in Kosovo. NATO's involvement grew deeper and, from an anti-militarist perspective, more ominous. Many a Green looked to Fischer, as foreign minister, to oppose the NATO campaign, or at least to keep Germany, with its peaceful traditions in modern times, from taking part. But on matters of anti-militarism and NATO, Fischer was out of step with his own party. In his reasoning, the Serbian atrocities gnawed away at the pacifist logic. He looked at the ethnic persecutions, and came away thinking that military action was not such a bad idea, after all.

FISCHER WAS FILLED with conviction on this theme. And when he got into office he took the fundamental Green commitment to anti-war principles, deftly heaved it overboard, and gave his official endorsement to Germany's participation in the NATO effort. A large number of Greens could only look at those ministerial actions and feel horribly betrayed. To have spent nearly twenty years building a new party devoted to anti-militarism, only to see its first foreign minister endorse military action by NATO, the imperialist alliance! That was galling.

At the Green convention in 1999, someone threw a bag of red ink at Fischer and broke his eardrum. Four hundred police officers had to guard him when he got up to address the convention. His own party, the eco-pacifist assemblage, was a howling mob. The man did not lack for political skill, and he managed to hang onto the convention's support. But there was no placating a good percentage of his opponents. What was to be done about that? Nothing, nothing. And so, when the accusations against Fischer came rolling down upon him in the early months of 2001, it was easy to imagine that motives from the left, anti-militarist and anti-NATO, and not just the traditional hostility of his enemies on the right, might have been at work.

Then again, the fury against Fischer might have wended its way into the press from the remote margins of German political life, from the very far left well beyond the respectable democratic radicalism of

the Greens—the fury of ultra-militants who had remained in some way faithful to the legacy of Meinhof and her martyred guerrillas. Or perhaps the fury had its origin on the extreme right, from well beyond the respectable zones of Christian Democratic conservatism.

## II.

**B**UT WHAT DID it mean in 2001, extreme right and extreme left? The ordinary political labels have gotten bollixed up in modern times, and not just in Germany. In poking around the Internet, I found my way to the electronic discussion center of the fans of the Baader-Meinhof Gang—they have their own website, naturally—and was interested to read about the curious case of Horst Mahler, one of the founders of the group back in 1970. Over the years, Mahler had slid down the corridor of extremist politics from left-wing terrorism into the circles of German neo-Nazism, where he set about promoting mad theories on Jewish themes. Such things did happen. And Mahler, as I discovered, entertained his own opinions about the Fischer affair. He made the argument that Ulrike Meinhof, had she lived, would have likewise slid over to the extreme right.

But in his view, as reported on the website, right-wing and left-wing counted for nothing as far as the behavior of Meinhof's daughter. The real animus against Fischer bubbled up instead from a daughter's anger at her inadequate mother, the prison martyr. Or else, as was more widely said, Röhl's anger at Fischer derived from a still vaguer resentment against the entire era of 1968—from the resentment that, on an earlier occasion, she had already described in the pages of *Der Spiegel*. For what was 1968 to Bettina Röhl?

It was the era that had deprived her of a childhood. Her mother, in the grip of the revolutionary manias of the time, had once tried to ship little Bettina and her sister to a Palestinian camp, only to have the girls' father, a publisher of left-wing (and somewhat pornographic) magazines, arrange to have them kidnapped en route and brought back to Germany—a horrible childhood event. Then the mother had gotten herself jailed, and had ended up dead—she suffered every tragedy of the era. As had the children, in their fashion.

And who was Joschka Fischer? Someone who had participated in the radical cause and gotten away scot-free; someone who managed to profit from every horrible thing that had taken place. This was the cause of Röhl's holy rancor, or so it was said. A victim's fury at a survivor. In any case, everyone could agree that, whatever her deepest motives might have been,

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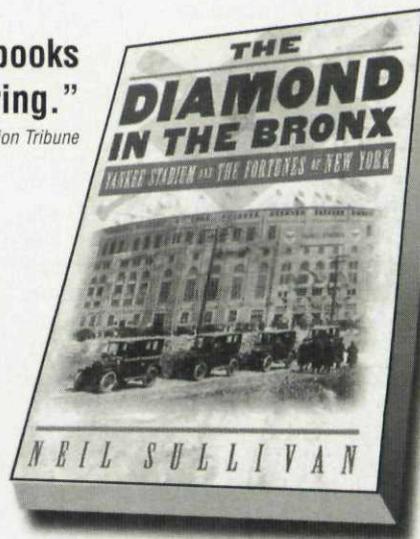
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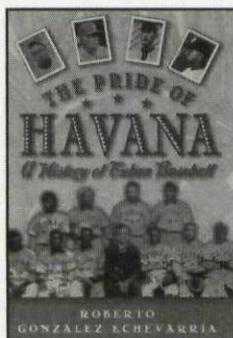
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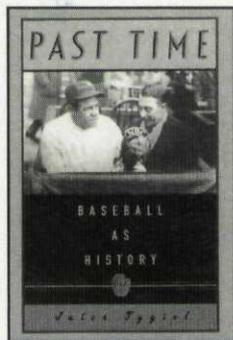
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Röhl had put a lot of vim and energy into her campaign. And no one could doubt that she had displayed a canny skill at inflicting the maximum personal damage, too—as if to prove that, with or without her famous mother, she was in her own right a real journalist.

ONE OF HER accusations pointed not at Fischer himself but slightly to his side, at an old roommate of his from the 1970s—another radical survivor, someone who had participated in nearly every phase of the movement, and had only managed to rise higher and higher in European life, and had suffered not one whit. This person was Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a well-known figure in Germany and all over Europe and beyond, even if, as a politician, he never achieved as lofty a post as Fischer. Cohn-Bendit was a man with an interesting childhood of his own. He was the son of German Jews, and he had spent his youth shuttling between West Germany and France. He attended university at Nanterre, outside Paris. And there, in the spring of 1968, he helped spark a series of student demonstrations, which sparked other demonstrations in Paris, which resulted, in May of that year, in a gigantic student uprising in Paris and all over France, which led in turn to a general strike by labor, which pretty much shut the country down for a while.

His hair was flaming red in those days, and he was witty and impish, and he became known as Danny the Red. He was the single best-known leader of the 1968 uprising, famous not just in France but everywhere in some degree, if only because the May uprising in Paris was the largest of the student uprisings anywhere in the world in that year, and because Paris was the capital of world revolution. Cohn-Bendit consequently had the experience of seeing himself elevated in a matter of weeks into the only person in any country who could claim to represent the generation of 1968 internationally, the human symbol of a worldwide seismic youth event—an odd personal fate for anyone to endure, an instant deification.

His legal citizenship, as it happened, was not French, but West German. And as soon as he made the mistake of stepping across the German border in 1968, the French authorities banished him from France. The leader of the French Communist Party, always a big enemy of the New Left, denounced Cohn-Bendit as a “German Jew,” which infuriated his admirers, who were many. Indignant crowds marched through the streets of Paris chanting, “We are all German Jews!”—a touching slogan, and a fine display of loyalty to Danny the Red. (At a right-wing

rally afterward, one of the slogans was “Cohn-Bendit—to Dachau!”) But there was no bringing him back to France, not for many years. He moved to Frankfurt.

He also roamed around a bit, stirring up trouble here and there. I ran into him in Britain in 1970. He sat on a hilltop and directed a small regiment of young French leftists, plus myself as translator, who invaded an Isle of Wight rock festival in the name of anti-capitalism, free rock music, and anti-clericalism. (The anti-clericalism struck me as odd, but those were our reasons.) Cohn-Bendit, our leader, was a mischievous guy. Mostly he stayed in Frankfurt, though. He set up house with Fischer.



Daniel Cohn-Bendit singing the “Internationale” to a policeman, May 1968

And, ever militant, Cohn-Bendit and Fischer organized a group called *Revolutioner Kampf*, or Revolutionary Struggle, which was left-wing and counter-cultural both, a fixture of 1970s life in the happening districts of Frankfurt.

FISCHER WAS THE main leader of Revolutionary Struggle’s militant political activities, and Cohn-Bendit of its counter-cultural side. Fischer led the revolutionary mob in the streets, and Cohn-Bendit directed the revolution in daily life. His main activity was to run a kindergarten. He spent two years at it. Running a kindergarten might sound like an oddly modest thing for a famous revolutionary to do. But kindergartens were a big project for the German New

Left. The goal was nothing less than to perform radical surgery on the German national character. The traditional educational system in West Germany had followed the standard old-fashioned authoritarian model. And, in the New Left analysis, the standard model had succeeded all too well in times past at producing standard personalities—people who responded well to authority and knew how to give orders and how to take them, the kind of people who might grow up to be Nazis or to accept a government of Nazis without protesting. Good Germans, in a phrase. Authoritarian personalities.

So the New Left set out to construct a new kind of education—an anti-authoritarian education, beginning at the beginning, with the goal of creating anti-authoritarian personalities, people who would think for themselves and instinctively shrug off any attempt to impose a totalitarian domination. Sex education figured in the idea. The anti-authoritarian educators wanted to break down the sexual repression of earlier times—the sexual armor that, in their psychological figurings (with the help of Wilhelm Reich), had always surrounded the authoritarian personality. That was the idea behind the kindergarten campaign: the “anti-authoritarian kindergartens.” The teachers wanted to encourage the healthy sexuality of little children.

The idea was more than German, to be sure. The notion of breaking down old-fashioned personality types, the idea that early education offers a fulcrum for moving mankind, the campaign to build new kindergartens and schools on radical new principles—this was a big impulse in the English left, too, on its anarchist side. It was a venerable notion: Rousseau, Godwin, Dewey. It was big in the United States. One of the national leaders of America’s Students for a Democratic Society, Bill Ayers, began his radical career by organizing a proper elementary school—after which he hurled himself into the guerrilla campaign of the Weather Underground, after which, correcting himself, he hurled himself back into early childhood education.

In Frankfurt, Cohn-Bendit not only ran his kindergarten, he also wrote about it in a book directed at the French public that had so amiably chanted about being German Jews. The book was called *Le Grand Bazar* and it appeared in 1975. It was a loosely structured memoir of his life in the revolutionary movement, with chapters on the French student uprising, his own Jewish identity, his kindergarten, the objectionable nature of communism, and several other topics. It was full of the inflammatory phrases of the day. Then *Le Grand Bazar* faded from memory.

**I**N THE EARLY months of 2001, though, with the photographs of Fischer circulating in *Stern* and the many accusations of violent leftism surrounding him and a scent of scandal rising on every side, Bettina Röhl craftily plucked one of those inflammatory passages from Cohn-Bendit's book, declared the passage to be an undiscovered new outrage, and offered it for a fee (a tacky move) to the press. She approached *Libération* in Paris with her scoop. *Libération* declined to take her up on it, partly because the newspaper's policy was not to pay for news scoops, and partly because the book in question had been published long ago and could be freely quoted by anyone, but mostly because the paper's correspondent read the passage and, by interpreting it the way Cohn-Bendit had plainly intended, failed to see any scoop at all. *The Observer* in England did go for Röhl's item, and ran the excerpt. Then the item was picked up by *L'Express* in France, the *Bild Zeitung* in Germany, *La Repubblica* in Italy, and other papers.

The excerpt described Cohn-Bendit's kindergarten and was intended to illustrate the atmosphere of non-repression—the lengths to which the kindergarten teacher would go in order to prevent his little wards from looking on sex with fear. Cohn-Bendit had written: "It happened to me several times that certain kids opened my fly and began to tickle me. I reacted differently according to circumstances, but their desire posed a problem to me. I asked them: 'Why don't you play together? Why have you chosen me, and not the other kids?' But if they insisted, I caressed them even so."

In the context of the sexual liberation ideas of the 1970s, his larger point in writing those words was clear enough, and not without sense. He did explain in the book that, even in the most anti-authoritarian of kindergartens, children need instruction and cannot be allowed to do just as they please. He considered that adults ought to ponder the sexual questions long and hard, with regard to children. But that one sentence did make it seem that he himself was not exactly pondering anything. If you lifted that one passage from its context, Cohn-Bendit could easily be made to look like a pedophile—like an adult having sex with children. And this horrendous insinuation, the suggestion that Joschka Fischer's roommate, Danny the Red, the spirit of 1968 itself, had been, in fact, a pedophilic creep of the first order, a child molester—this dreadful insinuation ascended into the scandal of the hour in the French newspapers and on television.

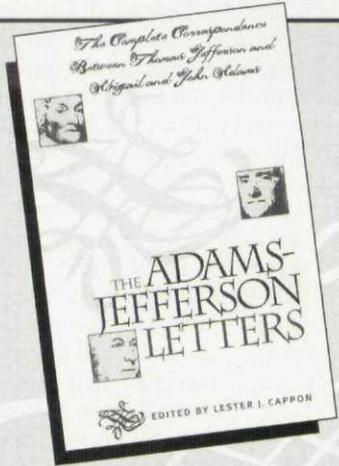
There was never any reason, none at all, to credit the accusation. A group of

parents of the kindergartners in Frankfurt plus some of the children themselves, now grown up, made public statements in praise and in defense of the teacher Cohn-Bendit. Not one person stood up to denounce him or to lodge any personal complaint. Cohn-Bendit himself, the Cohn-Bendit of 2001, was apoplectic about the accusation. He acknowledged in his riposte that the passage in his book had been written carelessly, in the provocative mode of the day. It was, he said, a "literary exaggeration," stupid, foolish, and shocking. Everything about the New Left, even its descriptions of kindergarten life, had been meant to provoke the wrath of the bourgeoisie. But he stressed that, during the friskier days of New Left wildness, whenever someone did try to make a case for pedophilia, as occurred from time to time (in the form of "man-boy love"), he was one of the people who spoke up right away in disapproval—he and the feminists and just about nobody else.

Pedophilia, Cohn-Bendit pointed out, has always been a shameful reality of traditional family life—the traditional life that conceals abysmal behavior under a blanket of silence, ignorance, and patriarchal authority. Pedophilia is the kind of scandalous reality that the sexual liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s tried to eliminate by making sexuality into something to be discussed honestly, without shame—by creating an anti-authoritarian atmosphere in which crimes and abuses would no longer be covered up in the name of filial obedience. Those were not foolish arguments on his part.

Surely he was right in pointing out that sexual liberation in the 1970s had turned out to be—notwithstanding the excesses and even the crimes that were sometimes committed in its name—one of the grand social advances of modern times, for women especially. Nowadays people can talk openly about pedophilia and other sexual abuses and depredations, as was rarely, if ever, possible during the two million years before the sexual revolution. Knowledge advances, ignorance recedes. There might even have been something heroic about Cohn-Bendit's devotion to the kindergarten. What other leader of a mass European uprising has ever turned from leading a revolutionary crowd in the streets to running a kindergarten? The new kind of masculinity needed a living example of how to behave, and Cohn-Bendit offered himself—someone unafraid to take up a role that had always been assigned to women. Any proposed revolution of daily life was going to depend on the willingness of men like him.

As it turned out, this particular accusation in the course of the Fischer affair, the insinuated charge against Cohn-



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Bendit, got nowhere at all back in Germany. The kindergarten in Frankfurt and the parents who had sent their children there and the children themselves were too well-known, and their refutations proved decisive. Besides, the experiment in anti-authoritarian education was conducted on a big scale in Germany in the 1970s and afterward, and large numbers of Germans had spent their infant years waddling through the hallways of that experiment and had come away understanding its goals and its methods as well as the sillier dogmas and the fads—the essays of Adorno ornamenting every anti-authoritarian classroom, that sort of thing. Familiarity bred respect (and perhaps a tolerant smile). To hang Cohn-Bendit on the basis of a single bad-sounding sentence in a book that no one remembered anymore did seem more than a trifle opportunistic. Even some of the conservative politicians in Germany spoke up for Cohn-Bendit's probity.

In France, a number of people likewise rebutted the insinuation, and right away, too. The host of a book-chat show on French television recalled that Cohn-Bendit had appeared on a panel in 1977 to discuss his book, and none of the other guests, not even the Catholic conservative, had thought to raise such an issue. It was pointed out that *L'Express*, which made such a convenient fuss over the accusation in 2001, had reviewed Cohn-Bendit's book when it originally came out and had found nothing objectionable at the time. And yet in France—and in other countries, too—the accusation about pedophilia, once it crept into the press, turned out to be a big event. Nasty journalists in the newspapers and at the television studios felt they could attach any sort of horrendous story or fantasy to the famous face from 1968, and have a swell time doing it, and feel no shame at all. Among journalists, such are the joys. Besides, newspapers must be sold and viewers attracted.

### III.

**B**UT THE MAIN reason the smear about Cohn-Bendit spread in France and in a few other countries had to do with something more than yellow journalism. Serge July, the editor of *Libération* (and a Maoist from the good old days), put his finger on that reason right away. The insinuation lingered because, in France and in some other countries, it had lately become fashionable to hold up for inspection the radicalism of the period around 1968, and to search out the wildest episodes, some of which were wild enough, and to identify the radicalism as a whole with its most extreme

moments. And it had become fashionable to take the social and cultural problems of our own time and to blame those problems on the radicalism of the earlier period, as exemplified in its extremes.

This particular fashion may sound familiar to American ears, but in Europe in the later 1990s it acquired a tonality all its own, without any American echo or equivalent. The new tonality consisted of—this was the strange part—youthfulness, instead of age. There was a stylish young people's pining for a long-ago era of order and hierarchy, when every person occupied his allotted place, and rules were rules, and culture and language and relations between the sexes were properly fixed, and not, as they are today, so damnably fluid. The young people who indulged in that particular nostalgia yearned, in short, for the 1950s. (They could hardly yearn for the 1940s.) And since nostalgic yearning always turns out to be, on its obverse, an indignant protest, the people who pined for the 1950s ended up raging against the 1960s, amusing themselves with indignant recitations of every scandalous outrage that was committed—and even a few that were not committed—by their own parents and older siblings.

You could describe their complaints as a right-wing reaction. That may overstate the case, though. Mostly the young reactionaries wanted to stamp their feet. As July pointed out, hardly anyone actually wanted to roll back the social and cultural achievements of the New Left era. To send women back to the kitchen, to resume the persecution of homosexuals, to return to the days of secrecy about child molesting, to resurrect the old superstitions about race, or to reconstruct the European imperialisms (to name a few of the ancient customs and social structures that had been overthrown in the course of the New Left era)—no one seriously wanted to do any of that. To undo the reforms of an earlier age is always possible, if enough people feel suitably motivated; but the nostalgics of the 1990s merely wanted to reel with horror, and in that way to fend off the anxieties of the present age.

The writer Michel Houellebecq had a big success in 1998 in France, then in Germany and elsewhere, with a novel about the horrors of the 1960s called *The Elementary Particles* (which came out in the United States two years later). And his blood-curdling portraits of the radical weirdness of yore, combined with a sentimental yearning for 1950s-style family life, combined with his ever-popular scenes of modern sex orgies, accounted for Houellebecq's success. Disgusting sexual cruelty in the name of liberation, cult manias, radical murders: his book hit

every note of 1960s mayhem. The Fischer affair merely seemed to recapitulate in real life what Houellebecq had already imagined in his novel, down to the figure of Bettina Röhl, the distressed child of a New Left terrorist, who seemed to have stepped from his own pages. (If she had only read a bit further in Cohn-Bendit's *Le Grand Bazar*, she might have dug up a few sentences about group sex, too, and *The Elementary Particles* would have replayed itself in full.)

In the early months of 2001, then, it hardly mattered if any particular accusation against Fischer or Cohn-Bendit turned out to be unfounded. Either way, true or false, the accusations afforded a satisfying pleasure to anyone who felt a nostalgia for the excellent social order of long ago, and a resentment at the radicals who had so rudely overthrown the order in question. That was true in Germany just as in France. Feelings were expressed, even if truths were not told. The accusations constituted, as July put it, a "settling of accounts with the generation of 1968." And so the accusations and even the smears spread from Germany to France and outward to Britain and Italy and, in some degree, around the world, on the basis of a cultural anxiety that had nothing to do with the petty ideological and local concerns of Greens and Christian Democrats and other politicians in Germany who fretted over the career of the statesman Joschka Fischer.

**A**ND THEN, HAVING floated upward into the airy zones of cultural anxiety, the Fischer affair suddenly sank into the concrete terrain of law. The legal issue came up at the trial of a New Left terrorist named Hans-Joachim Klein, who happened to be an old friend of Fischer's and Cohn-Bendit's in Frankfurt, from their days in Revolutionary Struggle in the early and middle 1970s.

The Fischer affair was a tale of people who had undergone life changes so vast as to be incomprehensible to outsiders. And among those many left-wing changelings, Klein was the king of kings. As a young man he had worked as an auto mechanic. He used to repair Cohn-Bendit's car. He followed Fischer to street demonstrations. He was one of the militants running to join Fischer in the grainy photographs from 1973—a tough character, not at all loath to mix it up with what we Americans used to call "the pigs." The terrorist wave rose in Germany, and Klein was carried aloft on the foam. When Sartre responded to Meinhof's letter by agreeing to visit Baader in the Stammheim prison, Klein served as his driver.

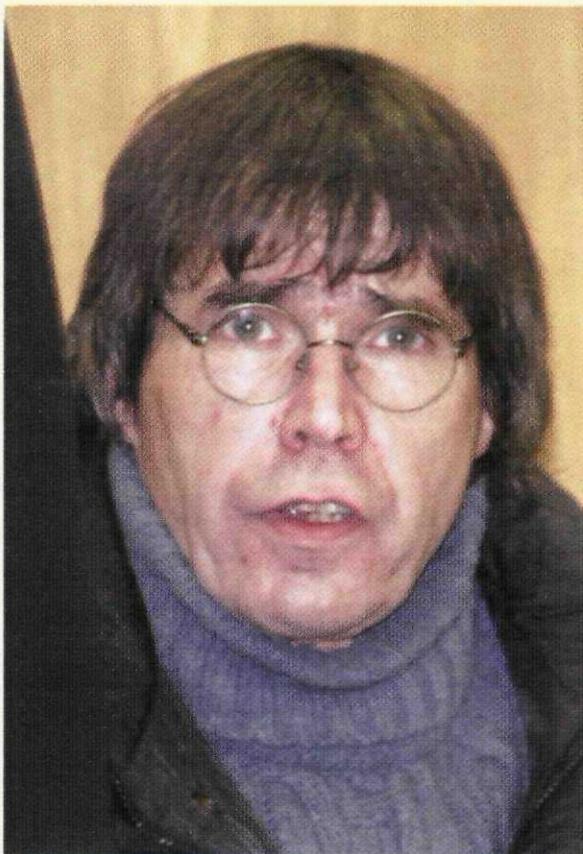
But he was no mere chauffeur. By then Klein was a secret soldier in a guerrilla

organization called the Revolutionary Cells, which was allied loosely with the Red Army Fraction and more tightly with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. One of the master achievements of the Revolutionary Cells was to help coordinate the Palestinian attack on the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972. A New Leftist from Frankfurt made the arrangements. And in 1975 Klein and the Revolutionary Cells joined with Carlos the Jackal, the Argentine terrorist, to attack, in the name of "the Arab revolution," a meeting of OPEC oil ministers in Vienna. Three people were killed. Klein was shot in the stomach and the shoulder, but he and Carlos and some of the others made their escape in a plane to Algeria.

As time went on, though, Klein reflected on what he had done. And having reflected, he made the grave decision of deserting his terrorist comrades. He renounced his own activities and denounced the terrorist doctrine. He fled underground from the underground, hiding equally from the police and the Revolutionary Cells and all the other terrorists, who would surely have killed him, given the chance. (There was a case in West Germany of left-wing terrorists murdering one of their deserters.) Klein sought out his old friends who, unlike himself, had never taken the plunge into armed activity, and he pleaded his case, and they helped him. Cohn-Bendit was one of those people, together with the French "New Philosopher" André Glucksmann, who had been a well-known visitor at Fischer's and Cohn-Bendit's Revolutionary Struggle house in Frankfurt. Cohn-Bendit and Glucksmann and the handful of other people who aided Klein rather admired him for having reconsidered his violence and for speaking out against his own comrades, the terrorists.

His friends helped him to settle in France. Sometimes they paid his rent. They tried to keep up his spirits. He lived in a little Norman village. He even wrote a book, and he granted a clandestine interview to Cohn-Bendit for a television documentary. In 1998, though, just three days before he was going to turn himself in under an arrangement that Cohn-Bendit had helped to broker, Klein was tracked down by the French police, who delivered him to the German authorities. His trial in Germany took place, by unhappy coincidence, just as the Fischer affair got under way in January 2001. He was sentenced to nine years.

But before the trial reached its end, Fischer was called to testify, not in his capacity as foreign minister but as a private citizen. He was asked about his relationship to Klein back in New Left times. Fischer explained that in those days he tried to talk Klein out of joining the terrorists. And when Fischer had finished making his statement, he walked over to Klein in his defendant's chair and shook the man's hand. The handshake seemed innocent enough, given that, as Fischer had just testified, Klein was an old friend, and the old friend had long ago denounced his own crimes and was now about to expiate them. Even so, next day in the Bundestag,



Hans-Joachim Klein at his trial, January 2001

Fischer was asked to explain himself.

There was worse. In the course of his testimony, Fischer was accused of having harbored people from the Red Army Fraction in his house. The accusation infuriated him. He told the court: "Next we will hear that Daniel Cohn-Bendit and I organized World War III in that house!" He wanted to draw a thick line between his own leftism and the terrorists—to show that in those days you could have been a revolutionary militant and still not have had any truck with murderers and kidnapers. But Fischer's insistence on this point turned out to be untrue. A woman named Margrit Schiller, who had served jail time for her connections to the Red Army Fraction, wrote an autobiography in 1999, in

which she plainly stated that she had spent a "few days" in the early 1970s living in the Revolutionary Struggle house. She visited the house out of curiosity. She wanted to see who these Revolutionary Struggle people were. She did see them, including Fischer himself. This awkward bit of information emerged in the aftermath of Fischer's testimony, and Fischer had to acknowledge that Margrit Schiller's assertion must have been correct.

The discrepancy did not seem especially damning. All kinds of visitors were always traipsing through the house in Frankfurt. Abbie Hoffman was there; Jerry Rubin came to visit. Who could remember every last person who had ever stopped by? But the news about a Red Army Fraction woman only managed to underline yet again how close Fischer, in his younger days, had been to the terrorists. And the revelation gave an opening to the prosecutor at the Klein trial. The prosecutor had already shown a nasty hostility to Fischer during his testimony; he had even been rebuked for it by the judge. Now the prosecutor charged Fischer with perjury. The Bundestag was put in the position of having to decide whether to lift Fischer's ministerial immunity and allow him to be tried on the perjury charge.

So Fischer faced a legal problem, and not just a public relations problem or a political problem, in the wake of those many accusations and scandals and insinuations. And with one scandal piling on another, the photographs, the resurrected accusations, the new accusations, the denials, the retractions, the outright smears, the undeniable acquaintance with more than one authentic bomb-thrower, and finally the perjury charge—with all of that, the general public was bound to gaze on Fischer with a nervous apprehension. What kind of man could this Joschka Fischer be? People did have to wonder.

Fischer's evolution was plainly a lot stranger and more extreme than might have seemed to be the case. He was not just a peacenik politician who in the fullness of time had metamorphosed into a NATO supporter—as had been widely believed, given his origins in the Greens. His political origins reached back to the era before there was any such thing as a Green. He was a street-fighting militant, someone on the fringe of terrorist New Leftism, a rough-and-ready revolutionary, who then became a Green, and then a NATO supporter, someone who had changed his colors not once but twice—or who knew how

many times?—someone whose history was populated with tough and sinister characters from the left-wing underworld.

## IV.

**D**IDN'T THE SEVERAL mysteries of his past political life suggest (as his political enemies insisted) that Fischer might, in fact, be a man without character? Didn't his political zigzags reveal a Machiavelli of the worst sort? A man desperate for power, someone who would adopt any position whatsoever, if only it would bring him what he wanted? That was how Fischer began to seem in other countries, including in our own far-away part of the world. Even before the scandal broke, Fischer was presented in *The New York Times Magazine* by the German pundit Josef Joffe as "a bit of a Forrest Gump," someone whose "business" is "self-reinvention"—which sounded friendly enough, until you stopped to think about it.

Then the waves of scandal rolled in, and Roger Cohen of the *Times*, one of the paper's most astute correspondents, duly reported in the news section that Fischer was, in fact, "a man of startling changes, not least in his views on the use of force," which was certainly true. But the startling changes were bound to arouse a few worries about the man, especially if he was Forrest Gump. Some of those worries cropped up on the *Times* editorial page, whose editors felt sufficiently upset by the incriminating photographs and by some of the accusations to devote a small commentary to the affair. The *Times* editors concluded that Fischer, in their words, "should be allowed to continue serving his country"—which was not too surprising, given that his foreign policy had been controversial in Germany precisely in the degree to which it coincided with that of the United States. Not quite satisfied, however, the editors added the cautionary phrase "barring more damaging revelations"—as if one more telling photograph, or one persuasive proof that he did tell people to throw Molotov cocktails back in 1976, might have tipped the balance against him.

And who could blame the editors for having registered their careful reservation? For if Fischer were, in truth, a man without principles, a man whose history consisted of shadows and hidden crimes and whose business was self-reinvention, there would have been reason enough to fret over the power that he could wield from his desk at the foreign ministry in Berlin. But it was also obvious that, beneath the day-to-day politics, a deeper worry was all along trailing through this affair.

**I**T WAS A nagging worry about the radicalism of the years around 1968 and its crazier episodes. Even some of us who went through a few of those episodes can hardly believe, looking back, that such things could have taken place. Might not a few dark after-effects from those days have lingered into the present? You could find yourself worrying that question even without pining for the arcadia of the 1950s. Out of the dark violence of the student left of three decades ago, might not a faintly criminal stain, a shiftiness, maybe a touch of ruthlessness, have crept across certain personalities and left an indelible mark?

The worry went well beyond poor old Fischer at the foreign ministry. In Germany under the Red-Green coalition, a greater number of veterans of the New Left had risen to power than in any other country among the big Western powers—risen through the Greens or else through the Social Democrats, where some of the New Left Marxists, having abandoned their revolutionary leftism, eventually found a home. Gerhard Schröder, the chancellor, used to be something of a radical socialist himself, before making his way into the safely popular regions of Social Democracy's "Third Way." Such was the long march through the institutions.

So Fischer, in all his flashiness, proved to be a representative figure in these matters. That was why it was reasonable to think of the Fischer affair as the trial of the generation of 1968—to see in it a challenge to an enormous cohort of people who had fashioned their personal characters in the years of New Left rebellion. And it did seem, for a while, that the challenge was going to prevail, and that Fischer would sooner or later have to accept the price of his young man's wildness, hang his head in shame, and submit his resignation, just as his enemies were dearly hoping.

But not so fast. The letters pages of German newspapers began to fill with dispatches from middle-aged worthies from the business world and the learned professions who confessed that they, too, had waged the revolution back in the years around 1968, and then had grown up and had sanded down the sharp edge of their views, just as Fischer had done, and Germany's foreign minister ought not to be persecuted for what happened long ago. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a conservative paper, published an essay by the poet Charles Simic shaking his head over the hypocrisies of conservative indignation. If only Fischer had become a stockbroker or a college professor, Simic observed, nobody at all would have complained about his left-wing background. If only he had become, like so many

ex-radicals from the 1960s, a right-wing newspaper columnist! The most amazing vote of support came from Fischer's own victim, the white-helmeted policeman in the photographs from 1973, whose name turned out to be Rainer Marx. Fischer telephoned Marx to apologize for the gruesome beating in the Frankfurt parking lot, and Marx found admiring words to say about Fischer's conduct of foreign policy. Nor did Fischer seem to be collapsing in the polls.

**B**UT THERE WAS something about Fischer's ability to survive the scandal that aroused still other worries, nameless and deep, touching on matters well beyond the mayhem of the New Left. For what might it say about Germany if, faced with some hair-raising accusations and the dreadful photographs, the German people ended up supporting their foreign minister with more enthusiasm instead of less? What would it mean if the worse Fischer seemed, the more he was applauded? Americans have had some experience with that kind of question. The Clinton sex scandal hit its stride in the same year that Fischer became foreign minister, and week by week Clinton's personal behavior was revealed in ever more pornographic detail. Most Americans seemed to recognize intuitively that their president's sex life had followed an ancient if undistinguished tradition of husbandly wandering, and had no bearing on state policy or the fate of the nation, and was finally not the public's business—which was why Clinton's popular ratings remained high, and rose even higher when his persecutors had their say.

Yet Clinton's conservative enemies, some of them, saw in his behavior something much more worrisome. They saw a shadow of the 1960s and its radical subversion of (as they imagined it) basic morality, a left-wing undermining of eternal principles of behavior, a menace to civilization. The right-wing accusation against the radicalism of the 1960s has always been a bit more shrill and intense in the United States than in Europe, and as the Clinton scandals unfolded, the conservatives in America grew ever more upset, not just at the sinning president but at the all-tolerant American public. What could it mean, the conservatives had to ask, that Clinton's legal situation was tottering and his public support was firming up? His popularity seemed to hint at something monstrous: that America had been corrupted in its ethics by the horrible radicals of the 1960s. The American public seemed to have sunk into a swamp of moral indifference, even depravity. Right and wrong had disappeared into a marshy haze. And the conservatives grew wide-

eyed in astonishment and horror.

The deeper worry that ran through the Fischer affair had something in common with that conservative American fear, only in a German version that seemed infinitely more sinister. Some of the commentaries on the Fischer affair made the quiet suggestion that, if Germany's foreign minister were shown to be a man without character, and if the Germans ended up applauding him anyway, as did seem to be happening, it was because, in Germany, any number of people were living in the shadow of their own shameful political pasts, and the country was long ago shorn of its ability to make moral judgments, and nothing was to be done about it. Such was the implication, quietly hinted. Germany: a country incapable of looking things square in the face. Germany: a country unwilling to confront its own history. And, to be sure, in Germany's case, something in that suggestion did catch the eye.

Watching the Fischer affair unfold through the early months of 2001 was like studying a painting where your attention first focuses on the main subject at the center of the canvas, and then you begin to notice the background and how interesting it is, and then you notice, reflected in a piece of metal or seen through a window, a second background, which you can barely see. The main subject in the Fischer affair was a simple political scandal of the present day involving a well-regarded government minister. But the scandal was set against a background consisting of events from twenty-five or thirty years ago, from the time of the New Left. The Fischer affair invited us, even required us, to make a few judgments about that background.

But the New Left background turned out, on closer inspection, to have a background of its own, barely visible, which was the Germany of long before. Not the generation of 1968, but the generation of 1938. Not the New Left, but the Nazis. The whole difficulty in making sense of the affair was to figure out what possible tale or narrative could account for all three of those elements: today's foreign minister in the foreground, the New Left behind him, and, half-hidden, the background of the background, yesterday's yesterday, bathed in darkest shadow.

## V.

EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT the Nazism of the 1930s and 1940s was. But what was the New Left of the 1960s and 1970s, in its motives, instincts, and goals, in its spirit? The decades come and go, and on that question no consensus has been achieved, none at all, not in Europe and not in America. That was why

the Fischer affair went leaping from country to country, arousing different controversies in each new place. It was mad cow disease in the form of an argument about the past. It turned out to be a rather useful argument, too. Questions were raised; perhaps a few lessons were learned. And what were those lessons? I will give my faraway, trans-Atlantic interpretation.

The New Left was a young people's movement motivated by fear. Naturally, not just by fear. New Leftists all over the world knew very well that, in the decades after World War II, European imperialism was steadily collapsing around the world and certain kinds of social progress were advancing nicely in the Western countries, and might go on advancing, too, given a proper left-wing push. Utopian cheerfulness was a sunbeam that fell here and there. Yet fear swallowed all. It was a fear that, at least in the Western countries, social progress rested on a lie, a fear that prosperity was theft, and Western wealth was Third World exploitation; a fear that Western civilization comprised a system of manipulation designed to mislead its own people and everyone else—an iron cage cleverly designed to resemble the open air of freedom.

The social optimism of the New Left drew on visible realities of world history, and so, too, did the fear. New Leftists all over the world looked at the United States. They saw that America's ancient prejudices against blacks had come under challenge. But the spectacle of America trying to reform itself succeeded only in revealing how persistent were the ancient prejudices, and therefore how limited and false must be America's claim on democratic virtue. New Leftists gazed also at Vietnam. The fighting there had the look of a colonial war in an extremely ugly version—a war no less racist under the Americans than under the French imperialists, except with a Madison Avenue smarminess (“defense of the free world”) and a terrifying industrial face. American bomber planes overhead and cone-hatted rice farmers down below made an unbearable spectacle. And the smarmy slogans together with the old-fashioned race hatreds and the technological ghastliness—all of this aroused a dread, finally, that pointed to the terrors of the past.

It was a fear, in sum, that in World War II, fascism, and more specifically Nazism, had not been defeated after all—a fear that Nazism, by mutating, had continued to thrive into the 1950s and 1960s and onward, always in new disguises. It was a fear that Nazism had grown into a modern system of industrial rationality geared to irrational goals—a Nazism of racial superstitions committing the same massacres as in the past, a Nazism declaiming a

language of democracy and freedom that had no more human content than the old-fashioned rhetoric of *Lebensraum* and Aryan superiority. And so the New Left in its youthful anxiety found its way to an old and mostly expired panic from its parents' generation, and bent over it, and fanned the dead embers, and breathed on them, and watched aghast as the ancient flames leaped up anew.

In each country where the New Left happened to flourish, the revived panic over a newly discovered, cleverly disguised, still-flourishing Nazism seemed to be confirmed by strictly local circumstances, each country in its own fashion. France in the early 1960s kept trembling on the brink of a right-wing coup d'état, and right-wing bombs exploded in central Paris, and French soldiers and police committed massacres and atrocities in Algeria, and a black cloud of those events hung over France well into the 1970s. In Italy, the New Leftists looked at their own neighborhoods and schools and even at their own families and saw with perfect accuracy that the social structures and cultural habits and ways of thought from Mussolini times had merely been covered over, as with a drop cloth. But no one gazed at the everyday vistas before their eyes with more pain and anger than the New Leftists of West Germany.

THE NEW LEFTISTS there could see all too clearly that West Germany's conservative parties were comfortably maintaining quite a few continuities with right-wing customs of the past, and that big-time industrial figures from Nazi times were big-time industrial figures still, and that society had not entirely changed hands. Even the gas chambers retained a patriotic luster in the eyes of many a knuckleheaded West German curmudgeon, such that when the New Leftists marched in the streets, here and there an ornery old burgher could be counted on to mutter, “You should go to the gas chambers!”—more or less the way that in the United States some Neanderthal throwback to the McCarthy era would always be heckling, “Go back to Russia!” (And we Americans thought we had it bad.) In most countries, when the New Leftists described their enemies as Nazis, they knew that Nazism was a figure of speech. But West Germany was beyond metaphor.

The New Leftists there noticed that even the socialists had made their peace with German society, and that no one in the Social Democratic Party seemed to be trying too hard to root out the holdovers from Nazi times. Such were their observations. Maybe they were unjust. Sometimes they were on the mark. Of the

many crimes committed by the Red Army Fraction, the most famous of all was the cold-blooded execution of Hans-Martin Schleyer, the president of the West German employers' federation, who turned out to have been a top SS officer in Prague during the Nazi occupation. And with a disguised Nazism apparently in command at home and across the Western world circa 1968, the need for an extremely radical resistance seemed to cry out from every stone. What was New Leftism, then? It was—it pictured itself as—Nazism's opposite and nemesis: the enemy of the *real* Nazism, the Nazism that had survived Nazism, the Nazism that was built into the foundations of Western life. And how did the New Left intend to act on that idea, with what tools and what ideas?

THE COMMENTATORS ON Fischer and his photographs and his terrorist acquaintances, in looking back on those years, tended to shrink the New Left and its practical and philosophical quandaries into a straightforward argument about violence and non-violence—about tactics, by and large. And, having divided the movement along tactical lines, the commentators wanted to know: was Fischer in his hotheaded youth a good New Leftist, meaning non-violent, or (as the photographs and the accusations made seem likely) a bad New Leftist? But those questions, asked head-on, were never going to shed much light on the man himself or on the movement. This was because New Leftism in its fear and its panic was always a super-emotional movement, and the charged sentiments undid any chance for lucid discussion, and the arguments for violence and non-violence kept slipping illicitly into one another's arms, though you wouldn't think it possible.

In our own country, to cite a humbling example, some of the most notoriously violent street protests of the late 1960s and early 1970s, during the mass mobilizations against the war in Vietnam, were led by the die-hard opponents of all violence whatsoever—by militants of absolute pacifism who, in their Christian zeal, chose to stand shoulder to shoulder with the helmeted warriors of sidewalk mayhem. And the helmeted warriors ran into the street and did what even the pacifists expected them to do. Were the pacifists good and the window-smashers bad? You may think so, but those people were arm-in-arm, and their differences shriveled at times to such tiny proportions as to seem mere variations in style, the pious and the polite over here, the blasphemous and the rude over there, each complicit with the other: good cop, bad cop.

The truly fundamental debates within the New Left, the arguments that really

mattered about the crypto-Nazism of modern life and how to confront it, the arguments that finally did lead to violence or that led away—*those* arguments broke down along lines that, in their origins, had very little to do with tactics. They were arguments about worldviews, about what it meant to be a leftist and what sort of world the left wanted to create—philosophical arguments, you could say. Those particular arguments tended to remain somewhat muted in the early years of the New Left, when tempers were relatively cool and the student movement was content to remain a student movement.

But the heat rose season by season, and by 1969 or thereabouts the New Left had lost any sense of balance that it might once have had—lost its balance because the Vietnam War had intensified and the anti-colonial movement seemed about to erupt in social and racial cataclysms here and there around the world, and because a good many New Leftists had by then undergone their own unhappy run-ins with the police, which led to dizzy spells of rage and tantrum. And the movement lost its old tranquility because many a simple-souled activist wanted to make the transition from student to grown-up and stop fiddling around—wanted to put together an adult movement capable of wrestling the old society to the ground.

## VI.

IN EACH COUNTRY around the world, some of the central figures from the student ranks, having grown older and more frustrated, set out to do just that, mostly by trying to organize a full-scale revolutionary movement, something that could no longer be described as a young person's merry carnival. Only what could that mean in the world of 1969 and the early 1970s? A revolutionary movement? In what fashion? In the Western countries the New Left, stroking its chin, contemplated three main alternatives.

The crudest of those alternatives, the least imaginative, was simply to revert to the old-fashioned sectarian Marxism of the 1930s and to go about fighting Nazism in exactly the way that people had done in the past, by organizing disciplined, Leninist structures based on obedience, dedication, and self-sacrifice, the dream words of the Great Depression, and in this manner to sink into a sepia-toned memory of long ago. Leftism, too, can be a nostalgia cult. (Leftism may be the greatest nostalgia cult of all.) Resurrecting the 1930s turned into quite an enormous campaign around the world. Even in the United States, where the Marxist and Leninist traditions were venerable but never especially strong, some fifteen thousand New

Leftists are estimated to have enlisted in the minuscule retro-Marxist sects, Trotskyist or Stalinist (though the Stalinists called themselves Maoists), which is no small number, if you consider that enlisting meant accepting the rigors of party discipline and not just sending in a dues payment or showing up at a meeting now and then.

I do not know exactly how many people embarked on that sort of project in West Germany, but the figures would have been larger, much larger. The yearning for a heroic Marxist past—for the heroic past that had failed in Germany to be sufficiently heroic, that had failed to beat down the Nazi challenge—became irresistible in the German student movement. Rosa Luxemburg, the martyr, became a goddess. And the students were drawn to old-fashioned Marxism for another reason. The New Left in West Germany had originally taken shape in response to the Federal Republic's banning in 1956 of the West German Communist Party, a political event that allowed the students to feel that a heritage from the past had been denied them: the heritage that was flowering (they liked to imagine) in the part of Germany that *was* struggling against the Nazi legacy, in the morally superior part, the egalitarian and civilized part—in the other part, that is: in East Germany.

THE PRINCIPAL WEST GERMAN student movement happened to be called SDS (which, coincidentally, were also the initials of the principal American organization of the New Left). In 1969, under the pressure of the revolutionary mood and the worldwide student uprising, the German SDS dissolved. The students from that organization, in their search for an adult politics, went about forming any number of brand-new Marxist-Leninist parties—a new party in every city, it sometimes seemed. That became a big tendency in West Germany, bigger there than in France and the other countries of the West.

And yet retro-Marxism was never New Leftism's main impulse. A much larger number of people took up the second alternative, a Marxism that was distinctly of the 1960s and 1970s: the Marxism of Castro, Che, Ho, and Mao, mixed with a few doctrines of the Frankfurt School. This was a modern Marxism, free of retro touches. The people who took it up sometimes went about organizing militant parties of their own, but mostly they cultivated their radical aspirations in a cheerfully provisional mood, awaiting the arrival of the true, well-organized revolutionary party of the future, and meanwhile biding their time in the agreeable fashion of the young. "Please, God, make

me chaste, but not yet!" Modern Marxism was for this reason mostly a left-wing milieu without formal structures or central commands or any way of coordinating itself—a big milieu, though.

As for New Leftism's third alternative, it was fundamentally anarchist—a libertarian impulse that sometimes drew on the nineteenth-century pamphlets of Bakunin and Kropotkin, sometimes on the early-twentieth-century writings of Anton Pannokoek and the councilists, sometimes on the contemporary but equally obscure pamphlets of the "autonomists" in Italy and the *Socialism or Barbarism* group and the Situationists in France. But most often it drew on nothing at all, on a breeze blowing through the university neighborhoods and on rumors from the California counterculture.

The libertarianism was typically less than libertarian. It was anarchist-leaning—or, as the French say, *anarchisant*—cultural more than political, oblivious to economics, a libertarianism under constant siege by the doctrines of the retro-Marxists and especially of the modern Marxists—a libertarianism that turned out to be, as a result, blithely inconsistent. The *anarchisants* of the New Left kept falling for the Third Worldist fantasies of the modern Marxists, kept wanting to celebrate Ho or some other tropical Communist as a hero of the libertarian cause—an odd thing to do. The *anarchisants* spoke about freedom and personal autonomy and, at the same time, nodded respectfully at the self-sacrifice of Che Guevara, whose unmentionable achievement was to have established Soviet-style prison camps in Cuba. An anarchist salt and a Marxist pepper, sprinkled together.

**C**OHN-BENDIT SPOKE for this third alternative. His own libertarianism was more sophisticated, and therefore more frankly anti-Communist, than that of almost everyone else in the New Left outside of the tiny, old-school anarchist sects. He could draw on a solid acquaintance with the old-time anarchist groups and the revolutionary tradition that in France went back to Proudhon, a venerable heritage. And the venerable heritage did have its wisdom, which was available to him even as a college student. Lenin's crimes were a revelation to everyone in the left-wing world, it sometimes seemed, but they were no revelation to the heirs of French anarchism. They already knew the awful truth.

Cohn-Bendit knew better than to sigh for the Popular Front. He was not a man for Mao buttons. He was a lot clearer than Fischer on these questions, back in the New Left days. (Cohn-Bendit has explained that, when he arrived in Frank-

furt after his expulsion from France, he was surprised by how great the Stalinist influence on the German left was, by how little the German radicals knew about the true nature of communism.) The phrase "visceral anti-communism" would have sounded terrible, even fascistic, in the ears of many a person in the movement; but Cohn-Bendit was happy with the phrase and applied it to himself. He filled his writings with all kinds of angry denunciations of the Soviet Union and Lenin and the Marxist-Leninist political tradition. *Le Grand Bazar*, the book that got him in so much trouble in the early months of 2001, was largely an anti-Communist tract.

Then again, in the spirit of inconsistency, even Cohn-Bendit made himself at home with all kinds of people who could never have postulated anti-communism as a New Left principle. Those were his limitations. Or perhaps those were the limitations of the movement: Cohn-Bendit would have cut himself off from an enormous number of people if he had insisted on anti-Communist principles at every moment. He was a great fan of the freak scene in the United States, which he instinctively knew to be anarchist at heart, allergic to bureaucracies, allergic to anything like a Marxist-Leninist centralized organization—a movement devoted to individual expression and to the expansion of personal freedom in every possible dimension, plus a few other dimensions. The freak scene in America was surely the biggest of all the libertarian currents around the world in those years, and its size and friskiness excited his enthusiasm. America's freaks and Hollywood's Westerns were a sort of ideal for him. He recommended their virtues in *Le Grand Bazar*. But then, America's freaks were just as inconsistent as anyone else among the New Left libertarians around the world. You could see the confusion in someone such as Abbie Hoffman, whose level of education in matters of left-wing lore was fairly low, and who therefore tended to be rather gullible about Third World communism. Hopelessly gullible, in fact. Hoffman was an anarchist who knew zero about anarchism.

No single phrase denoted the New Left's libertarian current around the world. The word that Fischer liked to use in West Germany (as I see from an interview that he gave to Cohn-Bendit back in the mid-1980s) was the humorously clunky "anarcho-Mao-spontex"—an expressive phrase covering all bases. "Anarcho" meant the old tradition of the anarchist movements of the past. "Mao" meant an imaginary Mao—a Mao who, unlike the real Mao, was not a totalitarian. "Spontex" meant "spontaneist"—against formal

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organizations and against the bureaucratic and military discipline of the Marxist sects. Or, abbreviating, the doubly-hyphenated phrase could be rendered as “sponti,” which was German for what we Americans meant by “freak,” more or less.

The “sponti scene” in Frankfurt meant the housing squatters whom Fischer used to lead around the streets, together with the “alternative” journals such as Cohn-Bendit’s *Pflasterstrand*, or “Under the Pavement, the Beach!” The sponti scene meant the teachers at the “anti-authoritarian” schools, the street-corner layabouts, the politicized dope-smokers, and the avant-garde in the arts, except for the people who could more comfortably fit under a label of conventional Marxist—a big scene, block after block in Frankfurt and Berlin, the sponti capitals.

I do not mean to suggest that those three grand tendencies of the New Left, post-1968—retro-Marxists, modern Marxists, inconsistent libertarians—kept themselves in neatly separated columns. Events and fads came in torrents, and atop the waves people bobbed about from one tendency to another. Still, the debates that went on within the New Left, the crucial argument over violence and non-violence, had to take place within categories of thought that were shaped by those fluid tendencies. The outside world sometimes had a little trouble in making sense of the New Left for that reason.

ON THE TOPIC of violence—back to that now—it was a convention of the bourgeois press in the late 1960s and 1970s to take the notorious old label of “anarchist” and paste it across every sort of left-wing scuffle, especially the acts of terror. A volume of clips from *The New York Times* lies before me as I write, and I see the headlines and the phrases: “Anarchist Leaders Seized in Frankfurt” (announcing the 1972 arrest of Andreas Baader and three other comrades of the Red Army Fraction). Or this, from the same year: “Miss Meinhof, thirty-seven years old, has been considered the leading ideologist of an anarchist group calling itself the Red Army Fraction....”

But the Red Army Fraction was not an anarchist group, nor was anarchism a main inspiration for New Left violence. A minor inspiration, yes. The June 2nd Movement in West Germany (which kidnapped a Christian Democratic politician), the Angry Brigade in Britain, and the Direct Action group in France were armed action groups that could plausibly claim an anarchist background. Some of the people in the Black Liberation Army in the United States (which came out of the Black Panthers) likewise invoked an

anarchist origin. Anarchism’s share of the violence of the New Left was, even so, strictly minimal. The bourgeois press had it wrong. The true inspiration for the guerrilla or terrorist groups on the New Left was overwhelmingly Marxist—not in the retro-style of the traditional Marxist organizations (traditional Marxism, dating back to Marx, always regarded terrorism with absolute disdain), but in the modern style.

The modern Marxists looked on life in the Western countries as hopelessly tainted and on Western society as inherently dreadful. They subscribed to the economic analyses of dependency theory, according to which the Western exploitation of everybody else around the world appears to be unavoidable, owing simply to the laws of economic survival under capitalism, and not to some streak of cruelty or thoughtlessness that could be overcome. The modern Marxists, having studied their Frankfurt School texts, saw in Western culture an impermeable wall of total oppression. Hopelessly exploitative in economic matters, hopelessly mendacious and manipulative in cultural matters—that was Western society. What could anyone do but heave a bomb and hope for the best? A proper bomb might blow a hole in the Western web of total oppression.

Some people did manage not to draw those particular conclusions. Herbert Marcuse himself stood up against the Red Army Fraction, and did it in *The New York Times* to boot, just in case anyone might fail to notice what position he was taking. Still, the terrorist logic, such as it was, drew on a Marcusean social criticism: the criticism that saw no hope at all in Western society. There was another line of argument: guerrilla action seemed a useful way to support the Third World liberation fighters, who were guerrillas themselves. “Be like Che,” the Fidelista slogan, meant that you too should die a warrior. Then, too, in the case of the Irish and Basque terrorists and a few other people fighting miniature wars of national liberation, violence offered an encouraging sign that Ireland or the Basque country or some other benighted province of the West might be able to slip away into the Third World, where the sunny rays of a beautiful social revolution were far more likely to dawn.

SUCH WERE MODERN Marxism’s guerrilla arguments. They had the curious effect of leading the guerrillas and the people who supported them to look sympathetically on the Soviet Union, even if without much enthusiasm. The armed Marxist organizations in the Western countries, if they intended to be

at all serious, did need a helping hand—logistical support, military training, a place to which hard-pressed guerrillas could flee. And where to find that kind of help if not from East Germany, or Czechoslovakia, or Cuba, or some other country of the Soviet bloc, or else from one of the Arab countries that enjoyed Soviet backing? And what is logistical support if not moral support?

That was definitely how the guerrilla argument ran in West Germany. Meinhof’s defense of terrorism leaned on the Frankfurt School Marxists, who were not especially friendly to the Soviets and sometimes were quite hostile; but on the Soviet question Meinhof drew her own conclusions, which were positive. The Soviet Union: a progressive force in world history. Really, how could she think otherwise? The East German secret services paid good money to keep the Red Army Fraction afloat in West Germany, and there was every reason to feel grateful.

The gap between the New Left terrorists in their modern Marxist version and the New Left libertarians was, in a small word, big. The libertarians detested the Soviet Union, even if they deceived themselves about the un-Soviet nature of Communist regimes in tropical regions of the world, about which everyone felt free to fantasize. The libertarians never imagined that Western society was hopelessly oppressive. The libertarians went about building the freak neighborhoods and the sponti scene on the palpable assumption that Western society, in its accordion flexibility, could be stretched and squeezed to play a few melodic variations on “alternative” themes. The libertarians never expected to storm the Winter Palace. The hippie-dippies—they were much too culturally minded for that. The several modern Marxist reasonings that led to a New Left terrorism therefore tended to escape them.

Then again, like the Marxists, the libertarians did find themselves in a fury over local events and foreign wars and the state of modern life. They chucked rocks at the police, and the police clubbed them back, and then some. That was Fischer’s experience: beaten by the police at a demonstration in 1968. And from behind their overturned cars and makeshift barricades, the libertarians, nursing their bruises, had to wonder: why stop at rocks? Or at Molotov cocktails? They scratched their long-haired heads. They were not *entirely* resistant to the terrorist argument. So they dithered. That was the characteristic response. Meanwhile they labored at building their communes, kindergartens, food co-ops, new gender relations, and other elements of the New Left utopia in its counter-cultural

version. Or else they followed the retro-Marxist example and colonized the factories in search of proletarian followers. They mooned nostalgically over the anarcho-syndicalist vision of a revolutionary general strike. And they never did take the terrorist plunge. Or they dipped a toe in and out. This was the situation in the early and mid-1970s. And at that moment the great black clouds of New Left moodiness and rage that had been gathering for a good ten years began to break up, all over the Western world.

## VII.

**T**HE MOOD CHANGED because the United States began pulling out of Vietnam, beginning in 1972, which tamped down the New Left hysteria; and because President Nixon, who managed to incite panic everywhere he went, soon enough began his long, slow fall from power. Watergate did wonders for democracy's prestige, and the refurbished prestige tamped down the hysteria still more. Maybe America was not unredeemably horrible, after all; maybe Hollywood's Westerns and California's marvelous hippies were the true America, and Richard Nixon was part of a false America that was going down to defeat. And just as those encouraging American trends were getting under way, two very shocking developments took place, which quickly sobered up large numbers of people in the New Left all over the world, and perhaps the libertarians most of all.

The first of those developments involved the Palestinians and their struggle against Zionism, and it requires a little explanation. The war of Arab nationalism against Zionism had been going on since the turn of the twentieth century or even earlier, and, in ideological terms, had already flip-flopped several times in the eyes of the European left, such that left-wing had turned into right-wing, and vice versa, and back again. The early Zionist settlers, being solid European socialists or anarchists, basked in the sympathy of at least some portions of the European left. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, the world Communist movement came out in favor of the Arab resisters. Then, in the 1940s, both the Communists and the democratic left in Europe returned to, or re-affirmed, their original sympathy for Zionism—only to have things switch again in the 1950s, when Israel lined up as an ally of the British and French imperialists.

The 1967 war, in which the Israelis seized a lot of land, seemed to confirm Israel's imperialist nature. The Soviets became fierce enemies of Zionism. Palestinian Marxists stepped forward. Soviet

resources poured in. And under those circumstances the New Left came up with one more interpretation of the Middle Eastern conflict, in which the New Left's vision of a lingering Nazism of modern life was suddenly re-configured, with Israel in a leading role. Israel became the crypto-Nazi site par excellence, the purest of all examples of how Nazism had never been defeated but had instead lingered into the present in ever more cagey forms. What better disguise could Nazism assume than a Jewish state?

Israel thus advanced in the New Left imagination into the vanguard of imperialist aggressors, and the Palestinian resistance into the front rank of modern anti-Nazism. "We are all German Jews" came to mean: our sympathies lie with the Palestinians. In West Germany, the shift of attitude in regard to Israel was probably more pronounced than in other countries. Israel's military triumph aroused a somewhat creepy excitement among German conservatives. The *Bild Zeitung* celebrated the Israeli general Moshe Dayan as a new Rommel, the "Desert Fox." Israel's tanks were greatly admired. An efficient army, at last! A Jewish *Wehrmacht*! And the student left recoiled. That was why, for a period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a militant and angry opposition to Zionism swelled into a main principle of the student movement in Germany, as well as elsewhere—why a young adventurer such as Joschka Fischer would have traveled in 1969 to exotic Algiers to attend a convention of the PLO, and might not have batted an eye when the convention solemnly voted to crush its enemy.

**T**HE WHOLE OUTLOOK of anti-Zionism suddenly seemed to fit the left-wing worldview. On the other hand, a theoretical sympathy for the Palestinian cause brought the European New Left into contact with actual Palestinian guerrillas, which, you might think, would have transformed the budding new sympathies into sentiments of love and brotherhood—an international fraternity of revolutionaries. But fraternity was hard to achieve. The Palestinians, once they had become known, ceased to be exotic. And as the European leftists got a closer look, the New Left's instinctive anti-Zionism—the interpretation that pitted heroic Palestinian resistance fighters against cleverly disguised Nazi Zionists—began to crumble.

That was the story behind the amazing evolution of Fischer's friend Hans-Joachim Klein, the penitent terrorist. Klein had joined the Revolutionary Cells in Germany and had united with Carlos believing that he was going to put his mechanic's skills to good use in a left-wing

military organization, fighting Nazism in its modern disguises. The Revolutionary Cells sent him for military training in an Arab country. In his interview on this theme with Cohn-Bendit in the mid-1980s, Klein did not specify which country. But wherever it was, he was not happy. He found himself in a military training ground where, in one part of the camp, European leftists singing left-wing songs received their anti-Zionist military training, and, in another part, European fascists singing fascist songs received their own anti-Zionist military training.

The Palestinian movement turned out not to be an anti-fascist or anti-Nazi cause at all. It turned out to be an anti-Jewish cause. Klein was horrified. His mother had been imprisoned for a while in Ravensbruck, the Nazi camp, and died later on from her sufferings there, when he was still a little child. In his adulthood, he began to imagine, or perhaps to fantasize, that she was Jewish—a common fantasy among modern Germans. That was why he abandoned the Revolutionary Cells and then went even further and accused his old comrades among the German guerrillas not just of having betrayed the revolutionary ideal but of being out-and-out anti-Semites. That was a shocking accusation.

A good many French New Leftists went through an identical turnabout, except without having killed anyone first. The French student movement never did generate a hard-line Marxist tendency of the sort that in West Germany produced the Red Army Fraction and in Italy the Red Brigades. I suppose that in France the libertarian currents in New Leftism were much too vigorous to allow such any such thing to take shape. The main organized tendency to come out of the 1968 uprisings in France was, instead, a group called the Proletarian Left, which was usually described as Maoist (and its members as "Maos"), and which Cohn-Bendit liked to describe as outright Stalinist; but it was, more accurately, a Mao-spontex hodgepodge—an old-fashioned Marxist organization streaked with libertarian impulses. (The Proletarian Left kept having to expel people who, because of those impulses, insisted on smoking their unproletarian hashish and muttering about Stalinists. I spent a couple of weeks living in a commune with those people in Paris, and felt their pain.)

So the Proletarian Left, in its spontex ambivalence, dithered on the road to terror. It was only in 1972, a late date by New Left standards, when the French Maos finally did their revolutionary duty and kidnapped an assistant personnel director at a Renault factory. They did it under the rubric of the New People's Resistance,

whose very name raised the honorable old banner of anti-Nazism. The kidnapping was halfhearted, though, and after a while the New People's Resistance let their victim go, without having received a single sou in ransom.

Half a year went by, and then the PLO's Black September group, with the Revolutionary Cells' helping hand, launched its attack on the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games. And the leaders of the Proletarian Left in France, having flinched at their own violence, flinched at the Palestinian violence, too. The obvious truth that terrorist action means the murder of random persons for political aims suddenly became, to them, obvious. And the French Maos, exactly like Klein, turned away in horror—not just at the killings in Munich and at the general strategy of Palestinian terror, but also at their own intentions of launching similar campaigns at home.

**J**OSCHKA FISCHER WENT through a version of that same shock. The recognition fell on him in July 1976, seven months after his friend Klein played his part in the assault at Vienna and shortly after the suicide (unless it was a murder) of Ulrike Meinhof. The Revolutionary Cells, acting on behalf of jailed Palestinian terrorists, hijacked an Air France plane, took it to Entebbe in Uganda, and went about arranging a "selection" of passengers, Jews on one side, non-Jews on the other, with the Jews slated for execution. In that instance, an Israeli army unit, under the command of the young Ehud Barak, staged a spectacular raid and managed to rescue all but one of the hostages, though one Israeli soldier was killed. The soldier happened to be Jonathan Netanyahu, whose brother Benjamin was, like Barak, thereby propelled into a political career. A good deal of Israeli politics owes something to the events in Entebbe.

And the same turns out to be true of German politics. The German terrorists were killed by the Israeli commandos, and only after their deaths did Germany's New Left discover who those people were. It was a revelation. The terrorist leader turned out to be a man named Wilfried Boese, who was well-known and much-admired on the Frankfurt left—a hammy thespian who used to play the evil capitalist in street theater events, a founder of various left-wing institutions, and a prominent member of Frankfurt's Black Panther solidarity committee. Fischer knew Boese. Now was his own moment to be astonished.

Suddenly the implications of anti-Zionism struck home to him. What did it mean that, back in Algiers in 1969, the

PLO, with the young Fischer in attendance, had voted the Zionist entity into extinction? Now he knew what it meant. Fischer seems never to have gotten over the shock of Entebbe. Even in the early weeks of 2001, at the height of the scandal provoked by the photographs in *Stern*, the memory of the Air France hijacking came back to haunt him. He spoke to a reporter from that same magazine and cited the hijacking and especially the "selection" of Jews as part of his *Desillusionierung* with the violent left. A few months later, in his capacity as foreign minister of Germany, he happened to be in Israel at the very moment when a terrorist blew up a Tel Aviv disco; he was close enough to hear the blast. It was Fischer, more than any other foreign minister or religious leader or world figure of any sort, who took it upon himself to confront Arafat in person, who (so it has been reported) berated

The terrorist actions at Munich in 1972 and at Entebbe in 1976 were not the only examples, either. Klein announced his turn against terrorism in 1977 by making the sensational gesture of sending to *Der Spiegel* a letter containing his own pistol from the Vienna attack and announcing that the terrorists were planning on murdering the leaders of the Jewish communities of Berlin and Frankfurt. That was no idle threat, either. Carlos in person, gun in hand, rang the doorbell of the scion of Marks & Spencer in London and murdered the man on the spot for no other crime than being a Jew. There was an insane idea of murdering famous Jewish musicians such as Artur Schnabel and Yehudi Menuhin. The discovery that some people in the terrorist brigades had actually descended into such thinking came as a pretty severe blow to the muddle-headed non-terrorists of the German New Left.



Joschka Fischer at the Velika Krusa mass grave, Kosovo, June 1999

Arafat ferociously and even forced him into declaring some sort of a cease-fire. The erstwhile militant for the PLO, now militant against Palestinian terror.

Entebbe had such an effect on quite a few of West Germany's New Leftists. A new suspicion was dawning on those people—a little tardily, you might complain, but dawning nonetheless. It was a worried suspicion that New Left guerrilla activity, especially in its German version, was not the struggle against Nazism that everyone on the New Left had always intended. It was a suspicion that, out of some horrible dialectic of history, a substantial number of German leftists had ended up imitating instead of opposing the Nazis—had ended up intoxicating themselves with dreams of a better world to come, while doing nothing more than setting out to murder Jews on a random basis: an old story.

**T**HERE WAS A further shock, and it resonated at still deeper levels, if only because many more people were involved. It was the news from Indochina. New Left movements all over the world had yearned for a Communist Indochina, had worked hard for it, had sacrificed, had struggled, and had done a lot of dreaming, too. The new utopian society was supposed to emerge there at last, in a bamboo-and-thatch version. That was a popular idea—an irresistible idea, really. Those cone-hatted rice farmers were actually defeating the B-52s, and if a Third World peasant insurgency could fend off imperial France and then the mighty United States, what couldn't be done around the world, given sufficient dedication and the rightness of a cause? Millions of hearts beat to that rhythm.

But when the Communists did triumph

in Cambodia, and the new society turned out to be what it was, a new and unpredicted truth became clear, and not just in regard to the sorry turn of events in far-away Asia. For it was suddenly obvious to anyone with eyes that huge portions of the New Left had ended up supporting a cause that, in the case of the Palestinian guerrillas and their allies in Germany and other countries, was on a tiny scale resurrecting the old manias of the Nazis of the 1930s and 1940s; and, in the case of the Cambodian Communists, was engaged in slaughter by the millions. Anti-Semitism and genocide, a familiar twosome. And it became obvious that the New Left in its more radical or revolutionary version was not, as everyone had imagined, an anti-Nazi movement. On the contrary.

This was a vast, almost unimaginable shock—a shock that most people in the movement found much too horrifying to take in. For who had the emotional strength to see anything as unexpected, as undesired, as that? To have set out to fight Nazism in its sundry modern democratic disguises, only to have ended up, in a modern left-wing disguise, Nazi-like! That was absurd. To anyone gazing at the world through strictly Marxist glasses, the entire sequence of events and their implications in the early and middle 1970s lay outside the zone of recognizable reality. Marxism pointed to the workings of the capitalist economy and the manipulations of the imperial powers and the crimes of the United States, and if you spoke about anti-Semitism and Communist mass murder, weren't you merely repeating the much-analyzed propaganda of the imperialist West?

Among the Marxists of the New Left—the retro-Marxists and the modern Marxists alike, the mass of non-terrorists together with the handful of terrorists—the response to those shocking discoveries could only be dismissive, or, at any rate, quietly baffled. A good many people on the Marxist side of the movement simply lumbered on as if nothing had happened. Some of those people lumber on still. The largest number of all drifted away, speechless and agog, until the years had passed and they could no longer remember having participated in the New Left and its several manias and fanaticisms—amnesiacs of a New Left radicalism that no one could recall anymore, the kind of people who, in their respectable middle age today, would indignantly deny having ever been anything but ardent liberals. Who, us?

On the New Left, serious responses to the new events tended to come instead from people with some sort of background on the libertarian side of the movement. Those people, the inconsistent anarchists

and the anarcho-Mao-spontaneists, could at least rummage through their bookcases and discover a useful trove of critical pamphlets. They could gaze at the terrible new events and feel with some justification that anti-capitalism was a fine position to hold but had never been the main idea, not for the libertarian left. Those people could feel that authoritarianism, and not capitalism, had always been the real enemy. And having made that recognition, they had to imagine what might be a plausible libertarian response to the unexpected new events.

It was not that everyone with some sort of anarchist or libertarian background rushed to respond to the left-wing calamities with a sudden passion for thoughtful reflection. In the United States, the most influential of the anarchist-influenced writers was Noam Chomsky, who responded to the news from Cambodia exactly as any Third World-oriented Marxist would do: by wondering if the stories about genocide were not imperialist propaganda. Somehow Chomsky tilted in Marxist directions just when his anarchist background might have come in handy. Still, no great psychological obstacle prevented anyone who had done a bit of reading in the old anarchist pamphlets or in back issues of *Socialism or Barbarism* from interpreting the new events in a libertarian light. You needed only to be able to wriggle free of the Marxist influence, and to give the world a fresh glance.

Here and there, a few people did respond in that way. The veterans of the old anarcho-Mao-spontex currents in France were the first to do so, and in the long run they had the biggest influence around the world. But there were people like that in every country. Joschka Fischer was one of them.

It was just that, to shake free of Marxism's influence, to scoop up everything that was valuable about the New Left and abandon the rest, to come up with genuinely new responses—this was, intellectually speaking, extremely difficult. Several years of hard thinking and political experimentation were required. Some of the steps proved to be controversial, too. And the history of this new development, the move away from New Leftism toward something newer, a post-leftism, came up for public inspection and even a lot of jeering in the course of the widening Fischer scandal.

## VIII.

FISCHER'S RESPONSE TO the crack-up of the New Left entered into our American debates on one occasion to my knowledge; and a glance at that occasion may shed a little light on how

someone with an extremely radical New Left orientation could have ended up, in the fullness of time, a friend of NATO. The occasion was a discussion between Fischer and Glucksmann, which originally ran in the pages of *Die Zeit* in 1986, and was soon translated into English and published in *Telos*, the philosophical journal of the American New Left.

Among the intellectuals of the American New Left, the *Telos* item attracted a bit of attention partly because, to any of us in the United States who wanted to keep abreast of our comrades and peers in Europe, Glucksmann's name had already become fairly familiar. He had been a '68er in Paris, and afterward a Mao. Woolly essays under his byline ran in the *New Left Review* in England. And he was known for having made a sensational about-face in the mid-1970s to become one of the "New Philosophers," much noted around the world and much mocked. Glucksmann was never the splashiest or most telegenic of the New Philosophers. But that was good. He had a reputation for being the most solidly educated (he was a student of Raymond Aron). So we were curious. We liked to be astonished, too—a New Left trait.

Fischer's name, by contrast, was not at all well-known, except to the specialists in the German left and any Americans who had done a bit of hanging out in the Frankfurt sponti scene. Still, Fischer had become a leader of the West German Greens, and the Green connection counted for a lot in American eyes. The mass New Left in America had given way by the mid-1980s to a panorama of single-issue movements—against nuclear energy and nuclear weapons, for identity politics, for solidarity with the Marxists of Central America. To anyone who participated in those movements, West Germany's Greens seemed rather attractive. They had evidently discovered the secret of how to convert an impractical, marginal, too-radical left-wing movement into a practical, democratic movement that nonetheless knew how to cling to its left-wing soul: a difficult thing to do, achieved by virtually no one else anywhere in the world. That was their reputation. So Fischer, too, as a leader of the Greens, aroused a curiosity in the United States.

There was a charm in his debate with Glucksmann. The New Left had always drawn on a warm internationalist spirit, an easy young people's camaraderie of Paris, Berlin, Frankfurt, Rome, Mexico City, New York, and Berkeley (not to mention Lawrence, Austin, Madison, Ann Arbor, Cambridge, Portland, and so forth around the country and the world). Something of that remembered spirit warmed the discussion in 1986.

Glucksmann had spent a few weeks in Frankfurt back in the early 1970s with Revolutionary Struggle, and he had gotten to know Fischer and regarded him fondly, maybe a little patronizingly.

Fischer had never attended a university, and at the time of Glucksmann's visit he was trying to give himself a proper education by reading the great philosophers in alphabetical order, starting with Aristotle. Glucksmann could only laugh. He and Fischer did seem to have enjoyed themselves, though. That was visible in the 1986 debate. But the debate seemed noteworthy mostly because by the mid-1980s it had become obvious that, among the many responses around the world to the crack-up of the New Left, French New Philosophy, on one hand, and the West German Greens, on the other hand, seemed the most thorough and original, the deepest, the liveliest—the two responses most likely to blossom in the future, and not just in their own countries. They were opposite responses, of course. So there was drama in that debate.

GLUCKSMANN'S New Philosophy is easily enough defined, looking back on it. He went through the entire process of disillusionment of the New Left during the early and middle 1970s, in a fairly radical French version—the shock at Palestinian terror doubled by the shock at Cambodia, the shock at the New Left's plans for its own terror campaign, the remorse, the self-reproach, the moral confusion. And then, having stopped at every station, he set about trying to construct a new set of political ideas. That was his project. He did it in three big steps between 1975 and the early 1980s.

His first step, in the mid-1970s, was to give up on his old-fashioned anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism, the fundamentals of the left, in favor of what he began to call "anti-totalitarianism"—though by anti-totalitarianism he meant something broad, an opposition to extreme oppression of every kind, whatever its shape or cause. Glucksmann was the son of Jewish Resistance fighters during the Nazi period. Even his older sister had participated in the underground, passing out leaflets in Nazi Germany. He grew up thinking of pretty much everything he did as a struggle against Nazism. But now he took his old anti-Nazism and extended it in all sorts of novel directions. He read Solzhenitsyn. He became an enemy—and not just a critic—of the Soviet Union and of communism in Cambodia and everywhere else. He became an enemy of every extreme dictatorship around the world, right-wing or left-wing. He declared himself the enemy of famines, too, wherever

they might occur, as in Africa—the enemy of every extreme horror and catastrophe that leads to mass death and total oppression. And to all of those extreme dictatorships and catastrophes he attached a single name: "Auschwitz."

He still thought of himself as a New Leftist when he adopted his new anti-totalitarian position, and with good reason. He drew whole aspects of his new anti-totalitarianism from the views of his old colleague at Nanterre Michel Foucault, his fellow-rioter who was the philosopher of institutional super-oppression. It may be that, like so many other intellectuals in the French New Left, Glucksmann picked up a few inspirations from the old *Socialism or Barbarism* group in France, too. Those were his influences. They were impeccably left-wing. But he discovered that nothing was inherently or exclusively left-wing about counting himself an enemy of extreme suffering. The left-wing vocabulary was expressive, and he used it in the first of the books that explained his new position, *La Cuisinière et le mangeur d'hommes*, or *The Cook and the Cannibal*.

But the left-wing vocabulary was not necessary; it could even be misleading. After a while he set it aside. Most of Glucksmann's comrades on the left despised his new analysis anyway, no matter what rhetoric he used. (They could not forgive his sympathy for Solzhenitsyn. They thought that he had gone overboard in his opposition to the Soviet Union.) Besides, he discovered that by dropping the left-wing vocabulary, he could free himself from an inhibiting political tradition. So he became an anti-totalitarian with a vocabulary that was neither left-wing nor right-wing—his own vocabulary, hyper-emotional (*that* was his heritage from the New Left), baroque, flowery, philosophical, but no longer ideological in any of the conventional versions.

His second big step was to answer Lenin's "What is to be done?" with a few thoughts that would have curled the lip of any self-respecting Bolshevik. Glucksmann's original notion of revolutionary action, back in New Left days, had been pretty much the same as everyone's—among the more political people. He wanted to take the wartime French Resistance of his parents and his sister and update it with the inspirations that he drew from Mao and the Communist guerrilla fighters of the Third World. He wanted to rally the workers and to spark the revolution; and when the atmosphere hardened and violence was in the air, he wanted to fight the revolutionary war. Now he gave up on that kind of talk. He began to speak, instead, about humanitarian action.

His new heroes were people such as Bernard Kouchner, a man of his own generation. Kouchner had come up in the Communist youth movement of the early 1960s and had gone off to Cuba with Régis Debray to offer his services to Fidel Castro. Castro was nothing but discouraging, though Debray actually did make his way into the Latin American jungle to stand at the side of Che Guevara—the action theorist of guerrilla war. But Kouchner took his rejection by Castro seriously and went off to medical school instead. He ended up organizing Third World emergency medical rescue missions to places such as Biafra during the Nigerian civil war and Beirut during the Lebanese civil war—expeditions just as risky as any guerrilla fighter's, but medical instead of military. Kouchner founded Doctors Without Borders, and then a second organization called Doctors of the World. This was not like founding a guerrilla army—though from the point of view of existential risk and daring, or from the point of view of throwing off bourgeois comforts, perhaps it was a bit like founding a guerrilla army.

Glucksmann, in any case, was thrilled. He saw in Kouchner's medical activism a new ideal: the daring doctor, instead of the Resistance partisan. The saver of lives, instead of the maker of a revolutionary new society. As early as 1979, Glucksmann was promoting missions to rescue the boat people fleeing Vietnamese communism. By the mid-1980s he was already holding up Kouchner's organizations for comparison with the organizations of the left, and remarking that Kouchner was doing a world of good and that the left-wing organizations were doing nothing at all.

Glucksmann's third big step followed more or less logically from his first two: his anti-totalitarianism and his ardor for humanitarian action. He wanted to oppose extreme oppression with something more than medical rescue missions—he wanted to put up a military resistance, too. He came out for the military deterrence of the Soviet Union, which meant coming out for NATO. The Soviets installed new missiles aimed at Western Europe, and President Reagan announced a plan for new American missiles aimed at the Soviet Union. And Glucksmann came out for Reagan's missiles. He even defended the logic of nuclear deterrence. This was a genuine shocker to his old comrades on the left, needless to say. Solzhenitsyn was bad enough, but NATO?

IN THEIR DEBATE in 1986, Fischer could not get over how far Glucksmann had strayed from their common origins. Fischer was irate. But to

understand his indignation (and why his anger would slowly fade, until he himself had ended up following something like each of Glucksmann's three steps)—to understand all of this, it is necessary to glance at his own reaction to the crack-up of the New Left. His first important move, in the wake of the events at Entebbe, was fairly tentative. He gave a speech begging the German terrorists to put down their weapons. That was a useful thing to do, though it was not exactly a turn away from radical leftism.

In 1976, Fischer was against bomb-throwing, but not against stone-throwing. Against guerrilla war, but not against street fighting. Against murderous violence, but not against unmurderous violence. Someone who looks back on those

bomb-throwing, then, there was an enormous gap, and in 1976 everyone could see it plainly—everyone on the left, that is.

Thinking back on Fischer's speech, Glucksmann has pointed out to me that Fischer showed a lot of bravery to say anything at all about the guerrillas. In Italy in those years, the Red Brigades adopted a grisly habit of "kneecapping" people who criticized them in public. There was every reason to worry that, in West Germany, the Red Army Fraction or the Revolutionary Cells or someone else might do the same, overcome by a feeling of betrayal and rage or even something as pale as contempt at what Fischer had said. And the terrorists did feel a contempt. Klein made that clear in an interview that ran in the American jour-

out of politics. There was nothing else to do, anyway. The New Left was disintegrating. He drove a taxi. And when he returned to the political world, he signed up with the Greens, whose movement was strictly post-New Left. He joined in 1981.

## IX.

THE WEST GERMAN Greens resembled the French New Philosophers in a couple of respects. The Greens, too, wanted to escape the manias and the delusions of the traditional left, wanted to make a sharp break with the left-wing past. The nineteenth-century proletariat, the war-to-the-death of economic classes, the cult of the factory, of Marx, and of the pioneers of socialism, the barricades: the Greens wanted to be rid of every one of those ancient things.

It was just that, where Glucksmann and the New Philosophers in France wanted to give up the habit of thinking in large philosophical systems and especially wanted to give up the exhilarating old habit of imagining future revolutions and perfect societies, the Greens in West Germany wanted to take the left-wing concepts from the past and, item by item, recycle them into notions suitable for the present. Instead of the old proletarian metaphysics with its catastrophic vision of capitalism and its dream of a future proletarian society, the Greens proposed a new ecological metaphysics with its own catastrophic vision of capitalism and a dream of a new ecological utopia. Instead of the cult of the factory, the cult of the forest. Instead of the class war, the ecological struggle. Instead of the socialist millennium, the ecological millennium. Instead of the color red, the color green.

The German Marxists of a hundred years ago split between the revolutionary "orthodox" and the moderate "revisionists," and in precisely this manner the Greens split between the revolutionary "fundis" (or fundamentalists) who wanted to resist political compromises, and the reformist "realos" (or realists), who were happy to push their program forward one modest inch at a time. Fischer, the new Fischer of the 1980s, was a realo. By the mid-1980s he was already needling his Green comrades for their hostility to NATO. The Greens voted a resolution calling on Germany to withdraw from NATO. Fischer, by then a canny politician, declined to sign it. He remained a man of the left, even so. He had no intention of lining up with the United States in its struggle against the Soviet Union. He wanted to stay independent of both superpowers. The imperialist nature of the United States seemed to him a danger of the first order.



Fischer with German officers deployed with NATO forces in Macedonia, March 1999

distinctions today might laugh. Punching a policeman in the back or kicking him when he is down can be pretty brutal, after all, even if not murderous; and besides, it can end up murderous. Still, those were distinctions with a difference. The whole problem of civic life in West Germany was to find ways to shake people out of the old authoritarian habits of the German past, to get rid of the spirit of obedience, to encourage people to go out and protest, maybe with a bit of noise, too. That was the idea behind the left-wing street battles. The street fighters wanted to go too far, but not too, too far: to make protests that broke the code of obedience, but would not impose by violence a different code of obedience. The guerrillas, by contrast, wanted to establish their own system by force of arms: that was the whole point of founding even the tiniest of armies. Between rock-throwing and

nal *Semiotext(e)* back in 1982. (Klein's mention of Fischer and his opposition to West German terrorism must be one of the earliest mentions of Fischer in the American press.)

So Fischer's speech in 1976 was a first step. There were others. Glucksmann came to Frankfurt, promoting his book about Solzhenitsyn and the Soviet prison camps and the necessity of being anti-totalitarian. The militants of the left came out to jeer. Fischer stood by Glucksmann, though. Fischer and Cohn-Bendit presented Glucksmann at a public forum, quite as if Glucksmann's ideas were suitable for a left-wing discussion, which was something rare in those years of extreme dogmatism. Fischer was trying to get people to accept a principle of open debate—no small thing.

Mostly, though, in the effort to think his own new thoughts, Fischer dropped

He said to Glucksmann, in their discussion in 1986: "I do not want to identify myself with either Communist or American imperialism." He wanted to move beyond power blocs and imperial confrontations, to arrive at a different sort of politics, still imbued with the radical values of the past and the insights of left-wing theory. Glucksmann's arguments could only seem, to Fischer's way of thinking, dismal in the extreme, like nothing more than a fancy French repetition of every bellicose cold war platitude of the American superpower, lacking a vision of the future, lacking ideals, lacking the red blood of a left-wing heart.

"What separates us," Fischer told Glucksmann, "is your return to a rigid anti-communism as an ideological foundation." That was an icy phrase. Most people on the left in the 1980s, I think, would have seen that statement as the clincher in the argument—a devastating hit. Glucksmann had become a dogmatist of the right, a rigid instead of flexible thinker, an ideologue, every terrible thing. An apologist for the American superpower. A sad case!

**B**UT GLUCKSMANN HAD more to say. From his own point of view, it was Fischer who had surrendered to the will of an imperialist superpower. The West German Greens pictured themselves as putting up a lively resistance to tyrannical impositions from the United States. Yet Glucksmann considered that, on the contrary, the Greens were merely lowering their submissive German heads in the face of totalitarian pressure—as Germans had done in times past. It was just that, in the 1980s, the totalitarian pressure was coming from the Soviet Union.

The Greens prided themselves on being a new type of German: rebels against authority. But Glucksmann saw in them Germans of the old type, the respecters of power and the enthusiasts of obedience. He knew very well that, in their own imaginings, the Greens were strictly independent of the Soviet Union, even contemptuous of it. But he pointed out something to Fischer. The anti-missile demonstrators in West Germany had directed nearly all their indignation at the United States, and almost none at the Soviet Union. Which superpower was occupying half of Europe, though? "We are left with the scandal," Glucksmann said, "that 500,000 people demonstrated against Reagan, but only 10,000 against Brezhnev. This fact has a scandalous effect not only in Paris, but also in Prague and Warsaw, and on all those who struggle for freedom in Eastern Europe."

Fischer replied that Glucksmann

seemed to expect some enormous turnabout in political life, some immense change. And no such thing was going to happen. "You are taking a perspective twenty years from now," Fischer said. "Gorbachev will not change. America will also not fundamentally change. Without a doubt, there is a huge monopoly of opinion in the Soviet Union. This is probably the case in two-thirds of the world, or even more. But Hollywood is essentially more effective as far as the monopoly of opinion is concerned."

From Glucksmann's perspective, Fischer had lost the argument right there. It was preposterous to suppose that Soviet censorship and America's Hollywood were in some way comparable, and crazier still to imagine that Hollywood was "essentially" worse. And Glucksmann responded with a terrible swift word: "No."

**B**ACK IN 1986, it would have been easy to suppose that Fischer had merely blundered at that moment, and in the heat of argument had let loose a foolish volley of hyperbole, as anyone might do. But today we may look on that debate with a bit of accumulated knowledge and recognize that blunders such as Fischer's bubbled up naturally from the fundamentals of his anti-imperialist outlook. The blunders came out of the instinct that led him and everyone else with old-fangled or even new-fangled leftist points of view to look at the world from the standpoint of the crimes of capitalism—from a standpoint that, by definition, attributed the world's woes principally to capitalist economics (and therefore to the United States, the capital of capital), and by afterthought to anything else.

Then again, maybe the foolishness in Fischer's remark was obvious even at the time, and not just to Glucksmann. For what does seem plain, looking back today, is that Fischer's side of the argument—the popular side, many people would have said, judging from the mass demonstrations in West Germany and Britain and the United States and elsewhere—was not as strong as it may have seemed. And Glucksmann's side—the unpopular one, judging from the malicious scorn that so many commentators heaped and still heap on the new intellectual generation in France, the non-geniuses, the less-than-Sartres—was gathering strength year by year.

This was certainly true in France. The shift in opinion from New Leftism or even Old Leftism to something like New Philosophy was already visible in Paris by the mid-1970s. Foucault in his later years, as is sometimes forgotten, was rather a supporter of Glucksmann. Sartre himself, in

1979, the year of his death, stood with Foucault and even with Aron to endorse Glucksmann's argument not just about humanitarian action but, implicitly, about burying the hatchet with the right. The new attitude was symbolized by a famous photograph of Sartre side by side with the conservative Aron, and a Beatle-haired Glucksmann alongside them, representing the younger generation: the three men together, left-wing, right-wing, and youth, at a meeting to call for emergency humanitarian aid for the refugees of Vietnamese communism. By the early 1980s it had already become obvious that, at least in France, a large group of the more interesting younger intellectuals was thinking along lines close to Glucksmann's—the '68ers, grown up now, "the former left," as they came to be called: Alain Finkielkraut, Pascal Bruckner, Bernard-Henri Lévy, and several other writers, the veterans of the student insurrection.

A similar evolution was going on among the dissidents of the Eastern bloc. Even as late as the early 1980s a good number of the dissidents there, the radical intellectuals, '68ers by and large, might still have identified with Fischer more than with Glucksmann. Václav Havel has described how, in the intervals when he was out of jail, he would turn on his television and watch the mass demonstrations of the West German anti-nuclear protesters and would root for the people with long hair and pacifist principles. By the mid-1980s, however, he and the other dissident intellectuals of the Eastern bloc were beginning to lose patience with the Western peace movements, at least on political grounds. (The cultural affinity remained—a complicating point.) Glucksmann was aware of this evolution in the East, too. That was why in his debate with Fischer he invoked the dissidents, while Fischer did not.

**B**Y THE MID-1980S you could even detect a few shifts in opinion in Fischer's own circle of friends and comrades. Cohn-Bendit was the bellwether. In 1986 Cohn-Bendit was still living in a New Left-style commune, putting out *Pflasterstrand*. He, too, was a Green by then: Danny the Green. But he was keen on preserving a sense of continuity with the New Left past, and he went around the world that year with a television crew filming interviews with some of the heroes of the 1968-era uprisings in different countries, which he later turned into a book called *Nous l'avons tant aimée, la révolution*, or *We Loved the Revolution So Much*. His idea was to produce a series of interviews showing the international dimension of the New Left and the seriousness of the people who had been

involved and the evolution in their thinking—to assemble a sort of '68ers' International by means of television and the book. He went to the United States and interviewed Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Bobby Seale, Jane Alpert, and Susan Brownmiller—the American delegation to his '68ers' International.

He conducted an interview with Hans-Joachim Klein for this same purpose, though Klein was still on the lam. Klein and Fischer, together with the feminist Barbara Koster, were Cohn-Bendit's West German delegation. (The accompanying photo of Fischer showed him as a young politician in blue jeans and sport jacket, a great advance in visual imagery over the black-motorcycle-helmet look.) Glucksmann, by contrast, was definitely not on Cohn-Bendit's list, nor anyone else who had made the transition to something like New Philosophy. Those people, the New Philosophers, had wandered too far from the old left-wing idea to be acceptable. In his introduction to the book, Cohn-Bendit went so far as to complain about "defrocked Stalinists" who had made themselves virgins by turning into Reaganites. He meant the ex-Maos.

Cohn-Bendit's '68ers' International was notable for one other large omission, at least in the television documentary and in the first edition of the book, which appeared in 1986. He had tried to arrange an interview with someone from the 1968 generation in the Soviet bloc, namely Adam Michnik, a leader of the Polish student movement from those days. Only the Communist government in Poland had crushed the Solidarity labor movement and Michnik was languishing in jail, where there was no interviewing him. Then he got out, and Cohn-Bendit was able to speak with him at last, if only for the mass-market paperback edition of the book. Michnik seemed eager to be interviewed. He very much thought of himself in generational terms—a '68er through and through. He kept insisting on this to Cohn-Bendit.

But Michnik's interview turned out to be unlike anyone else's in the book. He and

## Rest Stop, Alabama

Even here the rows of urinals  
Are "automatic-sensor operated."  
There's a laser eye that watches me  
Unzip my pants so when I zip them up  
It does the flushing for me seven times.

Above my head the ceiling has a speaker  
Dishing out the sticky sentiments  
Of country music, giving me advice,  
Clichés and platitudes, that tell how not  
To live my life.

Out in the lobby again  
A road map on the wall says, "You Are Here!"  
And I can press a button near the map  
To catch the weather service bulletin:  
"It's partly cloudy in Mobile tonight."

I wonder why it matters if the clouds  
Are out at night, but I remember how  
Sometimes I've seen the stars go blank in places  
And been told that it was flocks of birds  
Migrating in the dark too high to see.

There's melatonin in their pineal glands  
Behind their beaks to let them find their way  
By sensing minute changes in the light,  
Unlike my kind whose senses have become  
So insignificant that only words  
And widgets thought in words can get us home.

It's been reported on the radio  
That certain cars are being made today  
With GPS devices in the dash  
So drivers needn't worry with directions,  
Reading road signs, having to stop and ask.

And if you watch the sky at night you'll see  
The orbits of the satellites that catch  
And send the signals of the world, what song  
To sing for whom, which urinal to flush.

Back in my truck I hang my head out, looking  
More at constellations than the road  
As if to follow my nose and navigate  
From star to star, as the crow flies, like geese  
And all the hordes of fowl that need no sign  
To beat the shortest course from A to Z.

Wilmer Mills

Cohn-Bendit argued about the Vietnam War. Michnik was not about to condemn the United States for having put up a fight against communism. In this one passage of the book, the principles of anti-totalitarianism, non-ideological solidarity, and respect for NATO—Glucksmann's principles, in a word—suddenly emerged as fairly reasonable, and deserving of their proper place in a survey of the heroes of '68: principles that could not be rejected

out of hand just because the conservatives or the State Department might approve of them. Cohn-Bendit gave the impression of being a little astonished by Michnik's remarks, but he published the interview anyway and even advertised it on the jacket of the new edition. All of this was quite significant, seen in retrospect. Cohn-Bendit was the only person anywhere in the world who could claim to speak for the 1968 generation as an international phenomenon, and this small alteration in his book, the addition of Adam Michnik, spoke volumes.

X.

THOSE WERE THE shifts in argument and mood through the 1970s and 1980s. But the moment when large numbers of veterans of the New Left finally had to put aside matters of mere philosophy or attitude and adopt actual positions and accept the political consequences, and sometimes the more-than-political consequences—that moment, the moment of truth, arrived only after the Soviet collapse had gotten under way. A first sign of it could be seen in the months after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and declared it annexed. George Bush the Elder was president of the United States, and he defined the war to drive Saddam out of Kuwait mostly as a war over material interests, which came down to oil; and Bush's definition, given the power of the American president, guaranteed a pretty strong backlash against the war on the part of a lot of people on the left, all over the world. Still, the inadequacy in Bush's way of thinking did not inhibit a number of other

people from noticing a few additional aspects of the war: the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Kurds in northern Iraq, the threats of further atrocities to come, Saddam's threat to incinerate the Israelis. There were, in short, questions of genocide to consider: a twentieth-century predicament.

Among the old militants with New Left backgrounds, some people did notice that sort of thing. This was certainly the case in

France, due to the circle of the "former left." You could see something similar in Germany, too, where a handful of old-time heroes of the New Left—Wolff Biermann, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and a few others—surprised their public by declaring themselves in favor of the war. Peter Schneider, who had come out of the anarchist half of the New Left, gave his endorsement. Cohn-Bendit did the same—an especially brave thing to do, given that Cohn-Bendit was, in his fashion, a political leader and not just an intellectual, and had to worry about his popularity. In the Soviet bloc, the '68ers had no trouble at all supporting the war. Havel was already the president of what was still Czechoslovakia, and he went so far as to send a small detachment of Czechoslovak soldiers, experts in gas warfare, into the Saudi desert to take their place in the grand alliance. Even in the United States you could have seen a few small indications of a split on the left on this issue.

**Y**ET THE BIG MOMENT of change came the next year, when the ethnic massacres got under way in the Balkans. Then at last the old, profound question of Nazism and what to do about it—the old founding question of the New Left—rumbled up in a European setting and not just in connection to a barbarous dictator in the Middle East. And once again the veterans of the New Left had to ask themselves the old questions about Europe and its past. They had to ask: why was it, how could it have been, that Germany, the center of civilization, had once upon a time gone Nazi? And how, why, did the rest of Europe, most of it, end up being conquered by the Nazis back in the 1930s and 1940s? Everyone knew the answer to those questions in a general way. Germany had gone Nazi and Europe had succumbed because the Nazis were strong and well-organized and powerfully motivated; but mostly because everyone else, the non-Nazis, had failed to resist.

And why the lack of resistance, in those days? A thousand reasons, of course. And here were mass graves once again. And again a thousand reasons not to resist, and even a new reason—a thousandth and first. The new reason was something never before imagined, a new mutation of an old argument, a novelty, almost a contribution to modern political thought. The Atlantic Alliance, having come out of World War II, did have to look on genocide as a fundamental enemy, at least in regard to Europe. When the massacres got going in the former Yugoslavia, the big Western democracies had to respond, if only to affirm what it meant in the 1990s to be a powerful democracy. So the big powers

responded. They unfurled the bloodless blue flag of the United Nations. They came up with a principle of non-action through action: a resistance that was no resistance at all. A non-action that cannot be faulted because it calls itself action: that was the new mutation. And so, when the Serb nationalists made their insane "selection" of Bosnian Muslims to be killed en masse at Srebrenica, the Dutch troops and a French general and the other Western military forces in Bosnia—the foreign interveners—did what they had been sent to do, which was to not intervene.

**H**OW COULD THE Western democracies have managed to come up with such an absurdity? It was because, by the 1990s, the vast public in the democratic world was definitively opposed to genocide in a general way; but somebody had to step forward to oppose genocide in a concrete and specific way. And who was that going to be? In Europe, who was going to argue for a genuine forcefulness and not just a morally pleasing display of high dudgeon? The champions of foreign policy "realism," by any chance? That was out of the question. Realism is never genocide's enemy. Genocide in modern times always takes place in the margins of what appear to be great events, never at the center; but "realism" is a calculation of power at the center—a calculation of "Great History," in Finkelkraut's phrase, not of Little History. Genocide attacks the weak, but realism appraises the strong.

If genocide in World War II has come to seem central to the war against Nazism, that is only because, in later years, the kinsmen and the friends of the slaughtered insisted on viewing it that way, and the historians reconsidered the entire evolution of events and succeeded in changing public attitudes. The realists of the 1930s and 1940s had never looked on the war in that light at the time, and their heirs in the 1990s were not going to respond to genocide in their own time any differently. The realists were going to observe with perfect accuracy that massacres in the Balkans or anywhere else threatened the fundamental interests of not one of the great powers. Massacres were not going to knock over the giant chessboard of world power. What did worry the realist thinkers was that a NATO military intervention in the Balkans might upset Western relations with Russia. Intervention, not massacre, posed the danger, from the point of view of great power relations. Realism was non-interventionism in the 1990s.

The argument for intervention, therefore, was going to have to come from zones of opinion that chose to put matters of conscience at the heart of their foreign

policy thinking—from the foreign policy "idealists." Meaning "who?" or "whom?" The Catholic Church? The Church turned out to have its interests in the Balkans, and they were those of the Croatian Catholics. (Between the Yugoslav civil war and the massacres in Central Africa, the 1990s proved to be another less than splendid decade for Catholicism in the matter of genocide.) And the Protestant political instinct leaned toward pacifism.

Would the call come from the political left—from the parties and the movements that pictured themselves as the voice of the oppressed? But there were multiple lefts. There was an old-fashioned and even reactionary left (to call it that), which still felt an ancient tug of loyalty to the Soviet Union and therefore to Soviet communism's child and heir, the Russian republic. Sympathy for Russia counted for quite a lot in the Western European left, and leftism, from that perspective, meant a tender concern for Russia's national interests. This kind of thinking counted for something even in the United States, where *The Nation* published an amazing series of anguished editorials about the need not to upset the Russians and especially the nationalists among them.

Then again, there was also a realpolitik left, which was not in the slightest inclined to idealism in foreign policy. François Mitterrand, the president of France, realpolitik's master of masters, made an art of signaling his solidarity while craftily defending a weirdly nineteenth-century vision of French national interests in the Balkans and in Central Africa alike. (It did mean something that Mitterrand, the Socialist, turned out to have been an old Vichy official in an earlier life.) The realpolitik left in Europe, just like the realpolitik liberals in the first years of the Clinton administration, were hardly going to press for forceful interventions in the name of something as vaporous as human rights.

**I**N EUROPE, IF any large group of people was going to press for a forceful intervention, it was going to have to include a good many veterans of the student uprisings circa 1968—the people who, in their young days, had imagined that they were building a new civilization in Europe. Those people, in looking at the Balkans, were at least guaranteed to give a few thoughts to matters of genocide, to questions of resistance and non-resistance—the issues that, many years before, had brought them to the left-wing barricades. Anti-genocide was those people's oldest and deepest idea, together with the worried conviction that Nazism was capable of reappearing under new disguises.

But even if the old '68ers and their heirs did give some thought to massacres in the Balkans, how were they possibly going to make a case for an intervention that would actually intervene? The '68ers and their heirs were, after all, of two minds on military questions, divided into the warring attitudes that you could have seen in the *Die Zeit* and *Telos* debate back in 1986. In France the question of intervention was decided fairly quickly and easily among the intellectuals, as could have been expected. The "former left" had long ago ascended into powerful positions in the French press and on radio, and throughout the later Mitterrand years those people pushed for the three principles that had first been laid out by the New Philosophers years before: anti-totalitarianism, humanitarian action, forceful means.

The "former left" had a success, too, in a painfully delayed version. The traditions of the French Communists and of Mitterrand's Socialists; the traditions of "realism" at the Quai d'Orsay and its ancient bugbears about the balance of power and the Serbo-French alliance of ages past and the Francophone struggle against its historic foe the Anglophones; the many phantoms that haunted France's political imagination—all of this conspired against any sort of powerful French intervention. Yet once Mitterrand was gone and Jacques Chirac, the conservative, was president, the French government, for all its stammerings and duplicities, did manage to become the first of the Western powers to play any kind of forceful role in the Balkans. Quite a few French soldiers were killed, too (a fact that is always forgotten by Americans who love to sneer at the French). In this way the French opened the door to a more forceful involvement by the timorous Clinton administration. This was in some degree an achievement of the old '68ers in France.

**B**UT WHAT COULD be expected of the old '68ers and their heritage in Germany? The Greens, to begin with, whose movement represented probably the purest expression of the post-'68 political imagination anywhere in the world—how could they possibly respond? The Greens still insisted on interpreting anti-Nazism to mean anti-imperialism in the left-wing style. Didn't American hegemony pose a terrible danger to Europe and to the world, perhaps the greatest danger of all? A laughable question, you might observe, given the Balkan massacres. But the Greens had been asking that question all their lives, and repetition made it anything but laughable. The United States had committed crimes in the past. How could it not be doing the same in the present?

In their pacifist hearts, the Greens had to ask: what about the moral dangers of using any force at all? They had to wonder about the legacies of Hitler. In the 1940s Hitler had sent German armies into the Balkans and had fought the Serbs. Now the advocates of war wanted to send German armies into the Balkans and fight the Serbs. Why would fighting the Serbs be, this time, anti-Hitlerian? Thus did ten thousand Lilliputian arguments swarm across the terrain, explaining why NATO was a monstrosity and nothing could be done about the Balkans, and that it was too bad but life is tragic, and what about the dangers of nuclear energy?

The Greens needed to tear off their veil of ideology. And this was precisely what Joschka Fischer managed to do. Even as late as 1994 he could not imagine sending German soldiers to places where Hitler had sent German soldiers. But then, with the news from Srebrenica, he finally understood that anti-Nazism in its traditional Green version was going to end as no anti-Nazism at all: "I learned not only 'No more war' but also 'No more Auschwitz.'" For there, at Srebrenica (and at Omarska and other places), was Auschwitz, not just in the figurative sense that Glucksmann liked to bandy about but with greater and grisly exactitude, down to the "selection" by the master ethnic

group of its victims. So Fischer made his choice, and Glucksmann's three principles—anti-totalitarianism, humanitarian action, NATO—finally became his principles, too.

**B**UT HOW WAS Fischer going to bring along his fellow Greens? The governments of the United States, Britain, and France were not going to clarify the issue on behalf of Europe's pacifists. The Western powers seemed to have sunk comfortably enough into their swamp of make-believe action and their meaningless threats—their clever compromise between "idealist" anti-totalitarianism and "realist" non-intervention. The Serb nationalists alone could force the issue. And on that one point, the government of Slobodan Milosevic proved to be splendidly reliable.

In late 1998 and early 1999, Milosevic's military and paramilitary forces began to clear the Albanians from the whole of Kosovo. The new government in Germany was just then settling into power—the Red-Green coalition with its regiments of ex-New Leftists, now converted into Social Democratic and Green politicians. The emblem of those new people was, of course, Fischer himself, the new foreign minister, far more than Schröder—Fischer the notorious Frankfurt street-fighter, the

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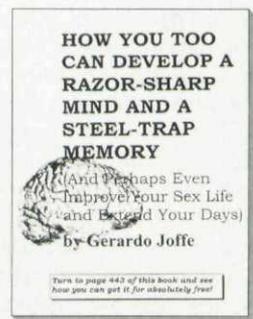
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rioter outraged by Ulrike Meinhof's death, the Green anti-militarist in his anti-bourgeois blue jeans. And so on top of the ten thousand Lilliputian arguments against taking any kind of forceful action in the Balkans came ten thousand more, directed against anyone who had participated in the New Left of long ago—low, personal arguments, the arguments that invariably descend on anyone who has displayed the mental alertness to change his mind now and then.

Fischer and his advisers and co-thinkers among the Greens must have gritted their teeth when they contemplated those arguments. They had to have told themselves: if we do what seems to be necessary in order to prevent a giant catastrophe; if we endorse a NATO air campaign against the Serb nationalists; if we, the Greens and the '68ers and the old-time New Leftists, come out for real intervention instead of fake intervention; if we approve a German participation in the NATO action—won't we be accused of inconsistency? Fischer surely had to know: if I come out forcibly against Nazism in its current guise, which happens to be Serb racism, won't I be accused of lack of character? If I stick to what have always been my principles, which have been to oppose Nazism in all its forms, won't I be accused of betraying my principles?

And so it was. The foreign minister gave the endorsement. Germany, which had failed to resist Nazism, resisted Nazism. Feebly, you may say. Even so, German soldiers departed German soil for the purpose of saving someone else's life. Something new under the sun! And Germany's foreign minister, of course, was accused of having been a brute and a man without principles, and the accusations spread around the world, until even *The New York Times* was fretting over the man's moral character. Fischer's friend and old-time roommate was accused of pedophilia, and those accusations, too, made their way around the yellow press of France and England and Italy. The world of Joschka Fischer was presented as a running scandal, and his enemies in the Bundestag congratulated themselves on their maturity and statesmanship in standing up to say of Germany's foreign minister, "This man can no longer represent us to the world." Fischer: a maneuverer without scruples. A thug, a cynic, a man with a dark past.

## XI.

THE KOSOVO WAR has sometimes been called "The Liberals' War," because it was the liberal idealists, more than the conservative realists, who were keen on fighting it. But I am not the

first to point out that it could just as easily be described as "The '68ers' War." That was true of the European participants, anyway. The French participation was owed to the circle of "former leftists." The NATO official in charge of the pacification of Kosovo after the Serb military withdrawal was Glucksmann's hero from long ago, Dr. Kouchner. The man who in 1998 signed the treaty that brought the Czech Republic into NATO and therefore into the NATO intervention was Jan Kavan, a Czech '68er. The NATO diplomat in Kosovo for a while was Jiri Dienstbier, another Czech '68er. The secretary-general of NATO during the war was Javier Solana, a '68er from Spain's Socialist Workers Party. And the German participation could not have occurred without Fischer and his allies. The '68ers' International that Cohn-Bendit had tried to assemble in an imaginary version back in the 1980s had finally assembled in real life, under the auspices of NATO. An irony, you might think. But it was not an irony.

At the height of the Fischer affair, Serge July, the editor of the Paris *Libération*, wrote an editorial called "On Your Knees!" accusing Fischer's and Cohn-Bendit's enemies of engaging in a reactionary campaign not just against two individuals but also against the social changes and the social conscience that had come out of the uprisings of the years around 1968—a prosecution by smear of entire portions of the population. That was why *Libération* settled on the inspired phrase "the trial of the Generation of 1968." But if the affair was, in some sense, a generational trial, you would have to conclude that, from a point of view such as July's, everything turned out well enough after a few weeks, certainly in France. The charges against Cohn-Bendit were made, and were rebutted, and evaporated. The animus against Fischer in France never congealed into anything worrisome or even politically awkward.

And in Germany? I followed an English-language Web edition of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* during the controversy, and I noticed that in Frankfurt, too, the affair was looked at precisely as July defined it in Paris—as an accusation against a generation. Naturally the scandal counted for more in Germany than in France, given Fischer's place in the government and the role of the Bundestag, and given those terrible photographs. Yet the polls never did tip against him. At one point Fischer was declared to have the support of seventy-two percent of the polling respondents, a nice statistic for a man under daily assault in the press and in the Bundestag.

Even Fischer's keenest enemies eventually had to bow before that kind of public

reaction. Late in April, the prosecutor in the Klein trial, having left the foreign minister to twist slowly, slowly in the wind, at last dropped the perjury charge, which brought the Fischer affair to an end in a legal sense. But by then the affair had already dribbled to a close in the popular imagination. The true finale, in the judgment of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, came in late March, some ten weeks after the affair had begun, when the results of one other poll came in, quite a fascinating poll precisely because its subject went beyond Fischer himself. The subject in this instance was the generation of 1968. The radicals of that period—were they mainly "interested in power," or were they "idealists"? Such was the question to the German public. The respondents stroked their chins. And a majority (whose exact size was left unreported) answered: "Idealists."

IT IS TRUE that "interested in power" versus "idealism," taken as an either/or proposition, makes for a pretty crude way of judging the motivating sentiment of vast crowds of people. You could shrug off such a poll easily enough. What does it mean, anyway, this word "idealism," outside of some specific setting such as foreign policy, where the word has a kind of technical meaning, connoting a particular set of values? Surely everyone understands by now that idealism has always been Satan's slogan, the father of fanaticism, the mother of self-righteousness, a license for crime. And is it always so bad to be interested in power? No one could believe that Fischer himself had ever been indifferent to power. There had to be more to his politician's career than a love of meetings. The man was obviously a major conniver. And yet that naïve little poll in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* surely offered an expressive commentary on modern life and its foreground from a few decades ago, perhaps not just in Germany.

We can be pretty confident that, thanks to the Fischer affair, no one among the respondents to that poll needed to be reminded of the realities of New Leftism and its history from a quarter of a century before. The movement's ugliest traits had been on public display for months. Nor did anyone need to be reminded of the politician's machinations that had brought Fischer to his present station, nor of the policies that he had adopted once in power. Shady associates and violent acts years ago, NATO bombings in 1999: everyone knew everything. Those were the givens in that poll. And given the givens, the real meaning lurking beneath that naïve-looking question was, I think, a little less naïve than might have seemed to be the case.

The real meaning, I propose, was this: knowing what everyone knows about the New Left of long ago, knowing the consequences of the New Left's many rebellions, knowing the characteristics and consequences of those alternative kindergartens and everything else, knowing the career that Fischer had followed, knowing the role that Fischer had played in 1998 and 1999 in the European crisis over the Balkans—knowing all that, did it make sense (Question One) to speak of a basically admirable quality in the New Left, a quality that could be branded with the approving honorific "idealism"? Did modern society seem (Question Two) better off in the wake of those many New Left rebellions? Did Nazism and its constituent traits and habits seem (Question

Three) to have suffered a blow? Did a personal background in the New Left seem (Question Four) to indicate an attractive feature in someone's character today, lo these many years later?

Those were the real issues, the four questions, hiding beneath the dopey-looking query about idealism and power. The answers, among a majority of the respondents, were plainly yes, yes, yes, and yes. In spite of everything, four yeses, and in a conservative newspaper, too: a sign of political wisdom in the heart of Europe, I think—though I grant that some people, the not-majority among those respondents, perhaps quite a hefty not-majority, answered those questions differently. And so *la lotta continua*, as we used to say. ■

precisely what he should do: he should point out that what was alleged to have taken place never did take place because it never could have taken place. One will not find that kind of response in Wacker's history of American Pentecostals, and their influence on American culture, between 1900 and 1925. Instead of trying to "debunk" such claims, Wacker, a historian of religion, wants "to understand why the practice became so firmly rooted in pentecostal culture despite the absence of corroborating evidence."

Glossolalia itself, Wacker concedes, is not a language, for it lacks tenses, grammar, and syntax. But neither is glossolalia nonsense. We are best off understanding the phenomenon of speaking in tongues partly as an involuntary physiological process that takes control of believers, but also partly as a process that believers consciously know how to enter and to leave. And speaking in foreign tongues—well, that, he suggests, may have happened because "ideology dictated behavior." If you were convinced that the Lord was about to make his appearance in the world, you could speed up the process of saving souls in foreign lands by convincing yourself that you spoke the languages that they used.

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# Holy Realists

By ALAN WOLFE

## Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture by Grant Wacker

(Harvard University Press, 364 pp., \$35)

**I**N 1914, a pastor in a Kansas mining town, reporting on his conversion efforts, wrote that forty-six individuals had been saved and thirty-three individuals had received baptism. "One brother," he then added, "... was understood in four languages." Can an individual who has never studied, or never even heard, a foreign language speak in that language during a moment of religious ecstasy? Can other people who are unfamiliar with a particular language identify it when people are speaking to them? There is a short, clear, and true answer to these questions: no. In the light of everything that we understand about the human capacity for language, it is incontrovertible that it takes years of hard work for an adult to learn a new one, and nobody, literally nobody, is capable of achieving a trance-like state that would enable him or her to master a foreign tongue.

Pentecostals believed otherwise. Emerging toward the end of the nineteenth century out of revivalist religions in the American heartland, Pentecostals—so named because Jesus's followers spoke in tongues and experienced Holy Ghost baptism on the day of Pentecost, according to the scriptural account in the Acts

of the Apostles—are usually derided as "holy rollers" by their critics. Pentecostals combined a faith in the Lord's imminent return with an emphasis on personal salvation and a need for lifelong moral cleansing. Carried away by religious fervor, they included glossolalia—that is the technical term for speaking in tongues—among their religious practices.

It takes a history of Pentecostalism as detailed as Grant Wacker's book to realize that glossolalia was among the more conventional of Pentecostal practices. There was ritual healing, in which, blessed with the spirit of the Lord, the lame would proclaim themselves healed, and some people, going even further, found a way to report on their death and their rebirth. There was grapholalia, the writing of illegible letters under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as well as the phenomenon of right-handed individuals suddenly writing with the left hand. And then there was xenolalia or xenoglossy, the capacity to speak in a foreign language that one has never learned.

What is a historian to do when he comes across letters and documents testifying to a practice that is humanly impossible to carry out? A school of thought that could be described as hard-nosed realism knows

**W**ACKER'S REFUSAL TO pass judgment on whether early Pentecostals were just fibbing—he considers the possibility, only to reject it as "improbable"—clearly has something to do with the fact that he is himself the product of a Pentecostal family and a self-described sympathizer with the tradition, with one foot inside the tent and one foot outside. His history of the movement, for this reason, is not just a description of how Pentecostals thought and acted, though it is very much that. It is also an attempt to render a very unfamiliar religion intelligible. Given the book's apologetic tone, one might conclude that Wacker is unable to write a credible historical narrative. This would be incorrect. *Heaven Below* is an informative and fascinating account of a religion that has not so much been misunderstood—Pentecostals did much of the holy rolling associated with them—as underestimated. If you want to understand how John Ashcroft, a product of this sometimes otherworldly tradition, became attorney general in this world, then this is the book that you should read.

Wacker goes to great lengths to humanize the Pentecostals about whom he writes, but they do not come across as nice folk. One of the founding "saints," Charles Fox Parham, reacted to the emotionalism of black Pentecostals by becoming an out-and-out racist. Aimee Semple

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