

FOREIGN FRONT



Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany

Quinn Slobodian

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A book in the series

Radical Perspectives: A *Radical History Review* book series

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Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany

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ABOUT THE SERIES

History, as radical historians have long observed, cannot be severed from authorial subjectivity, indeed from politics. Political concerns animate the questions we ask, the subjects on which we write. For over thirty years the *Radical History Review* has led in nurturing and advancing politically engaged historical research. Radical Perspectives seeks to further the journal's mission: any author wishing to be in the series makes a self-conscious decision to associate her or his work with a radical perspective. To be sure, many of us are currently struggling with the issue of what it means to be a radical historian in the early twenty-first century, and this series is intended to provide some signposts for what we would judge to be radical history. It will offer innovative ways of telling stories from multiple perspectives; comparative, transnational, and global histories that transcend conventional boundaries of region and nation; works that elaborate on the implications of the postcolonial move to "provincialize" Europe; studies of the public in and of the past, including those that consider the commodification of the past; and histories that explore the intersection of identities such as gender, race, class, and sexuality with an eye to their political implications and complications. Above all, this book series seeks to create an important intellectual space and discursive community to explore the very issue of what constitutes radical history. Within this context, some of the books published in the series may privilege alternative and oppositional political cultures, but all will be concerned with the way power is constituted, contested, used, and abused.

No oppositional political culture has received more attention from historians in recent years than the student movements of the 1960s. However, even sympathetic studies of the New Left and the Sixties tend to favor a narrative that locates its origins in Europe and the United States, and separates (following Jürgen Habermas) a "good" student left—that advocated broader liberalization and human rights, in the Enlightenment

tradition—from a “bad” one that tragically degenerated into narcissism and violence, inspired by a warped vision of Third World revolution. These dual assumptions are boldly and persuasively challenged in Quinn Slobodian’s superb study of the German student movement of the 1960s, *Foreign Front*. The early chapters trace the crucial role played by thousands of foreign students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, enrolled in West German universities, in both inspiring and mobilizing the first manifestations of German student protest during the 1960s. Indeed, Slobodian suggests that the international wave of demonstrations following the assassination of Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba in 1961—protests in which African and other Third World students played a central role—would be a more appropriate starting point for a global history of the sixties than the oft-cited Berkeley Free Speech Movement that began in 1964.

It was flesh and blood political actors from the “Third World,” often speaking in the language of democratization and human rights, who helped inject concerns about neo-colonialism and U.S. imperialism into political debates at German universities. To quote Slobodian, “West German Third-Worldism did not inhabit a realm of fantasy separate from political reality for New Leftists,” despite the utopian elements contained in this perspective. The result of his meticulous research and innovative perspective is a book that genuinely decenters the history of the student left and that allows us to appreciate the significance of a Third World politics that amounted to much more than simply a projection of the desires of “Western” students. For all these reasons, it is a very welcome addition to the Radical Perspectives series.

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Berlin, August 2011

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Auswärtiges Amt (Federal Foreign Office)
APO	Außerparlamentarische Opposition (Extra-Parliamentary Opposition)
APVO	Ausländer-Polizeiverordnung (Foreigner Police Order)
ASTA	Allgemeiner Studentenausschuss (General Student Union)
AUMA	Ausstellungs- und Messe-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft (Association of the German Trade Fair Industry)
BMI	Bundesministerium des Innern (Federal Ministry of the Interior)
BRD	Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Federal Republic of Germany, West Germany)
BV	Bundsvorstand (Federal Committee)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
CIA	U.S. Central Intelligence Agency
CISNU	Confederation of Iranian Students, National Union
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service)
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik (German Democratic Republic, East Germany)
DFFB	Deutscher Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (German Film and Television Academy), Berlin
DGB	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Confederation of German Trade Unions)
DM	Deutsche Mark
FAASU	Föderation der Afro-asiatischen Studenten-Unionen (Federation of Afro-Asian Student Unions)
FDJ	Freie Deutscher Jugend (Free German Youth)

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FIS	Federation of Iranian Students
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
FU	Freie Universität (Free University), West Berlin
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
HSU	Humanistische Studenten-Union (Humanist Student Union)
HU	Humanist Union
INF	Iranian National Front
KFA	Kampagne für Abrüstung (Campaign for Disarmament)
KZ	Konzentrationslager (concentration camp)
LSD	Liberal Student Union
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NLF	National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam
OAU	Organization of African Unity
SAVAK	Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar (National Intelligence and Security Organization), Iran
SDS	Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (Socialist German Students Union)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SHB	Sozialdemokratischer Hochschulbund (Social Democratic University Union)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SS	Schutzstaffel
TU	Technische Universität (Technical University)
UAR	United Arab Republic
UGEAN	Students of Black Africa under Portuguese Rule
UN	United Nations
VDS	Verband deutscher Studentenschaften (Association of German Students)
VGSA	Verein Griechischer Studenten und Akademiker (Union of Greek Students and Academics)
VIS	Vereinigung Irakischer Studenten (Iraqi Student Union)
VLR 1	Vortragender Legationsrat, 1. Klasse (Ministerial Counsellor, First Class)
WESCPV	Western European Student Committee for Peace in Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes he knows a great deal about the international political situation. It keenly interests him, and he feels connected to young people on other continents. This often means fighting against those that want to endow him with their way of seeing the world. He sometimes becomes alienated from his homeland under such circumstances. Through this act of distancing, I have understood him better. We belong together at this distance.

—Patrice Mandeng, a Cameroonian student,
on the West German student, 1967

In January 1962, the West German leftist magazine *Konkret* printed a photograph of a monument to German colonialism (see figure 1). A stone soldier in a uniform spattered with bird droppings stood as if on guard in front of Hamburg University. Near the bottom of the photograph and easily overlooked, a black hand reached in from the left margin, burying the teeth of a saw in the statue's plinth. Formerly colonized populations, the photomontage suggested, were set to topple the soiled and pitted remnants of colonialism. In the accompanying article, the journalist Jürgen Holtkamp justified the prediction of colonial overthrow with reports on the local and international mobilization of African and Asian political actors: the demonstrations of black African students in Cologne after the murder of the Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba; the protests of Iranian students across West Germany against the policies of the shah; the conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade in 1961; the departure of the Portuguese from Goa; and the successful demands of postcolonial countries in the United Nations. "Word of the Copernican discovery of the twentieth century is starting to get around," he concluded. "Old Europe is no longer the center of the world."¹

Five years later, metaphor became reality when West German students

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1. Statue of the German colonial hero Hans Dominik being sawn by a dark-skinned hand in a photomontage in *Konkret* magazine (January 1962). The statue stood in front of Hamburg University until West German leftist students tore it down in September 1967.

tore down the very monument in the photomontage. Members of the largest and most active student group, the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (German Socialist Students Organization; SDS) pulled down the statue of Hans Dominik, a leader of colonial troops in Cameroon, along with a statue of the colonial leader Hermann von Wißmann in September 1967.² The students carried Wißmann across the street, propped him up in the cafeteria line, painted him red, and hung a collection box on him for activists' legal fees.³

The students linked their act of iconoclasm to a series of events in the developing world. They called for a celebration of "the eighteenth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the fall of Wißmann and [West Berlin's mayor Heinrich] Albertz, the victories of the Vietcong, the struggles of the liberation movements in Latin America and the social revolution in Africa."⁴ Their statement suggested a shift in the key locations of political struggle to sites beyond Europe and North America and cast West German radicals as partners in the international project of de-centering the map of world politics.

Decolonization and the subsequent emergence of the Third World as a political category helped split the West German left in the 1960s. The students and intellectuals of a self-described New Left rejected the Old Left of labor and social democracy for its abandonment of the language of class struggle, its rigid Cold War mentality, and its refusal to criticize U.S. overseas military interventions. Coming of age during the “economic miracle,” many young West Germans used their free time and prosperity to push their elders on their own claims.⁵ They asked penetrating questions. Why should a self-described democracy outlaw the opposition as the West German government had with the ban on the Communist Party in 1956? Why was the Soviet invasion of Hungary an outrage but the violent suppression of independence movements in Algeria and Angola by “free world” allies was not? What remained of democracy when the major parties of the right and the left formed a single coalition, as they did in 1966? If West German social democracy had been bought off by consumer capitalism and East German communism was suffocating in authoritarian conformity, what was Left? Scrutinizing the claims of both Germanies to the label of democracy, New Leftists found both of them wanting. Children of the Cold War themselves, they questioned the received geopolitical categories and looked for options beyond the blocs.

The space newly dubbed the Third World seemed like one source of political alternatives. The Asian-African Conference of 1955 held in Bandung, Indonesia, first brought the existence of a third geopolitical position to world attention. Leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Sukarno of Indonesia, and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt articulated their desire to follow a path of national economic development free of intervention by empires, whether old European or new Soviet or American. The formation of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 added Josip Broz Tito’s Yugoslavia to the bloc and another heterodox form of socialism with it. After 1959, a more radical alternative emerged in revolutionary Cuba, which a West German New Left journalist described in 1962 as a “permanent celebration.”⁶

These shifts on the world stage registered with the nascent West German New Left. Arguably more important, however, were the proximate interactions with members of the Third World at home. As foreign students arrived in West Germany in large numbers from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, they helped the New Left stake out its political position. Already mobilized by struggles for decolonization and democracy in

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their own countries, foreign students pushed West Germans to support their campaigns for political and economic self-determination. For a largely quiescent West German university population at the beginning of the 1960s, foreign students served as models of the politically active student. Seeding theories of New Left internationalism, some socialist student leaders also took the activism of their foreign colleagues as proof that the Third World could be the source of political energy that they felt the Western working class had lost.

Acts of state violence drove West Germans to act and emotionally bound them to others worldwide. Crowds flooded the streets of national capitals across six continents after the murder of Lumumba in 1961; rolling demonstrations followed authoritarian heads of state on their diplomatic travels; and hundreds of thousands marched against the Vietnam War on internationally coordinated days of protest. For West Germans, state violence came home on June 2, 1967, when a police officer shot twenty-six-year-old Benno Ohnesorg fatally in the back of the head during a demonstration organized by Iranian students against the shah. Under the truncheon blows of the police, West German activists developed an affectively powerful sense of shared victimization and shared political self-understanding with both distant Third World colleagues and those protesting alongside them.

As the Vietnam War discredited postwar Western liberal democracy, West German New Leftists reoriented their politics eastward and southward. In the course of the decade, the focus shifted from Bandung to Havana to Beijing. Viewed extremely optimistically, revolutionary Cuba and the Chinese Cultural Revolution offered models of communism without a party. The Cuban model of the *foco*, or miniature guerrilla group, and Mao's order to "bombard the headquarters" seemed to carry forward the communist principles that had stalled in the bureaucratic forms of Eastern Europe. As described by Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Régis Debray, the *foco* worked through improvisation and spontaneous adaptation to local circumstances rather than mass party-line orthodoxy. The permanently mobilized Red Guard and the *foco* group in the Sierra Maestras seemed to embody the unity of politics and everyday life. Like the Vietcong, they also provided the prospect of creating "liberated zones," where forms of human interaction could be renovated from the ground up. While a tiny fraction of radicals chose to bring Guevara's "propaganda of the bullet" to West Germany by the end of the decade, many

more switched their attention from the seizure of state power to the transformation of mentalities and forms of everyday life. Creative re-workings of Maoism and the Chinese Cultural Revolution helped New Leftists understand culture as the site where the perpetuation of systematized oppression was enabled and where it could be opposed.

West German activists earned insight and a sense of political authority from their work alongside Third World colleagues throughout the decade. It was a foreign student who gave content to the broad and seemingly homogenizing category of “Third World” in 1967. In a bestselling book, the Iranian intellectual and West German resident Bahman Nirumand praised the term as the first to describe Africa, Asia, and Latin America as political rather than economic entities.⁷ For Nirumand and West German New Leftists, the category of the Third World did not denote comparative backwardness or inferiority. To be third was not to be last or behind but to be something new, and something more. Through concrete collaboration, activism, and engagement with political theories, the New Left brought the Third World close in the 1960s, making it a partner in dialogue, and an object of ongoing interaction.

The Third World in the Story of Germany’s ’68

Despite the breadth and complexity of this interaction, the Third World has had a curious fate in the scholarship and memory of the West German 1960s. The more time passes, the more it seems to disappear. Scholars and former activists insist that the Third World of West German radicals never actually existed. It was an artifact of their own imagination and a “projection screen” for their self-centered revolutionary yearnings.⁸ The stories told about the era known as ’68 help explain this fate. In popular and scholarly imagination, ’68 has become the moment when West Germany began to earn its place among the Western democracies.⁹ The protest movement challenged tradition and unleashed creative energies. Novel forms of sexuality and self-expression undermined the vestigial conservative mores of the Third Reich, and a new postwar generation confronted its parents about the crimes of the Nazi past. Maturing into the Green Party, new social movements and citizens’ initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s, the youthful protesters helped initiate what the philosopher Jürgen Habermas called, in an oft-repeated phrase, a “fundamental

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liberalization” of West German society.¹⁰ Historians have recently expanded responsibility for this sea change from the relatively small circle of activists to broader groups and structural changes, but the overall narrative stands.¹¹ The year 1968 is a turning point in a national success story, when a society sloughed off the residues of fascism and joined the democratic West.

The first transnational histories of the West German 1960s have tended to reinforce this story line by linking the student movement westward to the United States. Martin Klimke, Maria Höhn, and other historians have provided a rich portrait of exchange by tracing the movement of protest tactics, influences, and individuals across the Atlantic.¹² They have shown how entangled the West German and U.S. student movements were, from the presence of a West German SDS member at the drafting of the Port Huron Statement in 1962 to years of collaborations on GI desertion campaigns and the travels of Black Panthers to West Germany in the late 1960s. Klimke follows the unexpected outcomes of the attempts to entrench West Germany institutionally in the U.S.-led bloc as West Germans on Fulbright exchange programs brought home critiques of U.S. military power and race politics and U.S. exchange students in the Federal Republic of Germany became participants in overseas antiwar activism. These interactions produced what he calls “the other alliance” between West German and U.S. activists in the shadow of their governments’ Cold War partnership. The alliance produced concrete policy outcomes. Höhn shows how it brought attention to issues of racism within the U.S. military “at the highest level of government in both countries” by the end of the decade.¹³

The United States was the dominant international presence in West Germany in the 1960s, as it was in much of the world. The global scope of U.S. soft and hard power in the decade made it impossible to speak about the world without simultaneously speaking about “America,” to use the name that co-opted two continents. Its influence even overdetermined apparently Third World issues, as in the case of the Vietnam War, which was simultaneously about a postcolonial nation and about the United States. Critiques of imperialism emerging from the West German New Left reflected this fact, ascribing to the United States a universal, and sometimes nearly omnipotent, force. By the end of the decade, it became the referent for all expressions of power beyond national borders for New Leftists. Even the Soviet Union was portrayed in a reactive role.

Historians have a clear responsibility to document the hypertrophy of U.S. power in the 1960s, as Klimke and others have done. Yet it is also their role to qualify it and bring back to light some of what Arif Dirlik calls the “alternative futures” and alternative alliances obscured by U.S. dominance.¹⁴ More than ten thousand students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America were on West German campuses at the beginning of the 1960s, ten times more than from the United States.¹⁵ Later in the decade, a pre-registration list for the SDS’s climactic International Vietnam Congress in West Berlin in February 1968 showed three participants expected from the United States but seventy-five from the Iranian student organization alone.¹⁶

Pioneering works by activist-historians such as Werner Balsen, Karl Rössel, Siegward Lönnendonker, and Tilman Fichter in the 1970s and 1980s were well aware of these alternative connections.¹⁷ Höhn and Klimke, too, are mindful of the insufficiency of an exclusive focus on the U.S.–West German relationship. Klimke points to the need for further transnational research on the non-West, a call to which this book is, in part, a response.¹⁸ Yet some other voices are less careful and risk portraying ’68 as an inner-Western project and postwar student activism as an American invention. Wolfgang Kraushaar, for example, writes that the international student movement “had its origins without any doubt in the West”—more precisely, in the West of the United States, in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of 1964.¹⁹ Norbert Frei similarly began a recent monograph on “youth revolt and global protest” in the 1960s with a chapter titled “In the Beginning There Was America.”²⁰ The Third World is altogether absent in his book, which is divided into sections on “the West” of North America, Western Europe, and Japan and “the East” of Eastern Europe. The narrative of U.S. origins is repeated in the German press. In March 2009, Josef Joffe wrote in the liberal weekly *Die Zeit* that the “cultural revolution in the West was born on October 1, 1964, in Berkeley, California.”²¹

The influence of the United States, on both West German society and the West German New Left, was undeniably significant and complex. Yet to locate the beginnings of all postwar student politics there betrays a serious oversight of the global process of decolonization under way since the end of the Second World War. Students had been central in decades-long struggles against colonial rule that, by any measure, were radical attempts to expand political rights and realize the “concrete utopia” of new societies that Frei finds the origins of in the United States.²² In Africa,

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as with other formerly colonial regions, the first generation of post-independence leaders came from the ranks of former student activists, and students remained an influential force after independence both in support of and opposition to postcolonial governments.²³

These mobilizations sent currents of ideas and individuals into the First World from the end of the 1950s onward. Paul Kramer has argued that foreign students of color were important protagonists in the early U.S. Civil Rights Movement.²⁴ Penny von Eschen, Robin D. G. Kelley, John Munro, and Nikhil Pal Singh have shown that anticolonial activist networks linked the United States and Africa long before the 1960s.²⁵ Other scholars have pointed to the catalytic role of the Cuban Revolution for both African American and white activists and the significance of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in transforming the grounds for leftist politics in the United States.²⁶ These studies make clear that the United States was not the birthplace of international student politics but was itself responding to developments beyond its borders. Local actors read global politics through domestic concerns and gained a sense of membership in a political space that crossed the borders of Cold War dichotomies.

Third World Marxism was strong in the United States, and scholars have shown its influence on the African American, Latino/a, Asian American, feminist, and labor movements that organized in the late 1960s and 1970s.²⁷ The story line for the U.S. 1960s is one of radicalization and eventual political balkanization. Some scholars and observers praise the turn to gender, race, and ethnicity as necessary, and others condemn it as a tragic loss of movement unity. Although armed groups such as the Weather Underground emerged in the United States, they were a side-show to the new identitarian movements. In West Germany, by contrast, the turn by some New Leftists to left-wing terrorism is the most important immediate sequel to 1968. It is here that the Third World makes its appearance in the dominant story line of '68, acting as a dangerous Fata Morgana, luring radicals to swerve from the road to the West.

From early on, the Third World offered an answer to a problem implicit in the “red to green” liberalization narrative of '68—namely, how to explain the elements of violence that were also part of the era. If the “good '68” was about a society learning to think independently and call authority to principles of democracy and justice, what about the “bad '68,” which held that “the stone determines consciousness (*der Stein bestimmt Bewusstsein*)” and preached the pedagogical value of bodily clashes with

the police?²⁸ More important, what about the “bad ’70s” of left-wing terrorism, when small groups of erstwhile New Leftists turned to bombing, kidnapping, and hijacking? Habermas himself suggested a solution as early as June 1968, when he first located the flaw of the New Left beyond the West in its relationship to the Third World. In a widely reproduced speech, he declared that one of the central misconceptions of the student movement was the notion that “our space of action is determined through an international unity of anti-capitalist protest.”²⁹ Although he condoned consciousness-raising about the “barbarity” of the United States in Vietnam, he warned strongly that “identification, produced at the emotional level—with the role of the Vietcong, identification with the Negroes in the metropolitan slums, with the Brazilian guerrilla fighters, with the Chinese cultural revolutionaries or the heroes of the Cuban revolution—has no value as a political position. The situations here and there are as incomparable as the problems they create, and the methods with which they must be confronted.”³⁰

Habermas made a similar point in a talk in New York in 1967 when he said that the “white middle-class kids” of the New Left had departed from European strains of anarchism like that of George Sorel when they adopted the “actionism and worldview . . . of Mao and Castro.”³¹ Recent work on the New Left has taken Habermas’s point on the fatefulness of the Third World turn as given. A recent history of the Red Army Faction uses this precise quote to introduce that group’s embrace of militancy.³²

Yet it is worth looking more closely at the moves that Habermas performs in this passage. On the surface, he makes a sensible link between strategy and milieu with which most New Leftists would agree. Responding to the speech in 1968, Claus Offe, a Frankfurt SDS member, called it a “truism . . . that [political] forms cannot simply be copied from one country to the other.”³³ At the same time, Offe insisted that there was indeed an “internationalism of protest.”³⁴ His adamancy points to the fact that Habermas seemed not only to distinguish the milieus of the New Left’s “white middle-class kids” from those of Third World and non-white populations but also to de-link them and remove any ground for common action. Habermas’s statement contained an internal geography that mapped politics onto race onto populations in impermeable containers, with no potential for exchange or interaction. Non-whites, he implied, practiced a kind of violent, guerrilla politics that was appropriate to them but could not be transferred to First World whites. Whites, by

contrast, practiced, or should practice, the politics of rational engagement and measured protest that he described in the rest of the speech.

By casting Third World politics as a potential deviation from the salutary aspects of the West German protest movement, Habermas previewed the role that the non-Western world would play in the dominant story line of '68. As the U.S. "War on Terror" has directed attention back to the West German state's own battle with terrorist groups in the 1970s, scholars have increasingly cast Third World politics as the midwife to armed extremism.³⁵ Ingo Juchler expressed the interpretive position succinctly when he wrote that "engagement with the [Vietnam] conflict, Third World national liberation struggles in general and their theoreticians contributed to a political radicalization of parts of the student movement and an identification with these struggles, leading ultimately to the formation of terrorist 'urban guerrilla' groups in both the U.S. and West Germany."³⁶ In the only book that compares Third World influence on the U.S. and West German New Left, Juchler forsakes nuance to draw a straight line from the Third World to the terrorist underground. In the process of inserting the 1960s into a national story of civic maturation, the dominant narrative has conveniently found the sources of error beyond national borders. The Third World has become part of an alibi, explaining why elements of the New Left chose the road to armed militancy in the 1970s and keeping the "good '68" available as part of a national narrative of post-fascist recovery.

The terminology used to discuss the Third World helps support this one-dimensional portrayal. Scholars and former activists return consistently to the psychoanalytic terms of identification and projection to describe the New Left relationship to the Third World. The inflationary use of these terms in recent years can have the effect of distancing and dematerializing Third World politics, denying them an independent existence by making them symptoms of the West German psyche. The notion of the Third World as a "projection screen (*Projektionsfläche*)" for the desires of West German radicals has become especially common since the mid-1980s.³⁷ Its usage follows the analysis introduced by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). In their basic form, analyses that follow Said maintain that the categories of "Self" and "Other" can be transposed onto the West and the non-West, or any other apparent binaries, to see how cultural self-understanding is constructed in large part through negative comparison against an Other.

In a number of recent studies, scholars have returned to the writings and activism of radicals of the 1960s to see which elements of West German identity their dreams of the Third World reveal.³⁸ Sara Lennox and Arlene Teraoka have argued that West German radicals identified with Third World revolutionaries to exonerate themselves as Germans and claim a position that transcended national sins.³⁹ The former activist Peter Schneider supported this notion in 1998, stating that internationalism was attractive first as “a means of escaping from a despicable skin, the skin of being a German.”⁴⁰ Richard Jobs points out that “embracing foreignness” was widespread among young activists in 1968 in Western Europe as a means of expressing alienation from their own nations and solidarity with foreigners both distant and nearby.⁴¹

Discussing the West German engagement with African American politics and culture in the 1960s and early 1970s, Moritz Ege has applied the work of the theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to speculate about whether the process of “becoming a minority” could be a defensible element of an “ethics of identification” for West Germans, promoting the “deterritorialization” and “erosion of received subjectivities.”⁴² While Ege’s engagement with the possibilities of identification is novel, he acknowledges his own inability to defend his proposed claim in political terms. He confesses that it is not clear why “real groups such as African-Americans would have any interest . . . in making themselves available as mediums . . . for the metaphysical encounter between static Being and dynamic Becoming” for Germans.⁴³

The perverse legacy of Said’s *Orientalism* has been that modern European historians pay attention to “the East” primarily as a mirror with which to see the West more clearly. When applied to the 1960s, the actual agency of individuals in the Third World, and Third World individuals in West Germany, can vanish as they become shadows of Germans themselves on geographically far-flung cave walls. By following the work of a small group of scholars in acknowledging the activist presence of African, Asian, and Latin American students in West Germany of the 1960s, this book seeks to complicate an analytic framework based on a West German Self and a Third World Other.⁴⁴ The fact that Third World activists in the first half of the 1960s articulated their demands almost exclusively in the “Western” idiom of human rights and political freedoms disrupts the dichotomies of the “projection screen” arguments, as well as the functionalist maps of the national liberalization narrative. When the projec-

tion screen speaks, the localization of certain political idioms with “the West” and others with the non-West becomes untenable.

As it restores agency to Third World actors, this book also contextualizes the very psychoanalytic language on which scholars have relied. The following chapters show that New Leftists used identification as a category of mobilization rather than analysis. Antiauthoritarian student leaders called for Germans to “recognize themselves” in the fighting Vietcong, suggesting that “solidarity with the victors” rather than the “underdogs” would embolden and empower them. They also promoted clashes with authorities to induce what the socialist student leader Rudi Dutschke, quoting Marx, called an “identification of the thinking with the suffering” to bridge the gap between First World and Third World experience. What Habermas criticized, many embraced, celebrating the efficacy of what Herbert Marcuse called the “solidarity of sentiment” over the Old Left’s “solidarity of interests.”

Dutschke’s relegation of the entire Third World to the category of the “suffering” suggests that identification came at a price. Identification tactics tended to instrumentalize Third World populations, turning them into accessories for German psychological epiphanies. Clearly, many people from what Germans called the “Trikont,” or “tricontinental” of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, were active members of the “thinking” population in the 1960s. Indeed, many were doing their thinking alongside West Germans on university campuses. Dutschke himself was well aware of this fact. He had arrived at his theories in part through collaborations with leftist Third World students. Yet at the same time, he was able to elide their “thinking” presence in his model of mobilization. How and why did this happen?

This book explores the oscillating dynamic of presence and absence that marked the West German relationship to the Third World throughout the 1960s.⁴⁵ It maps a trajectory along which the push by the West German New Left for universal theories turned Third World individuals into placeholders, and the drive for ever more shocking images of Third World conflict turned them into icons. It shows how national stories were being told about transnational events as they happened, writing Iranian leftists, for example, out of the narrative of June 2 even as the event was taking place. By the end of the decade, “becoming Chinese” seemed possible to many Germans without having ever met a Chinese person at all.

Foreign Front shows how the Third World was both distant and near at hand for the New Left in West Germany of the 1960s. The book's chapters illustrate the tension between abstract identification and embodied collaboration in the decade, proceeding in roughly chronological order through the decade. Chapter 1 outlines the arrival of large numbers of African, Asian, and Latin American on West German campuses in the early 1960s. Here I reverse the oft-repeated claim that the West German New Left "discovered the Third World" by showing that the Third World discovered it as politicized foreign students mobilized West German students for their causes. To the dismay of their home governments, many foreign students protested the ongoing oppression in their countries, bringing domestic acts of state violence to the attention of an international public. For Iranian, Angolan, and Iraqi students, among others, the West German public sphere became a "foreign front" in the struggle for political freedoms in their home countries. For West German students in the early years of the decade, Iranian repression, Portuguese colonialism, and South African racism looked like aberrations, blemishes on a world picture that seemed potentially to be moving toward standards of international justice and equality. They gave their solidarity and support to a range of national student groups, which made their demands in the liberal idiom of human rights and self-determination. West German internationalism in the early 1960s was personalized and effectively bilateral, shifting its focus between national groups.

Chapter 2 reveals the consequences of collaboration with Third World students through the shifting theories of the influential student leaders Dutschke and Bernd Rabehl. I show that socialist students drew conclusions from their interactions with Third World students—even when those conclusions often boomeranged attention back to German subjectivity. The chapter's pivotal event is the demonstration against the visit of the Congolese leader Moïse Tshombé to West Berlin in 1964. Before the Vietnam War, West German New Leftists saw the Congo conflict as the key case in understanding how the dynamics of imperialism could persist after decolonization. By that time, the prediction made in 1962 of a black hand toppling the remnants of colonialism had proved premature. Even after the wave of decolonization, interventions of the former colonial powers and the new U.S. superpower ensured that the room for maneuver of African, Asian, and Latin American governments remained narrow. The dominant powers reacted to attempts to implement novel reme-

dies for national-economic disadvantages with both repression by proxy and outright military intervention. West German New Left theories of neocolonialism crystallized around the Congo in the early decade. By foregrounding its importance, I propose that the global protest wave following the death of Lumumba in 1961 would be a more appropriate starting point than the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of 1964 for historical narratives of the global 1960s.

Chapter 3 describes the ruptures in New Left thought and organization that followed the escalation of the U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. Many New Leftists responded to the war by questioning the validity of the liberal idiom of rights and freedom that had underwritten demands early in the decade. By 1966, socialist students had begun to see incidents like repression in Iran or racism in South Africa less as deviations from liberalism than revelations of the disavowed truth of liberalism as a system. An SDS leader summed up the reigning interpretation in 1966 when he called Vietnam “an example and testing ground for warfare and cost calculations valid for future conflicts to be conducted in Asia, Africa, and Latin America according to the logic of imperialism.”⁴⁶ Whereas Third World activism in the early 1960s related to particular national cases and even individuals, activism after 1966 sought exemplary cases that would illuminate broader patterns of U.S. imperialism, a term that entered socialist students’ discussions at this time. The imperialism critique encouraged a shift from specificity to abstraction and stressed that one could understand the relationship of the First, Second, and Third Worlds according to general laws and not only in national particulars. Within this changed environment, a small group of antiauthoritarian students from West Berlin pushed a new form of politics to the center of the socialist student movement. Abandoning the appeal to liberal values, they openly called for identification with the “Vietnamese victors” for the first time, radicalizing the empathy of the early decade.

Chapter 4 revisits the events of June 2, 1967, a date that has endured in popular memory as the beginning of West Germany’s “1968.” Although opposition to the Vietnam War mobilized many West Germans, it was the death of the student Benno Ohnesorg at a West Berlin protest against the visit of the shah on June 2 that led large numbers of students to take to the streets. This chapter counters existing accounts of June 2 by writing Iranians back into the history of this properly transnational event. While Germans saw the murdered Ohnesorg as the first victim of a state back-

sliding into fascism, Iranian students saw him as the most recent victim in the struggle for political freedoms in Iran. Bahman Nirumand and other Iranian students played a critical role as nodes in the transnational protest network, articulating the connection between domestic and overseas political struggles for the West German New Left. Despite these many and varied border crossings, there was a tendency even as it was happening to narrate June 2 as an inner-German rather than as a transnational political moment. National stories have been told about the global 1960s after the fact. This chapter shows that those stories were also being told at the time, putting transnational politics back into a national narrative. My retelling restores the missing bodies of Iranian activists—and the Iranian dead—that should flank Ohnesorg in the memory of June 2.

Chapter 5 focuses on the dilemmas of representation faced by the New Left as it responded to the escalating domestic and international violence of the late 1960s. Ohnesorg's death and the experience of police brutality at home, combined with the ongoing sanguinary Vietnam War abroad, amplified the register of protest rhetoric and changed its nature. After June 2, activists turned increasingly to graphic images of dead and mutilated bodies in their attempts to articulate outrage and mobilize public opinion. The adoption of what I call corpse polemics brought the politics of representing Third World suffering to the fore of activist issues. It also accompanied dubious analogies between the West German New Left and other victims of state violence, including the murdered Jews of the Holocaust. By invoking the national past to protest acts of injustice in the present, activists both commemorated and distorted German history. Some New Leftists used internationalism as a long route back to German victimhood by casting themselves as the ultimate suffering subjects after June 2. Others were able to keep their sights on the Third World subjects of their solidarity while navigating a visual landscape in the late 1960s that, for reasons of both politics and entertainment, was increasingly soaked in blood.

Chapter 6 also begins with the West German media environment to explore the most radical case of cultural conversion in Third World politics in the 1960s: when large factions of the West German student movement declared themselves "Chinese." Pronouncing themselves the "new Jews" allowed New Leftists to feel a sense of righteous victimization; calling themselves "Chinese" was an act of defiance against the mainstream media's demonization of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Em-

bracing Maoist tactics as their own, New Leftists deracinated the category of culture, expanding the traditional German understanding of *Kultur* from a particular ethnic-national endowment or the sphere of artistic production to the “realm of the ruling ideas.” In a limit case of Third Worldism without Third World individuals, Germans also claimed a non-Western identity with none of the personal collaboration that characterized solidarity in the early years of the decade. In the swing between imagination and collaboration in the New Left relationship to the Third World, the Cultural Revolution allowed a moment of something that was close to pure invention. “Chinese” was an identity available for adoption as a style in the political marketplace. To be Chinese for a West German New Leftist in the late 1960s meant to provoke, shock, and, above all, discuss. By attempting to create “liberated zones” in communal apartments, occupied university buildings, and unauthorized demonstrations, West German activists had made the Third World their own.

1

DISSIDENT GUESTS

In the first part of the 1960s, West German universities experienced what one observer called an “invasion of students from African and Asian countries.”¹ The number of students from those countries newly designated as “developing” had risen from 200 in 1951 to about 12,000 by 1962.² Financed through state scholarships and family funds, students from developing countries were to be new national elites, gaining practical knowledge with which to return to their home countries. Officials intended their presence in West Germany as temporary “guests” to demonstrate the openness of the German state and society to the world beyond Europe and augment the program of industrialization loans and grants to Third World nations begun in earnest in 1961. To the surprise and concern of officials in both West Germany and the home countries, many African, Asian, and Latin American students quickly began to deviate from their prescribed role by organizing politically in West Germany, using publicity campaigns, hunger strikes, and demonstrations to bring to light instances of injustice and state violence in their home countries.

As foreign students faced censorship, blocked money transfers, and threats of deportation for their activism, they urged West German students to act in solidarity with them. Dissident guests from the Third World acted as models of the political role that students could play on the national and international level, encouraging the umbrella West German Verband Deutscher Studentenschaften (Association of German Students; vds) to take political stances for the first time in its history. In the first half of the 1960s, the internationalism of West German student activists developed in significant part through concrete collaboration and relationships of solidarity with individuals from the Third World who shared their status as students and young intellectuals.³

The emerging transnational narrative of 1968 that recognizes the role of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement as a “model for campus revolts,” as

Wolfgang Kraushaar puts it, must also acknowledge the activism of Third World students on West German campuses in the early 1960s. Education migrations from the Third World created the conditions for African and Asians to speak in their own names rather than as distant objects of charity or romantic identification.⁴ The defense of the right of non-Germans to free political expression in West Germany became an important site for the expansion of human-rights claims beyond a national framework and exposed the limits of democratic tolerance in the postwar German state.

African and Asian Students Mobilize alongside West Germans

The most visible Third World campaigns in West Germany in the early 1960s were directed against Portuguese colonialism, South African racism, and political repression in Iran. In each case, the official and popular West German relationship with the countries was good. Portugal was a fellow member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); South Africa still benefited from what Immanuel Geiss in 1963 called a “deep-rooted *Boer-Romantik*”; and the private life of the Shah of Iran was such a beloved subject of the tabloid press that some dubbed it the “Soraya-Press” after his second wife.⁵ Iran was also the single largest source of West German oil imports, which grew ten times over from 1957 to 1962, helping fill the needs of a rapidly motorizing population.⁶ By 1961, West Germany imported one-third of its oil from Iran at an annual worth of more than \$200 million.⁷

Most important, despite some aid from the Soviet Union to Iran, all countries were firmly in the U.S.-led “Western” bloc and refused to recognize the German Democratic Republic (GDR) diplomatically. To mobilize public opinion against the injustices of these states, foreign students had to work outside the categories of Cold War competition. They needed to convince West Germans that allies in the struggle between the blocs could also be criticized for their internal policies, a difficult proposition in a public sphere dominated, as scholars have shown, by an emphasis on consensus rather than critique into the early 1960s.⁸ Dissident students also had to overcome wariness on the part of West Germans, even those on the left, about the capability of non-Western populations to be responsible political actors. The West German labor leader Ludwig

Rosenberg summarized the caution in this relationship in 1960, writing that West Germans were watching the developing countries with “concern” about the “uncertainty of the political path they are striking out on, their deficient preparedness for self-sufficiency, and the interruption of existing economic connections.”⁹ He also expressed the common anxiety about the vengeful volatility of postcolonial populations whose experience of colonialism often led them to “doubtless excesses and misguided hate” against their former oppressors.¹⁰ Rosenberg, like many others, suggested that West Germany’s relationship toward the developing nations must be one of cautious accommodation with new governments. West German influence would be exercised through the soft power of economic investment and foreign aid and the cultural diplomacy of state and unions.¹¹ Strident demands for human rights and political freedom expressed by African and Asian students did not sit well with this model of interstate relations.

Two events in early 1961 provoked the first major intervention of African and Asian students and their first appearance in West German streets: the closing of Tehran University after a demonstration against parliamentary fraud and the murder of the Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba.¹² On February 19, a female Iranian medical student led a march in Cologne of 300 Iranian, Egyptian, and West German students to protest the Iranian university’s closure, with further protests in Munich, Erlangen, Göttingen, and Düsseldorf. Police forbade a sixth demonstration planned for Mainz.¹³ On February 20, in Bonn, Egyptian and African students protested Lumumba’s murder, with some demonstrators carrying the cover of the leftist magazine *Konkret* and its image of Lumumba accompanied by the caption “Murder” (see figure 2).¹⁴ Further Lumumba demonstrations were held in Hamburg, Erlangen, Kiel, and Frankfurt.¹⁵ West German officials reported that some of the same students participated in both protests, with Egyptian students playing a leading role.¹⁶

Both demonstrations contradicted the official West German position, which was supportive of the shah and critical of Lumumba, and challenged the intolerance for alternatives in the Cold War thinking of West German officials. In labored logic, Eugen Gerstenmaier, president of the West German Bundestag, expressed the impossibility of Lumumba’s independence from both blocs, saying in an interview months before his murder, “A Lumumba in power can ruin everything and throw the door to Bolshevization wide open, even if he is not a communist and does not