

Militant itineraries

Manfred Roeder's travels abroad and their impact on his radicalization

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The German right-wing extremist Manfred Roeder traveled extensively. In addition to frequent outings to Germany's neighboring countries – Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, and Denmark – as well as brief visits to the United Kingdom, Roeder also engaged in intercontinental travels. Between 1974 and 1980, he repeatedly traveled to the autocratic Middle Eastern region, South Africa, and Namibia (still under rule of the apartheid system of South Africa), but also to democracies such as the USA and Canada, which had a much higher tolerance for Nazi propaganda than Germany.¹ After fleeing abroad in January 1978 to avoid a prison sentence, Roeder also traveled across Latin America, spending time in right-wing autocracies such as Brazil and Chile. He was there when he wrote:

›Since January, I have been traveling in many countries, including overseas. Everywhere I encounter openness and a willingness to help in the fight against the injustice that is being done to us and to many patriots in all countries. The enemy is seething, because he believed he had finished me off long ago.‹²

With these words, Roeder cast his travels not as routine political engagements but as pivotal moments in an ongoing struggle. He framed them as evidence of an international groundswell of support, a sign that his cause transcended national borders and resonated with sympathizers abroad. These travels were watershed moments in both symbolic and legal terms. Unlike postwar West Germany, where anti-Nazi laws restricted public support for National Socialism, the countries Roeder visited af-

- 1 Johannes Dafinger: ›Zu Gast bei Freunden‹: Die deutschsprachige extreme Rechte reist nach Süd(west)afrika/Namibia, 1960er- bis 1980er-Jahre (Paper presented at Lebenswelten der radikalen Rechten, Potsdam, 28. Juni 2024).
- 2 ›Seit Januar bin ich in vielen Ländern unterwegs, auch in Übersee. Überall finde ich Aufgeschlossenheit und Hilfsbereitschaft im Kampf gegen das Unrecht, das man uns und vielen Patrioten in allen Ländern antut. Der Gegner kocht, denn er glaubte mich längst erledigt zu haben.‹ Manfred Roeder, 55. Rundbrief, März 1978, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter BA), N1291/125.

forded him significantly more latitude in organizing ideological activities and distributing hateful propaganda. Brazil and Chile's right-wing autocracies, for example, welcomed former Nazis and neo-fascists alike, even establishing ›collaborative relations‹ with them.³ But if such journeys abroad were so crucial, as Roeder wrote, how exactly did they shape his worldview and influence his turn toward violence?

By analyzing the interplay between traveling abroad and domestic militancy, this chapter highlights the ways in which transnational exposure can transform and radicalize extremist worldviews into violent mobilization. Interactions with like-minded extremists, experiences of disappointment and encouragement, and impressions of moral and racial decline abroad not only confirmed Roeder's perceptions of a worldwide struggle against a shared enemy; they deepened his sense of embattlement and urgency, shaped his strategic decisions, and pushed him further toward violence. Building on the work of historians Galadriel Ravelli and Andrea Martini, this chapter shows that the impact of cross-border journeys moved from fortifying militant identity to catalyzing militant action.⁴ It thereby adds to the ›thin‹ body of scholarly literature on the role transnationalism plays within right-wing extremism, as historian Graham Macklin recently pointed out.⁵ Overall, I show how experiences of both confirmation and setbacks put Manfred Roeder more firmly on the pathway to terrorism.

Existing research has outlined the basics of Roeder's travels, listing destinations, contacts, and financial resources.⁶ However, while his time abroad has been acknowledged, its radicalizing effects remain unexplored. Previous accounts assert that his exile (1978-1979) or travels to Lebanon and Iran (1980) fueled his militarization without explaining how or why

3 Galadriel Ravelli/Anna Cento Bull: The Pinochet Regime and the Trans-Nationalization of Italian Neo-Fascism, in: Robert Leeson (Hg.): Hayek: A Collaborative Biography, Cham 2018, 361-393; Barton Swaim: Can the Nazis Teach Us Anything?, in: Wall Street Journal (25. Juli 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/can-the-nazis-teach-us-anything-e7cbd3ca> [27.7.2025].

4 Galadriel Ravelli: Narratives of Neo-Fascist Transnational Trajectories: Travellers, Warriors or ›National-Tourists‹?, in: Journal of Modern Italian Studies 26.3 (2021), S. 333-53; Andrea Martini: Travelling to See, Reading to Believe: Being Fascists after the End of the Second World War, in: Contemporary European History 33.3 (2024), S. 1060-1077.

5 Graham Macklin: Evaluating ›Transnationalism‹ as an Analytical Lens for Understanding REMVE Terrorism, in: CTC Sentinel 17.11 (2024), S. 1.

6 Florian Schubert: »Terrorismus ist die einzige Hoffnung für Deutschland!« – Die »Deutschen Aktionsgruppen«, in: Hendrik Puls/Fabian Virchow (Hg.): Rechtsterrorismus in der alten Bundesrepublik: Historische und sozialwissenschaftliche Perspektiven, Wiesbaden 2023, S. 65-92; Darius Muschiol: Einzeltäter? Rechtsterroristische Akteure in der alten Bundesrepublik, Göttingen 2024.

this was so.⁷ They overlook the impact of these experiences on his political strategy and shifting alliances. What did Roeder seek and find abroad that he lacked in the FRG? How did these experiences shape his perceptions and plans? To answer these questions, I analyze four key journeys Roeder embarked on: his visit to the Ku Klux Klan's World Nationalist Congress (Louisiana, 1976), a Hitler birthday gathering (Brazil, 1978), his trip to Lebanon and Iran (1980), and the Aryan Nations Conference (Idaho, 1980). These journeys stand out because Roeder himself framed them as ›turning points‹ that shaped his decisions. As such, these trips explain why Roeder took certain actions at that exact moment in time, rather than earlier or later. The connection between these cross-border journeys and his subsequent actions helps clarify the timing of his radicalization. By tracing the meetings, impressions, and realizations Roeder himself identified as crucial, I adopt a first-person perspective, shedding light on the factors that extremists explicitly invoke to justify their path toward violence.⁸

Recent scholarship on West German right-wing terrorism has uncovered a persistent and violent right-wing extremist movement that has long escaped serious attention – one that continued to evolve both within West Germany's borders and, as I demonstrate in this chapter, through transnational contacts. These studies have revealed how, since the 1960s, right-wing terrorism in West Germany has developed as a persistent and continuous phenomenon that was strongly embedded within the right-wing extremist milieu. Barbara Manthe identified the 1970s as a formative period in which personnel continuities, the circulation of enemy im-

7 Sebastian Gräfe: *Rechtsterrorismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Zwischen erlebnisorientierten Jugendlichen, »Feierabendterroristen« und klandestinen Untergrundzellen*, Baden-Baden 2017, S. 128, 131, 238; Daniel Koehler: *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century. The »National Socialist Underground« and the History of Terror from the Far-Right in Germany*, Oxon 2017, S. 83; Barbara Manthe: *On the Pathway to Violence: West German Right-Wing Terrorism in the 1970s*, in: *Terrorism and Political Violence* 33.1 (2021), S. 63; Bernhard Rabert: *Links- und Rechtsterrorismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1970 bis heute*, Bonn 1995, S. 277; Rainer Fromm: *Die »Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann«: Darstellung, Analyse und Einordnung: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen und europäischen Rechts-extremismus*, Frankfurt a. M. 1998, S. 239-40; Thomas Grumke: *The Transatlantic Dimension of Right-Wing Extremism*, in: *Human Rights Review* 4.4 (2003), S. 65 f. The exception is Muschiol (Anm. 6), S. 291-93, 307 f.

8 Rik Peels: *A Paradigm for Studying Extreme Belief and Behavior. Introduction to the Series*, in: Beatrice de Graaf (Hg.): *The Radical Redemption Model: Terrorist Beliefs and Narratives*, Oxford 2024, S. 7-10; Beatrice de Graaf: *Why Do We Need to Historicize Terrorism, and How Should We Do It?*, in: Rik Peels/John Horgan (Hg.): *Conceptualizing Extreme Beliefs and Behaviors: Definitions and Relations*, Oxford 2025, S. 46-48.

ages, and the transfer of knowledge and strategy laid the foundation for right-wing terrorism in the 1980s.⁹ Zooming in on the anti-Semitic double murder of Shlomo Lewin and Frida Poeschke in Erlangen in 1980 by Uwe Behrendt (Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann), Uffa Jensen emphasized anti-Semitism as a central driver of right-wing radicalization. Particularly relevant to this chapter's transnational focus is Jensen's observation that members of WSG Hoffmann were exposed to practices of drill and torture in a paramilitary training camp run by the Palestine Liberation Organization in Jordan – an experience that fueled their radicalization.¹⁰ Most recently, Darius Muschiol challenged the long-prevailing myth of right-wing terrorists like Behrendt as lone actors. He found that out of 133 right-wing terrorists active between 1949 and 1990, only five received no demonstrable support before or after their attacks; all others were (inter) nationally well-connected, embedded in both right-wing extremist networks and broader society, and had established professional structures.¹¹

The chapter's first section sketches Manfred Roeder's extremist career before 1976. The second section focuses on Roeder's travels abroad. It commences with Roeder's 1976 overseas visit to the World Nationalist Congress in Metairie, Louisiana, then takes us to a German-owned hotel in the Brazilian village of Itatiaia, where Roeder attended a National Socialist celebration in 1978. From there, we follow Roeder to the Middle East in January-February 1980, before arriving at the compound of Aryan Nations in Hayden Lake, Idaho in July 1980. These four vignettes of Roeder's cross-border journeys converge to convey the impact of transnational interaction and experiences on his turn towards violence, his need to impress allies abroad, and his claims of executing Germany's liberation. The conclusion weighs transnational and domestic factors, arguing that both are essential to fully understand right-wing extremist radicalization.

9 Manthe (Anm. 7).

10 Uffa Jensen: Ein antisemitischer Doppelmord: die vergessene Geschichte des Rechtsterrorismus in der Bundesrepublik, Berlin 2022, S. 13, 227-229.

11 Muschiol (Anm. 6), S. 432.

Cross-border journeys: a specific type of transnational interaction

Elsewhere, I have elaborated a framework of transnational interaction and exchange to trace cross-border right-wing extremist connections as well as the consequences of these connections for domestic radicalization.¹² In brief, the framework distinguishes between indirect and direct contact. In the indirect mode, the sender and receiver do not know each other, whereas this personal connection is a requirement for the direct mode. In practice, indirect contact involves expressions of support and solidarity, shared ideological beliefs, and the adoption of other groups' propaganda, symbols, and violent tactics. Direct contact ranges from face-to-face or written ideological exchanges, resource sharing (like funds, weapons, and knowledge), and even collaborative operations, such as joint planning and execution of violent actions. The framework thereby divides indirect and direct contact in three categories: ideological, logistical, and operational respectively.

Here, I propose to add a fourth category of transnational interactions to the framework: the experiential category that captures the transformative impact of travels abroad.¹³ While some cross-border journeys served ideological, logistical, and operational goals, others had profound effects on the course of action taken by the person who made the journey. For example, the American neo-Nazi Gary Lauck, upon returning from West Germany in late 1972, felt disillusioned by the ineffective state of the German movement, while Roeder returned from the USA in September 1976, energized by his American comrades' candid fervor. They utilized these diverse experiences to decide on new courses of action: Lauck shifted from an armed underground struggle to a propaganda war in Germany, and Roeder began to advocate militant action. The men's contrasting impressions of the movement on the other side of the Atlantic and their subsequent decisions exemplify how travels abroad may inspire new blueprints for action, strengthen the resolve to use violence, or broaden the horizon of potential threats.

12 Annelotte Janse: *From Letters to Bombs. Transnational Ties of West German Right-Wing Extremists, 1972-1978*, in: *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 14.3 (2022), S. 241-258.

13 Annelotte Janse: *The Pursuit of »White Security«*. *Transnational Entanglements between West German and American Right-Wing Extremists, 1961-1980*, PhD thesis, Utrecht 2024, S. 28-31.

Transnational journeys of (right-wing) militants have been the topic of previous research. Historians Galadriel Ravelli and Andrea Martini conceptualized extremist mobility and transnational travels as activities that distinctly affected militant identities. Using autobiographies, Ravelli studied how three Italian neo-fascists ›made sense of their transnational experience.‹¹⁴ Operating transnationally enabled these neo-fascists to narratively recast their identities, from being politically sidelined and marginalized domestically to becoming a warrior who waged the same ideological battle elsewhere, thus shaping their ›political performance.‹¹⁵ Martini, demonstrating the earliest years after 1945 to be a phase of neo-fascist ›ideological tourism,‹ noted how traveling abroad helped neo-fascists acquire or regain political prestige, increase their knowledge, and refine their political agendas, strengthening their connections overall.¹⁶ More importantly, Martini argued, travel helped ›develop a common understanding of [...] the political moves to make in the future‹ and ›a sense of belonging to the same political universe.‹¹⁷ The studies highlight how transnational mobility reshaped individual militant identities and fostered a shared ideological framework.

Yet by the late 1970s, cross-border journeys influenced right-wing extremist practices beyond the mere shaping of identity. Building on Martini's work, this chapter argues that such travels spurred tactical planning, mobilization, and radicalization. To examine this, I trace how Roeder reacted – during and after his travels – to social interactions and experiences abroad, and how these shaped, confirmed, altered, or accelerated his plans.

Manfred Roeder's political career before 1976

Roeder's youth and student years suggested his drive and capacity for political commitment. Born and raised in a middle-class family in Berlin-Friedenau, Roeder (1929) and his four siblings were raised in a Christian and National Socialist spirit.¹⁸ His parents – his father a senior government official and his mother a bank employee – had joined the NSDAP in 1931.¹⁹

14 Ravelli (Anm. 4), S. 339.

15 Ibid., S. 349-350.

16 Martini (Anm. 4), S. 1061.

17 Ibid., S. 1061, 1075.

18 Hauptabteilung VII/6, Bericht (Potsdam, 17. Juli 1965), S. I, BA, MfS, AIM, 5425/70, Bd. I.

19 Oberlandesgericht Stuttgart, Urteil gegen Roeder u. a., (28. Juni 1982), S. II, BA, B136/32184.

During the war, Roeder attended a Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt (NAPOLA) but left at age 15 to volunteer for the Volkssturm and Wehrmacht. When, on April 30, 1945, Russian soldiers forced the surrender of Roeder's regiment, which was part of Berlin's defence perimeter, Roeder narrowly escaped capture by hiding in the Havel river until nightfall, determined to remain out of Russian hands.²⁰

Whereas many of his generation became part of the so-called ›45ers‹ who fiercely supported democracy, in part through their travels to other western democracies, Roeder went in the opposite direction. After the war, he studied law in Berlin, Münster, and Bonn, passing his first ›juristische Staatsexamen‹ in 1956, but subsequently paused his legal career to join the American movement Moral Re-Armament (MRA), with which he had become acquainted already in 1950.²¹ The MRA promoted an evangelical, anti-communist worldview.²² Until 1961, Roeder worked as a ›freelancer‹ for the MRA and ›traveled around constantly‹, taking up social internships in South Wales and the USA, where he spent one and a half years in each country, and visiting Paris, London, and Geneva.²³ In these years, he learned to speak and write English fluently, came to view the world from ›a journalist's perspective,‹ and developed a knack for polemics, charisma, and networking.²⁴ His years as an anti-communist MRA missionary cultivated the skills that later translated his ideological views into effective action.

Historian Sebastian Bischoff has demonstrated how, in the late 1960s, Roeder's *Rechtsruck* followed in the slipstream of outrage over the legalisation of the distribution of pornographic materials.²⁵ In one journalist's words, the law's liberalisation caused ›a wave of porn‹ to wash over West Germany, stirring outrage among the CDU, of which Roeder had been

20 OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 11-12.

21 Ibid., S. 13.

22 The MRA, established in the 1910s, enjoyed great popularity in the two decades after 1945, when the Cold War reached its apex, and brought together politicians, industrialists, and union leaders who aimed to achieve ›moral reconciliation‹ through non-diplomatic channels. See also Daniel Sack, *Moral Re-Armament: The Reinventions of an American Religious Movement*, New York 2009.

23 Bundeskriminalamt, Anlage 3: Verantwortliche Vernehmung Manfred Roeder (26. Februar 1975), S. 1, BA, B141/60273; Hauptabteilung VII/6 (Anm. 18), S. 1.

24 OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 13; Hauptabteilung VII/6 (Anm. 18), S. 1; Jochen Maes, *Die Macht-Ergreifung*, in: *Penthouse* (1980), S. 145-46, Generalbundesanwalt beim Bundesgerichtshof Karlsruhe (hereafter GBA), Kiste 1, Bd. 1.

25 Sebastian Bischoff: *Nation und Perversion. Der »Anti-Porno-Anwalt« Manfred Roeder und sein Übergang in die völkisch-radikalnationalistische Rechte, 1969-1975*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 48.4 (2022), S. 584-618.

a member since 1965, and the NPD.²⁶ In tune with these right-wing factions, Roeder equated pornography's unhindered circulation to the ›systematic destruction of our morals‹ resulting from ›corruptive cultural politics‹ that would turn Germany into ›the dirtiest country in the world‹ and threatened its cultural heritage, identity, and unity.²⁷ The lack of successful public resistance against the law – despite a total of 35,965 signatures submitted to the Bundestag by mid-1971²⁸ – convinced Roeder that Germany's moral downfall could not be stopped by either politicians or ›appeals to conscience‹ alone.²⁹ By 1970, saving Germany had become a matter of ›self-help‹ to Roeder who, in the next two years, established the precursor to the Deutsche Bürgerinitiative (DBI).³⁰ He also launched provocative actions against ›swinish sex affairs,‹ sabotaged viewings of erotic movies, and stole porn magazines from a newsstand; a theft he later justified as ›an act of self-defence.‹³¹ His actions earned him both the nickname ›anti-porn lawyer‹ from the traditional press and the approval of right-wing newspapers.³²

From 1973 onwards, Roeder began gradually replacing his anti-porn crusade with the classic Nazi credos of anti-Semitism. He lost his confidence in 1973 when writing the foreword to SS veteran Thies Christophersen's *Die Auschwitz-Lüge*, a Holocaust denialist pamphlet that became an ›under-the-counter bestseller‹ in Holocaust revisionist circles.³³ In 1974, Roeder participated in a lecture tour organized by Christophersen.

26 Müdes Lächeln, in: Der Spiegel (50/1969), 7.12.1969.

27 Bürgerinitiative gegen den Sex-Terror, in: Deutsche Wochen-Zeitung (13. Oktober 1972), apabiz, Berlin, Roeder, Ordner 6; Roeder, 4. Rundbrief DBI (September 1971), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam (hereafter IISH), ZK55018; Manfred Roeder, Presse-Erklärung und Einladung: Justiz auf der Anklagebank – Hauptschuldiger an der Pornowelle (7. Februar 1972), IISH, ZK55018.

28 Bischoff (Anm. 25), S. 592.

29 OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 14.

30 Bischoff (Anm. 25), S. 602. Roeder left the CDU in the same year.

31 Roeder, 11. Rundbrief (August 1972), IISH, ZK55018; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, Erkenntnisse über Roeder (27. September 1974), BA, B106/101969, Bd. 2; Roeder, 29. Rundbrief (Mai 1975), IISH, ZK55018; Fromm (Anm. 7), S. 238.

32 St. Porno, in: Der Spiegel (1971); Manfred Roeder, Soll Deutschland ein einziges Bordell werden?, in: Das Reich (Oktober 1971), Searchlight Archives, Northampton (hereafter SA), SCH/01/Res/EUR/05/001; Schulungsbrief 1, [1975], in: PDI Sonderheft 17: VSBD (o. J.), BA, Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (hereafter MfS), ZAIG 30255.

33 Manfred Roeder: Vorwort, in: Die Auschwitz-Lüge. Ein Erlebnisbericht von Thies Christophersen, Mohrkirch 1973, S. 8-15; Thies Christophersen: Reflections on Auschwitz and West German Justice, in: The Journal of Historical Review 6.1 (1985), S. 117-121.

Speaking in Ruhekrug on July 21, Roeder announced that he had finally found ›the source of the disease‹ that had caused the ›plague of pornography‹ to break out ›in the first place‹: ›And sure enough, as we can also read in *Mein Kampf*, behind every problem there is usually a little Jew. The same goes for pornography.‹³⁴ A little under three weeks later, on August 8, Roeder continued that thought, stating that

›... through my anti-pornography campaign, I have arrived at this central question of the German Reich and I suddenly realize that the fight against moral decay in the Federal Republic is closely intertwined with the question of the Reich. This moral neglect that has taken hold among us was only made possible after the destruction of the German Reich, and it would never have occurred if we had won the war. I would even claim that 99 % of the world's problems today would not exist if Germany had won the war.‹³⁵

Roeder's ideological views had come full circle. He blamed Jewish people for the legalization of pornographic materials and asserted that the German Reich, had it not been defeated, would have prevented the nation's moral downfall caused by pornography because – although Roeder did not say this part out loud – the German Reich would have exterminated the Jewish people. Instead, after 1945 Germany had been divided and, according to Roeder, West Germany had become a ›colonial province of American-Jewish observants.‹³⁶ Interlaced with dreams of returning the German Reich to its former size and glory, this line of revanchist, anti-Semitic, and Nazi reasoning laid the groundwork for Roeder's next step: organizing Germany's liberation with his *Freiheitsbewegung Deutsches Reich*.³⁷ Roeder's road towards realizing that armed liberation movement had a distinctly transnational dimension.

34 ›... ich bin mit meinem Anti-Pornokampf bei dieser zentralen Frage des Deutschen Reiches gelandet und sehe plötzlich, daß der Kampf gegen die Sittenverwilderung in der Bundesrepublik zentral verflochten ist mit der Frage nach dem Deutschen Reich. Denn, diese Vewahrlosung, die bei uns eingezogen ist, war eben nur möglich nach der Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reiches und wäre niemals möglich gewesen, wenn wir den Krieg gewonnen hätten. Ich behaupte sogar, 99 % aller Probleme in der Welt heute gäbe es nicht, wenn Deutschland den Krieg gewonnen hätte.‹ Anlage 6: Übertragung der »Rede Roeder am 21. Juli 1974 in Ruhekrug/Schleswig« (21. Juli 1974), S. 4, BA, B141/60273.

35 Anlage 7: Übertragung der »Rede des Rechtsanwaltes Roeder in Ratjensdorf« (8. August 1974), S. 4 f., BA, B141/60273.

36 Anlage 6 (Anm. 34), S. 10.

37 Janse (Anm. 12), S. 187 f.; Schubert (Anm. 6), S. 70.

Roeder on tour. A ›world-wide Anti-Jewish Congress‹
in Louisiana, 1976

David Duke, a rising star on the firmament of American white supremacism, had invited ca. 300 ›Racial Nationalists‹ from all over the world – including Roeder – to join his World Nationalist Congress (WNC) in Metairie, Louisiana, from September 8 to 12, 1976.³⁸ With invitations distributed across three continents, adverts placed in nationalist magazines, and travel arrangements made, anticipation for the Congress was accordingly high.³⁹ The League of St. George (LSG), a British neo-Nazi group that promoted ›European‹ Nationalism, had billed the WNC in its propaganda materials as a ›promise to be the greatest step forward, taken by the White Race during the past 30 years, in our fight to save Western Civilisation‹.⁴⁰ On the evening before the 8th, James K. Warner – Louisiana Grand Dragon of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (KKKK), Duke's co-organizer, and leader of the New Christian Crusade Church (NCCC) – had invited some of the guests to a ›pre-congress cocktail party‹ at his home.⁴¹ The evening was later recounted as ›filled with the good comradeship of white people enjoying the company of other white people dedicated to an international struggle against Jewish-Communism‹.⁴² The pre-party set the tone for the talks that followed over the next four days.

Despite their different backgrounds, the international horde of extremists attending the WNC addressed the same topics: the survival and liberation of, and security for, the white race. For the many American segregationists in attendance, the issue of race was a focal point that was all the more urgent given the issuance of government policies promoting af-

38 James K. Warner: Dear Christian Friend, in: *The Liberty Bell* (August 1976), IISH, ZDK48053; Tyler Bridges: *The Rise of David Duke*, Jackson 1994, S. 58. Attending organizations included Vlaamse Militanten Orde, League of St. George, Canadian Western Guard Party; National States Rights' Party, New Christian Crusade Church, and Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, as well as Roeder and his accomplice Alexi Erlanger. Michael Newton: *The National States Rights Party: A History*, Jefferson 2017, K. 14; World Nationalist Congress, in: *Christian Vanguard* (Oktober 1976), SA, SCH/01/RES/US/06/002; Manfred Roeder, 41. Rundbrief (Oktober 1976), Apabiz, Roeder Ordner 3.

39 Warner (Anm. 38).

40 Owen Masters: *League Overseas*, International Newsletter No. 3 (o.J.), SA, SCH/01/Res/BRI/18/002.

41 Convention Week-Success for KKKK, in: *The Crusader: Special Anti-Busing Issue* (1976), Duke University, Durham NC, Southern Poverty Law Center, Intelligence Project Collection (hereafter SPLC).

42 Ibid.

firmative action. Duke blamed the civil rights movement, which was devoted to ending American segregationist policies, for marginalizing white Americans.⁴³ The LSG voiced similar concerns, but in explicitly racist terms; they stressed the need to ›strike the first blow for WHITE RACE SURVIVAL‹. As ›Jews [...] now occupy Palestine‹ where they ›work for the survival of their race‹ and ›[t]he Black race have countries [...] where Blacks from all over the world are welcome‹, so too should ›White men‹, the invitation read. ›White Nationalists MUST work together, we MUST gain control in at least one country, which will openly support the White Race.‹⁴⁴ The Congress attendees found additional common ground in their shared perception of enemy and threat. Duke and the LSG set Jewish people up as the ›masterminds‹ culpable for orchestrating desegregation. They thereby framed Black people, and people of color more broadly, as proxies of a purported international Jewish conspiracy intent on dominating the world.⁴⁵ As the *Christian Vanguard* reported as well: ›The World Nationalist Congress was actually a world-wide Anti-Jewish Congress.‹⁴⁶ Such shared vocabularies of threat, enemy, and interest gave right-wing extremists the ›measure of coherence‹ necessary for an international movement to coalesce.

Roeder joined the WNC's anti-Semitic chorus, praising the ›clarity‹ with which the ›race and jewish [sic] problem‹ were discussed.⁴⁷ He reiterated claims he had made before at his ›Reichstag‹ in Flensburg in 1975.⁴⁸ In Flensburg, Roeder had declared the post-war Federal Republic of Germany and its government ›illegitimate‹, claiming it was a mere ›provisional administrative entity‹ falsely imposed by the Allies in 1945 and subsequently institutionalized in 1949 with the founding of the FRG.⁴⁹ To bolster his

43 Martin Durham: *White Rage: The Extreme Right and American Politics*, London 2007, S. 39.

44 Masters (Anm. 40).

45 See, e. g., Negro Blood Means Mongrelisation and Disease and Death. We are Tired of Rabbis Telling Christians to Mongrelize, in: *The Thunderbolt* (Oktober 1962), SPLC; Mongrels War on Europe, in: *The Thunderbolt* (Juli 1977), SA, SCH/01/Res/US/01/003.

46 World Nationalist Congress (Anm. 38).

47 Roeder (Anm. 38).

48 Janse (Anm. 12), S. 187-191.

49 Manfred Roeder, 30. Rundbrief (Juni 1975), apabiz, Roeder Ordner 3; Manfred Roeder: *Ein Kampf um's Reich*, Schwarzenborn 1979, S. 61. The claim that Hitler's Reichsregierung had never surrendered its political power was widely spread in far-right circles, see Gavriel D. Rosenfeld: *The Fourth Reich: The Specter of Nazism from World War II to the Present*, Cambridge 2019; Sebastian Lotto-Kusche: *Der »Reichstag zu Flensburg«* am 23. Mai 1975. *Wendepunkt der extremen Rech-*

challenge to the FRG as the ›legal successor of the Reich,‹⁵⁰ Roeder had corresponded with Großadmiral Dönitz and asked the ostensible éminence grise ›once again to write to me clearly and unequivocally whether you are still the legal President of the Reich today or when you resigned from this office.‹⁵¹ Dönitz answered he had not been elected but appointed head of state by Hitler and, rather ambiguously, left it to Roeder ›to draw the legal conclusions from this‹ – which Roeder did, to his own benefit.⁵² Now, in front of his American audience, Roeder ›described in detail the horrible conditions existing in Germany‹ since 1945 and asserted that ›Germany is still an occupied country, the Allies set up a corrupt Jewish government which is holding the German people under complete subjugation.‹ His audience received Roeder's words with ›a standing ovation.‹⁵³

On paper, the WNC was a success for Roeder who, in turn, framed it as ›a Copernican turning point in our history.‹ The WNC attendees ›unanimously approved‹ ten resolutions, the first of which ›emphasize[d] strong support for Mr. Roeder of Germany,‹ while the fifth endorsed Roeder's Reichstag claims, asserting that ›the German Reich did not perish in 1945.‹ The Congress delegates hence demanded the Reich's ›freedom from occupation troops.‹⁵⁴ Roeder reflected on the importance of these resolutions in his first post-WNC newsletter, writing that the battle was no longer a national one against ›our own countrymen:

›For the first time in our history, we no longer have our own order, but instead a total foreign rule imposed from outside. The existing system is anti-German, from its underlying ideas to its daily practices. No Germans exercise authority anymore; instead, it is an international clique. Germany is not only geographically occupied, but all intellectual and cultural values are under foreign control. [...] Now, our sole duty is to eliminate the opponent's order. [...] Yet we Germans are not alone. We are in the same boat as all other nations.‹⁵⁵

ten und selbst ernannter »Reichsbürger« zur Delegitimierung der Bundesrepublik, in: Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 63 (2023).

50 Roeder (Anm. 46), S. 72.

51 Roeder an Dönitz, 31. Januar 1975, in: Roeder (Anm. 46), S. 26.

52 Dönitz an Roeder, 6. Februar 1975, in: Roeder (Anm. 46), S. 27.

53 World Nationalist Congress (Anm. 35).

54 World Nationalist Congress (Anm. 35); Convention Week-Success (Anm. 38); International Antisemitic Congress 1976, in: Patterns of Prejudice 10.6 (1976), S. 11-12; Roeder (Anm. 35).

55 ›Zum ersten Mal in unserer Geschichte haben wir keine eigne Ordnung mehr, sondern eine von außen aufgezwungene totale Fremdherrschaft. Das bestehende System ist anti-deutsch von der Idee bis zur täglichen Praxis. Keine Deutschen üben

The transnational experience of recognition and confirmation of Roeder's postulated need to liberate Germany reinforced his resolve for action at home. When Roeder rushed home on September 25, 1976, after a thick fog over Iceland had trapped his return flight for 24 hours, he was late for the meeting he had organized himself with what he called ›the core‹ of the right-wing extremist movement.⁵⁶ About 60 extremists were present.⁵⁷ First, Roeder shared the news with them that he had secured financial support from American comrades – Warner had collected more than \$1,200 to pay one of Roeder's many fines and Duke had donated ›large sums of money‹.⁵⁸ Second, he insisted in increasingly ›strident terms‹ that ›the organizational structure of the NS movement in the FRG and West Berlin needed to be tightened‹. Among other things, Roeder demanded that actions be taken to ›make the existence of the NS movement unmistakably clear‹.⁵⁹ The proposed ›reinforcement‹ of the movement, Roeder argued, formed the ›essential basis for actions that had to be waged primarily against the Jews‹. Echoing the resolutions of the WNC, he reassured his audience at Haus Richberg that ››World Jewry‹ is far more dangerous‹ than any other threat. To combat it, Roeder promoted ›armed struggle‹.⁶⁰

The proposed measures radiated militancy, which did not go unnoticed. Listening to a three-and-a-half-hour Roeder speech about the results of his travels and meetings, some of the gathered extremists observed that ›Roeder had become extremely aggressive‹ during his time in the USA.⁶¹ Roeder's heightened thirst for revolutionary aggression transpired in his newsletters, too. In the October 1976 edition, Roeder referenced an article in Willis Carto's *The American Mercury* that called for a ›period of anarchy‹ to be unleashed in order to ›purify[y]‹ Germany and prevent it facing a fate similar to America: ›We must say yes to upheaval, to revolution,

mehr die Herrschaft aus, sondern eine internationale Klique. Deutschland ist nicht nur geographisch besetzt, sondern auch alle geistigen Werte sind fremdländisch besetzt. [...] Zum ersten Mal müssen wir die gesamte »Ordnung« ablehnen und bekämpfen. [...] Jetzt ist es unsere einzige Pflicht, diese Ordnung des Gegners zu besetzen. [...] Wir Deutschen stehen aber nicht allein. Wir sind mit allen Völkern im gleichen Boot.« Roeder 41. Brief (Anm. 35).

56 Ibid.; Roy Armstrong an Willis and Elisabeth Carto, 12. Oktober 1976, Kansas University, Papers of Willis A. Carto (hereafter PWC), Box 3, Folder 13b.

57 Operativ-Information Nr. 55 (28. September 1976), S. 1, BA, MFS, AOP, 184/89, Bd. 1.

58 Warner (Anm. 38); Roeder (Anm. 38).

59 Operativ-Information Nr. 55 (Anm. 57), S. 2 f.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

to chaos. Only then can the new, the healthy come. The great reckoning, the judgement is at the door.⁶²

While the WNC provided Roeder with a platform for recognition and ideological reinforcement, it is important to situate this event within the broader context of his five-week journey, which allegedly included visits to Canada and Mexico. To what extent, then, can one argue that it was specifically the WNC that radicalized him? Rather than marking a sudden shift, Roeder framed the WNC as the highlight of his trip. It served as a culminating moment in a longer process of ideological hardening, reinforcing the anti-Semitic perceptions he already harbored and expressed publicly. His participation in the WNC, therefore, did not fundamentally alter his worldview or introduce him to new enemies; it intensified his commitment to fighting them. What changed through his transnational trip, then, was not the content of his beliefs, but the urgency and militancy with which he sought to act upon them. The transnational experience of recognition and validation reinforced his resolve for action at home. Yet it would take two more years before this transnationally fueled radicalization manifested in actual decisions and practices.

Renewed radicalization in Brazil, 1978

After September 1976, the intensity of Roeder's radical fervor dwindled. He made a number of appearances at associated right-wing groups in Britain and Austria, but otherwise resorted to organizing public yet provocative demonstrations, making himself an easy target for German prosecutors.⁶³ The ensuing cycle of public provocations and court trials in 1977 – among others for organizing the Flensburger Reichstag – resulted in Roeder being ridiculed in the press and by right-wing underground hardliners such as Udo Albrecht and Paul Otte, with the latter likening Roeder's activities to 'a complete farce'.⁶⁴ A prison sentence of six months, handed to Roeder for the Flensburger Reichstag, caused Roeder to flee the country. Roeder justified his escape by stating his fear that once he was in prison, his sentence would be extended repeatedly. Typical of right-wing extremist

62 Roeder (Anm. 38).

63 BKA, Vermerk, Leseabschrift Wochen-Vormerkkalender 1977 (19. Oktober 1980), GBA, Kiste 7, Bd. 29.1.

64 Dietrich Strothmann: Hitlers Harlekine von heute, in: Die Zeit (1978); Schreiben GBA an StA Braunschweig (13. März 1980), S. 162 f., BA, B362/8011; Befragungsprotokoll des Albrecht, Udo (7. August 1981), S. 123 f., BA, MfS, AOPK, 25579/91, Bd. 2.

sacrificial narratives, Roeder cast himself as a ›political refugee‹ who lived in exile because an ›unjust state that does not protect true Germans‹ had ›persecuted‹ him for his ›patriotic beliefs.‹⁶⁵ In line with Ravelli's analysis of Italian neo-fascists, this narrative enabled Roeder to frame his escape as an act of self-defence. Yet it also set the stage for the next phase of his radicalization, where his transnational experiences began to translate into concrete actions and decisions.

On the run from the Bundeskriminalamt and Interpol, Roeder embarked on a neo-Nazi ›grand tour‹ between January 1978 and October 1979, paid with the donations of his sympathizers.⁶⁶ He traveled from Switzerland to Brazil on April 17, 1978. There, one event pushed Roeder's transnational radicalization into higher gear again: a party in honor of Hitler's 89th birthday, organized in a sleepy village in Brazil. Known as a refuge for wartime Nazis and post-war criminals since 1945, it is easy to understand why Roeder saw Brazil as a safe haven.⁶⁷ Since 1964, Brasil had been ruled by a right-wing military dictatorship that tortured and executed the left-wing opposition; nevertheless, many West German companies and politicians still maintained close relations to this country and the booming market in the 1970s.⁶⁸ In late April 1978, Roeder and his host, the wealthy German industrialist Josef Adolf Krall who lived in São Paulo, stayed at Hotel Tyll in Itaitiaia, a quiet town 120 kilometres from Rio de Janeiro. The invitation had been extended to them by the hotel's owner, Alfred Winkelmann, a German who had moved to Brazil in 1935 and led an Axis spy ring after Brazil had entered the war on the Allied side in 1942.⁶⁹ After the war, Winkelmann stayed in Brazil and maintained contact with German right-wing extremists.⁷⁰ In 1978, Winkelmann had invited ›guests

65 ›Weltweit Teutonic Unity‹, in: *Der Spiegel* (1981); Manfred Roeder, 3. Rundbrief EFB (September 1979), BA, N1291/125; OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 24; Manfred Roeder, 49. Rundbrief (August 1977), BA, N1291/125.

66 Roeder received ca. 172.900 DM, see Schubert (Anm. 6), S. 73.

67 Sarah R. Valente: *Post-World War II Brazil: A New Homeland for Jews and Nazis?*, in: *Comparative Cultural Studies – European and Latin American Perspectives* (2021), S. 75-87; Ana Maria Dietrich: *Nazismo tropical?: o Partido nazista no Brasil*, São Paulo 2012; Alan Riding: *Where Nazi Refugees Found the Climate to their Liking*, in: *New York Times*. 16.6.1985.

68 Frank Bösch: *Deals mit Diktaturen: Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*, München 2024, S. 311 f.

69 Nazi Upsurge Reported in Brazil, in: *The Detroit Jewish News* (30.6.1978); *Der Neonazi Roeder in Brasilien entdeckt*, in: *Die Tat* (16.7.1978).

70 Paul Otte was among Winkelmann's connections, see Alfred Winkelmann an Paul Otte, 19. März 1976, BA, B362/8044.

from all over the world« to join a meeting of the »Friends of April 20« in the final weekend of that month to honor Hitler's 89th birthday:

»We will have plenty of time and peace to enjoy being together. [...] We will also hear testimonies from other groups of friends who, like us, do not want to be the last of yesterday, but the first of tomorrow – and perhaps even the first of today on the path towards a more just and more powerful future for our people.«⁷¹

On April 21, 1978, Alfred Winkelmann, dressed in a tailor-made black uniform and accompanied by his dirndl-clad wife, opened the door of their hotel to find the police on their doorstep.⁷² Just before, an anonymous caller had informed the police that »a secret meeting of Communists« was taking place at Hotel Tyll. When the police and inquisitive reporters arrived, they found Winkelmann, Roeder, Krall, and others singing the »Horst Wessel Lied« upon their arrival. Inside, their eyes were drawn to a large poster of Hitler in the hotel's dining room, decorated with »stylized swastikas«, and several guests wore a small badge with three crossed torches on their lapel; the symbol of Roeder's *Freiheitsbewegung Deutsches Reich*.⁷³ For an hour or two, the police questioned the guests and searched their personal belongings. Unsurprisingly, the police found no traces of the alleged Communist meeting. The presence of classic anti-Semitic tracts such as »Mein Kampf« and »The Protocols of the Elders of Zion«, in combination with stickers and pamphlets such as »Kauft nicht bei Juden« and »Die Juden sind unser Unglück« rather pointed in the direction of National Socialism.

For Roeder, the disruption of the party in Itatiaia was nothing less than first-hand evidence of »the Jews« striving to disrupt »a Nazi conspiracy«, aiming to repress the Germans, their identity, and their ideals.⁷⁴ But for Roeder, the soured experience had a silver lining as well. In a letter to his wife Traudel, Roeder claimed that the Brazilian police officers had been in heartfelt agreement with his political ideals and »fight for freedom«.

71 »Wir werden viel Zeit und Ruhe haben, um gemütlich zusammen zu sein. [...] Wir werden auch Erklärungen von anderen Freundeskreisen hören, welche wie wir nicht die Letzten von gestern, aber die Ersten von morgen sein wollen – vielleicht aber auch die Ersten von heute auf dem Wege für eine gerechtere, kraftvollere Zukunft unseres Volkes.« »Wir sind nicht die Letzten von gestern«, in: *Der Spiegel* (24/1978), 11. 6. 1978.

72 *Ibid.*

73 Larry Rohter: *The Nazi Network*, in: *Washington Post* (31.7.1978); Emilia Silveira: *Nazismo como nos velhos tempos*, in: *Jornal do Brasil* (24.4.1978).

74 Roeder an Dönitz, 20. Mai 1978, in: Roeder (Anm. 49), S. 64.

The recognition by Brazilian state representatives had been the final impetus to officially take over the representation of the Reich, which Dönitz had already recommended three years earlier, according to Roeder.⁷⁵ He wasted little time. On May 20, he wrote Großadmiral Dönitz to announce he had taken over the position of Reich Regent (*Reichsverweser*) – a declaration Roeder found ›long overdue‹. Not just the situation in Germany had demanded Roeder's decision, but

›From my many trips abroad, I know how much the world is waiting for a voice from Germany. I experienced this again recently in Brazil. The Jews wanted to disrupt a meeting of German-Brazilians and denounce it as a Nazi conspiracy. But when we explained to the Brazilian authorities that our concern was solely for the freedom of our fatherland, which has been unlawfully occupied for 33 years, we were met only with support and sympathy. They expressed the greatest understanding for a freedom movement, as they too had once fought for their own freedom.‹⁷⁶

With the help of the American-based Georg P. Dietz, owner of the anti-Semitic publishing house Liberty Bell, and Alexi Erlanger, Roeder published a ›Declaration of Principles and Appeal‹.⁷⁷ In the pamphlet, which was sent along with the regular newsletter, Roeder declared to take over ›the provisional representation [for the Reich] for a transitional period until the formation of a free German government‹ in name of the *Freiheitsbewegung Deutsches Reich*.⁷⁸

Thus, Roeder utilized the disrupted birthday party to not only legitimize but enact the continuation of the German Reich government. Because Roeder was increasingly being ridiculed in both the West German press and right-wing extremist movement, he clearly needed additional confirmation, which he claimed to have received from the Brazilian po-

75 Emphasis mine. BKA, Auswertungsbericht zu Asservaten aus dem Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Roeder (14. April 1981), S. 39 f., GBA, Kiste 3, Bd. 21.

76 ›Von meinen vielen Auslandsreisen weiß ich, wie sehr die Welt auf eine Stimme aus Deutschland wartet. Erst jetzt wieder habe ich es in Brasilien erlebt. Die Juden wollten ein Treffen von Deutsch-Brasilianern stören und als Nazi-Verschöpfung brandmarken. Als wir den brasilianischen Behörden erklärten, daß es uns nur um die Freiheit unseres Vaterlandes ginge, was seit 33 Jahren widerrechtlich besetzt sei, erhielten wir nur Zuspruch und Sympathien. Für eine Freiheitsbewegung hätten sie größtes Verständnis, denn schließlich hätten sie auch um ihre Freiheit kämpfen müssen.‹ Roeder an Dönitz, 20. Mai 1978, in: Roeder (Anm. 49), S. 64.

77 *Freiheitsbewegung Deutsches Reich*, Grundsatzzerklärung und Aufruf, in: Roeder (Anm. 49), S. 61–63.

78 *Ibid.*, S. 61–63.

lice officers. Yet the moment's impact extended beyond his identity as a self-styled ›warrior‹: the episode in Itatiaia clarifies why Roeder chose to officially declare himself *Reichsverweser* in May 1978, rather than earlier, despite having entertained the idea since 1975.

Middle Eastern disappointments, 1980

From October 13 to 20, 1979, after several trips abroad, Roeder found shelter with Heinz Colditz in Kirchheim unter Teck, where he met the future members of the German Action Groups (*Deutsche Aktionsgruppen*, hereafter DA): Raimund Hörnle, who was a political friend of Colditz's, Colditz's daughter Gabrielle, and her friend Sybille Vorderbrügge. By January 13, 1980 at the latest, the DA was officially established.⁷⁹ The group aimed to confront institutions related to the Holocaust, ›intimidate‹ asylum seekers, compel them to ›return home‹, and ›shake up the public and pressure the government‹ to restrict the FRG's asylum policies.⁸⁰ Roeder viewed the act of wounding and killing immigrants as a strike against the ›Jewish‹ system, which he held accountable for the perceived foreign infiltration (*Überfremdung*) of the Germans. The violence, for which the group amassed a substantial arsenal of weapons, served the DA's goal of revolutionary liberation of the country. But for Roeder, the violence was connected to another goal: securing international support and cooperation.

On 16 January, Roeder deliberately set course to the Middle East. Writing in Thies Christophersen's extreme right-wing magazine *Die Bauernschaft*, Roeder had stressed that unleashing a revolution similar to the Islamic Revolution in Iran (November 1978 – February 1979) was one of his goals and reasons for traveling to that country.⁸¹ The new Islamist autocracy of Iran shared many beliefs with Roeder: the large Jewish community in Iran was forced to leave the country, and the Americans were seen as former occupiers and chased out of the country while members of their embassy were taken as hostages. German and American right-wing extremists alike applauded the Islamic Revolution because of its establishment of a racially nationalist and perturbing anti-Semitic regime.⁸² Still,

79 OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 61f., 69f.; Schubert (Anm. 6), S. 73.

80 OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 16), S. 130.

81 Die Bauernschaft 1 (März 1980), S. 73, apabiz; Anton Maegerle: Die iranische Rechtsextremisten-Connection, in: Vierteljahresheft Tribüne. Zeitschrift zum Verständnis des Judentums 178 (2006), S. 3.

82 Meir Litvak: The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust: Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism, in: Journal of Israeli History 25.1 (2006), S. 267-284; German Fascist

Roeder's exhilarated admiration for Khomeini was quite exceptional. His objectives in Libanon and Iran were threefold: first, to obtain asylum in Iran, a request he had already filed as a self-professed political ›refugee‹ prior to his journey.⁸³ Second and more importantly, he wanted to meet with officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and representatives of the Iranian regime to secure political and financial backing for the revolutionary overthrow of the West German government. And third, he wanted to learn from the Iranian Revolution how to stage his own uprising in West Germany.⁸⁴

As the stakes were high and largely unattainable, they amplified the radicalizing effect of the journey. Roeder arrived in Beirut via Switzerland, having secured a Lebanese visa under a false name. On January 21 and 22, he met with two PLO representatives, hoping to secure their support.⁸⁵ Roeder had outlined his strategy in his diary: he would present himself as ›the well-known anti-Zionist in Germany‹ who was ›hunted and pursued by Interpol‹ for leading the German Liberation Movement.⁸⁶ Drawing parallels between the Palestinian struggle against Israel and his own against the FRG, he sought PLO backing to combat what he called the ›Jewish occupation‹ of both Palestine and Germany. In return, Roeder offered the PLO political recognition, cooperation, and assistance in establishing a government-in-exile.⁸⁷ His first efforts were in vain. Roeder described both PLO officials as ›insipid‹ and placed his hopes on Tehran, where he expected support from higher-ranking officials.⁸⁸

But on January 30, he once again met with indifference: ›A benevolent nod of the head is the whole answer.‹⁸⁹ A brief respite came on February 5, when he visited a bazaar in Tehran and purchased a Persian ›rug,‹ as

Still at Large, in: Searchlight (Juni 1980), SA, SCH/01/RES/SCH/003. For right-wing extremist views of Khomeini similar to Roeder's, see Ben Klassen: The era of political parties is over, in: Racial Loyalty 19 (Dezember 1984), S. 1-3; Conrad E. Volmar: Iran: A populist revolution, in: The New Order (März 1979), SPLC; National Socialist Bulletin 10.12, Kansas University, Laird M. Wilcox Collection (hereafter LWC); Botschaft des Ayatollah Khomeini zur Judenfrage, in: NS Kampfpruf 38 (Mai-Juni 1980), S. 6, IISH, ZF114; Pro-Zionist Policies Endanger Oil Supply, in: White Power 89 (Januar-Februar 1979), S. 1-3, IISH, ZF40374.

83 BKA, Auswertung schriftlicher Aufzeichnungen (10. Oktober 1980), GBA, Kiste 4, Bd. 21.3.

84 BKA (Anm. 75), S. 77 f.; BKA (Anm. 83), S. 3 f.

85 Asservat Manfred Roeder, Jahreskalender 1980, S. 2, GBA, Kiste 3, Bd. 20.

86 Jensen (Anm. 12), S. 104.

87 BKA (Anm. 83), S. 11-13.

88 Ibid., S. 14.

89 Ibid., S. 17-18.

Roeder noted in his calendar.⁹⁰ The following day, however, low-ranking Iranian officials showed little interest in Roeder's message.⁹¹ In the final leg of his trip, Roeder returned to Beirut to meet leaders of the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF, a faction of the PLO), including its founder Abu Abbas on February 10 and 11.⁹² He visited a PLF training camp on the 12th and met with Abbas once more before flying back to Zurich.

The meetings left Roeder profoundly frustrated. Abbas had remained ›tight-lipped‹ and, unimpressed by Roeder's claims, displaying what Roeder described as ›enormous arrogance.‹⁹³ The PLF's general secretary dismissed Roeder's revolutionary ambitions outright, suggesting that if Roeder truly understood ›the mentality and conditions in Germany as well as the Ayatollah does in Iran‹, he should be able to overthrow the Bonn government without help.⁹⁴ Whereas Roeder had traveled to the region driven by the ideal of revolutionary liberation, he departed deeply disillusioned. ›How one can remain positive after these experiences, let someone show me!!!,‹ he had noted in his diary by February 6.⁹⁵ Roeder had gradually come to realize that his mission had been a mistake; he encountered ›abysmal mistrust everywhere.‹⁹⁶ The Palestinians, he noted a week later, believed they could achieve their goals alone and ›only respect those who do the same.‹⁹⁷ This realization proved ›fundamental: concrete actions had to be taken in order ›to gain support from the »East«.⁹⁸

The setback in the Middle East became a direct driver of violence. Directly upon his return, Roeder instilled in Hörnle and Colditz the belief that ›financial support from abroad‹ could only be expected if they, as a group, had more to offer, indicating the need for ›spectacular actions involving the use of violence.‹⁹⁹ So, when Colditz told Roeder about his plan to bomb an Auschwitz exhibition, Roeder encouraged him to go ahead. Eight days after Roeder's disappointing meetings with the PLO, the DA conducted its first attack: on 21 February 1980, Hörnle and Colditz placed a homemade bomb and a bucket of petrol at the rear entrance of

90 Asservat Manfred Roeder (Anm. 85), S. 4.

91 BKA (Anm. 83), S. 18.

92 Abu Abbas' real name was Muhammad Zaidan. The PLF's secretary general was Tal'at Ya'qoub, who had co-founded the PLF with Abu Abbas.

93 BKA (Anm. 83), S. 16

94 Ibid., S. 15.

95 Ibid., S. 19.

96 Ibid., S. 18.

97 Ibid., S. 16.

98 Tell an 007 [Roeder an Dietz], 28. März 1980, in BKA, Auswertungsvermerk (22. Januar 1981), S. 2-3, GBA, Kiste 3, Bd. 21.2; OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 69-76.

99 OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 84.

an Auschwitz war crimes exhibition in Esslingen. In the early morning of 18 April, the home of the district attorney of Esslingen, who was the exhibition's patron, was bombed. Ten days later, in the night of 26-27 April, Hörnle and Vorderbrügge placed a bomb at the Janusz-Koczak School in Hamburg. A ceremony commemorating the Nazi murder of twenty Jewish children and their companions in 1945 had taken place at the school. A mistake with the bomb's timer caused it to explode in the afternoon of 27 April, injuring two passing nurses. The DA had claimed its first victims.

As his journey to the Middle East evinced, Roeder's desire to impress international comrades and secure their support for his radical plans reinforced and catalyzed his resolve to use violence. The visit thus motivated and, to his mind, justified his encouragement of Hörnle and Colditz to use violence. And indeed, in a ›little message for the heart‹ that Roeder sent his German-American friend Georg P. Dietz on March 3, he wrote that ›Germany is not quite lost yet!!!‹, hinting at the DA's first attacks.¹⁰⁰ Another letter to Dietz, dated March 28, underpinned and explained Roeder's ›fundamental realization‹ in full: ›If we do not act on our own,‹ he wrote, ›we will never be taken seriously. If we start to really fight and stand firm against Zionism, then any cooperation is possible.¹⁰¹ If the DA were to intensify its fight for liberation, thereby marking the group's strength, viability, and potential to effect change in West Germany, Roeder believed, those actions could open doors to cross-border cooperation.

Aryan and Teutonic unity at Hayden Lake, 1980

When Roeder embarked on another journey to the USA on 6 June 1980, his mission was clear: where he had faced setbacks in the Middle East, he sought to secure support and cooperation again. Now, he was armed with the DA's violent actions as proof of its radical commitment and prowess. In June 1980, Roeder visited Alexi Erlanger, his ally and American ›deputy and leader‹ since 1974, with whom Roeder had established an American newsletter, *Teutonic Unity*. Roeder subsequently met with several leading extremists – including the KKK's Tom Metzger – to promote his efforts in Germany and *Teutonic Unity*.

The highlight of his journey was undoubtedly his visit to Aryan Nations (AN). AN asserted that the white race's superiority was predestined

100 Tell an 007 [Roeder an Dietz], 3. März 1980, in BKA (Anm. 98), S. 1.

101 Tell an 007 [Roeder an Dietz], 28. März 1980, in BKA (Anm. 98), S. 2 f.; OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 76.

and considered other races impure and directly linked to Satan and Satanic influences. They perceived the Jewish people as the white race's ›adversary‹, which they called ›the children of darkness.‹¹⁰² Consistent with their extreme beliefs, AN aimed to overthrow the U. S. federal government and establish an independent ›racial haven‹ or ›White Republic.‹¹⁰³ Despite Roeder's private reservations about certain aspects of AN's Christian Identity doctrine, these did not preclude future cooperation with Butler; rather, it showed the persistent strength of anti-Semitism as a unifying perception of threat that could overcome internal ideological and religious differences.¹⁰⁴

Roeder, who had brought along his wife, stayed at the Aryan Nations' 20-acre compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho, from July 4 to 8, 1980. Concealed within the woods, the compound was guarded by security squads. Members lived on the compound itself, which featured a church as well as an open-air wooden platform for sermons and celebrations. While Roeder's visit to Aryan Nations is best known for his participation in AN's Annual Conference of July 6-7, the welcoming ceremony held prior to the Conference's start, on July 4, was perhaps even more significant: it heralded Roeder's alliance with Aryan Nations.¹⁰⁵ On the evening of the fourth, Butler, his right-hand man and Christian Identity pastor Robert ›Bob‹ Miles, and ›30 comrades‹ welcomed the Roeders into their midst.¹⁰⁶ While the ceremony's proceedings remain unknown, later AN publications praised Roeder as ›a noble warrior‹ who exemplified ›the cradle of our culture in Europe.‹¹⁰⁷ The same publication announced the cooperation between Butler's Aryan Nations and Roeder's Teutonic Unity, which now formed ›A WORLD TEUTONIC ARYAN MOVEMENT.‹¹⁰⁸ The movement's name, in Roeder and Butler's views, symbolized their unwavering commitment to their joint fight ›to break the shackles of jewish [sic]

102 Richard Butler: Who, What, Why, When, Where? Aryan Nations [1980s], RH WL P4108.

103 Eckard Toy: ›Promised Land‹ or Armageddon? History, Survivalists, and the Aryan Nations in the Pacific Northwest, in: Montana The Magazine of Western History 36.3 (1986), S. 81; Kathleen Belew: Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America, Cambridge, MA 2018, S. 121.

104 Roeder felt he did ›not need an Identity Church‹ to prove that ›the Germanic peoples‹ were the chosen or superior people, see BKA (Ann. 83), S. 29.

105 Kevin Flynn/Gary Gerhardt: The Silent Brotherhood. The Chilling Inside Story of America's Violent Anti-Government Militia Movement, New York 1995, S. 84.

106 Asservat Manfred Roeder (Ann. 85), S. 17.

107 Calling Our Nation 17 (1980), S. 2, LWC.

108 Ibid., S. 2.

thought enslaving the minds and souls of our nations«. ¹⁰⁹ Aryan Nations proclaimed it ›went International, merging with Manfred Roeder's ›Teutonic Unity«, ›a rapid development it could ›hardly keep abreast of,‹ while Roeder hailed their ›total cooperation«. ¹¹⁰

This cooperation on paper was to turn material, as well. Roeder proudly and brazenly recounted violent actions that, while he did not explicitly name the *Deutsche Aktionsgruppen*, closely resembled the attacks carried out by Colditz and Hörnle. He claimed that these individuals, frustrated with what Roeder referred to as ›Jewish infiltration‹ and ›re-education‹, lashed out by bombing an Auschwitz exhibition and later the home of its organizer as well. ›They just did it‹, Roeder said, emphasizing how easily such acts could be carried out. ¹¹¹ Stressing the DA's audacity, Roeder hoped to tap into financial and logistical resources. And indeed, he sorted success. Butler organized a collection for Roeder, raising \$358.60. On July 7, Imperial Wizard of the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan Bill Wilkinson, whom Roeder had thought ›a cranky loner‹ after meeting him in 1976, turned out to think ›just like us‹ and enthusiastically handed Roeder \$1,000. ¹¹² Roeder celebrated his success at Hayden Lake as a triumph, calling it ›the greatest experience of co-operation we have had so far.‹ ¹¹³ When he returned to Germany in late July, he looked forward to starting a ›tremendous program of co-operation‹ with AN. ¹¹⁴

As such, the promises of cooperation that underpinned and resulted from the U. S. trip emboldened and endorsed Roeder's fight for the liberation of his people – whether ›white‹, ›Aryan‹, ›Teutonic‹ or ›Germanic‹ – from non-white ›foreigners‹, whose influx he believed was orchestrated by the Jews. Shortly after his return to West Germany on July 19, the DA began targeting asylum seekers and refugees, selecting victims of visibly racially different backgrounds. ¹¹⁵ On July 30, August 7, 17, and 22, the DA fire-bombed several asylum seekers' centers and refugee shelters, wounding several people and killing 2 Vietnamese refugees, Nguyễn Ngọc Châu

109 Ibid., S. 2.

110 James Rea, Newsletter (30. Juli 1980), LWC; Aryan Nations, Organizational News Brief [early 1981], SPLC; Manfred Roeder, Teutonic Unity 10 (Oktober 1980), SPLC.

111 BKA, Übertragung einer Tonbandaufnahme (21. November 1980), S. 1, GBA, Kiste 4, Bd. 21.3.

112 Manfred Roeder, Teutonic Unity 25 (November 1982), SPLC.

113 Ibid.

114 Manfred Roeder, Teutonic Unity 10 (Oktober 1980), SPLC.

115 OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 168-170.

and Đõ Anh Lân. Tellingly, on the page for August 22 in his diary, the day of the DA's first kills, Roeder wrote: ›liberation begins‹.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the impact of travels abroad on the militant itinerary of Manfred Roeder. It demonstrated how, in 1976, Roeder returned from the United States clearly reinvigorated and having adopted militant rhetoric. Yet his actions remained confined to talk rather than concrete deeds. By 1978, a direct consequence of his experiences in Itatiaia, Brazil, Roeder officially declared himself *Reichsverweser*, thereby defying Großadmiral Dönitz and, as such, taking a next step towards his envisioned liberation of Germany. By 1980, the need for violence and transnational journeys had become intricately intertwined, with Roeder drawing on his impressions of racial mixing in the USA and his disappointments with Iranian and PLO officials to push the Deutsche Aktionsgruppen towards ultimately lethal, racially-driven violence to combat the perceived threat of ›Überfremdung‹ at home. His aim was to impress international comrades and secure their support. Thus, Roeder's transnational travels, his growing network, and his escalating aspirations – whether successful or not – ultimately catalyzed his radicalization and violent actions.

The countries Roeder visited could provide such radicalizing incentives through their permissive legal contexts and Roeder's network within them. In contrast, although right-wing terrorism was, as Hof notes, ›historically more significant in Italy‹ than in West Germany, Roeder appears to have had no contact with Italian neo-fascists and made little reference to them in his writings. His close ties to Switzerland and Austria, however, help explain this absence, as Muschiol similarly observes: the contested status of South Tyrol made collaboration between German-speaking and Italian right-wing extremists unlikely.¹¹⁷ As an additional consequence of this dynamic of radicalization fostered abroad, public concern in German newspapers reflected growing anxieties about transnational right-wing extremist networks, including Roeder's – fears that his activities may well have been designed to provoke.¹¹⁸

116 OLG Stuttgart (Anm. 19), S. 199-201, 308.

117 Muschiol (Anm. 6), S. 156 f., 308.

118 ›Weltweit Teutonic Unity‹ (Anm. 65); ›Es lebe der Faschismus‹, in: Der Spiegel, 5.10.1980.

By tracing Roeder's self-proclaimed turning points, I have argued that Roeder, in his own views and belief systems, acted rationally – in sharp contrast to Bernhard Rabert's explanation that Roeder had lost touch with reality.¹¹⁹ In Roeder's world, everything was connected: the defeat of the Third Reich, the legalisation of pornography's distribution, the denied continued existence of Hitler's Reichsregierung, the Americans' pro-segregationist struggle, and even Khomeini's Islamic Revolution. Roeder interpreted these events and developments through an anti-Semitic lens. The fact that the enemy was globally active, as Roeder told his comrades in September 1976 at Haus Richberg, reinforced the need to create an international network of right-wing extremist allies. This demonstrates that enemy images not only emerged and changed in the western world relatively synchronously,¹²⁰ but crucially triggered transnational interaction, exchange, and (attempts at) network formation.

Building on Ravelli's and Martini's insights into the impact of transnational travel on militant identities, this chapter demonstrated that by the late 1970s, such journeys informed not only self-perception but also concrete extremist action. While Ravelli and Martini highlight how travel helped right-wing militants reframe their identities and establish ideological cohesion, Roeder's case shows that these experiences could also shape tactical decisions and escalate violent ambitions. His travels did not merely provide validation or ideological reinforcement – through experiences of frustration, they sharpened his sense of urgency and thereby emboldened him toward violent action. As such, the journeys actively informed his strategic thinking and the operational direction of the Deutsche Aktionsgruppen, while Roeder's rhetoric, violent focus, and mobilization efforts remained anchored in the specific anxieties of West German society between 1970 and 1980. Overall, Roeder's trajectory exemplifies how radicalization emerges at the intersection of transnational interaction and national political climates, with cross-border experiences amplifying and catalyzing – rather than replacing – the drive for local militant action.

119 Rabert (Anm. 7), S. 278.

120 Kristy Campion: A »Lunatic Fringe«? The Persistence of Right Wing Extremism in Australia, in: Perspectives on Terrorism 13.2 (2019), S. 2-20; Amber Hart: Right-Wing Waves: Applying the Four Waves Theory to Transnational and Transhistorical Right-Wing Threat Trends, in: Terrorism and Political Violence 35.1 (2023), S. 1-16.