

# Dying for the Cause: Choreographing the Myths of Ulrike Meinhof and Wolfgang Grams

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*Abstract: This paper analyses contemporary choreographic responses to the left-wing terrorist organisation Red Army Faction. It uses the Austrian Johann Kresnik's 'Ulrike Meinhof' (1990/2006) alongside the Czech Pavel Mikuláščík's 'Tatort: The Seven Deaths of Wolfgang G.' (1994) to examine how these choreographers tackle the highly contentious subject of violent anti-state activism in their country of residence, Germany. The works centre on (in)famous members of the organisation, who died early deaths, highlighting the ideological and physical confrontation between the anarchist terrorists and police powers. The choreographies, however, apply different artistic strategies in re-evaluating RAF history and its fatal consequences from a left-wing perspective.*

Keywords: Dance, Choreography, Terrorism, Red Army Faction, Johann Kresnik, Pavel Mikuláščík

**T**HE YEAR 1998 marked a milestone in Germany's violent post-war history: the silent passing of the Red Army Faction. Since its inception in 1970, the RAF – Germany's post-war terror organisation, also known as Baader Meinhof gang – had spread nationwide anxiety. Its anti-state rhetoric and urban guerrilla tactics, such as the 'removal' of leading figures in banking, police and the military, politics and business through hit-and-run violence and the 'expropriation' of big business-owned resources through thefts and robberies, constantly produced headlines. Cases such as the kidnapping and subsequent killing of the industrial representative and former SS-member Hanns Martin Schleyer, whose body was subsequently found in the trunk of a green Audi, at the height of the conflicts in 1977 impressed upon politicians that the RAF was prepared to use any means available to further their goals. The group sought to 'punish' the German state for the lack of internal resistance against the Nazi Regime and what they perceived as West Germany's ineffective de-nazification in the post-war period. Other targets included the Vietnam War, alleged police and state repression, and the social authoritarianism which they saw as a hangover from the country's fascist past.

While the RAF was a minority group whose activities were grossly disproportionate to the attention they received, its demands did lead to an effective war of ideologies within West-German society. The RAF demanded strict solidarity with their cause: when in 1972, most of the first-generation members were incarcerated, accounts of the insufferable, inhuman conditions they faced in prison were soon disseminated. The group decried measures such as the total isolation of its prisoners from other inmates, the deprivation of external (including acoustic) stimuli and reading materials, severe restriction of contact with relatives and lawyers, and other practices they saw as psychologically damaging. Comparing the punitive treatment of their members with the Nazis' tactics of extermination and genocide, they cast themselves in the roles of victims. With these allegations they thus cemented their view that the West-German state in general and certain politicians in particular were ultra-authoritarian and even

fascist (see also Varon 2005: 250). The people were likewise cast in black and white terms as either “human being or pig [...]. There is nothing in between” (Meins 1974).

On the other hand, the state, the majority of the public, and in particular the mass media – notably the widely-read yellow-press BILD newspaper – launched equally robust campaigns against the terrorist group itself. Those who were seen as helpers, fellow-travellers or even simply in agreement with elements of the RAF’s ideology were swiftly labelled with the derogatory term *Sympathisanten* (‘sympathisers’). One was either a good citizen of the state or a terrorist ally. Labour Chancellor Helmut Schmidt reacted to the RAF with particularly harsh measures, viewing them as a threat to West Germany’s democratic principles and, with their militarism and refusal to accept a plurality of values, akin to fascists themselves. Even more moderate left-wingers, such as philosopher Jürgen Habermas, attacked the RAF’s contempt for the institutions of West Germany’s liberal democracy and its use of violence as undermining its moral justification and as “left fascism” (cited in Kraushaar 1998: 259). Thus, both the RAF and the political ‘establishment’ justified their hatred for the other partly with reference to Germany’s Nazi history.

However, with the RAF’s roots in the West-German leftist student movement, some on the left refused to criticise the group publicly, and others while not approving of its deeds still stood up for its underlying principles. Artists were at the forefront of those engaged in the debate, a famous example being the author and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972, Heinrich Böll. In a journal article, Böll pleaded for mercy for the RAF founder-member Ulrike Meinhof before her arrest in 1972, and entered a bitter dispute with the mainstream BILD newspaper for its hostile and allegedly unjust treatment of her. Böll’s claims earned him numerous attempts at intimidation, including anonymous death threats and retaliation from BILD in the form of denunciatory articles targeting the author himself. His famous book *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* (1974) explored the theme of tabloid sensationalism and the values of contemporary West German society against the backdrop of 1970s militant action. The RAF has continued, moreover, to attract artistic and literary interest: as recently as 2005, the author Christoph Hein – alluding to Böll’s earlier text – published a sympathetic account of another RAF member, Wolfgang Grams, which conflicted significantly with official state accounts of his career and death.

The terrorists Meinhof and Grams play central roles in two dance choreographies that were created in the early 1990s and which constitute attempts to analyse and evaluate the RAF from the perspective of the political left. This essay examines how the choreographers Johann Kresnik and Pavel Mikuláščík, like the authors Böll and Hein in the literary sphere, tackle RAF terrorism through the lens of the lives and identities of these two figures, navigating the ideologically-contested terrain outlined above. Drawing on dance analysis, cultural history and the artistic and political contexts in which they were created, I shall consider Kresnik and Mikuláščík’s choreographic retellings of the RAF story; how they question the official ‘establishment’ version and challenge our perspectives on this chapter of German history.

### **The Death and Resurrection of Ulrike Meinhof**

Johann Kresnik is among Germany’s most forceful and outspoken dance artists. Originally from Austria, he is renowned for the belief that dance should promote political awareness, knowledge and action, rather than merely disinterested pleasure. He is among the few cho-

reographers to tackle current issues of state and governmental politics in a straightforward and intentionally biased manner: “Dance [...] must have to do with content. A fresh start is needed – the theatre has to become political again” (Kresnik 2010: 87). Politically, he has maintained an outspoken communist stance, which is reflected in his choreographies, and was actively involved in the Marxist movement in the 1960s and ’70s.

Kresnik developed the plot of *Ulrike Meinhof* (1990) together with Meinhof biographer Mario Krebs, possibly in the attempt to authenticate his choreography; although ultimately his version offers a non-objective and relatively orthodox Marxist view of the subject. He adopted central characters from the real-life RAF: alongside the protagonist Ulrike Meinhof, her husband the editor Klaus Roehl, and fellow terrorists Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader. The choreographer draws a panorama of Meinhof’s adult career, dividing the role into three personae performed by different dancers: the first ‘Meinhof’ to appear represents the woman returning to Germany posthumously in 1990 to discover that society is fundamentally unchanged: characterised by rampant consumption, Americanised culture and shallow entertainment which fulfils only the most superficial desires. The second Meinhof dancer represents the left-wing journalist, wife and mother; and the third is the terrorist operating underground before eventually being caught and incarcerated.

This multilayered perspective of Meinhof’s life and the serious treatment of her earlier journalistic career contrast with the narrow view presented in the mainstream press and even scholarly analyses of the RAF’s personnel, which have tended to focus on the group’s militancy. Attempts to explain RAF members’ beliefs and actions have often ascribed to them an acute loss of touch with reality, viewed their ideology as a kind of ‘cult’ or else analysed their individual mindsets in pathological terms (Varon 2004: 17). By contrast, in the interview I conducted with Kresnik in 2008, he not only maintained that Meinhof had never held a weapon (a claim belied by her participation in various bombings and shoot-outs), but pointed to the feminist significance of her journalistic writings: “She went into factories for where women worked and wrote about the problems of these women” (Kresnik 2010: 79). He thus not only expressed understanding for her motives (as Böll had done) but actively defended her ideological viewpoint and emancipatory zeal.

Indeed, far from painting Meinhof as the brutal terrorist portrayed in the mainstream media, the communist Kresnik shifts the perspective to highlight her own (alleged) victimisation. Through drastic chorographic images he depicts, on one hand, her subjection to a degrading, inhuman system dominated by capitalist consumption and meaningless entertainment; and on the other he accuses the state of maltreating Meinhof and her fellow inmates through the actions of its officials (such as prison guards) during her later incarceration. The piece is thus, as dance historian Horst Vollmer writes, an attempt to “tackle the phenomenon of terrorism under a different aspect from just the simplistic idea of a threat to the state” (Vollmer 1990: 36).

In accordance with Kresnik’s sympathetic view of Meinhof, the piece adopts the protagonist’s sharply critical attitude towards contemporary West Germany; a view clearly shared by the choreographer. A range of disturbing images is deployed to this end. In a critique of the Americanisation of society in the opening scene, Meinhof, on her return to earth, is forced to pace over piles of American-style fast-food rubbish littering the floor. In reptile-like motions, a group of dancers representing citizens wind their way through this litter, devouring junk food in an unappetising manner only to literally vomit it out onto the stage. A man attempts to force-feed Meinhof, symbolising the violence inherent in the capitalist system.

Later scenes reiterate Kresnik's deep scepticism of mass entertainment and Western consumer culture, when impersonations of popular German Schlager singers and carnival entertainers from the 1970s and '80s, such as Heino and Katja Ebstein, appear on stage to perform excerpts from their well-known songs. The vulgarity of their music is underscored by the dancers – representing ordinary 'folk' – forming a polonaise, a simple line dance, during which they execute movements connoting sexual intercourse.

Kresnik appears to view 'light entertainment' in a profoundly negative light. Like protagonists of the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor Adorno and Horkheimer, he rejects mass culture as conformist and as diverting the people from their serious real-life problems under the dominant capitalist model. In this vein, Kresnik often juxtaposes images of popular entertainment with those of war or dictatorship. In *Ulrike Meinhof* he presents allusions to Nazism, when a 'Hitler and Stalin' pair appear on stage to dance a *Schuhplattler*, a German folk dance, tied together by one giant pair of trousers. With Hitler's preference for traditional art forms rooted in the people, folk dance, while harmless to many observers, has associations with the far right in some German cultural thought. In another scene, Marilyn Monroe appears above a small wall in centre-stage, dragging the corpse of a Vietnamese civilian. Here, Kresnik accusingly points to the discrepancy between the merry superficiality of Monroe's milieu and the mass killings executed in America's name. The US involvement in Vietnam, and West Germany's perceived support for American imperialism, were indeed catalysts for the RAF's campaign.

The bourgeois society in which Meinhof grew up is shown as a violent and unstable environment, highlighting the belief that under capitalism citizens are subject to various forms of 'terror'. While some of these, like ideological brainwashing and the 'commodity fetishism' instilled by the advertising industry, occur without being fully perceived by the victims, others such as economic exploitation and abuse within the nuclear family are far more overt. In a disturbing scene, Kresnik introduces a repulsive couple in enormous fat-suits with bowler hats and oversized genitalia, clearly connoting 'bloated capitalists', who physically and sexually abuse a fragile and helpless Ulrike.

The use of costume and movement vocabulary is noteworthy with respect to characterisation. The dancers portraying the RAF members primarily wear dark jeans, jackets, and shirts, and move with much more agility and suppleness than the homogenous crowd of acquiescent citizens in conservative bourgeois clothes. The kinetic repertory of the West-German society's 'conformists' involves either dramatic and symbolic gestures or the deployment of folk or social dance forms, whereas the terrorists' movement mostly comprises contemporary dance material and some contact work. This movement is employed in scenes encompassing actual RAF terrorist incidents and Meinhof's involvement in them. Several shots are fired, and in one scene Baader, Ensslin and Meinhof set fire to a container. This probably refers to the real-life occurrence in 1968 known as the "Kaufhaus-Brand", in which explosive devices were placed in two department stores in Frankfurt.

The final, extended section turns to the imprisonment of Meinhof and her fellow activists, and once more Kresnik's focus is on the (concealed) terrorism perpetrated by the West-German establishment. Again, he resorts to shocking imagery to portray the pain and humiliation imposed on RAF prisoners. They are shown being stripped naked: a common form of psychological abuse, witnessed more recently in the Abu Ghraib atrocity in Iraq. They are disinfected with oversized hosepipes, a possible metaphor for the attempted 'washing off' of their subversive political ideas. Meinhof herself is hung horizontally on large meat

hooks, perhaps symbolising her treatment as a slaughtered animal, although her pose also resembles the image of the pietà: the depiction of Jesus in Maria's arms following the crucifixion as often seen in medieval artworks. It is, indeed, not inconceivable that Kresnik intends to draw a sacrilegious parallel between the lives of Christ and Meinhof. Both, from his perspective, were social critics who advocated radical changes of ethical values and disrupted the status quo, provoking the opposition of the establishment and suffering the ultimate penalty.

Meinhof's physical and psychological torture culminates in two stark images. She silences herself by cutting off her tongue: perhaps a reference to the Roman politician Cicero whose tongue was pulled out as a symbolic gesture against his vaunted power of speech. Finally, her body is placed between two large panes of glass, as if in a sarcophagus to preserve her, visible to everyone, for posterity. Kresnik might here be recalling the fact that after Meinhof's death, her brain was secretly removed for scientific research, and her outraged daughters only managed to retrieve it for burial almost thirty years later once the scandal became known (see Adler 2002 and Boyes 2002). This incident was but one element in the complex 'mythology' surrounding Meinhof's death. Found hanging from a rope in her cell in the high-security Stammheim prison in 1976, state officials claimed she committed suicide triggered by discord with fellow RAF inmates. However, many leftists have insisted she was secretly executed by the state (see Varon 2004: 197, 234), and the ensuing controversy cost human lives as the RAF killed two people in retaliation for Meinhof's supposed murder. Some on the left who stopped short of alleging her direct killing, moreover, still regarded the state as indirectly responsible; the editor Klaus Wagenbach, for instance, in a recent *Spiegel* interview blamed Meinhof's death on the "German circumstances" (2010: 111).

*Ulrike Meinhof* was premiered in Bremen at a time when the RAF was still in existence. Although the period of its most drastic operations was over, the group still pervaded the German collective consciousness and any sympathising with them was harshly condemned. The sensitivity of the theme and its treatment was highlighted in the run-up to the piece's launch when the theatre received a bomb threat, compelling postponement of the premiere and a police escort for Kresnik's young children. This threat was reminiscent of the type of intimidation Heinrich Böll also faced over his 1972 article about Meinhof. Poignantly, it raises the same moral issues the RAF themselves were confronted by; namely, whether and under what circumstances one may (threaten to) assume power over life and death for political motives.

## Death of an Anarchist: Wolfgang Grams

Czech choreographer Pavel Mikuláščík's *Tatort* (meaning *Crime Scene*) was premiered in 1994 at Freiburg Theatre, just four years after *Ulrike Meinhof*. Mikuláščík, who had performed with Kresnik in Bremen before founding his own company, was much influenced by Kresnik's concept of choreographic theatre, although his own style is typically more playful, poetic and emotional. While Kresnik's piece is based on a historical figure (almost twenty years having elapsed since Meinhof's death), *Tatort* centres on an incident just a year before the choreography was shown. This involved the RAF terrorists Wolfgang Grams and Birgit Hogefeld. Grams, whose father's voluntary service in the Waffen-SS suggests that he was a hard-core Nazi, became a RAF-sympathiser following the arrest of the first-generation activists in the early 1970s, and later joined as a full-blown member. His name first came

to prominence when police shot the RAF activist Willi-Peter Stoll and discovered Grams's name in a notebook Stoll was carrying on his body. Grams fell in love, and later moved in with Birgit Hogefeld, and both went underground in 1984. Recent DNA analyses of hairs found when the banker Karsten Rohwedder was killed in Düsseldorf in 1990 – in the vicinity of the area where I grew up – suggest that Grams was involved in his killing. (We lived very close to the crime scene and I recall hearing ambulance and police sirens wailing through the night.)

In late June 1993, members of Germany's elite counter-terrorism unit GSG9 were set to arrest both Grams and Hogefeld at the railway station in Bad Kleinen, a small town in north-east Germany on the bank of Lake Schwerin. According to official state and police accounts, Grams resisted attempts at capture and managed to pull a gun, shooting two GSG9 police officers – one of whom, Michael Newrzella, was killed. In the shoot-out Grams was initially only lightly injured, but, so the police claimed, subsequently shot himself in the head while falling backwards onto the rails. In the course of ensuing investigations to establish the exact sequence of events, there were so many slip-ups, uncertainties and inconsistencies that only a few days afterwards versions were circulating that suggested Newrzella was killed accidentally by a colleague's 'friendly fire', while Grams was intentionally executed from close range by another officer. The hitches in the investigation, including the apparent destruction of, or tampering with, filmic evidence, led to the resignation of then-Minister of the Interior Rudolf Seiters and the Chief Federal Prosecutor Alexander von Stahl. Notably, the regional court in Bonn later ruled that it was impossible to resolve the case in view of the available evidence.

Grams's parents and several journalists and authors were among those to allege he was killed by a GSG9 official, contradicting the official version which speaks of suicide. The well-known East-German author Christoph Hein tells Grams's story (renaming him Oliver Zurek) in his recent 2005 novel *In seiner frühen Kindheit ein Garten* (*In His Early Childhood a Garden*) in an empathetic but realist fashion from the viewpoint of the terrorist's father, a former school headmaster and thus sworn official of the German state. The novel traces the father's psychological development from a faithful supporter of German social values to a bitterly disappointed and sorrowful man who completely loses faith in his country's justice system and tenets. Echoing Kresnik's perspective of fifteen years earlier, the father figure urges that the state owes its citizen the utmost transparency and openness, lest it become itself a 'terrorist' institution. Indeed, it has potential to be "the most dangerous of all, since unlike the worst criminal, it possesses and can exert unlimited power" (Hein 2005: 225). As Hein's novel makes clear, the Bad Kleinen incident and its aftermath encapsulates the German people's ambivalent relationship to democracy and authority, sounding out the morality not only of the terrorists' actions but also of the state's response. (A reviewer for an online literary magazine argues that the case also has supranational relevance, recalling the questionable use of evidence by the American and British governments to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003; anonymous, complete review's review). Like earlier RAF events, the treatment of Grams's death in artistic works has rekindled heavily polarised debates. Ijoma Mangold's rather contemptuous review of Hein's book in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, for instance, claims that by narrating the story from the father's perspective, the author becomes a mouthpiece for the 'mythologising' of the RAF (2005). I would respond, however, that *any* commentator on the group must of necessity contribute to the folklore surrounding it, regardless of their

perspective, since even the ‘official’ account of the conflict has now arguably attained a ‘mythical’ status.

The material Mikuláštk uses for *Tatort* is fascinating from a criminological, political as well as psychological perspective. In contrast with Kresnik and Hein, who paint damning pictures of the state authorities and employ various dramaturgic and literary means to underscore this view, Mikuláštk’s piece – at 1½ hours of similar duration to Kresnik’s – is characterised by an attempt to sketch a somewhat more balanced, realist account of events. The stage background is an evocative allusion to the scenery of Bad Kleinen, showing a rural idyll with a lake, and the set has elements depicting a train station, even including the noise of trains passing at the beginning of the piece. Movement is at times painfully slow and gestures are mostly straightforward to decipher and not normally subject to abstraction. However, the Czech choreographer does seem to mirror his more famous contemporary Kresnik through (perhaps more limited and less imaginative) use of symbolic imagery, such as strings that recur as symbols of narrow worldviews, keeping people within the confines of social ideologies and expectations.

The work approaches the Bad Kleinen killings from the viewpoints of many of those affected, featuring in a range of scenes the terrorist Grams and his partner Hogefeld, Grams’s family and also Newrzella, the policeman who was shot. At the piece’s opening, the audience sees two mummified figures being carried onto stage, which after shedding their burial shrouds are revealed as Grams and Newrzella respectively. A fight between them results in their deaths, and they sink to the floor whereupon their contours are traced with chalk by crime-scene investigators. Inevitably, the ever-present press is also acknowledged as several reporters push and press onto the stage. Grams and the policeman are almost indistinguishable in appearance, wearing white shapeless clothes and white-painted faces, and it is at times difficult to discern whether they are actually fighting or tenderly embracing each other. Like Kresnik, Mikuláštk does not offer a chronological narrative of events but instead shows Grams’s death in various guises and from different perspectives – later in the piece, for instance, we witness a coffin being carried by his parents. This approach is indeed signalled in the work’s subtitle: *The Seven Deaths of Wolfgang G.*

Interspersed with the death-scenes, Mikuláštk also traces several stages of Grams’s life, including sequences which illustrate his childhood and his family’s conservative, bourgeois background, and some depicting his subsequent involvement in the militant leftist movement. One section depicts Grams’s father in his role as teacher of a class of pupils who become progressively more and more unruly, perhaps symbolising the undermining of authority or indeed his son’s own rebellion. Another scene shows Grams’s participation in RAF gatherings as the group’s members and sympathisers pace quickly across the stage and dance in unison, expressing signs of victory such as the raised fist, while two figures in the left and right-hand corners yell out leftist, anti-imperialist slogans into microphones. Presumably so as to avoid an entirely one-sided narration of the event, Mikuláštk also inserts a sequence showing the talented young policeman Newrzella (who was just 25 years old when he died) in a loving scene with a female figure, possibly his mother or girlfriend.

Mikuláštk places less emphasis than Kresnik on the political critique of German society which underpinned the RAF’s actions. However, there are subtle allusions suggesting a certain predilection with aspects of the left-wing ideology. Early in the piece, Mark Knopfler’s song *Once Upon a Time in the West* is played as accompaniment. Presenting a bleak account

of the 'Western' world, the second stanza has particular pertinence to the Bad Kleinen incident:

Yes it's no use saying that you don't know nothing It's still gonna get you if you don't do something.

Sitting on a fence that's a dangerous course, Oh, you could even catch a bullet from the peace-keeping force.

Even the hero gets a bullet in the chest Oh yeah, once upon a time in the West. (Knopfler 1979)

The first three lines refer to political apathy and the need to stand and fight for one's views. In the context of the choreography, this might easily be seen as a defence of radical political action, and the "bullet from the peace-keeping force" could allude to Grams's alleged shooting by the police (which would imply that Mikuláščík is among those who question the official 'suicide' verdict).

In another strong scene, Grams and Birgit Hogefeld dance a love duet whilst a female speaker at the stage's fringe reads out a eulogy, probably written by Hogefeld herself just two days after Grams's death. Here, she describes in loving terms his personality, the couple's relationship and the events at Bad Kleinen as she experienced them. (I am unable to ascertain whether or not these are Hogefeld's precise original words, but there are similar statements by her published on the Internet; see for instance Hogefeld 1996). This section, with its underlying speech, tender dancing and music – reminiscent of that used to accompany funerals – stands in stark contrast with the preceding choreographic scene which showed several police in green uniforms with rough, brutal appearances.

Given the ideologically-laden character of any discussion of the RAF, it is clearly virtually impossible to create a work about this subject without being seen to make a political statement. Mikuláščík's portrayal of Brigit Hogefeld's perspective seems to reveal a certain affinity with her cause, or at least her personality. Accordingly, the work was condemned by the daily BILD, which in reporting its premiere announced in big letters "RAF Bloodbath as Dance Theatre: Director Consults with Terrorist". (Mikuláščík was the 'director' and Hogefeld the 'terrorist' referred to; the musical composer for the piece, Trevor Coleman, confirmed to me that some members of the company visited Hogefeld in prison to gain a better understanding of their roles, notably Eva Cerna who played Hogefeld's part.) The BILD 'review' itself consists of a compilation of seemingly horrified Bonn politicians: Angela Merkel, now Chancellor and then Youth Minister, is quoted as saying "This goes too far", whilst the Mayor of Freiburg, Thomas Landsberg, is said to have exclaimed: "Artistic freedom. One has to accept that sometimes something goes wrong [...] But perhaps there is not enough distance shown from the role of the terrorist" (cited in Stange & Bassewitz 1993). In the final paragraph, the article's authors cite the theatre's subsidy of 40 million Deutschmarks, probably in an attempt to provoke outrage at the 'waste' of taxpayers' money on a production whose (allegedly) uncritical or even celebratory portrayal of an anti-state terrorist organisation they deem unacceptable.



## Conclusion

Kresnik's and Mikuláščík's choreographies are part and parcel of a trend in leftist circles in which artists have sought to express disillusionment with (West) German liberal capitalist society. Sowinski goes as far as arguing that left-wing intellectuals have contributed to a weakening or even destruction of the youth's loyalty to the German state (1994: 11). There are, however, differences between the ways these two dance artists tackle the topic of RAF terrorism. Kresnik openly portrays and evaluates the movement in a sympathetic light while heavily condemning the political establishment. 'Authority' figures are sketched as inhuman enemies apparently lacking souls, with their faces normally remaining hidden or unrecognisable as they are covered by masks. Worse still, the state is seen as abusing its power through torture, as subduing its citizens to the 'terrors' of consumer fetishism and the popular culture industry; and is in political terms accused of fascism and support for US-imperialism. Thus, *Ulrike Meinhof* echoes the RAF's rhetoric through choreographic imagery.

Mikuláščík's piece does not take sides as openly as Kresnik's, rather showing the events of June 1993 as a human tragedy for all involved. We witness the consequences of the shoot-out on various lives: Grams and Newrzella (who both die multiple deaths) and their respective families, and Hogefeld whose 2008 clemency request was denied and who remains, in 2010, incarcerated in a Frankfurt detention centre. Unlike Kresnik, who portrays the police authorities as faceless and threatening, Mikuláščík grants them a human face – albeit briefly. He also eschews any political or historical reasoning about the motives for RAF members' actions.

In tackling this sensitive topic and presenting alternatives to the 'official' versions of events, both choreographers contribute to a reinterpretation and rewriting of German social history. As there is little consensus about the truth of these matters, there is leeway for various constructions to be placed on them from differing political perspectives. Their 'myths' were certainly augmented by the premature and controversial deaths of Meinhof and Grams. The official claims of suicide helped cast the terrorists as pathological cases while maintaining the integrity and credibility of the democratic state. The RAF, on the other hand, had an interest in painting the police as murderers and their own comrades as heroic martyrs for their cause. Moreover, recent developments in the Western world indicate the continuing relevance of many of the issues addressed. In the post 9/11 era, ethical questions such as whether militant anti-state action is ever justified, the powers that states should (or should not) deploy in fighting terrorist threats, and the implications of terrorists' actions on their families' lives have again become burning concerns.

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