

## POLICE RAID ON GENE ARCHIVE– NEWS FROM WEST GERMANY

GEN-ARCHIV  
Führichstr. 15, 4300 Essen I, FDR

**Synopsis** – In the evening of 18 December 1987, a search-and-arrest operation was carried out by the Federal Prosecutor's Office (the Bundesanwaltschaft, the highest prosecuting authority in the Federal Republic) in West Germany. It was primarily directed against women who critically examine questions of genetic and reproduction technology, and who have set up information and communication networks. Among the places raided was the Gene Archive in Essen. The armed police raids were carried out by 200 officers of the Federal Criminal Investigation Office (the Bundeskriminalamt, the central police authority at the Federal level). Information materials and personal property were seized. Several women were taken into custody.

In the evening of December 18, 1987, a search-and-arrest operation took place in the Federal Republic instigated by the Federal Prosecutor's Office (Bundesanwaltschaft – BAW– the highest prosecuting authority in the Federal Republic). It was carried out by around 200 officers of the Federal Criminal Investigation Office (Bundeskriminalamt – BKA– the central police authority at federal level, roughly equivalent to the FBI), with the support of the local police. Thirty-three objectives were affected by the measure (homes, work premises, a medical practice) in three federal provinces. It was primarily directed against women who had critically examined questions of genetic and reproduction technology and who had set up communication and work linkups within this framework. A second target was people who are concerned with refugees and those seeking asylum.

The searches were carried out almost simultaneously, without search warrants and using enormous numbers of police. Streets were sealed off; officers forced their way into premises with firearms at the ready, in part in the absence of those concerned or witnesses. Those not involved had to identify themselves or were arrested; adjacent rooms, offices, and homes were also searched. Twelve persons were taken into temporary custody and were processed by the police records department, some of them having to strip naked. Frequently, the party concerned was not informed of the reason for the search; others were told there was a suspicion of "membership of a terrorist organization" (Article 129a of the Penal Code). Scientific material was seized, for example, relating to human genetics, prenatal diagnosis,

research work into genetic technology, etc. also radio and video recordings, postcards, address lists of seminars, personal address books, notes, alarm clocks, and other objects. "Extreme condemnation" (of genetic technology) was cited as the criterion for the seizure of documents.

A woman from Hamburg, Ulla P., was flown to Karlsruhe on the same day and appeared before the examining magistrate at the Federal Supreme Court (Bundesgerichtshof–highest criminal court in the Federal Republic), who issued an arrest warrant. She was accused of "bare" membership of the "terrorist organization 'Red Zora'" (which means that she was not accused of any crime –on "Red Zora" see below). Since then, she has been in the remand prison in Hamburg under tightened conditions of imprisonment (isolation, lawyer's visit with dividing glass wall, solitary outdoor exercise, restricted number of books, exclusion from communal activities).

On December 20, another woman, the former *Emma* journalist Ingrid S., was arrested and an arrest warrant issued against her on the grounds of "Membership ... ," this time of "revolutionary cells" and suspicion of participation in the attack on the Lufthansa headquarters on October 28, 1986. This attack was directed against the active participation of Lufthansa in the forcible deportation of women applying for asylum and in cooperating with prostitution tourism. According to the BAW, she bought an alarm clock in 1986 identical to the one used in the attack.

On December 19, the alleged grounds for the searches were given in the regional and national media. It was stated that they were within the framework of investigations against 23 suspected

members of “terrorist organizations, ‘revolutionary cells’ and the ‘feminist wing Red Zora’” and had served “to put into safekeeping evidence of past and future crimes.” Although the seized material could not have been examined at the time the newspapers went to press, they reported on the “successful action” and “deeper insight achieved into the organization and methods of these groups.” This obviously meant that statements had been issued in advance by the BAW or the BKA. In the following days it was repeatedly hinted by spokespersons of the BAW or of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution that “extensive evidentiary documents had been seized” and the “structures of the Red Zora paralysed.”

Overall, the action was obviously aimed at giving the legal structures and discussion-contexts on the subject of genetic and reproduction technologies the odour of criminal / terrorist activities (i.e., directed against the population) in the media. The aim is to separate the growing, if in part unfocused, rejection of these technologies from those movements – in particular sections of the women’s movement – who have formulated radical criticism of the development of the technologies and have for years been engaged in publicizing this.

These tactics of the BKA and the BAW can only be understood in connection with the special characteristics in the Federal Republic of resistance to genetic and reproduction technologies and the various forces taking part in it. Since spring 1985, when the first women’s congress against genetic technology took place in Bonn, the discussion on the purposes and aims of genetic and reproduction technology, human genetics, and surrogate motherhood has been assuming greater and greater proportions and not only within the women’s movement. There is a wealth of publications dealing critically with this subject and in particular pointing out that the most personal sphere of women – capacity for childbirth – is to be taken from them. Several working parties of women’s groups on genetic technology and population policy have followed. The positions worked out have been published at women’s weeks and other events. In April 1987, a nationwide week of action was carried out against human genetic counseling.

these accounts, it presented an uncompromising standpoint against bio- and genetic technology, human genetics, and population policy and

As in other cities in the Federal Republic, in the Ruhr region too, where the main thrust of the police actions of December 18, 1987 lay, events and actions on the subject of genetic technology and population policy have taken place in recent years. The Gene Archive in Essen is an association of various women who for several years have been collecting general, scientific, legal, and political publications of all kinds on these subjects and making them available to interested laymen and women. According to their own conception of themselves, this work should serve to demystify the technologies involved and make them understandable and simplified. The social acceptance of genetic and reproduction technologies should be made more difficult. Demands for state control of these new technologies and attempts to specify positively useful areas of application are, in their opinion, actually a contribution to promoting their acceptance. Fundamental criticism of the content and methods of biological and medical research – the main natural sciences of these technologies – is not being voiced here. The only critically progressive position is the demand for the control of institutions and practices. The development and expansion of their fundamental criticism contains two main aspects:

1. Inherent criticism of the possibilities and the “truth content” of biological and medical research projects
2. Analysis of the social effects and the sociopolitical aims of their application

Women from the Gene Archive have, in the past, been invited as consultants by university, trade union, and church institutions and by adult education schools and other educational establishments to give information on these subjects.

The “revolutionary cells” and the Red Zora have existed since the middle 1970s. According to the BAW, these groups have carried out around 250 attacks. In “only” two cases was the BAW able to achieve criminal convictions. The “Red Zora” published information on these attacks on institutions of genetic technology, human genetics, population policy, and also on support actions for women’s struggles in Third World countries. In revealed through the publication of documents from the above-mentioned institutions the fundamentally antihuman and antiwoman character

of the new technologies. The BKA has so far had no success in penetrating the structures of the Red Zora, which maintains it is a group operating on a legal basis. The BKA is now belatedly trying to challenge this by means of searches and arrests to construct grounds from an uncompromising publicly expressed rejection of the new technologies and their application, along with actions to undermine their development by any available means.

Meanwhile, practitioners and advocates of genetic and reproduction technologies and population policies are staging a public mock discussion on the so-called “chances and risks” of the new technologies through “information campaigns” in order to defuse the growing mistrust shown against them by all sections of the population. The new technologies and their alleged uses for mankind (e.g., prevention of illnesses and disability and childlessness, development of apparently vital medicines, increases in productivity in industry and agriculture in order to combat hunger in the world, and much more

besides) are presented in all the media. The risks are also mentioned but appear inconsiderable or acceptable in view of the alleged usefulness and the fundamental ignorance of the population regarding economic, social, and political matters.

All statements and criticism regarding genetic and reproduction technologies are to be integrated into this mock democratic debate, in which the causes of illnesses, disabilities, childlessness, hunger, etc. are not and may not be discussed. These police raids can be seen as an attempt to silence criticism – of whatever type or method – which reaches the heart of the matter, that is, directed against population policies and human genetics as instruments of oppression, selection, and guarantee of domination and against genetic and biotechnologies as the foundation and precondition for an increase in profits in industry and agriculture. The strategy can be seen to make these criticisms and those groups that support and promote them illegal, criminal, isolated, and eventually, smashed.