Preface

This paper is a synopsis of my book on the history of the Socialist Patients' Collective Heidelberg: Christian Pross, "Wir wollten ins Verderben rennen" - Die Geschichte des Sozialistischen Patientenkollektivs Heidelberg. It presents an overview of a dramatic and complex chain of events that filled the media headlines in West-Germany from early 1970 until late 1971. The study is based on interviews with 65 eyewitnesses - former patients, student activists, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers in the Dept. of Psychiatry of Heidelberg University; and members of the university administration - and on extensive archive material from 14 public and 17 private archives. In this brief synopsis, I cannot, of course, explore personalities, events, and dynamics in their full complexity – and so urge the interested reader to turn to my book for those. As a medical student in Heidelberg University Medical School I was personally involved in the early stages of the Socialist Patients' Collective, but distanced myself after the group took a radical turn towards urban guerilla activity. Humans can never be totally "objective" about human events – and my dual role as eyewitness and researcher has challenged me to actively question my own recollections and
interpretations as I dealt with the materials uncovered in my research, including the
impressions of participants. I have also been very fortunate to have two thoughtful research
assistants, Sonja Schweitzer and Julia Wagner, who continually questioned my own
memories, reactions and interpretations – and so helped me achieve a more data-driven,
bird’s-eye perspective.³

1. The 1960ies mark the end of post-war stagnation in West-German society

The mid 1960ies mark the end of a period of stagnation in West-German society, the
beginning of the end of the culture of obedience inherited from Germany's long history of
feudal rule and the recent Nazi dictatorship. Two events may highlight this: the Auschwitz
trial in Frankfurt 1964/65 put an end to the conspiracy of silence on the Holocaust. It was the
first major trial against Nazi perpetrators after the Nuremberg trials and the first trial of this
kind by a German court. In 1969 the 20 year rule of the conservative Christian Democratic
Party (CDU) under its patriarchal leader Konrad Adenauer came to an end and with the social
democrat (SPD) Willy Brandt for the first time after the war an outspoken Anti-Nazi
resistance fighter was elected chancellor. Following his slogan "Mehr Demokratie wagen"
courage for more democracy) his government initiated a series of fundamental reforms in
education, health, legislation on issues of family, sex, abortion and other fields. His new
"Ostpolitik" melted the ice between East and West Germany, made the Berlin Wall more
porous, allowing Westerners and Easterners to visit their relatives, the accreditation of
journalists, facilitation of trade and cultural exchange. The German universities, in which the
old boys network of Nazi professors had managed to evade Allied efforts of denazification,
underwent a fundamental change in their traditional hierarchical structure and culture of
teaching. Full professors, chairs and heads of department under the new university laws had to
share their hitherto unlimited power with assistants and students in issues of curricula,
assignments, administration and the election of the university president.

2. The student rebellion

The student rebellion in West-Germany in the mid 1960ies was driven by the protest
against the anachronistic authoritarian structure of German universities, the Vietnam war, the
federal government's support for military dictators in Third World countries and the passing
of the Emergency Laws (Notstandsgesetze). Those laws were considered a remake of the

³ See Pross "Wir wollten...", chapter 1.2 "Eigene Motivation - Entstehungsgeschichte der Studie" (personal motivation and
evolutionary history of this study), p. 19; chapter 1.3 "Doppelrolle von Forscher und Zeitzeuge" (double role of researcher
and eyewitness), p. 23 ff.
emergency laws of the late Weimar republic which had paved the way for Hitlers seizure of power in 1933. The rebellion culminated in violent street fights in West Berlin in 1967 following the police shooting of a student during a demonstration against the Sha of Iran and the attempted assassination of the popular student leader Rudi Dutschke in 1968. The rebellion swept from West-Berlin to all major German university towns including Heidelberg. The movement originally had a very strong anti-authoritarian and libertarian touch, copied from the US counter culture of the Hippies - experimenting with new styles of living in communes with sexual freedom and a philosophy of self-fulfilment. Writings of the leftist Freudian Wilhelm Reich (Character Analysis, The Function of the Orgasm, Mass Psychology of Fascism) reached enormous popularity.

The student movement did not initiate the above mentioned reforms of the Willy-Brandt administration but it gave them more momentum and spread the virus of disobedience and participatory democracy in all layers of German society, one of those layers being psychiatric institutions. I shall come back to this in detail later.

3. The disappearance of the Humboldt model of education

Student life in German universities had changed dramatically in the 1960 and 70ies. The original Humboldt model of holistic education, academic freedom and a creative learning experience in a close personal relationship between students and professors disappeared. As a student psychotherapist noted: "The former integrated individualistic style of student life and lodging protected by a high social status has vanished. What we see today is educational mass production, social disintegration, pressure for conformity, competition stress and loss of orientation." In a conference on psychological disturbances among students in 1968 in Berlin experts reported a growing rate of psychological problems and psychiatric and psychosomatic disorders among students. The main complaints reported were parental conflicts, doubts about the choice of field of study, feelings of inferiority, learning difficulties, lack of concentration, exam nerves, social isolation, sexual disorders, addiction, anxieties and phobias, sleeping disorders, depression, suicidal tendency, hypochondria, fits of rage, obsessive compulsive behaviour. As causes for these complaints experts reported a high pressure to perform, overcrowded lecture rooms, lack of learning material and teaching staff, authoritarian style of teaching, arbitrary humiliating procedures during exams, loneliness, housing shortage and lack of opportunities for social life. In several German universities these grievances had motivated the university administration to establish psychosocial counseling centers for students. In Heidelberg however the conservative university president and Ex-Nazi Werner
Conze had ignored urgent appeals from the University Department of Psychiatry under its director Prof. von Baeyer to establish such a center for the Heidelberg student population.

4. Heidelberg University Department of Psychiatry - center of German mental health reform

The Heidelberg Department of Psychiatry during the Nazi period had been one of the centers of the euthanasia killings under its notorious director Prof. Carl Schneider. The appointment of Prof. Walter von Baeyer to the Heidelberg chair in 1955 marked a new beginning and a paradigm shift in postwar German academic psychiatry.

Von Baeyer came from a Jewish family, had suffered setbacks in his professional career during the Nazi period, survived in a mixed marriage and as a military psychiatrist in the Wehrmacht. His values were shaped by this experience. He turned the Heidelberg Department into one of the centers and think tanks of the German mental health reform. He and his associates Heinz Häfner und Karl Peter Kisker as early as 1965 published a memorandum on the miserable conditions in German mental hospitals. In the preface of their memorandum they explicitly reminded of the Nazi "destruction of life unworthy of living", whose survivors deserved rehabilitation and compensation for the injustice inflicted upon them. Von Baeyer and his associates developed a roadmap towards dissolution of the big insanities asylums with locked wards and replacing them by a community-based system of care.
with outpatient clinics, day clinics, small inpatient units in general hospitals, counseling services and self-assistance groups advocating equal civil rights for the mentally ill. Von Baeyer's memorandum eventually became an official government program in 1975. Von Baeyer had been inspired by the American model of social psychiatry, which he had studied during a trip to the US in 1949, having been invited by the US military government as one of the first German psychiatrists after the war. In 1964 von Baeyer, Häfner and Kisker published a ground-breaking study on the concentration camp survivor syndrome, which set in motion a fundamental change in the jurisdiction on compensation for persecution induced health hazards among holocaust survivors.4 Von Baeyer's Heidelberg Department of Psychiatry as one of his assistant wrote in his autobiography was "a tinderbox of ideas". In an exceptionally liberal and tolerant environment doctors, nurses and social workers were allowed to experiment with new therapeutic approaches such as talking cure with schizophrenics,

Staff of Department of Psychiatry, Heidelberg University around 1966. Back row 3. from left Dr. Wolfgang Huber, 2. from right Prof. Karl-Peter Kisker; Front row 7. from left Prof. Walter von Baeyer, next to him to the right Prof. Hans-Joachim Rauch, Dr. Helmut Kretz, Dr. Maria Rave-Schwank, Prof. Carl-Friedrich Wendt, Prof. Heinz Häfner, Private Archive Rave-Schwank

building therapeutic communities\(^5\), implementing ideas of icons of unorthodox psychiatry and anti-psychiatry such as Ronald Laing, David Cooper, Franco Basaglia and Gregory Bateson.

It must be noted that the von Bayer's reforms were not unanimously welcomed in his Department. Among the staff there was a powerful group of traditionally oriented doctors and nurses, who acted against the wind of change. Among this group were male nurses, who had been SS-members and two psychiatrists who had been involved in the euthanasia killings during the Nazi period: Prof. Hans-Joachim Rauch and Prof. Carl-Friedrich Wendt\(^6\). When von Baeyer became chair in 1955 he was forced to keep these remnants of the Carl Schneider era, because they had life-long contracts as civil servants - a typical postwar German setting with victims and perpetrators working next door to each other. In the Department the old and the new culture co-existed, it was divided into a modern part with open wards run in the style of a therapeutic community, day clinics etc. and a traditional custodial part with locked wards. In 1965 von Baeyer and his deputy Kisker orchestrated a coup against the old boys network by planting a medical student in a custodial style psychiatric ward as an undercover observer. He published his observations in a leading psychiatric journal, unmasking the rigid prison like regime of the "Masters of the Ward" - i.e. the traditional nurses. This caused un uproar in the Department.\(^7\) The old and the new forces fought heavily against each other, yet von Baeyer who was a very soft, anxious and permissive man did not clearly enough set the direction the Department was to be going. This structural weakness should prove to be fateful in the later conflict with the SPK.

In 1970/1971 the momentum of the student rebellion had reached the professional mental health community. The German Society for Social Psychiatry (DGSP) founded in Mannheim near Heidelberg in the fall of 1970 by a handful of young residents - some of whom coming from von Baeyer's Department - within only a decade grew to more than 3000 members. The DGSP served as a collection point for dissatisfied and reform-oriented staff, nurses, doctors, social workers, physiotherapists and interns in mental health institutions.

In order to understand the story I am speaking about today it is necessary to recall the state of German mental hospitals, which at the time were prison-like asylums in isolated locations in a rural environment remote from the community with extremely inhumane

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\(^5\) The concept of the therapeutic community was developed by Maxwell Jones with World War II veterans in the UK. See: Stijn Vandevelde, Maxwell Jones and his work in the therapeutic community. [http://www.dldocs.stir.ac.uk/documents/vandevelde1999.pdf](http://www.dldocs.stir.ac.uk/documents/vandevelde1999.pdf)

\(^6\) The charges against Rauch and Wendt in one of the late trials against doctors involved in the euthanasia killings were dropped in 1986 for lack of evidence for their direct participation in and knowledge about the killings. See Pross "Wir wollten...", p. 48.

\(^7\) The publication on the "Masters of the Ward" according to eye-witness Dr. Maria Rave-Schwank played a key-role in the struggle for mental health reform. See Pross, "Wir wollten...", p. 43-44.
conditions tainted by the stigma of having been centers for the Nazi forced sterilization programs and euthanasia killings of the mentally ill and the handicapped.

Wiesloch State Mental Hospital near Heidelberg September/Oktober 1970, Archive Marcovicz bpk Bildagentur für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte

5. The decay of the student rebellion into sectarianism and the rise of psycho-groups

In late 1969 and early 1970 the student rebellion decayed and dissolved into numerous small sectarian leftist groups - maoist, trotzkyte, anarchist and at the extreme end the Red Army Faction (RAF) - a terrorist group comparable to the weathermen in the U.S. The leaders of the SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund - comparable to the Students for a Democratic Society in the U.S.) declared "the liquidation of the anti-authoritarian phase" of the student movement whose future mission would be the building of a party following the Lenin model of democratic centralism. Another current evolving from the decaying student rebellion was the so-called "psycho-boom", the rise of sensitivity, encounter and self-awareness groups following new psychotherapeutic approaches - some of them imported from the USA - such as primal scream therapy, transactional analysis, Gestalt therapy, not to mention the various religious imports from Indian Gurus such as Baghwan Shree Rajneesh, Maharishi Yogi and others. The psycho-groups had in common a vision of personal liberation from the straightjacket of an achievement oriented capitalist society and sexual repression in a
culture of puritan prudery. The sectarian leftist groups paradoxically reenacted the authoritarian culture which had set off the rebellion in the first place. Their members under the rule of self-appointed party chiefs had to submit to an extremely rigid discipline, study the works of Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky or Mao Tse Tung, work in factories to agitate the working class for the revolution and sacrifice their assets and personal life for the party. So the psycho-groups offered an alternative for young people searching for a new life and freedom.

A key experimenting field for new life styles were the numerous emerging communes. As a model who strongly influenced the generation of the 1960ies served the famous West-Berlin commune 2, which in 1969 published its widely read self-portrayal "Commune 2 - Attempt to revolutionize the bourgeois individual - Connecting collective life with political action". In this book the authors describe how they practised some kind of wild psychotherapy called "serial analysis", in which one commune member after the other in a row lay down on the floor or the couch and was analyzed by the other members of the commune. The aim being - inspired by the writings of Wilhelm Reich - to overcome ones sexual inhibition including the "affirmation of infantile sexuality". Two other psycho-groups which originated at that time and became widely known are the group of the Berlin psychoanalyst Günther Ammon and the group of the Vienna artist Otto Mühl. Those two groups carried all signs of a cult with a messianic ideology of salvation, a sealing off from the outside world portrayed as hostile, a strong bonding and fixation on an idealized infallible charismatic leader, persecution and expulsion of dissidents and a tendency to externalize internal conflicts and tensions within on outside enemies. Both leaders materially and sexually exploited their followers.

6. The mystery of the Socialist Patients Collective Heidelberg

It was in this context and this Zeitgeist that a group of patients - many of them students - emerged at the policlinic (outpatient clinic) of the Department of Psychiatry of Heidelberg University calling themselves "Socialist Patients' Collective Heidelberg" (SPK). They originated from a therapy group led by Dr. Wolfgang Huber, a young resident, who got involved in an escalating conflict with his colleagues and superiors who accused him of instrumentalizing his patients for political purposes.

The story of the SPK which only existed for 17 months has given rise to many myths and legends promoted by the SPKs propagandistic pamphlets and a three volume documentary from a left-wing medical students organization published in 1972. The prevailing myth being that the SPK was the first self-assistance group of psychiatric patients

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in Germany and in the world (!), that it was victimized and destroyed by a reactionary alliance of traditional psychiatrists, conservative professors of the Medical Faculty of Heidelberg and the Baden Württemberg State Secretary of Education. This myth was taken over unscrutinized and passed on over the years by various authors. A number of tabloid press journalists portrayed the SPK as the main recruiting basis for the Red Army Faction (RAF). During every anniversary of the RAF's kidnappings and bombings the horror story of the "Lunatics with Guns" was reactivated. In the early 2000ies some scholars for the first time made an effort to shed light into the mystery of the SPK by evaluating archival sources. However they did not get very far because they hardly found any sources on the antecedent of the SPK in von Baeyer's Department, the inner life and structure of the group, its therapeutic practice and the deeper reasons for the irreconcilable and destructive nature of the conflict.

7. Antecedent of the SPK - "The Dr. Huber case"

The origin and development of the SPK is strongly connected with its leading figure, the physician Dr. Wolfgang Huber. Dr. Huber, born in 1935, joined the Department of Psychiatry of Heidelberg University as a resident in 1964. Colleagues and his boss Prof. von Baeyer described him as an ambitious, tacit, sensitive, somewhat peculiar, eccentric and difficult person, as a very gifted psychiatrist, dedicated to his patients, well read and proficient in philosophy. One colleague who worked closely with him in one of the wards in an interview with a journalist reported that Dr. Huber was driven by an unresolved conflict with his very old overpowering Nazi father and was projecting this conflict on his superiors in the Department of Psychiatry, namely Prof. von Baeyer and his deputies. He tried to compensate his lack of self-confidence, seeking appreciation from his superiors by working extremely hard, working overtime, permanently on call for his patients, sacrificing himself unlimited. This made him a nuisance and a permanent silent reproach for his peers. In 1966 following insurmountable conflicts with his colleagues he was transferred from the main hospital to the policlinic located in another part of town, which served as a sort of dumping place for "difficult colleagues".

He tried to climb the academic ladder and qualify as a professor with a PhD thesis on the philosopher Hegel's view on boundaries in the context of insanity - but failed. His presentation of a first draft of his thesis in a clinical conference came across as nebulous and abstruse, nobody understood what he was trying to say. On top of that his mentor, the psychiatrist and philosopher Prof. van der Meulen, committed suicide in 1969. It is noteworthy to mention that van der Meulen was considered a right wing Hegelian - i.e. an
advocate of Hegel's support for the powerful rule and state order of the Prussian monarchy - as opposed to left wing Hegelianism represented by Karl Marx. Huber later wrote in his autobiography that he never was a left winger, and colleagues remember him as an originally rather apolitical, conservative and career oriented person.

During the year 1969 Huber completely withdrew from his colleagues and superiors and indulged in his patient work in the policlinic. He no longer attended rounds and clinical conferences and did not avail himself of the opportunity of participating in the rich training and qualification opportunities of von Baeyer's department, such as seminars on psychotherapy, group therapy and the concept of therapeutic community. He treated an exceptionally large number of patients in his daily consultation hours often late into the night. The policlinic was a contact point for acute psychiatric cases and the whole range of psychopathology from the general population of all social strata. The main hospital however as a teaching hospital focussed more on interesting special cases selected for research and teaching purposes. Often Huber could not refer suicidal or acutely psychotic patient needing inpatient treatment to the main hospital and had to refer them to the notorious and dreaded insanes asylum in Wiesloch, the countryside south of Heidelberg. This became a further source of Huber's increasing anger at and alienation from his colleagues and superiors. Huber saw himself as the advocate for the underclass of the policlinic patient population in contrast to the luxury clientele in the main hospital. In this context Huber must have developed his belief that this most vulnerable underclass of the mentally ill was to be the carrier of a future revolution. His views most probably have also been influenced by the writings of the icons of antipsychiatry Laing, Cooper and Basaglia who saw the insanes asylums as dumping grounds for the underprivilged, as places of marginalization and destruction, in which the social misery was covered up by psychiatric treatment and custody. They viewed schizophrenia not as a disorder but as a reaction to unbearable living conditions, as a creative self-determing protest against alienation. Therefore madness should be allowed to thrive freely as a natural healing process without medical treatment forced upon them.

All these setbacks and offenses, Huber's growing isolation in the Department are regarded by several sources (eyewitness statements, memorandums, reports in the university archives) as the source of his metamorphosis from a silent, apolitical, industrious and rather adjusted colleague to an aggressive revolutionary.

With the student rebellion and the crisis of university education a growing number of students filled Hubers consultation room in the policlinic. The encounter with this clientele left its mark on Dr. Huber, who more and more identified with the student rebellion, attended
seminars of the student initiated "critical university", participated in demonstrations, go-ins and sit-ins. He had an open ear for taboo topics such as sexual promiscuity, smoking pot, throwing LSD, gay and lesbian love, getting in trouble with the police. Dr. Huber eventually became something like an insider tip for left wing student activists, an unconventional shrink, wearing a black leather jacket instead of a white coat and a Che Guevara beret, growing a Trotsky-like beard and addressing his patients informally by their first names. He turned the policlinic into some kind of unofficial psychotherapeutic counselling center for students which von Baeyer with no avail had demanded from the university president.

In effect Huber further developed the founder and first director Karl Peter Kisker's concept of the policlinic from the early 1960ies as a vanguard model institution of social psychiatry with group therapy for neurotic and for psychotic patients, social assistance, and a patient club. Under his immediate superior Dr. Spazier, who himself had an outsider position in von Bayers Department, Huber could thrive fairly well. But von Baeyer and his deputies
observed Hubers patient work with growing suspicion. They got the impression that Hubers group therapy sessions were more a forum for political agitation than for psychiatric treatment.

Huber extended his informal unorthodox style of therapy by inviting selected patients to philosophical seminars to his private home. This group of about 15 patients formed the nucleus of the later SPK. What happened here was that Huber over-identified and formed an alliance with his patients. From them he sought and received the appreciation and support that he had failed to get from his colleagues and superiors. He implicated his patients in his personal conflict with his superiors and his labor dispute with the hospital administration. Huber had been shaped and inspired by the "tinderbox of ideas" by the reforms in von Baeyer's Department. But he radicalized them to an extreme point, in which therapy was transformed into revolutionary action. One of his colleagues characterized this as a "pathological misunderstanding of the concept of the therapeutic community".

The looming tension between Dr. Huber on the one side and von Baeyer, his deputies and the bulk of residents and senior residents on the other side escalated to an open conflict when Dr. Spazier left in the fall of 1969 and was replaced by Dr. Kretz. Kretz, a young ambitious colleague, was the same age as Huber, elegant, eloquent, career oriented well respected and well integrated into the hospital community. Von Baeyer had appointed Kretz on purpose for this position in order to end Huber's extravagancies and withdrawal from any control and supervision by his peers and superiors. Kretz demanded accountability from Huber concerning his therapeutic practice in individual and group therapy. He asked him to participate in case conferences and training seminars, to hand him his medical reports to proof read and sign - something that is considered a matter of course in a clinical institution. Huber full scale refused. After a few heavy clashes between the two as well as between Huber and von Baeyer in December 1969 and January 1970 Huber was informed that his contract would not be prolonged beyond the deadline of July 1970. When Huber in turn mobilized his patients who payed von Baeyer a protest visit in his private home Huber was fired without notice on February 2, 1970.

In mid February a first report appeared in the local press on the "Dr. Huber case", by which the conflict now became a public issue. When 20 patients and a dozen medical students occupied the university hospital administration headquarters on February 27, 1970 demanding the re-employment of Dr. Huber, this was the hour of birth of the SPK.
8. From Self assistance for the mentally ill to the concept "Turn illness into a weapon"

During the occupation Huber and some patients acted extremely aggressive against von Baeyer who together with members of Medical Faculty and the liberal president of the University, the theologian Prof. Rolf Rendtorff, tried to negotiate with the occupants. Huber threatened that patients may commit suicide in case he would not be re-employed, which was considered blackmail by members of the medical faculty. Finally Rendtorff reached a compromise with the occupants allowing them to continue the policlinic therapy groups in university premises outside the Department of Psychiatry. Out of fear that a sudden termination of the therapeutic relationship between Huber and his patients would do harm to them and that there was in fact the risk of suicide the faculty and von Baeyer reluctantly agreed to the compromise. They only agreed under the condition that this arrangement would be valid for no more than 8 months in which the patients could detach themselves from Dr.
Huber and be referred to other doctors resp. mental health services. In one of their first public statements the occupants celebrated the compromise as a success and defined their mission as a kind of self-assistance group for the mentally ill: "In working groups we want talk about our daily problems, to foster the mutual understanding and support among the patients and to practically shape education, sexuality, family and the working world." Self-assistance was the creed of the pragmatic faction in the core patient group, who simply wanted to keep their treating physician and continue the individual and group therapy they had received in the policlinic.

Following the media reports and nation wide publicity in the spring of 1970 a growing number of students joined the SPK who were disillusioned by the decay of the movement and seeking orientation. The SPK for those appeared to combine self-awareness and psychological support with political activism. This radical faction of students in an alliance with Dr. Huber gained more and more influence in the group. In a crude simplified amalgamation of Marxian, Hegelian, Reichian and Marcusian concepts they considered the mentally ill as the revolutionary class, and considered illness a revolutionary productive force. They understood mental illness as an inhibited protest against unbearable living conditions. So the only consequent way to fight mental illness was to convert the inhibited protest into political action against "the pathogenic capitalist patriarchal society". Following their slogan "turn illness into a weapon" the patient was to convert his "unconscious unhappyness" into an "unhappy consciousness" by which he realizes the causes of his misery. The doctor-patient relationship as an expression of the "object role" of the patient should be repealed and instead "every patient become a therapist of himself and other patients." Some of the "older" and more experienced patients became lay therapists. Therapy was now called "agitation", meaning treatment by political action. Portrayed as some kind of Robin Hoods tearing down the walls of custodial psychiatry the SPK quickly gained a nationwide heroic reputation in liberal and left-wing circles and grew from originally 50 to about 300 patients. The leading national newspapers and radio stations published lengthy - benevolent and critical - features on the group. In the local press in Heidelberg and the state capital Stuttgart the dramatic events around the SPK were reported sometimes every day or several times a week.

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8 See Pross "Wir wollen...", p. 112, note 344 - translation: "The aim of psychotherapy is to abandon the function of the psychotherapist", leaflet for the patients of the policinic, distributed on March 3, 1970.
9 Herbert Marcuse (1898-1978) was a German philosopher, sociologist and political theorist from the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, who escaped from Nazi Germany to the US and later became one of the icons of the student rebellion. According to his analysis of modern capitalism (his book "One-dimensional Man" strongly influenced the German Left) the working class was no longer a potentially subversive force capable of bringing about revolutionary change. As a result, rather than looking to the workers as the revolutionary vanguard, Marcuse put his faith in an alliance between radical intellectuals and those groups not yet integrated into one-dimensional society, the socially marginalized, the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders.
The compromise between Huber, his patients and university president Rendtorff was to be put on paper in a contract. The pragmatic faction in the group wanted to sign the contract and encourage Dr. Huber to open a private practice as a panel doctor after the termination of the contract in September 1970. However Huber and the radical faction never
signed the contract. Instead they started verbally attacking Rendtorff as a liberal hypocrite. Huber obviously could not accept that he had been fired and wanted to preserve his status as a university employee. In late June of 1970 Rendtorff declared the compromise as failed and demanded that Huber and his patients leave the university premises.

Huber and the SPK then occupied Rendtorff's office and demanded a permanent contract. The situation in the occupied presidents office was chaotic. Rendtorff following his humane instincts as a theologian did not call the police to end the occupation but asked a leading liberal-left wing psychoanalyst, Prof. Horst-Eberhard Richter, Head of the Department of Psychosomatic Medicine of Giessen University to do a sort of crisis intervention and come up with a solution of the conflict. Richter spent several hours talking to Huber and his patients. He wrote an expert opinion in which he recommended to continue the SPK as an experimental project under a number of conditions: that the SPK in a scientific project analysis was to prove the therapeutic effect of its model of a politically oriented therapeutic community, that the SPK will not expand its activities and take in more patients and that it re-establishes a cooperative relationship with the Department of Psychiatry and other mental health services in the city. Otherwise Richter warned, the group risked overburdening its therapeutic capacity and would fail in containing the pathological dynamics within the group. He explicitly criticized the groups fanatic tendencies: "A direct revolutionary political struggle on the basis of group therapy for the mentally ill would be an absurdity." He observed that the radical faction had an "imperturbable belief in the outstanding quality and political significance of their project". He quoted the concerns of the pragmatic faction of the SPK, that "a continued expanding political struggle would seriously hamper a profound therapeutic processing of pathogenic conflicts within the group and jeopardize the project." Nine years later in his bestseller "The Group" Richter stated that he had been mislead by Dr. Huber, who at the time obviously was already preparing for the "anarchist underground struggle" driven by a "self-destructive delusion". The group according to Richter had developed a "Michael Kohlhass-complex" which suffocated the grandiose therapeutic ambitions and served to stabilize the group.

Two further expert opinions by Prof. Brückner, chair of psychology of Hannover University, and by Dr. Spazier, Hubers former superior in the policlinic, backed Richters recommendations to continue the SPK project under university auspices. The Medical Faculty presented three expert opinions from two chairs of psychiatry (one of them being von

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10 Michael Kohlhaas is a historical icon, a symbol for the avenger of the supressed, robbing the rich and giving to the poor. He can be seen as the German equivalent to Robin Hood.

Baeyer) and Prof. Thomä, chair of the Department of Psychotherapy of Ulm University and head of the German Psychoanalytical Society. All three rejected Richter's recommendations. Brückner, Spazier and von Baeyer did not really qualify as independent experts because they were biased due to their personal involvement in the conflict.

10. Therapeutic practice, inner life and group dynamics

Besides all revolutionary rhetoric the SPK in fact offered practical help for a wide range of people in need, the mentally ill, socially deprived, runaway kids etc. It compensated the lack of outpatient services for the mentally ill at the time, and it provided a safe haven and holding environment for many, who had no place to go or would be locked away in one of the custodial style mental hospitals. Many patients had a long record of doctor shopping, failed psychotherapy and being put on waiting lists before they found help in the SPK. One of my contemporary witnesses, a former patient told us, she ran away from home as a 17 year old highschool kid because she was beaten and sexually abused by her father and found refuge in the SPK. The parents tried to bring her back home with police force, but the group succeeded in protecting her. Looking back, she says the SPK saved her life.
Dr. Huber and the lay therapists (who were called "agitators") had an open ear for taboo and outsider topics such as sexual problems, homosexuality, drug abuse, adolescent rebellion, clashes with the police during demonstrations. As a contemporary witness put it: "The SPK was a left-wing counseling center". Patients were encouraged to direct their frustration, inhibition, anxiety and depression on an outside enemy - the capitalist society, which had in fact a temporary therapeutic effect, a transformation of symptoms, a turnover from passivity and depression into aggression and action.

However the ever growing number of patients (up to 500 according to some sources) could not be managed by Dr. Huber as the only physician in charge and the lay therapists, who were inexperienced and untrained. The group dynamics got out of control with manic, psychotic and drug dependent patients decompensating. There were several suicide attempts. The growing tension and pressure from inside was aggravated by a growing external pressure. The Medical Faculty of Heidelberg university considered the SPK a dangerous extremist group in which mental patients were politically instrumentalized and called upon the State Secretary of Education to take action. Following the Faculty's complaints the Secretary in September 1970 ordered the university president Prof. Rendtorff to remove the SPK from the premises he had provided. From then on the threat of eviction loomed on the SPK like the sword of Damocles. The polarisation between the SPK and its adversaries was reflected in the SPK's weekly published pamphlets, which took on a more and more aggressive tone.

In one of those pamphlets it says: "Comrads, there must not be any therapeutic step that has not been proven to be a revolutionary one. Long live the victory of the working class! The system has made us sick, so let's give the sick system the death blow!"12

11. The "inner circle" of the SPK forming an urban guerilla

In the fall of 1970 the radical patient faction discussed strategies of violent resistance against the impending eviction including the armed struggle. Patients of the pragmatic faction heavily opposed this. Contemporary witnesses report several turbulent patient plenary meetings in which the two factions clashed. Orchestrated by Huber and his mouthpieces several dissidents were expelled by force. From then on the radical faction formed a clandestine group, the so-called "inner circle", which met in Hubers private home and started building an urban guerilla task force following the model of the Uruguayan Tupamaros, the US Black Panthers and the Cuban model of Castro and Che Guevara. They acquired firearms, explosives, radio equipment and did shooting and bombing exercises in the Odenwald.

12 See Pross "Wir wollten...", note 352, p. 116.
mountains near Heidelberg. They also connected with the simultaneously arising urban
guerilla groups of the Red Army Faction, helping each other with know-how, conspirative
housing, falsifying papers, providing cars, arms, equipment and logistics.

The bulk of patients who knew nothing of these clandestine activities were virtually
left to themselves. Huber asked a young female patient - whom he had made his mistress in
the early days and who had just passed her final exam in medicine - to replace him in the
daily medical consultation. She had no experience in psychiatry and was hopelessssly
overburdened with the large patient population including acute cases who needed crisis
intervention.

University president Rendtorff thought that inspite of the Secretary of Education's
eviction order the group needed further support by the university and looked for alternative
solutions. However in the process of polarisation a persecution paranoia had affected the
group which no longer enabled them to make compromises and to differentiate between
friend and enemy. Either one supported the SPK's demands 100% or one was against it. There
was nothing in between. Sympathisers among the student Left, liberal physicians, liberal
professors including president Rendtorff, who wanted to help the patients to find a place for
themselves and to de-escalate the conflict were vilified in the SPK's pamphlets as hypocrits
serving as fig leafs for capitalist repression and fascists practicing "euthanasia" on mental
patients.

In April 1971 the conflict reached a climax after a young schizophrenic woman in the
SPK committed suicide. She is described by contemporary witnesses as a very sick, severely
depressed and shy person with a working class background who felt helpless and
overwhelmed by the SPKs revolutionary rhetoric and pressure to engage in the political
struggle. In her suicide note she wrote: "I do not want to be buried with Marx and Lenin... I
have not understood anything." It was quite clear that the SPK had been detrimental for her.
Her suicide was a shock and caused a lot of anxiety, doubts and uncertainty among the group.
Huber and the radical faction however managed to put the blame for her suicide on the SPK's
adversaries. In a pamphlet with the headline "Suicide = Murder" the SPK charged university
president Rendtorff, the State Secretary of Education and the speakers of the Medical Faculty
with homicide. On the walls of their private homes "assassin" graffitis appeared. After some
of them received hate mails that a "people's court" had sentenced them for homicide, they had
to ask for police protection for themselves and their families. A witness, former member of
the radical faction, told me in my oral history interview 42 years later: "When a person that
you knew well commits suicide you always ask yourself what you may have done wrong. We
felt terrible. So to say that every suicide is a homicide committed by the capitalist system for us was a way of coping, it was a coup of liberation, which strengthened the group cohesion.”

With this incident the SPK’s slogan "turn illness into a weapon" materialized in a factual life-threatening way and confirmed Prof. Richter's warnings and anticipations, which he had so clearly expressed in his expert opinion 9 months prior.

Members of the inner circle attempted three bomb attacks, one against an uninhabited new building of the notorious insane asylum in Wiesloch, one against the president of the Federal Republic, the liberal social democrat Gustav Heinemann, and one against the Heidelberg internal revenue office. All three failed for technical reasons. None of the suspected perpetrators from the inner circle were sentenced for these bomb attacks during the later trials because their personal involvement could not be 100% proved.

Following a shooting incident with police near Dr. Huber’s private home in June 1971 the clandestine activities of the "inner circle" came to light. A special task force of the state police collected substantial evidence based on the testimony of a key witness from the "inner circle" who had left the SPK in March 1971 protesting against the urban guerilla activities. In mid-July Dr. Huber and the members of the "inner circle" were arrested and in three trials in 1972, 1973 and 1974 were sentenced for the "formation of a criminal organization". Huber and one of his co-perpetrators spent five years in jail. A few members of the radical student

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13 case history see Pross "Wir wollten...", pp. 263ff.
faction subsequently joined the Red Army Faction (RAF) some of whom got killed in action or were sentenced to life-long imprisonment.

Dr. Huber (left) and patient (woman on the right) arrested in front of his house June 25, 1971, report in local Heidelberg newspaper RNZ 26./27.6.1971

12. "Revolutionization on the back of patients"

By a detailed reconstruction of biographical data and case histories I have found evidence that none of the actually mentally ill patients in the group and none of the original core of the policlinic patients except two joined the armed struggle. Some of them who were strongly identified with Huber as their doctor who had saved them and felt a strong loyalty to the group naively became accessories in the "inner circle's" criminal activities. One of those patients who suffered from a severe form of manic depressive illness in his role as a lay therapist and speaker of the group experienced the above described transformation of symptoms, a turnover from passivity and depression into aggression and action. He lent his car to the "inner circle" for clandestine operations. His apartment was used as a hiding place for weapons without his knowledge. During the trial he got a rather mild sentence of only a couple of months in jail because the prosecutor and the court considered him to have been
drawn into these actions by Huber and the radicals. In jail he suffered a severe relapse of depression and a couple of years later committed suicide.

My notions confirm the statement of von Baeyers deputy, Prof. Tellenbach, who wrote in a public statement in November 1970 that Dr. Huber exercised a "revolutionization on the back of patients": "Consider, what enormous physical and mental forces a struggle for the overthrow of a social order requires. It is against medical ethics, it is simply inhumane to exert such a struggle on the back of mentally disturbed people. Dr. Huber may limit his struggle on assigning healthy people. The sick have no place on the battlefield. It is a macabre game to send them to the front line and to counter every attempt to stop them with suicide threats." ¹⁵

In the last sentence Tellenbach refers to Hubers and the SPKs repeated tactic to threaten their adversaries with the increased suicide risk among patients in case they would not meet the SPK's uncompromising demands.

13. The SPK - a particular German phenomenon

The question arises how one can explain the dramatic, intense, irreconcilable and violent nature of the conflict. There is not doubt that Dr. Huber's personality, failed career and subsequent vendetta against von Baeyer and his colleagueus are a key factor. However the SPK has to be seen in a wider context of German history. The SPK was a typical phenomenon of the German 1968 movement. A number of scholars believe that the polarisation in postwar German society in the 1960ies was much more extreme, the threshold towards violence much lower than England, France, the Netherlands and the United States who had a much longer tradition and culture of democracy. As the German historian, who has investigated the deeper roots of National Socialism, Götz Aly, notes: The special nature of the German "68" is due to the "late nation" and the legacy of the Nazi period. The non-resistance of the pre-war and war-generation against the Nazi tyranny and their failure to confront themselves with their responsibility and guilt drove the young generation of the 1960ies into some kind of "panicky avoidance reaction, an errant escape into feverish revolutionary nightmares". The writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger, one of the leading ideologues of the German 68ers set the line in 1964 by equalizing Auschwitz with the potential megadeath of the arms race in the cold war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the message being, that a second "final solution" had to be prevented. Instead of confronting the Nazi generation with their deeds the 68ers targeted as their main enemy figures the U.S. for fighting the war in Vietnam along with the West-

¹⁵ See Pross, "Wir wollten...", Hubert Tellenbach, note 1582, p. 397.
German State as its ally. The police brutality in the early period of the student rebellion seemed to prove that this State was of a fascist nature. After the West-Berlin police killed a student during the anti-Sha demonstration in Berlin in June 1967, Gudrun Ensslin, one of the later leaders of the Red Army Faction, is quoted to have screamed during a student meeting: "This fascist state is about to kill all of us. Violence is the only way to answer violence. This is the Auschwitz generation, and there's no arguing with them!"16

Looking at the SPK it is striking how in its pamphlets and its public statements it frequently projects Nazi analogies on its adversaries. The SPK insulted von Baeyer - whose Jewish roots, anti-Nazi attitude and engagement were beyond doubt - in a complete distortion of reality as a "desk murderer" (an analogy to Adolf Eichmann) practising euthanasia against the mentally ill. The SPK called the State Secretary of Education's order of eviction an act of "pogrome baiting" and "conscious liquidation of mentally ill patients (=euthanasia)". The group generally vilified the SPK adversaries' actions as "mass murder" and a "Kristallnacht against the sick".17 Some SPK-members who later joined the Red Army Faction justified the armed struggle as an act of defense against the impending recurrence of fascism in Germany, a preventive act against the ostensible building of a new Nazi Reich.18 One of the most outspoken self-critical persons from this group, Klaus Jünschke, believes that "our blind destructiveness had its roots in the unsurmounted pre-1945 history". At age 16 he had started reading books about the Nazi crimes with pictures of gas chambers and piles of dead bodies, which he could not talk about with his parents, who he assumes must have gone through an abominable process of rigidification and brutalization during the war. By demonstrating against the Vietnam the postwar generation according to Jünschke had not automatically mutated into the enlightened new human being. The 68ers extreme hatred deeply rooted in Germany's feudal "tradition of the subject"19 (which other 68ers call the culture of obedience, C.P.).20

It must be taken into account that the 68ers' sweeping Nazi analogies had a substantial kernel of truth. The faculties in German universities in the 1960ies were full of former Nazis, particularly in Heidelberg21. When U.S. troops occupied Heidelberg in early 1945 David Pelham, a German Jewish emigré and intelligence officer in the US army, was in charge of the denacification of Heidelberg university. After a detailed research of university adminstration files he came to the conclusion that the Heidelberg faculty was "nazified to the

17 See Pross, "Wir wollten...", pp. 297ff.
18 See Pross, "Wir wollten...", eye-witness Taufer, p. 378.
19 Synonym: subservient, the German word is "Untertan"
20 See Pross, "Wir wollten...", eye-witness Jünschke, p. 376 f.
21 See above p. 4: the old boys network of Nazi physicians and nurses in von Baeyer's Department
core". He demanded the dismissal of numerous professors including the university president and renowned surgeon Karl-Heinricht Bauer, whom he identified as a leading advocate of "Nazi racial hygiene" in charge of forced sterilizations of the mentally ill and the handicapped. Bauer in turn managed to orchestrate a defamation campaign against Pelham, denigrating him in letters to his superiors in the US military government as a psychopath driven by "pathological hatred against the university". Bauer's intrigue was successful. Pelham one morning found out that all the material he had collected against Bauer and other Nazi faculty members had mysteriously disappeared from his office. Subsequently he was transferred to another department by the military government. Bauer remained university president and all the other Nazi faculty remained in office.  

Bauer then played a key role in the reconstruction of the Heidelberg medical faculty and in 1964 was appointed director of the newly founded German Cancer Research Institute. In the summer of 1968 Bauer was confronted by a group of critical students and young doctors with his involvement in the Nazi forced sterilization program and for a second time managed to evade accountability for his deeds with the help of his faculty colleagues.

Another example of the continuity of old Nazi faculty is Prof. Werner Conze, chair of History and Prof. Rendtorff's predecessor as university president from 1969 until 1970. Conze, who became member of the SA brownshirts in 1933 and joined the Nazi party in 1937 during the war was in charge of Nazi race and population politics in the occupied Eastern territories including the "dejudification of Polish towns and villages". Conze managed to camouflage his Nazi past after the war, which was only exposed in 1998, 12 years after his death, by Götz Aly during the annual meeting of the German Historical Society. In the years between 1968 and 1972 Conze belonged to the spearhead of right wing professors battling against the rebellious students.

The presence of these identified or unidentified ghosts of the Nazi past were the source of a diffuse, almost paranoid, sense of anxiety and menace among the postwar generation, which is something I personally remember vividly. A fellow medical student who participated in a seminar on concentration camps in the Department of History in 1968 presented a paper on the "omnipresence of the concentrationary society" in which he suggested that the "external harmlessness of our society, is the banality and harmlessness of a Rudolf Höss (commander of Auschwitz, C.P.), camouflaging an incredible viciousness. The difference between our present to the Nazi society is the former's higher degree of mystification of its terrorist character. It is a dangerous illusion to believe, that by returning to a liberal, formally

democratic political system we have overcome National Socialism. The contrary seems to be the case, that Nazism under the cover of democracy continues much more effectively by camouflage."

The German "68", Aly notes, "was substantially harder, more bullheaded and tedious than the English, French and American 68. The integrative and traditional forces in those countries who had fought and won the war as a war of defense were much stronger than in Germany, in which the society had lost its moral ground and inner elasticity."