

# (RE-)CONFIGURING MAO: TRAJECTORIES OF A CULTURO-POLITICAL TREND IN WEST GERMANY

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In the 1960s, a search was mounted within left-wing circles all across Western Europe for a “third way” to overcome the Cold War confrontation between the “Soviet-dominated socialism” prevailing in Eastern Europe and the “American capitalism” in Western Europe. Since Stalinism had been discredited after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, Mao Zedong and his idea of a Cultural Revolution attracted more and more left-wing intellectuals. Inspired by the struggles of formerly colonized people in Indochina, Africa and South America, newly evolving subcultural left-wing milieus started to question the organizational models and ideologies of what they soon called the “Old Left.” In the “New Left’s” global protest movements of the late 1960s, new icons<sup>1</sup> soon came to represent this shift in left-wing thinking within very different national left-wing subcultures: Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, Ernesto “Che” Guevara and Mao Zedong took their places next to traditional communist icons such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and Joseph Stalin. Although Maoism turned into a globally recognizable political trend<sup>2</sup> in the 1960s and 1970s, “New Left” activists across the globe reconfigured, and thus localized, the iconic image of Mao and his ideology very differently, depending on the respective national, social and political contexts in which each of them operated.<sup>3</sup>

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1 In this paper, I use the term “icon” in the spirit of Aby Warburg’s definition for *Schlagbilder*, investigating the rhetorical and symbolical use of Mao’s image, the historical changes in that use, as well as techniques of representation, cf. Michael Diers, *Schlagbilder. Zur politischen Ikonographie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 1997), 7–13.

2 Following Appadurai’s approach to “cultural flows,” transcultural trends in this paper are seen as carriers of concepts, commodities and products, as well as lifestyles within or across different publics. These trends, however, are often reconfigured in their new cultural contexts and thus become localized once more. See: Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). See also: Laila Abu-er-Rub, Jennifer Altehenger, and Sebastian Gehrig, “The Transcultural Travels of Trends: An Introductory Essay,” *Transcultural Studies* 2 (2011). (Page 140)

3 See: Jens Benicke, *Von Adorno zu Mao. Über die schlechte Aufhebung der antiautoritären Bewegung*

Ever since the ascendancy of Mao as the leader of the Chinese Communist revolution, there have been multiple images of Mao Zedong.<sup>4</sup> Already in the 1930s, Mao himself realized the power of a carefully crafted image by consciously employing his own writings, photographs, and woodcut prints as powerful propaganda tools. At that time, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) began to intensify the propagation of its message via texts and images. In 1942, these efforts culminated in Mao's famous "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Arts," in which he outlined the importance of the arts and especially painting for Communist propaganda. Already at this early stage, Mao also tried to appeal to Western audiences. In 1936, the journalist Edgar Snow transported a most powerful portrait of Mao to readers in Europe and the US.<sup>5</sup> Initially, the Mao-cult had been conceived as a reaction to the growing leader cult of "director general" Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the nationalist Guomindang.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the efforts to stylize Mao as leader of the CCP soon proved to be such an effective "branding strategy" that Mao's image merged with the institution CCP.<sup>7</sup> In a process of "authoritarian branding," the fabricated image of Mao served the streamlining of internal interpretations of the CCP's political agenda within the party organization as well as external signalling.<sup>8</sup> When the Chinese Cultural Revolution began in 1966, "multiple" and "mysterious" images of Mao developed.<sup>9</sup> Due to the mere use of Mao phrases in Cultural Revolution propaganda, Maoist ideology became open to interpretation. This situation was enhanced through Mao's own behaviour. During the Cultural

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(Freiburg: ca ira, 2010); Belden Davis, "French Maoism," in *The 60s Without Apology*, ed. Sohnya Syres et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 148–77; Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East. French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Christopher Leigh Connery, "The World Sixties" in *The Worlding Project* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2007), ed. Rob Wilson and Christopher Leigh Connery, 77–108, 95–102; Alexander Cook, "Third World Maoism," in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Timothy Cheek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 288–313; Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002), 41–58.

4 See: Timothy Cheek, "Mao, Revolution, and Memory," in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Cheek. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3–30, 3.

5 See: Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937).

6 Daniel Leese, "Mao the Man and Mao the Icon," in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Timothy Cheek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 219–39, 223f.

7 Daniel Leese has employed the term "branding strategy" in his investigation of the Mao cult. See: Leese, "Mao the Man and Mao the Icon," 226.

8 The term "authoritarian branding" is employed by Daniel Leese in his investigation of the Mao cult's roots in China. See: Daniel Leese, "The Mao Cult as Communicative Space," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8 (2007) 3: 623–39, 628f.

9 See: Daniel Leese, "Performative Politics and Petrified Image: The Mao Cult During China's Cultural Revolution", PhD-diss., University of Bremen 2006, 177.

Revolution, he merely communicated to the Chinese people via his writings, which remained ambiguous.<sup>10</sup> When Maoism spread as a political trend to movements in the Third World and Western student groups, the icon Mao and his ideology were thus already designed to acquire multiple meanings. Living on the edge of the Cold War divide in Europe, West German radical left-wing activists soon recognized Mao Zedong and his idea of a Cultural Revolution as an appealing ideology, which they reconfigured into their political agendas. Due to the extensive use of different media in CCP-propaganda, the icon Mao lent itself perfectly to transcultural reconfigurations. Within Third World movements as well as in Western Europe and the US, the use of the icon Mao and the adherence to Maoist ideology thus turned into a widely recognized political trend through which left-wing activists created new spaces for imaginaries of a “better world.”<sup>11</sup>

After examining the intellectual interest in Mao Zedong and his ideology in West Germany since the early 1960s, this article will demonstrate how the left-wing group Kommune I (= Commune I) introduced the icon Mao into student protests. While intellectuals acknowledged Mao’s importance as a leading political thinker, Kommune I introduced the icon Mao as a means of provocation during the emerging student protests in West Berlin in 1966/67. West Berlin left-wing student groups played a key role in the evolution of a nationwide student movement at that time. This article argues that only the decline of student protests turned the reference and adherence to Mao and his ideology into a widespread political trend within many different subcultural left-wing networks and publics.<sup>12</sup> When spontaneous student protests lost their momentum, Mao and his ideology seemed to offer a point of reference to organize renewed left-wing opposition to the West German state in the 1970s. Interestingly, at this point, Mao simultaneously appealed to dogmatic cadre party members as well as terrorist groups and other left-wing activists. The final part of this article will trace the spread of Mao’s iconic image to

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10 Ibid.

11 Davis, “French Maoism”; Wolin, *The Wind from the East*; Connery, “The World Sixties”; Cook, “Third World Maoism”; Benicke, *Von Adorno zu Mao*.

12 The term “public(s)” is used here to avoid the Habermasian term “public sphere” which focuses on the establishment of rational decision-making through public discourse. Following Bourdieu’s idea of “social fields,” Appadurai’s “communities of sentiment” and Anderson’s “imagined communities,” these “public(s)” are conceptualised as shifting social realms (i.e., fields) that enable social, emotional and political participatory action. Publics are constituted in social processes such as practicing a life-style, consuming certain objects or committing to a political movement (i.e., they are based on emotional desire). Publics are not confined by cultural or national boundaries, but are merely dependent on (in-)direct communication and the adhesion felt between their agents. See also: Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Jennifer Altehenger, and Sebastian Gehrig, “The Transcultural Travels of Trends: An Introductory Essay,” *Transcultural Studies* 2 (2011) (Page 140)

artistic circles and popular culture. The fact that the icon Mao and left-wing jargon eventually found their way into popular culture highlights the historical significance of the left-wing subcultures and publics of the time.

### **A “Curiously Electrifying Impact”: Intellectual Enthusiasm for Mao in the 1960s**

Through their interest in Mao and China during the 1960s, intellectuals representing the whole political spectrum of the West German political arena prepared the grounds for the development of a broader political trend.<sup>13</sup> In this process, left-wing and right-wing thinking met more than once. Perhaps surprisingly, Mao Zedong was in fact first introduced into the West German political debate by liberal and right-wing intellectuals. In 1961, the liberal journalist Rolf Schroers discussed Mao’s ideas on warfare tactics in his book *Der Partisan* (= The Partisan)<sup>14</sup>, which was inspired by the ideas of Carl Schmitt, the infamous right-wing expert on constitutional law who served as the “Kronjurist (crown-attorney) of the Third Reich.”<sup>15</sup> Schroers stylized the partisan as the last autonomous individual in a world dominated by bureaucracy and technology. This interpretation followed conservative diagnoses of post-war reality put forward by Arnold Gehlen and Hans Freyer. These authors viewed individual freedom as severely restricted by large-scale state-led development plans, which influenced politics across Western Europe at the time, as well as by other technocratic constraints.<sup>16</sup> Two years later, Schmitt published his own interpretation of the new global situation in *Theorie des Partisanen* (= Theory of the Partisan).<sup>17</sup> In this book, Schmitt argued that the

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13 “Die militärischen Schriften Mao Tse-tungs [...] gehören zu den Schlüsselbüchern dieses Jahrhunderts. Sie sind das Werk eines außerordentlichen Geistes, und jeder Leser spürt nach wenigen Seiten die eigentümlich elektrische Wirkung, die der direkte Kontakt mit dem Genius unfehlbar hervorbringt.” See: Sebastian Haffner, “Der neue Krieg,” in *Theorie des Guerillakrieges oder Strategie der Dritten Welt, by Mao Tse-Tung* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1966), 5–34, reprinted in *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, ed. Wolfgang Kraushaar, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006), 157–81, 157.

14 Rolf Schroers, *Der Partisan. Ein Beitrag zur politischen Anthropologie* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1961). For a short biography of Schroers see: Dirk van Laak, *Gespräche in der Sicherheit des Schweigens. Carl Schmitt in der politischen Geistesgeschichte der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 251–56.

15 The term was coined by Waldemar Gurian. Cf. Heinz Hürten, *Waldemar Gurian: Ein Zeuge der Krise unserer Welt in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag 1972), 119.

16 Jan-Werner Müller, *Ein gefährlicher Geist. Carl Schmitts Wirkung in Europa* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 159f.

17 Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen. Zwischenbemerkung zum Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963).

rise of partisan warfare, which had come to full fruition in China, had put the *ius publicum Europaeum* and *Staatlichkeit* at stake, that is, the classic European idea of the international state system and its function.<sup>18</sup> This assumption was meant to support Schmitt's theory of the end of the classic European state system and the emergence of regions of influence (*Großräume*) dominated by powerful nations. These powers would not only rule their national domains but also dominate a region of influence around them. In Schmitt's eyes, the end of the classic state system also implied the end of regular warfare. Consequently, non-national combatants like the Maoist partisan had emerged in the struggle against domination by regional powers.

In light of successful liberation struggles in Asia, Africa and South America since the end of World War II,<sup>19</sup> many militant activists understood Schmitt's theory to mean that partisans were capable of shattering the liberal-democratic system of Western European states. After the student protests of "1968," some radical left-wing activists following Schmitt's course of thought, slowly turned into right-wing activists.<sup>20</sup> A prominent example of this shift in political beliefs was Günter Maschke. Starting his political career in the left-wing group Subversive Aktion (= Subversive Action), which will be described later in more detail, he became famous as the "Dutschke of Vienna."<sup>21</sup> In the early 1970s, Maschke spent one and a half years in Cuba. Drawing on large parts of Schmitt's theory of partisan warfare, Maschke developed his own approach to guerrilla warfare during that time. Disillusioned by Cuban reality, however, he returned to Austria. Maschke's interest in right-wing thinking while he was still a left-wing activist then facilitated his smooth transition into being an adherent of right-wing ideology<sup>22</sup>. Manifold connections between right-wing and left-wing publics<sup>23</sup> through Mao's writings on partisan warfare were once more

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18 van Laak, *Gespräche in der Sicherheit des Schweigens*, 70-85.

19 See: Cook, "Third World Maoism."

20 Müller, *Ein gefährlicher Geist* 164-167.

21 Rudi Dutschke was the most prominent West German left-wing student activist during the protests in 1967/1968.

22 Müller, *Ein gefährlicher Geist.*, 165.

23 Similar to Maschke's turn to the right wing, Horst Mahler developed from a lawyer defending student movement members in court into a founding member of the left-wing terrorist group Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion/RAF). In the 1990s, he reentered public life as a right-wing activist. In contrast to Maschke and Mahler, Hans Jürgen Krahl turned from a member of a conservative student association into one of the leading SDS protagonists in Frankfurt am Main. See: Susanne Kailitz, *Von den Worten zu den Waffen?: Frankfurter Schule, Studentenbewegung, RAF und die Gewaltfrage* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2007), 165ff. and Gerd Koenen, "Thankmar, der junge Krahl. Der SDS-Theoretiker Hans-Jürgen Krahl – ein Wanderer von der extremen Rechten bis zur radikalen Linken," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, February 5, 2005: 28f.

revealed in 1970 when Joachim Schickel, a left-wing sinologist and journalist in Hamburg, praised Schmitt as “the only personally approachable author” who was capable of elaborating “competently on the topics of partisans and irregular fighters.”<sup>24</sup>

In 1966, Sebastian Haffner, a liberal journalist, wrote the preface to the German translation of Mao’s writings on guerrilla warfare. Haffner regarded Mao’s concept of the “people’s war” as a “key text of this century,” written by a “genius”, and acclaimed its “curiously electrifying impact.”<sup>25</sup> He posited that Mao’s idea of a strategy that enabled the weak to defeat the strong had fundamentally changed the world. Universal peace was no longer to be achieved by a new type of *pax romana*; any imperial strategy had thus become obsolete. This, however, might be the “true key to universal peace,” Haffner concluded admiringly. In 1967, the philosopher Karl Jaspers started his assessment of the Federal Republic’s situation in world politics with a chapter on China. In Jasper’s view, the PRC’s rise as a nuclear power fundamentally changed the world order. In a time of deradicalisation of the US-Soviet antagonism, Jaspers attributed an aggressive attitude to the PRC regime.<sup>26</sup> Mao Zedong thus became a respected and sometimes feared political authority even in liberal and conservative publics during the first half of the 1960s.

From the mid-1960s onwards, China also became a major issue in intellectual left-wing networks and publics. Driven by the desire to discover new models for social change in West Germany, intellectuals were susceptible to Mao’s Cultural Revolution in their attempt to revitalize left-wing theoretical debates.<sup>27</sup> The political situation in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the use of military force against East German citizens in 1953 and Soviet military interventions in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia (CSSR) in 1968 had discredited Soviet socialism, particularly in West Germany. China appeared to be the most promising socialist “newcomer” to world politics, having successfully defeated Japan in World War II and split from the USSR in 1960/61. In 1965, Hans Magnus Enzensberger founded the periodical *Kursbuch*, which almost immediately became the leading theoretical left-wing journal of

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24 Joachim Schickel, *Gespräche mit Carl Schmitt* (Berlin: Merve-Verlag, 1993), 9.

25 Sebastian Haffner, “Der neue Krieg,” 157.

26 Karl Jaspers, *Antwort. Zur Kritik meiner Schrift Wohin treibt die Bundesrepublik?* (Piper: München, 1967), 15-28.

27 See: Sebastian Gehrig, Barbara Mittler, and Felix Wemheuer (eds), *Kulturrevolution als Vorbild? Maoismen im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008).

the late 1960s.<sup>28</sup> From its beginning, China was a major focus of the magazine. Joan Robinson, an English economist, explained world politics “viewed from China”<sup>29</sup> in the second issue. Jan Myrdal’s two articles entitled “Reports from a Chinese Village,” published in the sixth and twenty-third issues, were meant to show the enormous benefits of the Cultural Revolution for Chinese peasants.<sup>30</sup> In the sixteenth issue of *Kursbuch*, Peter Schneider pondered the potential of Cultural Revolution ideology to destroy the “cultural industry” that dominated the West.<sup>31</sup> In the next issue, Eduarda Masi tried to explain the changes within the traditional Chinese family caused by the Cultural Revolution.<sup>32</sup> In an eighty-five-page essay, Joachim Schickel declared China and Maoism to be legitimate successors of Marxist thinking.<sup>33</sup> He described several aspects of Mao, thus creating images<sup>34</sup> that later particularly attracted young left-wing activists. By highlighting Mao’s talents in the fields of politics, guerrilla warfare, poetry and philosophy, Schickel managed to appeal to all evolving left-wing grassroots groups.<sup>35</sup> The range of talents ascribed to Mao inspired many to adopt Maoist ideology in the following years,<sup>36</sup> including activists seeking to found a new “truly revolutionary party,” which later became the so-

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28 Henning Marmulla, “Das Kursbuch. Nationale Zeitschrift, internationale Kommunikation, transnationale Öffentlichkeit,” in *Handbuch 1968. Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2007), 37-47.

29 Joan Robinson, “Von China aus gesehen,” *Kursbuch 2* (1965): 83-102.

30 Jan Myrdal, “Erzählungen aus einem chinesischen Dorf,” *Kursbuch 6* (1966): 40-72; Jan Myrdal, “Erzählungen aus einem chinesischen Dorf,” *Kursbuch 23* (1971): 145-65. See also: Jan Myrdal, *Report from a Chinese Village* (New York: Random House, 1965).

31 Peter Schneider, “Die Phantasie im Spätkapitalismus und die Kulturrevolution,” *Kursbuch 16* (1969): 1-37.

32 Eduarda Masi, “Die Familie im alten und neuen China,” *Kursbuch 17* (1969): 98-128.

33 Joachim Schickel, “Dialektik in China. Mao Tse-Tung und die Große Kulturrevolution,” *Kursbuch 9* (1967): 45-129.

34 In this paper, I refer to the term “image” as Kathrin Fahlenbrach defined it in the context of the orchestration of protest by social movements. Cf. Kathrin Fahlenbrach, *Protestinszenierungen. Visuelle Kommunikation und kollektive Identitäten in Protestbewegungen* (Wiesbaden: Westdt. Verlag, 2002), 160.

35 Cf. Laura K. Diehl, “Die Konjunktur von Mao-Images in der bundesdeutschen „68er“-Bewegung,” in *Kulturrevolution als Vorbild? Maoismen im deutschsprachigen Raum*, ed. Sebastian Gehrig, Barbara Mittler, and Felix Wemheuer (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 179-201.

36 Sebastian Gehrig, “Zwischen uns und dem Feind einen klaren Trennungsstrich ziehen.” Linksterroristische Gruppen und maoistische Ideologie in der Bundesrepublik der 1960er und 1970er Jahre,” in *Kulturrevolution als Vorbild? Maoismen im deutschsprachigen Raum*, ed. Sebastian Gehrig, Barbara Mittler, Felix Wemheuer (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 153-77; Sebastian Gehrig, “Sympathizing Subcultures? The Milieus of West German Terrorism,” in *Between Prague Spring and French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980*, ed. Martin Klimke, Joachim Scharloth, and Jacco Pekelder (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 233-250.



called K-Gruppen (= K-Groups),<sup>37</sup> as well as militant activists and terrorists. In the twenty-fourth issue Schickel praised the “self-education of the masses” following Mao’s “primacy of practice” as the ultimate improvement of revolutionary pedagogy.<sup>38</sup> Schickel also translated and commented on several important collections of Mao’s writings. As a publisher of travelogues, he acted as an eyewitness to the Cultural Revolution and thus gained credibility within intellectual and subcultural left-wing publics.<sup>39</sup>

Schickel became one of the most important agents to introduce Mao and his ideology to the West German left wing. He provided German-language literature on China at a time when, aside from translations of Mao’s “Little Red Book” and *Selected Works*, little else existed.<sup>40</sup> Schickel thus centrally participated in generating genuine interest in China and acted as a trendsetter with regard to Maoist ideology. Other contemporary authors writing on China stressed Schickel’s prominent role as a translator and editor of important publications by and about Mao. Hans Heinz Holz, for example, characterized Schickel’s works as “insights which no future scientific analysis should fall behind.”<sup>41</sup> German literature on China was supplemented by translations of travelogues written by foreign journalists and intellectuals.<sup>42</sup> Along with these accounts, the reprint of Edgar Snow’s *Red Star over China* helped West German left-wingers envisage the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1930s Yan’an base areas.<sup>43</sup> Clearly, the contemporary political and social situation

37 Andreas Kühn, *Stalins Enkel, Maos Söhne. Die Lebenswelt der K-Gruppen in der Bundesrepublik der 70er Jahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005), 111-14.

38 Joachim Schickel, “China 1970: Die Selbsterziehung der Massen oder Die Pädagogik revolutionieren,” *Kursbuch* 24 (1971): 181-98.

39 Joachim Schickel, *Die Mobilisierung der Massen. Chinas ununterbrochene Revolution* (München: List, 1971); Joachim Schickel, *China in der Welt. Ein außenpolitisches Dossier* (München: Hanser, 1973); Joachim Schickel, *Große Mauer; große Methode. Annäherungen an China* (Klett: Stuttgart, 1968); Joachim Schickel (ed.), *Guerilleros, Partisanen. Theorie und Praxis* (München: Hanser, 1970).

40 Since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in the PRC, Chinese authorities provided left-wing activists across the globe with 110 million copies of the “Little Red Book” in 36 languages, see: Leese, “Performative Politics and Petrified Image,” 122.

41 Hans Heinz Holz, *Widerspruch in China. Politisch-philosophische Erläuterungen zu Mao Tse-tung* (München: Hanser, 1970), 8.

42 Giovanni Blumer, *Die chinesische Kulturrevolution 1965/67* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969); Louis Bacarta, *China in der Kulturrevolution. Ein Augenzeugenbericht* (Wien: Molden, 1967); Alberto Moravia, *Die Kulturrevolution in China* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1971); Jan Myrdal, *China—Die Revolution geht weiter* (München: dtv, 1974).

43 Edgar Snow, *Roter Stern über China* (Frankfurt am Main: März, 1970); cf. Gerd Koenen and Laura K. Diehl, “Mao als Mona-Lisa der Weltrevolution. Erinnerungen an den westdeutschen Maoismus,” in *Kulturrevolution als Vorbild? Maoismen im deutschsprachigen Raum*, ed. Sebastian Gehrig, Barbara



in China had become a major topic of discussion within West German left-wing publics. But as in other countries around the globe during the late 1960s, journalistic and intellectual writing on China played a greater role in the initial dissemination of Maoist ideology than Mao's own words.<sup>44</sup> The limited flow of information in the late 1960s also facilitated various and often conflicting interpretations of Mao's role as a socialist theoretician in left-wing subcultures. In a somewhat asymmetrical information flow, West German left-wing publics received only a selective picture of the real socio-political situation in China at the time. Intellectuals like Schickel thus served as gatekeepers in the process of introducing Maoist ideology to subcultural milieus.

### **The rise of Mao as an Icon: from intellectual Circles to grassroots Milieus**

The "New Left's" political start in the Federal Republic of Germany was particularly difficult. At the beginning of the 1960s, the radical political left wing had been marginalized. The Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (= Communist Party of Germany/KPD) had been banned in 1956, and the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (= Social Democratic Party of Germany/SPD) had removed the theory of class struggle from its party statutes in 1959. The revitalization of socialist and communist thinking was tied to an identity crisis, which West German society had faced since the early 1960s. After the building of the Berlin Wall, a reunification of the two German states appeared to have become impossible. Thus, West Germans had to negotiate the post-war consensus of living in a "provisional state." The general societal situation within the Federal Republic was a major focus of the ensuing discussion about the nature of the West German state. The media started to question the actions of the conservative government.<sup>45</sup> In 1962, the so-called *Spiegel-Affäre* (= *Spiegel-Affair*) uncovered the government's authoritarian behaviour towards journalists.<sup>46</sup> The magazine *Der Spiegel* had published a report that exposed the limited ability of the West German military as part of NATO forces to respond to a Soviet attack on Western Europe. The article contained very detailed confidential information. On the charge of

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Mittler, and Felix Wemheuer (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 27-38, 30.

44 Connery, "The World Sixties," 96; see also: Charles W. Hayworth, "Mao's Journey's to the West: Meanings made of Mao," in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Timothy Cheek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 313-31.

45 Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise. Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945-73* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 323-60.

46 David Schoenbaum, *Die Spiegel-Affäre. Ein Abgrund von Landesverrat* (Berlin: Parthas, 2002).

treason, the West German ministry of defence searched the editorial office of *Der Spiegel* and arrested, along with the author of the article, the chief-editor of the magazine, Rudolf Augstein, and four other members of staff. The free press seemed endangered as the editorial office was only fully cleared of governmental officials four weeks after the first search. A debate now arose around the perceived lack of democratic freedom and consciousness in German society.<sup>47</sup> In the course of this debate, members of the Institut für Sozialforschung (= Institute for Social Research) in Frankfurt am Main highlighted the function of the social sciences as “educational sciences.” Following this rise of the “Frankfurt School,” left-wing ideas promoted by social scientists increasingly gained attention within intellectual circles.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the intellectual left wing recaptured the public attention that the political left wing had lost in the years of strict anti-communism during the Adenauer era.<sup>49</sup> As a result, subcultural left-wing networks and publics evolved with the revitalization of left-wing thought.

It is crucial to understand the development of new protest methods within West German subcultural left-wing milieus in order to understand why Mao could become such a successful and trendy political icon in the student movement and after. The deep roots of the student protest methods were ideas that were originally derived from 1910/20s avant-garde theory. This connection would later also facilitate close ties between artists interested in China and student protest networks. This fact, in turn, added much to the growing transmediality of the trend. From the end of the 1950s, young fans of pop and rock music had expressed their dissatisfaction with society at a grassroots level.<sup>50</sup> Adopting American music culture was initially a general, non-political expression of protest by young West Germans against the conservative authorities that dominated society.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, young left-wing activists were searching for new ways to gain influence within the

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47 Moritz Scheibe, “Auf der Suche nach der demokratischen Gesellschaft,” in *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland. Belastung—Integration—Liberalisierung 1945–1980*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002), 245–77.

48 Clemens Albrecht et al., *Die intellektuelle Gründung der Bundesrepublik. Eine Wirkungsgeschichte der Frankfurter Schule* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1999), 78–131.

49 This loss of public influence by the left wing was most prominently documented by the tremendous election success of the conservative party CDU in 1957, when it gained 50.2% of votes.

50 Sebastian Kurme, *Jugendprotest in den 1950er Jahren in Deutschland und den USA* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2006), 177–224.

51 Detlef Siegfried, *Time is on my side. Konsum und Politik in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 209–428; Gerhard Fürmetz (ed.), “Schwabinger Krawalle.” *Protest, Polizei und Öffentlichkeit zu Beginn der sechziger Jahre* (Essen: Klartext, 2006).

parliamentary public beyond traditional means of political activism within fixed party structures and networks. Radical left-wing activists could no longer rely on the support of party networks since the ban of the KPD and the exclusion of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (= Socialist German Student Union/SDS) from the SPD in 1961.<sup>52</sup> In the eyes of SPD party leaders, the SDS had expressed ideas that were too radically communist. After 1961, the SDS only existed as a loose network of local and regional groups until its dissolution in 1970.<sup>53</sup> Thus, young leftists desiring publicity for their political demands had to discover new ways to be recognized by the media and affect parliamentary discussions.

In the early 1960s, the evolving left-wing subcultural groups of the “New Left” in West Germany put new protest methods into practice. These methods would later be enlivened with catchy Mao slogans, taken from the Chinese Foreign Language Press’ German version of the “Little Red Book” available in West Germany since 1966.<sup>54</sup> Provocative instances of “direct action,” first developed by the American student association Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which despite the identical abbreviation based its actions on a very different theoretical basis than its West German counterpart mentioned above, now captivated also the imagination of West German activists. Sit-ins, teach-ins and go-ins became widely used protest methods and revolutionized political protests around the world.<sup>55</sup> West German students returning from their studies in the US introduced this new kind of extra-parliamentary protest to West Germany.<sup>56</sup> Simultaneously, Guy Debord acting as the leader of the Parisian chapter of Situationiste Internationale (SI) revitalized ideas that

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52 Despite the similar names and identical acronyms, the American and West German SDS represented quite different student associations, cf. Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance. Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 10-39.

53 Willy Albrecht, *Der Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund (SDS). Vom parteikonformen Studentenverband zum Repräsentanten der Neuen Linken* (Bonn: Dietz, 1994), 310-445.

54 Dominic Sachsenmeier, “Little Red Book,” in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, ed. Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier (Houndsmill: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2010), 686f.

55 Alexander Holmig, “Die aktionistischen Wurzeln der Studentenbewegung: Subversive Aktion, Kommune I und die Neudefinition des Politischen,” in *Handbuch 1968. Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2007), 107-118; for a history of the German and American SDS see: Michael Schmidtke, *Der Aufbruch der jungen Intelligenz. Die 68er Jahre in der Bundesrepublik und den USA* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2003), 40-56; Klimke, *The Other Alliance*.

56 Martin Klimke, “Sit-in, Teach-in, Go-in. Die transnationale Zirkulation kultureller Praktiken in den 1960er Jahren am Beispiel der direkten Aktion,” in *Handbuch 1968. Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2007), 119-33, 120-23.

had initially been developed in the context of avant-garde art, Dadaism, and Surrealism in West European Bohemian circles in the 1910s and 20s.<sup>57</sup> Inspired by Debord, a group of artists in Munich called Gruppe SPUR (= Group SPUR) adopted ideas from Situationists and American artists known as Beatniks.<sup>58</sup> The founding members allegedly coined the group name on a walk. Looking back on their tracks in the snow, they agreed on the name SPUR, i.e. track, written in capital letters.<sup>59</sup> Situationists and Beatniks favoured merging art and political action. Wishing to experience the rediscovered Futurist, 1910s lifestyle of “the avant-gardist merging of art and everyday life”<sup>60</sup> himself, Dieter Kunzelmann, a member of Gruppe SPUR and later one of the leading members of Kommune I, travelled to Paris to live as a Gammler (“loafer”).<sup>61</sup> The notion of the necessity to merge art, daily life, political action and their own lifestyle prevailed among artists in Europe and the US at that time. Within youth culture, transnational influences of art conceptions and new provocative lifestyles pursued by American Beatniks and Weathermen, Dutch Provos, discussed in more detail below, and members of the British Independent Group and Situationists melded in the growing left-wing subcultures in West German cities.

The trend of using Mao, the icon, for one’s own political ends reached its tipping point within the left-wing subculture propelled by actions of activists with close ties to the group Subversive Aktion. Starting in 1962, the ideas of “direct” and “provocative” action inspired Subversive Aktion, which was founded by former members of Gruppe SPUR. Subversive Aktion expeditiously formed “microcells” in Munich, West Berlin, Frankfurt, Nuremberg and Stuttgart. Particularly the microcells in West Berlin and Munich developed new notions of how to “revolutionize society.”<sup>62</sup> These notions also determined the two main factions within the growing student movement. The West Berlin section of Subversive Aktion, led by Rudi Dutschke and Bernd Rabehl, advocated a mixture of traditional Marxist ideology and provocative activism to create

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57 Thomas Hecken, *Gegenkultur und Avantgarde 1950–1970. Situationisten, Beatniks, 68er* (Tübingen: Narr Franke Attempto, 2006), 135-58.

58 *Ibid.*, 21-38.

59 For the group’s development see: Eckhardt Gillen, *Feindliche Brüder? Der Kalte Krieg und die deutsche Kunst 1945-1990* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2009), 282-305.

60 Thomas Hecken, *Avantgarde und Terrorismus. Rhetorik der Intensität und Programme der Revolte von den Futuristen bis zur RAF* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2006), 29.

61 Dieter Kunzelmann, *Leisten Sie keinen Widerstand! Bilder aus meinem Leben* (Berlin: Transit, 1998), 18-44; see also: Aribert Reimann, *Dieter Kunzelmann. Avantgardist, Protestler, Radikaler* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 43-122.

62 The development of *Subversive Aktion* is described in Holmig, “Die aktionistischen Wurzeln der Studentenbewegung,” 107-10; Reimann, *Dieter Kunzelmann*, 64-91.

publicity. A faction around Dieter Kunzelmann, returned from Paris, favoured provocative actions in the spirit of the Situationists, who mainly aimed to criticize the “cultural industry.” Both agreed, however, on the general notion that all political activity had to provoke the social authorities.<sup>63</sup> Provocation would stir social disapproval and was intended to generate publicity. In 1966, both factions agreed to infiltrate the West Berlin chapter of the SDS to gain a broader organizational platform and network.<sup>64</sup> Within the SDS, they quickly gained authority through provocative tactics against the administration of the Freie Universität (Free University/FU) and the city magistrate.<sup>65</sup>

Since the mid-1960s, activists had reconfigured the “authoritarian branding” of the political icon Mao, which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had established. In the PRC, the idea of “Mao-Zedong-Thought” had been branded as the successful merger of Marxism-Leninism and Chinese realities since the 1940s.<sup>66</sup> While subcultural activists now engaged in branding Mao either as a signifier for justified militant rebellion, a new source of ideological legitimation in the process of party-building, or simply as a new political and philosophical point of reference, Western artists simultaneously reproduced the Mao portrait within pop-art publics. Yet, this facet of the trend only developed within the arts, most famously in Andy Warhol’s Mao-posters, when some subcultural left-wingers already questioned Mao’s authority. This development is described in a later section of this article. First, the icon Mao was simply used as a symbol of dismay at the West German establishment.

Mao Zedong entered the West Berlin left-wing public when he was instrumentalized by radical members of the SDS who were connected to the circles of Dutschke and Kunzelmann. Criticizing one of the first provocative acts against the university administration, a Berlin newspaper named *Der Abend* ran the headline “Mit Mao für die freie Liebe: Rotgardisten sprengen Diskussion an der FU” (“With Mao for Free Love: Red Guards Bust FU Discussion Round”). As some of the protesters wore Mao-buttons, the author immediately associated the protesters’ behaviour with the Chinese Cultural Revolution. When describing the goals of the activists, however, the author

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63 Holmig, “Die aktionistischen Wurzeln der Studentenbewegung,” 108; Reimann, *Dieter Kunzelmann*, 123-210.

64 Kunzelmann, *Leisten Sie keinen Widerstand!*, 50.

65 Joachim Scharloth, “Ritualkritik und Rituale des Protests. Die Entdeckung des Performativen in der Studentenbewegung der 1960er Jahre,” in *Handbuch 1968. Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2007), 75-87, 78-86.

66 Leese, “The Mao Cult as Communicative Space,” 623, 638.

stated that they aimed to establish a “commune” to educate “Provos.” After completing their “education,” these “Provos” would supposedly stage provocative “hecklings” to trigger “the revolution” in West Germany.<sup>67</sup> Kommune I members were thus associated with Mao’s simultaneously emerging Cultural Revolution, although their goals were much more related to Situationist strategies and point to Dutch “Provos” as role models. Since 1965, an Amsterdam-based action group called “Provos”, a short form of “provocateurs,” had organized protest actions inspired by anarchist currents. The group especially gained international fame in its protest against the royal wedding of Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands and Klaus von Amsberg, a German nobleman and former Wehrmacht officer, in March 1966. In June 1966, Dutch “Provos” engaged in riots in connection with protests by construction workers claiming their holiday fees. This kind of militant and action-focused behaviour became a focal point of many West Berlin activists in 1966/67. Kunzelmann and Dutschke had direct contacts with the group following a visit to the Amsterdam Institute for Social History. Subsequently, they also invited some Dutch activists to West Berlin.<sup>68</sup>

The icon Mao continued to prove its provocative potential in the following years. In one of the first trials against a Kommune I member in 1967, Rainer Langhans read aloud from the “Little Red Book” during his arraignment to demonstrate his contempt for the judge and the court as state institutions.<sup>69</sup> At that time, members of Kommune I regularly travelled to East Berlin to collect Chinese propaganda material, not only because selling these brochures to the West Berlin subculture defrayed the group’s living expenses.<sup>70</sup> Dieter Kunzelmann, one of the founders, described in his autobiography how West German activists imagined the Chinese Cultural Revolution as an uprising of Chinese youth against the “authoritarian structures” of society, similar to their own revolt against “the establishment.”<sup>71</sup> During the year 1967, the rebellious image of Mao dominated the political discourse of radical left-wing activists

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67 “Mit Mao für die freie Liebe: Rotgardisten sprengten Diskussion an der FU,” *Der Abend*, November 28, 1966, cf. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth, “Maos Rote Garden? ,1968’ zwischen kulturevolutionärem Anspruch und subversiver Praxis – Eine Einleitung,” in *Handbuch 1968. Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007), 1-7, 1.

68 See: Niek Pas, “Mediatization of the Provos. From a Local Movement to a European Phenomenon,” in *Between Prague Spring and French May. Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960–1980*, ed. Martin Klimke, Jacco Pekelder, and Joachim Scharloth (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 157-76, 169.

69 Scharloth, “Ritualkritik und Rituale des Protests,” 79.

70 Kunzelmann, *Leisten Sie keinen Widerstand!*, 55f.

71 Ibid.

in West Berlin. Consequently, a slogan inspired by Mao on a blackboard in the West Berlin SDS headquarters stated: “One can summarize the truth of socialism in one word: Rebellion is justified.”<sup>72</sup>

Short films like Harun Farocki’s *Die Worte des Vorsitzenden (Words of the Chairman)* of 1967 glorified Maoist slogans that seemed to legitimise militant action. Holger Meins, a terrorist and later member of the RAF, shot the film. In it, a protagonist dressed like a member of the Chinese Red Guards makes a paper dart from a page of the “Little Red Book” and throws it at another actor playing the Shah of Persia (Iran). While throwing, the actor says, “The words of Mao Zedong have to become weapons in our hands.” French films like Louis Malle’s *Viva Maria!* (1965) and Jean-Luc Godard’s *La Chinoise* (1967), the latter depicting a Maoist student group living in a shared apartment, transported a romantic notion of “making a revolution” and supplemented the revolutionary attitude of the student protesters. For a short time, a group associated with Dutschke and Kunzelmann even called itself Viva Maria! before Kunzelmann founded Kommune I.<sup>73</sup> Brigitte Bardot, who played one of the main characters in *Viva Maria!*, became even more popular among left-wing publics across European borders when she posed in a Red Guard suit. The Red Guard look quickly became part of a radical chic that was characteristic for the protests around “1968” in the Western world.<sup>74</sup> This development highlighted the convergence of different themes and ideas. While films such as *Viva Maria!* pointed to the Situationist idea of “direct action” and the revolution as a funny and joyful happening, Maoist themes began to serve as legitimation for a militant rebellion. As the Chinese Cultural Revolution appeared at the time to be a success from a radical left-wing perspective, Maoist ideology seemed to lead the way to victory in the “revolutionary struggle”.

At the 22<sup>nd</sup> conference of the SDS, held in West Berlin from September 4–8, 1967, members of Kommune I annoyed delegates by constantly playing Chinese revolutionary songs and army marches, wearing uniforms of the

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72 Cf. “Studenten: Nein, nein, nein,” *Der Spiegel* 24 (1967): 46-59, 47. The phrase “to rebel is justified [*zaofan you li*]” originated from a letter exchange between Mao and Red Guards at Tsinghua University in 1966. Students had sent Mao two big-character posters stating “Long live the proletarian revolutionary spirit of rebellion!” In his reply, Mao supported this claim and directed the anger of Red Guards at reactionaries within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP): “You say it is right to rebel against reactionaries; I enthusiastically support you.” See: Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 87ff.

73 Holmig, “Die aktionistischen Wurzeln der Studentenbewegung, 109; Reimann, *Dieter Kunzelmann*, 113-22.

74 Gerd Koenen, *Das rote Jahrzehnt. Unsere kleine deutsche Kulturrevolution 1967-1977* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002), 145.



Chinese Red Guards and distributing propaganda material. The delegates, however, viewed the performance as one of the jokes or provocations that Kommune I had become famous for rather than as a serious political statement.<sup>75</sup> Up until the end of 1967, Mao Zedong thus served mainly as a provocative icon used by Kommune I in order to win public attention. The Chinese Cultural Revolution was evaluated as a general uprising of youth against the authorities. Combined with Mao's catchy slogans, this notion of China was used as a provocative topic without judging the real situation in China or Mao's ideology in detail.<sup>76</sup> Fritz Teufel and Rainer Langhans, both members of Kommune I, expressed their intention of staging such political happenings in the magazine *Der Spiegel* as follows: "Without provocation, we are not recognized."<sup>77</sup> Associating many provocative acts with Mao, the political magazine *Der Spiegel* frequently labelled commune members as "Maoists."<sup>78</sup> Mirroring the influence of Kommune I on the media coverage of the student movement, Rudi Dutschke was referred to as the "Berlin prophet" of Mao Zedong in an article published in *Der Spiegel* in 1967. Moreover, the article's author stated that Mao was the most influential guiding authority for radical West German students.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, Dutschke frequently argued using Maoist terms. In his eyes, only a permanent state of revolution could bring about a true change in society. The notion of a permanent revolution, first introduced by Bakunin and later developed further by Lenin, figured prominently in the European image of the Maoist vision of revolutionary processes at the time.<sup>80</sup> In his preface to the "Little Red Book," Lin Biao moreover had characterized the essence of Mao's works as the merging of theory and practice. What cadres learned in studying Mao's writings had to be immediately applied in practice to accomplish fast political success. The revolutionary had to learn the most necessary first and immediately put into effect what he had just learned. Lin Biao thus emphasized practice.<sup>81</sup> Potential mistakes occurring in the course of political actions had to be identified and activities amended if necessary. Dutschke saw in the Cultural

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75 Ibid.

76 Kunzelmann, *Leisten Sie keinen Widerstand!*, 55.

77 In *Der Spiegel* 51 (1967): 64.

78 Cf. "Lieber Fritz! Wem soll das nützen? Peter Brügge in der Berliner Kommune I," *Der Spiegel* 31 (1967): 37-39, 37.

79 "Studenten: Nein, nein, nein," *Der Spiegel* 24 (1967): 46-59, 47.

80 See: "Wir fordern die Enteignung Axel Springers," *Der Spiegel* 29 (1967): 29-33, 30.

81 See: Mao Tse-tung, *Worte des Vorsitzenden Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Verlag für Fremdsprachen, 1966), II-III.

Revolution a continuous social transformation, which was not guided by a great plan. Actions of the Red Guards in China seemed to be constantly improved by their daily experiences of living in a changing society. Dutschke envisaged exactly such a method for the social transformation in West Germany. This idea also pointed to Mao's dogma of the "primacy of practice," that stated that it was the duty of the revolutionary to "make the revolution" and not only talk about theory.<sup>82</sup> Dutschke thus emphasized the importance of direct, immediate action. In his eyes, the revolutionary had to discover the right political strategy and tactics in a kind of "trial-and-error" process.

Naturally, the trend of quoting Mao and using Cultural Revolution gadgets such as the "Little Red Book," Red Guard shirts or Mao buttons in performance and revolutionary action also contained a playful, ironic facet at this time. In a satirical leaflet reflecting the conservative newspapers' press coverage of China, Kommune I even attributed Mao's honorary titles ("Great Teacher," "Great Leader," "Great Commander-in-Chief," "Great Helmsman") to Chiang Kai-shek. Some years later, K-Gruppen members would have judged such behaviour as a serious affront to their idol Mao. The text of the leaflet ironically referred to the reporting on the rising power of China in many West German newspapers. Numerous articles reported on "Red China" as a new potential threat. The country had just tested its first atomic bomb in 1964. The emerging Cultural Revolution triggered social violence resulting in many deaths. Thus, many members of the press judged the fact that Western student activists had nonetheless chosen Mao as a role model as a threat to West German society. This negative reporting now became the target of the Kommune I leaflet. The Kommune I announced a meeting with Chinese officials at the embassy in East Berlin because they wanted to meet "real" Chinese people before they were all "slaughtered." The screening of two films was planned during the meeting. While the first film reported meetings of Red Guard members with "the Great Teacher, Great Leader, Great Commander-in-Chief, the Great Helmsman Chiang Kai-shek [sic!]," the second was about nuclear weapon tests in China. The leaflet closed with the announcement that after the films, special candy would be served: "Chinese caramel bonbons" containing trace elements that trigger brainwashing.<sup>83</sup> This last remark sarcastically commented on the

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82 Mao Tse-tung: "Über die Praxis," in *Ausgewählte Werke, Bd. 1*, by Mao Tse-Tung (Peking: Verlag für Fremdsprachige Literatur, 1968), 347-64, 353, 358.

83 The text of the leaflet reads: „Liebe Kommunehospitanten! Die Massenschlächterei in China geht weiter. Bevor alle Chinesen abgemurkst sind, habt ihr noch eine Chance, leibhaftige zu besichtigen. Wir haben einen Termin mit ihnen ausgemacht: Mittwoch 30. August, 18 Uhr in der Chinesischen Botschaft. Einen gültigen westdeutschen Ausweis benötigt ihr, Berliner gibt es unter uns sowieso nicht. Wir sehen zwei Filme, einen über den 5. und 6. Empfang der Rotgardisten durch unseren großen Lehrer, großen Führer, großen Oberkommandierenden und großen Steuermann Tschiang Kai-schek, und

bewilderment among journalists that West German students were following Maoist ideology. The contrast between the mostly critical articles on China in the West German press and the appeal of Mao's writing among left-wing activists originated from a deep distrust of left-wingers in the press. Gretchen Dutschke, the wife of student protest leader Rudi Dutschke put it like this: "When the bourgeois press reported on mass murders in China, we simply did not believe it."<sup>84</sup> The media was part of the "system" at large and, accordingly, could not be trusted in the eyes of many left-wing activists.<sup>85</sup>

The immediate success of creating publicity by using provocative actions, as carried out by Kommune I members, supplanted classic Marxist positions that the SDS had propagated in the early 1960s. Kommune I members thus became the most important trendsetters in the process of introducing Mao to the radical left-wing public in West Berlin. The sudden and successful introduction of the icon Mao during the years 1966/67 even confounded some SDS-activists. Reimut Reiche, chairman of the SDS in 1966, stated in 1967 that no one would have dared refer to a Mao slogan at an SDS meeting only a year earlier. Now, in 1967, it happened frequently, accompanied by "pretentious laughter" from the people present at SDS meetings. The iconic and merely provocative use of Mao had to stop, Reiche concluded: "Now, we have to learn to read him [Mao Zedong, S.G.] properly: we have to learn from the revolution of the Third World."<sup>86</sup> Reiche's statement shows that the provocative use of Mao by Kommune I members and the circles around Rudi Dutschke had successfully made the icon Mao popular within student protest networks and publics in West Berlin (and beyond). Reiche's statement, however, also foreshadowed the more dogmatic use of Mao in the future.

In the summer of 1968, the student movement lost momentum. Having spread all over West Germany, student protests were nevertheless concentrated in West Berlin and Frankfurt am Main. By this time, Mao had become a well-established icon in the left-wing public and its networks all over West Germany. The focus on the Vietnam War had simultaneously led student movement members to

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einen anderen Film über die Atombombenexperimente in China, die uns das Leben kosten werden. Nach den Filmen gibt es leckere Sachen, z.B. chinesische Karamellbonbon mit Gehirnwäschespuren-elementen. Genaue Anschrift der Botschaft: Berlin-Karlshorst, Herbert-Dunckerstr. 26, S-Bahnhof Karlshorst. Eure K I. " Cf. Kunzelmann, *Leisten Sie keinen Widerstand!*, 54.

84 Gretchen Dutschke, *Wir hatten ein barbarisches, schönes Leben. Rudi Dutschke. Eine Biographie von Gretchen Dutschke* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1996), 108.

85 Dominik Lachenmeier, "Die Achtundsechziger-Bewegung zwischen etablierter und alternativer Öffentlichkeit," in *Handbuch 1968. Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2007), 61-72, 62.

86 Reimut Reiche, "Worte des Vorsitzenden Mao," *Neue Kritik* 41 (1967): 9.

become increasingly interested in the “struggle of the Third World.” In this struggle, China was seen as one of the leading actors. After the West German parliament passed so-called Notstandsgesetze (= Emergency Laws)<sup>87</sup> in May 1968, a legislation which was opposed by wide parts of West German society, one of the major goals of the student protesters became unattainable: In the fight against the new laws, left-wing grassroots activists had aimed to join forces with the unions to gain a stable organizational platform and network.<sup>88</sup> An alliance between the student protesters and the unions thus ended before it had really begun, once the common cause of fighting the Emergency Law legislation had vanished. Left-wing activists needed a stronger organizational basis than the loose network of local and regional SDS groups to sustain their protests. Consequently, the idea of cadre parties was revived by parts of the left-wing milieu. As a result, the iconic image of Mao Zedong was re-evaluated. Until then, he had served as a provocative symbol that represented pure revolt. Henceforth, left-wing subcultural activists studied Maoist ideology intensely, and in the process of forming cadre parties Mao became an ideological authority.<sup>89</sup> Intellectual enthusiasm about Mao’s role as a political philosopher, artist, partisan fighter and revolutionary, as expressed earlier in *Kursbuch* articles, was now transformed into real political, grassroots activism.<sup>90</sup>

In 1969, the student movement split into two main factions. This schism of the student movement, however, was already foreshadowed by the founding of Kommune I parallel to the activities of Subversive Aktion members within the SDS. One of them favoured the idea of establishing new lifestyles and communes. Through the “revolution” (i.e. radical change) of personal lifestyles and everyday life, supporters of this faction believed a revolution of society would eventually be facilitated.<sup>91</sup> Groups following this general political notion adhered to the rebellious image of Mao. This became obvious in radical left-wing newspapers such as *Agit 883*, published from 1969 to 1972. On one

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87 Protest against the so-called “Emergency Laws” was inspired by the misuse of their legal forerunners during the Weimar era. Many West Germans saw their democratic system endangered because the “Emergency Laws” of the Weimar constitution had facilitated Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933.

88 Marcia Tolomelli, “Repressiv getrennt” oder “organisch verbündet.” *Studenten und Arbeiter 1968 in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in Italien* (Opladen: Leske+Buderich, 2001), 231-52.

89 Kühn, *Stalins Enkel, Maos Söhne*, 111-13.

90 Cf. Diehl, “Die Konjunktur von Mao-Images in der bundesdeutschen ‚68er‘-Bewegung.”

91 Wolfgang Kraushaar, “Berliner Subkultur. Blues, Haschrebelln, Tupamaros und Bewegung 2. Juni,” in *Handbuch 1968. Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007), 261–77; Wolfgang Kraushaar, “Die Frankfurter Sponti-Szene. Eine Subkultur als politische Versuchsanordnung,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 44 (2004): 105-22.

of the paper's covers, Mao was put in a theoretical continuity that led from Marx, Engels and Lenin through Mao to "Che" Guevara.<sup>92</sup> In this reading, the classic communist icons Marx, Engels and Lenin led directly to the "third-world leaders" Mao and Guevara, who were admired for their resistance against imperial powers. Another cover showed a large Mao portrait, put up as a huge banner outside a building in West Berlin during a military parade of the American forces. The American soldiers were drawn with pig faces.<sup>93</sup> In an article discussing the foundation of militant groups, a depiction showed Mao as a "Jack in a box"-like figure, waving a flag in the one hand, while presenting a machine gun in the other.<sup>94</sup>

Mao's image was, however, also used to discredit the other main faction of the left: the growing cadre parties. After the disbandment of Kommune I, Dieter Kunzelmann founded a militant group called Zentralrat der umherschweifenden Haschrebellen (= Central Committee of the Rambling Hashish Rebels). When coining the militant group's name, Kunzelmann implicitly used the title of Mao's work "On the Mentality of Rambling Rebel Crowds,"<sup>95</sup> ironically referring to the growing dogmatic attitude within the newly founded K-Gruppen.<sup>96</sup> As Mao criticized rambling rebels in his writing, Kunzelmann's subversive use of the title pointed critically at the cadre groups. At that time, both cadre groups as well as Kunzelmann's "hashish rebels" were in the middle of abandoning playful and provocative public protest, which Kunzelmann, too, had been engaged in as a member of Kommune I. In taking the idea of symbolic provocative actions one step further to militant action, Kunzelmann became the mastermind of the first West German terrorist group, which was based in West Berlin.<sup>97</sup>

While Mao had at first merely served as a symbol of youth rebellion in connection with the Chinese Cultural Revolution, at the turn of the decade to the 1970s, the trend changed its nature. For a short while during the years of 1967-72, a variety of subcultural groups, ranging from militants and terrorists to cadre parties, used Mao slogans. Within the cadre groups,

92 See *Agit* 883 58 (1970): cover.

93 Cf. *Agit* 883 62 (1970): cover.

94 See: *Agit* 883 83 (1971): 8.

95 Mao Tse-tung, "Über die Mentalität umherschweifender Rebellenhaufen," in *Ausgewählte Werke, Band 1*, by Mao Tse-Tung (Beijing: Verlag für fremdsprachige Literatur, 1968), 129f.

96 Ralf Reinders and Ronald Fritsch, *Die Bewegung 2. Juni. Gespräche über Haschrebellen, Lorenzentführung, Knast* (Berlin: ID-Verlag, 1995), 23.

97 See: Reimann, *Dieter Kunzelmann*, 237-54.

Chinese propaganda and Mao's ideology were taken as indisputable truths.<sup>98</sup> The ideological foundations of these groups had already been laid in many statements written by intellectuals in the mid-1960s. In particular, grassroots activists now rediscovered articles by Schickel and Myrdal.<sup>99</sup> Admiration for Mao within the K-Gruppen now led to a period of dogmatic allegiance to Chinese world politics within wide parts of West German left-wing grassroots milieus. In the early 1970s, even West German terrorist groups used the iconic image of Mao. They tried to gain attention and support among left-wing subcultural groups by exploiting the popularity of Mao within grassroots publics that had initially been created by the activities of Kommune I.<sup>100</sup>

Dieter Kunzelmann concluded in his memoirs that in the transition period from student protests to many diverse local and regional left-wing subcultural milieus, "somehow all radical left-wing organizations were more or less fans of Mao, be it because of the thesis of the permanent revolution, his successful underground activities during the Long March, or the Cultural Revolution."<sup>101</sup> After this period, the political trend of using Mao's slogans, image and writings was monopolized by the K-Gruppen. The Chinese government had encouraged party foundations in Europe since the early 1960s. In a German version of the *Peking Rundschau* (= *Beijing Review*) (since 1964) and *China im Bild* (published since 1956 as a pictorial presenting China in glamour and glory, from 1966 onwards with a clear Maoist agenda), the CCP tried to reach a wider German readership. The publications of these newspapers and a radio broadcast in German called Radio Peking beginning in 1960 even led to the foundation of a first cadre party in 1965, the Marxistisch-Leninistische Partei Deutschlands (= Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany/MLPD). The party, however, was completely detached from "New Left" student protest networks and publics.<sup>102</sup> Although calling itself a party, the MLPD only consisted of a negligible number of activists.

The first cadre party developing from student protest networks was the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands/Marxisten-Leninisten (= Communist Party of Germany/Marxists-Leninists/KPD/ML). It was founded in 1968 and also acknowledged by the Chinese government. Next to smaller splinter groups,

98 Research on Swiss and Austrian K-Gruppen has shown this effect, see articles by Felix Wemheuer and Angela Zimmermann in Sebastian Gehrig, Barbara Mittler, and Felix Wemheuer (eds.), *Kulturrevolution als Vorbild? Maoisten im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 53-76; 77-106.

99 See: Koenen and Diehl, "Mao als Mona-Lisa der Weltrevolution," 30.

100 Gehrig, "Zwischen uns und dem Feind einen klaren Trennungsstrich ziehen." 153-78.

101 Kunzelmann, *Leisten Sie keinen Widerstand!*, 141.

102 Kühn, *Stalins Enkel, Maos Söhne*, 18.

two other major Maoist parties were assembled in 1970 and 1973. Since 1970, the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands/Aufbauorganisation (= Communist Party of Germany/Assembling Organization/KPD/AO) – later just called KPD – organized the growing number of activists. In 1973, the Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland (= Communist Association West Germany/KBW) was founded.<sup>103</sup> While party members used Maoist thought as their ideological basis, Italian Marxist-Leninist groups also became role models for the parties' organization.<sup>104</sup> This fact once more highlights the “New Left's” transnational character. In the 1960s and 1970s, left-wing protest in West Germany developed from various outside influences. These foreign inspirations then amalgamated in new ideological and organizational constructs. Within cadre parties, former members of student protest groups now started to fundamentally change their political activism and private lifestyles.

The initial student uprising had been fuelled by creative, subversive and provocative action and was driven by the desire for a radical liberation of the self from “authoritarian” social structures in the private sphere. Cadre party leaderships now imposed traditional protest methods on their members. Similar to Third World Maoist movements, reference to Mao now often served just as “a pose, an imitative adoption of Mao's personal authoritarian style” to legitimise a strict chain of command within cadre groups.<sup>105</sup> Strikes and organized mass demonstrations—actions already pursued by the German communist party of the 1920s and 30s—became primary means of public protest again. Moreover, party members and adherents were required to adopt “proletarian” lifestyles. While protests had centred at the universities in 1967/68, cadre groups now prepared their members to agitate the “proletariat” in the factories. The spontaneous protests, organized within the loose network of SDS groups, had failed to establish a sustainable infrastructure for radical left-wing opposition in the Federal Republic. The cadre parties' firm organizational structures therefore became an appealing opportunity to engage in further protests. Research estimates a number of 100,000 to 150,000 activists following this promise throughout the 1970s.<sup>106</sup> By the mid-1970s, the stock of left-wing subcultural bookstores reflected the

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103 *ibid.*, 18; 21-38.

104 *Ibid.*, 18.

105 See: Cook, “Third World Maoism,” 297; the strict organisation of West German cadre groups is described in: Koenen, *Das rote Jahrzehnt*; the Swiss activist Laurent Vonwiller even let his cadre party decide on his private love life choices, see: Laurent Vonwiller, “Der Lange Marsch in der Seifenblase: Die Kommunistische Partei der Schweiz/Marxisten-Leninisten (KPS/ML) im Rückblick,” in *Kulturrevolution als Vorbild? Maoisten im deutschsprachigen Raum*, ed. Sebastian Gehrig, Barbara Mittler, and Felix Wemheuer (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 39-49.

106 Kühn, *Stalins Enkel, Maos Söhne*, 287.



widespread interest in Maoist ideology within West German left-wing subcultures. No less than eleven left-wing publishing houses associated with militant groups and K-Gruppen had established contact with the Chinese publishing house Guoji Shudian (國際書店).<sup>107</sup> Access to Chinese writings initially improvised via the Chinese embassy in East Berlin, was now coordinated by a functioning subcultural network of publishing houses and left-wing bookstores. There was a growing interest in Mao's writings as a basis for a "revolutionary organization" following the decline of student protests in late 1968. Accordingly, subcultural networks began to provide direct access to Chinese propaganda material. Starting in the early 1970s, left-wing publishing houses and bookstores provided burgeoning left-wing milieus with literature. Greater independence from periodicals run by intellectuals contributed to an increasing separation of subcultural and intellectual left-wing publics throughout the 1970s. In a joint initiative called the Verband des linken Buchhandels (= Association of Leftist Booksellers/VLB), K-Gruppen and other subcultural groups published a catalogue in the attempt to list all available "revolutionary literature."<sup>108</sup> Despite conflicts during the production process, which ultimately caused the association to break up, a catalogue of 3,000 works was published in 1972. Among the literature listed, the catalogue included fifty-eight writings by Mao himself in the category "Classics of Marxism-Leninism" and an additional one hundred and one publications on the "Contradiction between Socialist States and Imperialism/Social Imperialism" and "Building Socialism in the People's Republic of China."<sup>109</sup>

In 1974, Deng Xiaoping officially presented the "theory of the three worlds" before the United Nations Assembly. This seemed to substantiate the notion of China as a model for a "third way" and further deepened the interest of leftists in Maoist thinking.<sup>110</sup> Deng stated that the world was oppressed by US capitalism and Soviet social imperialism. Agreeing with Deng's assessment of the contemporary global situation, many West German leftists perceived the successful struggles

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107 This number only includes subcultural publishing houses and fails to include well-established publishing houses like Wagenbach or Rotbuch, cf. Jürgen Fischer (ed.), *Linke Verlage informieren. Verzeichnis linker lieferbarer Bücher (VII)* (Berlin: Maulwurf Buchvertrieb, 1975), section 39: "Bücher aus China". I would like to thank Uwe Sonnenberg for pointing me to this connection between West German bookshops and Chinese suppliers.

108 See: Uwe Sonnenberg, "Der Verband des linken Buchhandels (VLB) in den 1970er Jahren. Ein Netzwerk innerhalb der Netzwerke," in *Linksalternative Milieus und Neue Soziale Bewegungen in den 1970er Jahren*, ed. Cordia Baumann, Nicolas Büchse, and Sebastian Gehrig (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011), 161-88.

109 Kleiner Roter Buchladen (Braunschweig) et al. (eds), *Das politische Buch. Katalog sozialistischer Literatur 1972* (Köln: Gaehe Henke, 1972), 13-17; 85-90.

110 Deng Xiaoping, "Rede von Deng Hsiao-ping, dem Leiter der Delegation der Volksrepublik China," *Peking Rundschau*, 15 (1974): 8-13.

of formerly colonized people as models for their own fight against the USA and the USSR. Deng's theory also seemed to have direct implications regarding the still unsolved "German Question." Some left-wing activists, among them Rudi Dutschke, had identified the German division as a necessary precondition for the superpower's stabilization of influence within their blocs.<sup>111</sup> The success of a united struggle of the "people of the Third World" and European nations against the two superpowers now even seemed to open up possibilities for German national reunification: For some, Maoist China seemed to offer the clue even to the German question.

### **"The most prominent person in the world": Mao in the arts and popular culture**

The period of the 1960s and 1970s were characterized by a vibrant left-wing artistic scene not only in West Germany, but in many parts of the West European world. In accordance with the Situationist dogma of merging art and daily life, many artists tried to "politicize" their work. The abovementioned Gruppe SPUR, for example, was founded in this spirit.<sup>112</sup> Artists also increasingly showed an interest in Mao as a motif. In the late 1960s, German artists like Thomas Bayrle, Gerhard Richter, Jörg Immendorff, Eugen Schönebeck, K. P. Brehmer and Sigmar Polke introduced Mao to the general public in their avant-garde works. Sympathizing with the student movement, these artists were also members of left-wing intellectual and grassroots publics. Their artistic interest in Mao was another facet expressing his popularity and status as a trendy icon in left-wing networks. Conversely, artists also quite literally increased Mao's visibility in artist circles and among the general public. Mao's popularity in intellectual circles and his appropriation by left-wing activists for political action were thus also reflected in the visual arts and subsequently entered popular culture.

In the late 1950s, the art academy in Düsseldorf became a prominent centre of left-wing art.<sup>113</sup> As early as 1958, the first Neo-Dada exhibition was shown in Cologne, later followed by an exhibition of American pop art.<sup>114</sup> Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter studied under Joseph Beuys and others in Düsseldorf

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111 Cf. Florian Roth, *Die Nation im politischen Diskurs. Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland zwischen Neuer Ostpolitik und Wiedervereinigung (1969–1990)* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), 224f.

112 Cf. Hecken, *Gegenkultur und Avantgarde 1950–1970*, 21–38.

113 For the networks of the artists mentioned see: Gillen, *Feindliche Brüder?*, 235–82.

114 *Ibid.*, 219–24.

from 1961 to 1967.<sup>115</sup> At that time, the art academy was highly influenced by American pop art as well as performance art in the spirit of Beuys.<sup>116</sup> In 1963, and again in 1966, Polke and Richter presented their work in joint exhibitions shown in Düsseldorf, West Berlin and Hanover:<sup>117</sup> Both of them would later paint portraits of Mao. Thomas Bayrle, too, expressed his fascination with China, which also guided his artistic work. In his eyes, each Chinese individual took part in forming the “collective will” in Chinese society. He contrasted this notion with the will imposed by Adolf Hitler on the individual in Third Reich society.<sup>118</sup> China in the days of the Cultural Revolution on the other hand appeared to Bayrle as a country where the experiment of forming a functioning “democratic” mass society had succeeded.<sup>119</sup> In this spirit, Bayrle’s Mao portrait of 1966 was not painted on canvas. Fascinated by Chinese mass choreographies, Bayrle built an installation consisting of dozens of vertically aligned wooden panels in the style of modern advertising boards. A hidden electrical device allowed the panels to rotate vertically thus revealing in alternation a portrait of Mao and a big red star.

The interaction between art and politics became most obvious in Jörg Immendorff’s paintings. Up until the mid-1970s, Immendorff illustrated posters and leaflets for the newly founded KPD/AO.<sup>120</sup> These illustrations also included an iconic depiction of Mao or quotations by Mao. By modifying Mao’s quotes, Immendorff advertised the KPD/AO’s youth organization and

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115 Cf. Peter Fischer, “Pop und viel mehr. Komplexität im Werk von *Warhol, Polke und Richter*,” in *Warhol–Polke–Richter. In the Power of Painting 1*, ed. Peter Fischer (Dielsdorf: Lichtdruck Mathieu, 2001), 11-24.

116 Margit Rowell, “Sigmar Polke. Strategien der Subversion,” in *Sigmar Polke. Arbeiten auf Papier 1963-1974*, ed. Margit Rowell (Ostfildern: Cantz, 1999), 9-22, 9.

117 Cf. Jürgen Becker and Claus von der Osten (eds), *Sigmar Polke. Die Editionen 1963-2000* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Dr. Crantz’sche Druckerei, 2000), 401.

118 Cf. Stephanie Schreer, “Thomas Bayrle...lineare Paradoxa im Kleinen und im Großen...,” in *Thomas Bayrle. Texte von Jean-Christophe Ammann, Rolf Lauter, Stephanie Schreer*, ed. Jean-Christophe Ammann (Darmstadt: Häussler, 1994), 7-18, 7.

119 In 2006, Bayrle depicted his initial fascination and later disillusionment with Mao and China after his visits there in 1990 and 2005 in three paintings accompanied by short texts. He stated once again that his enthusiasm for China had been based on the idea that the Chinese masses were creating something better by working together as a collective, rather than just living as a group of individuals (exemplified by the perfect mass ceremonies during official celebrations). See: Thomas Bayrle, “Drei Impressionen,” in *Touching the Stones. China Kunst Heute*, ed. Waling Boers (Köln: Walther König, 2006), 112-115.

120 Jörg Immendorff, *Das grafische Werk. In Zusammenarbeit mit Beate Reifenscheid/Dirk Geuer* (Düsseldorf: Geuer & Breckner, 2006), 32.

the party's clandestine methods.<sup>121</sup> Immendorff also frequently articulated his conviction that it was the duty of the artist to be politically active and to merge art and political activity. In the painting *Dem Volke dienen mit Pinsel und Farbe* (*Serving the People with Brush and Paint*), Immendorff modified the Maoist slogan of "Serve the people" to stress his contribution as an artist to the "revolutionary activities" of other grassroots activists.<sup>122</sup> In the painting, a man, maybe Immendorff himself, is shown in front of a red flag, holding a brush and a paint can in his hands. In the sketch *Rot bleibt Rot* (*Red Remains Red*), Immendorff depicted the portraits of the "five classic" icons of communist ideology in the eyes of the K-Gruppen Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao.<sup>123</sup> In contrast to the line of thinkers presented by militant activists in *Agit 883*, described above, K-Gruppe members drew a line from Marx, Engels and Lenin directly to Stalin and Mao emphasizing the importance of the latter three in the development of concepts for the establishment of a revolutionary party. Immendorff therefore artistically illustrated the K-Gruppe members' belief that a revolution without a "revolutionary party" was impossible. In contrast to other left-wing groups mentioned above, cadre group members were convinced that any revolutionary attempt to change society had to be led and organized by a party organization.

In 1984/1985, Immendorff once again painted Mao in a cycle of paintings called *Anbetung des Inhalts* (= *Adoration of Content*).<sup>124</sup> In this cycle, he also painted other dictators such as Hitler and Stalin. By connecting Mao to the two other great dictators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Immendorff critically reflected on his Maoist past. Others, however, had already voiced criticism of Chinese politics much earlier. In 1972, the West Berlin band *Ton, Steine, Scherben* featured a picture of Mao with the caption: "Mao, Mao, why did you abandon us?" on the cover of their newly-released album *Keine Macht für Niemand* (= *No Power for No-one*). This statement was meant to criticize the decision of the Chinese government to receive US-president Nixon in that year. During his official state visit, Nixon also met Mao. As part of the West Berlin radical left-wing milieu, the band expressed the general feeling of dismay shared by many leftists across different groups with regard to changes in Chinese foreign policy occurring at the time. The meeting between Mao and Nixon called into

121 Jörg Immendorff, *Zeichne. Arbeiten aus seinem Archiv. Mit einem Essay von Christoph Danelzik-Brüggemann* (Köln: Walther König, 2008), 32, 38.

122 Pamela Kort (ed.), *Jörg Immendorff: Zeichnungen 1964-1993* (Bern: Gachnang & Springer, 1995), Abb. 61. For the original text see: Mao Tse-tung, "Serve the People," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. 3*, by Mao Tse-tung (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967), 177f.

123 Kort (ed.), *Jörg Immendorff*, Abb. 62.

124 Immendorff, *Das grafische Werk*, 50-54.

question their image of Mao as the new legitimate leader of communism against capitalism. As part of the West Berlin left-wing scene, the album's title referred to a new development within the West Berlin subculture. Militants now also began squatting in the attempt to establish "state-free zones." During the early 1970s, the band's members were part of this militant "scene" and had close ties to first terrorist groups, whose members later joined the Bewegung 2. Juni (= Movement 2<sup>nd</sup> of June) and the Red Army Faction (RAF). During concerts, band members or fans frequently read Mao quotes between songs.<sup>125</sup>

In the early 1970s, Mao probably reached the peak of his popularity in the field of art with Andy Warhol's pop-art adaptation of the official Mao portrait shown in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. Warhol followed a suggestion by Bruno Bischofsberger, a Swiss gallery owner, to make a portrait of the most famous person in the world. Bischofsberger had Albert Einstein in mind. Warhol, however, had read in the magazine *Life* that Mao was the most famous human being of that time.<sup>126</sup> In a retrospective article on Warhol's works, Sabine Müller argued that Mao represented a simplistic Western notion of Chinese communism, dominated by ideological propaganda images.<sup>127</sup> As Tilman Osterwold contended, Mao became part of the cultural memory of the West and symbolized "the East" in "the Western imagination."<sup>128</sup> However, by printing more than 2,000 pictures of Mao, Warhol showed that Mao had also become a commercial(ly viable) icon since the student protests of 1968.<sup>129</sup> Due to Warhol's international popularity, his Mao portraits also quickly reached the West German general public.

Mao's iconic status throughout the 1970s was once more revealed in a published photograph of Paul Breitner, a West German soccer star, sitting in a rocking chair in his living room, below a portrait of the "Great Chairman."<sup>130</sup>

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125 Kai Sichtermann, Jens Johler, and Christian Stahl, *Keine Macht für niemand. Die Geschichte der Ton Steine Scherben* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2008), 64, 109.

126 Sabine Müller, "Symbole der Politik in der modernen Medien- und Konsumgesellschaft: Andy Warhols *Mao Wallpaper*," in *Politisierter Konsum-konsumierte Politik*, ed. Jörn Lamla and Sighard Neckel (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 185-206, 188.

127 Ibid.

128 Tilman Osterwold, "Andy Warhol. Commissioned art. Cars-stars-disasters," in *Andy Warhol. Cars and Business Art*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Ostfildern-Ruit: Dr. Crantz'sche Druckerei, 2002), 15-25, 19.

129 Renate Wiehager, "Introduction," in *Andy Warhol. Cars and Business Art*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Ostfildern-Ruit: Dr. Crantz'sche Druckerei, 2002), 1-14, 8.

130 Cf. Peter Brügge, "'Ich wäre auch nach Griechenland gegangen.' Peter Brügge über den nach Spanien abgewanderten Nationalspieler Paul Breitner," *Der Spiegel* 35 (1974): 92f, 92.

The picture presents an intriguing mixture of bourgeois and subversive elements. Breitner is photographed sitting properly dressed in a rocking chair in his living room wearing a checked shirt, a dark slipover and dark trousers. He is reading the German version of the *Beijing Review*. A dog (a boxer) is sitting next to the rocking chair. Breitner thus only seemed to use popular icons of youth protest while living in a rather bourgeois environment.<sup>131</sup> In the early 1970s, Breitner had cultivated his own image as a new, young, rebellious sportsman who would rather study “Mao, Marx, and ‘Che’ between training sessions than Jerry Cotton”<sup>132</sup> like his fellow team members. Although he was well on the way to becoming a wealthy man at that time, Breitner used Mao’s image to appear as the “bad boy” of West German professional soccer and thus gained popularity.<sup>133</sup> Attracted by the rebellious aura of the 1967/68 student protests, Breitner stylised himself as a sympathizer of the movement by adopting elements of Chinese propaganda. In return, members of the West Berlin left-wing network acknowledged Breitner as one of them, pointing out his haircut as a clear indicator of a “revolutionary look.”<sup>134</sup> Breitner had a beard and an afro-look haircut at that time. According to members of the band *Ton, Steine, Scherben* mentioned above, Breitner even visited their flat on 11 January 1973. The band had sent Breitner a copy of one of their albums. In return, Breitner invited them to a soccer game in Berlin. In 1999, Breitner reflected on this period of his life as follows:

There was a group in Munich called SDAJ [= Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Jugend/Socialist German Worker’s Youth, S.G.<sup>135</sup>]. In the beginning of 1972, at a time when I was already a professional soccer player playing for Bayern Munich, I took part in some of their actions during which I also got to know Ton, Steine, Scherben. In the beginning of 1973, I met them again. ... After that meeting, contact between us ended, which had only been sporadic anyway. ... I liked the music of the Scherben, but I was not a die-hard fan. What interested me, was their [the band’s, S.G.] critical attitude towards the establishment and their connections to underprivileged groups, such as students. At that time, I myself was not only a soccer player, but I also studied special education

131 Although Breitner shared a flat with his teammate Uli Hoeneß for a short while, neither Breitner nor Hoeneß became deeply engaged in any protest actions or were part of left-wing networks.

132 Brügge, “‘Ich wäre auch nach Griechenland gegangen,’” 92.

133 Ibid.

134 Sichtermann, Johler, and Stahl, *Keine Macht für niemand*, 118.

135 The SDAJ was founded in 1968 as a youth organization and had close ties to the *Deutsche Kommunistische Partei* (DKP/German Communist Party). It attracted some 15,000 members, and youth festivals, organized by the SDAJ apparently attracted up to 100,000 people. See: Koenen, *Das rote Jahrzehnt*, 272f.

(Sonderpädagogik). I led kind of a hermaphrodite's life. On the one hand, I was a soccer player and as such standing on the side of the privileged people. On the other hand, I also was a student. That was why I empathized with Ton, Steine, Scherben.<sup>136</sup>

Frequently criticizing the economic mechanisms of professional soccer in Marxist terms, Breitner's popularity even made it onto the pages of the *New York Times* in 1972. Henry Kamm called Breitner "a new hero of the German New Left" and "the newest hero of West German counterculture" who "has captured a surprising place for the New Left in the most popular and highly paid group in the country—the national soccer team."<sup>137</sup> Breitner left his soccer club 1. FC Bayern München after winning the world cup. He signed a contract with Real Madrid, a soccer club associated with "feudal behaviour," as Peter Brügge put it in a *Spiegel* article. This especially referred to the player's salaries. Leaving West Germany in 1974, Breitner now claimed that he had always tried to fight his "left-wing image," but the image had been stronger. As he had some connections to left-wing activists until 1973, Breitner seemed to have downplayed his interest in left-wing activities in the interview. Nevertheless, his interest in left-wing ideology seems to have been half-hearted as he termed students an underprivileged group. Though he remained a frequent critic of the social and economic mechanisms of professional soccer, this interview marked Breitner's break with his left-wing youth.<sup>138</sup> Subsequently he also stopped using left-wing iconic items in his public presentation.

In their conflict with radical left-wing protesters, conservative politicians and the media became increasingly suspicious of popular culture. In 1969, the *Bayernkurier*, a conservative Bavarian newspaper, attacked Erika Fuchs, the ingenious German translator of Mickey Mouse comic books. In the eyes of the *Bayernkurier*, the Disney characters in Fuchs' German translation had adopted the "sociologist-Chinese of the New Left."<sup>139</sup> The term "sociologist-Chinese" ("Soziologen-Chinesisch") referred to the colloquial language that characterized left-wing discussions during the student movement years and after. In the 6<sup>th</sup> Mickey Mouse issue of 1969, a Verbandsideologe (= "group ideologue") accompanied the Beagle Boys who suggested that they had to take over the "means of production." Fuchs adamantly denied any intention of

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136 Sichtermann, Johler, and Stahl, *Keine Macht für niemand*, 140.

137 Cf. Henry Kamm, "Soccer Star a Hero to German New Left," *The New York Times*, July 20 (1972).

138 Brügge, "Ich wäre auch nach Griechenland gegangen,"

139 Cf. "Mickey Mouse: Jünger Maos," *Der Spiegel* 43 (1969): 65-67, 65.



clandestinely introducing left-wing ideology into her texts. At the same time, however, left-wing high school pupils published a Marxist analysis of Mickey Mouse characters in the nationwide high school paper *Wir machen mit* (= *We Participate*). In their eyes, Scrooge McDuck was a “prototype monopoly capitalist.” Donald Duck became a symbol of “revisionist social democrats,” whereas Huey, Dewey and Louie represented the “socialist youth.” The pupils only recognized the Beagle Boys as revolutionary. These appeared to be “true disciples of Mao,” as they would “get down to business with the expropriation of the exploiters.”<sup>140</sup> Thus, as a result of left-wing activists’ attempts to politicize everyday life, the trend of referring to Mao, originating from intellectual circles and propelled by a growing left-wing subculture, came to be connected with one of the most famous products of American popular culture in West Germany at that time. Breitner’s and Fuchs’s use of Maoist icons and left-wing rhetoric presented curious transformations and comebacks of Mao as a trendy icon in new contexts. The fact that a soccer player and a comic translator felt compelled to engage with left-wing publics shows the political significance of left-wing subcultures at the time.

### Rise and fall of Mao in West German publics

The reference to and adoption of Mao’s writings and the Chinese Cultural Revolution as ideological role model turned into a political megatrend, to be felt in many regions of the world in the 1960s and 70s.<sup>141</sup> Maoism became a subversive alternative to hegemonic public culture. It was propelled by student protests in the USA and Western Europe since the 1960s. In West Germany, the tipping point of this trend was marked by actions performed by Kommune I in 1967. Intellectual interest had paved the way for the development of a broad trend affecting left-wing subcultures all over West Germany since the early 1960s. While liberal and right-wing intellectuals developed an interest in Mao’s contribution to global warfare tactics, left-wingers discovered China as a new ideological role model state. The Chinese social and political development appeared to be a “third way” to a better society in the eyes of many left-wing intellectuals. The revolutionary tide of the “struggle of the Third World” thus also reached West Germany from the mid-1960s on. Left-wing intellectuals, however, did not immediately turn into trendsetters. Mao as icon and Maoism as an ideology were initially introduced to the networks between student movement members’ in a rather “apolitical” manner. Kommune I members realized that a society still affected by patterns of strict

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140 Ibid., 67.

141 Connery, “The World Sixties;” Cook, “Third World Maoism.”

anti-communism would be utterly enraged by non-conformist performative Maoist behaviour. The icon Mao and gadgets like the “Little Red Book,” Red Guard shirts and Mao-buttons served this strategy very well, as the reaction of political magazines like *Der Spiegel* show. For many student protesters, the Kommune I members were proven right by their publicity success. As representatives of the “New Left,” former members of the Subversive Aktion now entered the network of the SDS.

What was seen as China’s Youth Rebellion, the Chinese Red Guards movement, was equalled by the aspirations of West German activists. China served as a “screen” onto which many leftists projected their romantic notions of a supposedly already existing “new kind” of society, such as they hoped to establish in West Germany.<sup>142</sup> This process represented a re-configuration of Chinese events in the West German context. It was only this initial re-interpretation of the ongoing events in the PRC that facilitated a localization of Maoism in the European political context. Consequently, this re-configuration facilitated the fast spread of the trend within the West German left-wing subculture in 1967/68. West German subcultural left-wing activists of the time were extremely susceptible to this interpretation of Chinese events. Much of their protest was driven by a general dissatisfaction with conservative restrictions on youth by the older generations. Still appearing authoritarian in nature, German society seemed to prove the existence of Nazi attitudes within state institutions and society in general. In the left-wing activists’ attempt to fundamentally change West German culture and society to overcome Third Reich legacies, the romantic notion of a successful cultural revolution in China mirrored hopes for a real “Lebensstilrevolution” (= lifestyle revolution) in West Germany. This revolution of German culture and politics would encompass the overcoming of traditional family relations, work relations, and social relations in general, all of which were topics widely discussed among left-wing circles. Mao Zedong and his ideology, especially his idea of a Cultural Revolution, thus became one of the most important points of reference for left-wing protests in the 1960s and 1970s.

From 1968/69 onwards, the simultaneous intellectual discussion of Mao, his adoption as an art motif, and the use of new protest methods rooted in avant-garde art theory had turned Mao into a trendy, widely recognized political icon. The close connection between left-wing political networks and the avant-garde art scene created a new kind of provocative political protest culture. While the trend of adopting Maoist slogans and ideology was now well established, it started to change in nature with the transformation of the

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142 Koenen and Diehl, “Mao als Mona-Lisa der Weltrevolution,” 35.

student movement within left-wing subcultural milieus. Mao became popular within militant circles and amongst adherents of cadre parties. The trend's changing nature within West German subcultures is most evident in the person of Dieter Kunzelmann. Starting from left-wing artistic circles and connected to Situationists, he co-founded Kommune I to revolutionize his personal lifestyle. Later, he radicalized provocative symbolic protests to the point of militant action and founded one of the first West German terrorist groups. After his imprisonment, he became a member of a Maoist cadre group.<sup>143</sup>

While left-wing intellectuals tried to propagate the Cultural Revolution as a social role model and thus ultimately served as trendsetters for subcultural discussions, they also acted as gatekeepers. Information about the social and political situation in China initially travelled to West German left-wing publics only via a small number of publications, because especially grassroots activists distrusted news on China reported in the West German press. As long as the left-wing subculture had not established direct contact with the Chinese publishing house Guoji Shudian, translations by German sinologists remained the only source for left-wingers to acquire information in German about China. These translations and other materials about China were always accompanied by commentaries and prefaces, and thus contained potentially biased opinions. Since he had already published widely on China in the 1960s, Joachim Schickel could become one of the key agents in spreading the trend in West Germany. Since left-wing groups had found their own channels of information from the early 1970s onwards, left-wing intellectuals', artists' and subcultural activists' publics and networks—which had merged for the short period of student protest—lost their inter-connections. After the student movement had lost its momentum, classic Marxist notions of how to organize “class struggle” regained currency within left-wing subcultures. After the decline of the student movement, Mao was no longer merely recognized as a “global communist hero” in the debate on how to organize protests. Now, his ideology was intensely studied. Within the evolving K-Gruppen, he became the “fifth classic” communist theorist. This adoption of Mao's ideology represented a transcultural flow of the Chinese concept of communism to West Germany. Maoist ideology was not only adopted, however, it was also reconfigured and mixed with European communist ideology in K-Gruppen discussions.<sup>144</sup> Thus, Maoist thinking melded with other classic communist schools of thought and formed new hybrid transcultural ideologies, unique to each K-Gruppe. These cadre parties attracted up to 150,000 adherents during the 1970s. Yet, the peak of the Mao-cult within K-Gruppen also marked his end: after Mao's death in 1976,

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143 See: Reimann: *Dieter Kunzelmann*.

144 Cf. Kühn, *Stalins Enkel, Maos Söhne*.

West German activists mourned the “greatest Marxist-Leninist of our times.”<sup>145</sup> The trend of applying and following Maoist examples came to a sudden end in the late 1970s. With China’s proclamation of the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and the beginning of economic market reforms in 1978, Maoism lost its appeal for West German left-wing activists.<sup>146</sup>

During the general modernization process of West European states in the 1960s and 1970s, small extra-parliamentary groups developed new protest methods particularly designed to generate publicity and popularity by provoking social authorities and state institutions.<sup>147</sup> These methods were deeply rooted in Futurist, Situationist and avant-garde art theory, turning political action into provocative acts and spectacles. By using these new protest methods, left-wing activists broadened the boundaries of already existing publics. Until then, politics had been negotiated in parliament, the press, the unions and intellectual circles. Now, left-wing activists created new publics and turned them into stages for political action. The creation of public spectacles through sit-ins, go-ins, teach-ins, happenings and street theatre created in turn publicity and media presence that the left-wing milieu might otherwise never have acquired. With the retreat of more and more left-wing activists from the goal of a “revolution” in West Germany, left-wing subcultural milieus began to dissolve by the mid-1970s. Many activists commenced to participate in “single-issue” movements like the anti-nuclear movement, the women’s movement or the peace movement. These movements focused on social change and reform, but not revolution.<sup>148</sup> During the “German Autumn” in 1977, when a series of terrorist attacks ultimately discredited the use of political violence as well as the radical left wing as a whole, the majority of left-wing grassroots activists finally (and publicly) abandoned the prospect of a revolution in the Federal Republic.<sup>149</sup> The dissolution of grassroots milieus combined with growing new protest movements also heralded the decline of Maoist influence on West German intellectual, grassroots and artistic milieus and publics. The official end of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1976 and

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145 Ibid., 113.

146 For the break-up of the international alliance with China see also: Cook, “Third World Maoism,” 298f.

147 Jacco Pekelder, “Towards a new Concept of the State,” in *Linksalternative Milieus und Soziale Bewegungen in den 1970er Jahren*, ed. Cordia Baumann, Nicolas Büchse, and Sebastian Gehrig (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011), 61-83.

148 Cordia Baumann, Nicolas Büchse, and Sebastian Gehrig, “Einleitung: Protest und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in den 1970er Jahren,” in *Linksalternative Milieus und Soziale Bewegungen in den 1970er Jahren*, ed. Ibid. (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011), 11-32.

149 Gehrig, “Sympathizing Subcultures? The Milieus of West German Terrorism,” 243f.

Chinese economic reforms beginning in 1978 completed the decline of the culturo-political trend of Maoism within West German subcultural publics. Just as the trend could only gain ground in West German society in the specific socio-political situation of the late 1960s, it now lost its appeal completely as times changed. Many Maoist-inspired protest methods and theoretical ideas, however, found their way into the new social movements via left-wing activists and were thus further transformed.

## Conclusion

To conclude, it can be argued that the propagation of the iconic image of Mao and Maoism represented a culturo-political trend (not just) in West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s. As pop art and the new protest methods of the student movement developed from some of the same avant-garde art theories, artists and musicians frequently used Mao's iconic image. Mao very often appeared in collages and on protest banners.<sup>150</sup> Mao's ideology not only found recognition in radical left-wing circles, it was also evaluated and respected by liberal, conservative and right-wing intellectuals. Though never a political ideology favoured by major parts of society, Maoism was frequently debated in the newspapers in the context of intellectual and political discussions on China's role in world politics.<sup>151</sup> In a cover story published in June 1968, *Spiegel* authors even concluded their article by quoting Mao to criticize the student protesters' lack of patience. "Whoever wants the revolution here and now—like the impatient members of the SDS—needs political mass support instead of religious time and leisure. Regarding this issue, Mao's Bible states: If we tried to go on the offensive when the masses were not yet awakened, that would be adventurism. If we insisted on leading the masses to do anything against their will, we would certainly fail."<sup>152</sup> The spread of intellectual debate into political magazines such as *Der Spiegel* and *Kursbuch*, subcultural networks and artistic discussion not only turned Mao and Maoism

150 Cf. Diehl, "Die Konjunktur von Mao-Images in der bundesdeutschen '68er'-Bewegung," 184; Hecken, *Avantgarde und Terrorismus*, 44-46.

151 The political magazine *Der Spiegel* even published translations of Mao's writings. In one piece, Mao talks to his niece about the necessity of learning other languages so as to reach a better understanding of her own language. Mao appears as a tolerant, benevolent person offering advice. Cf. "Gespräche Maos mit seiner Nichte," *Der Spiegel* 28 (1967): 77.

152 "Wer aber—wie die Ungeduldigen vom SDS—die Revolution hier und heute will, braucht politische Masse statt religiöser Muße. Und dafür gilt Maos Bibel: Wenn das Bewusstsein der Massen noch nicht geweckt ist und wir dennoch einen Angriff unternehmen, dann ist das Abenteuerium. Wenn wir die Massen stur zu etwas veranlassen, das sie selbst nicht zu tun wünschen, so wird das Ergebnis unweigerlich eine Niederlage sein." Cf. "SDS: Zur Sonne," *Der Spiegel* 26 (1968): 38-55, 55; Cf. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung. Volume IV* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1961), 243.

into an ideological flow on elite (left-wing intellectual) and anti-elite (left-wing subcultural) levels, but also into a culturo-political trend widely recognized in West German publics of the 1960s and 1970s.

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