

EVENTS

LECTURE SERIES, FALL 2007

THE “GERMAN AUTUMN” OF 1977: TERROR, STATE, AND SOCIETY IN WEST GERMANY

Deutscher Herbst—“German Autumn”—was the name a group of filmmakers bestowed upon a series of terrorist attacks and the atmosphere of crisis they provoked in West Germany in late 1977. On September 5 of that year, the self-styled urban guerillas of the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*, RAF) kidnapped Hanns Martin Schleyer, a prominent businessman, and demanded that imprisoned RAF members be freed as the condition for Schleyer’s release. After the government of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt refused to meet the kidnappers’ terms, a group of Palestinian terrorists hijacked a Lufthansa passenger jet and, like Schleyer’s kidnappers, demanded the release of the imprisoned RAF members. West German counterterrorist forces stormed the plane in the night of October 17–18 and succeeded in rescuing the eighty-six passengers on board. Later that same night, four imprisoned RAF members attempted suicide; three died, the fourth survived. Shortly after the raid on the hijacked plane, Schleyer was shot by his captors; his corpse was found on October 19. These events and the measures enacted in response to them gave new urgency to West Germany’s long-running debate on political violence and civil liberties. This lecture series revisited the *Deutscher Herbst* and West Germany’s confrontation with terrorism.

- September 27 *Ideology and Terror in the Red Decade: Reflections on Communism, Anti-Zionism, and the Memory of Terrorism’s Victims*
Jeffrey Herf (University of Maryland)
- October 25 *Refusing to be “Good Germans”: New Left Violence as a Global Phenomenon*
Jeremy Varon (Drew University)
- November 1 *Terror and Security: Law Enforcement, the Media, and Social Change in West Germany during the 1970s*
Klaus Weinhauer (University of Bielefeld)
- November 8 *Militant Subcultures: The Origins of West German Terrorism in the Late 1960s*
Detlef Siegfried (University of Copenhagen)
- November 29 *Stammheim and Majdanek: Prosecuting Terrorists and Nazis in 1970s West Germany*
Rebecca Wittman (University of Toronto)