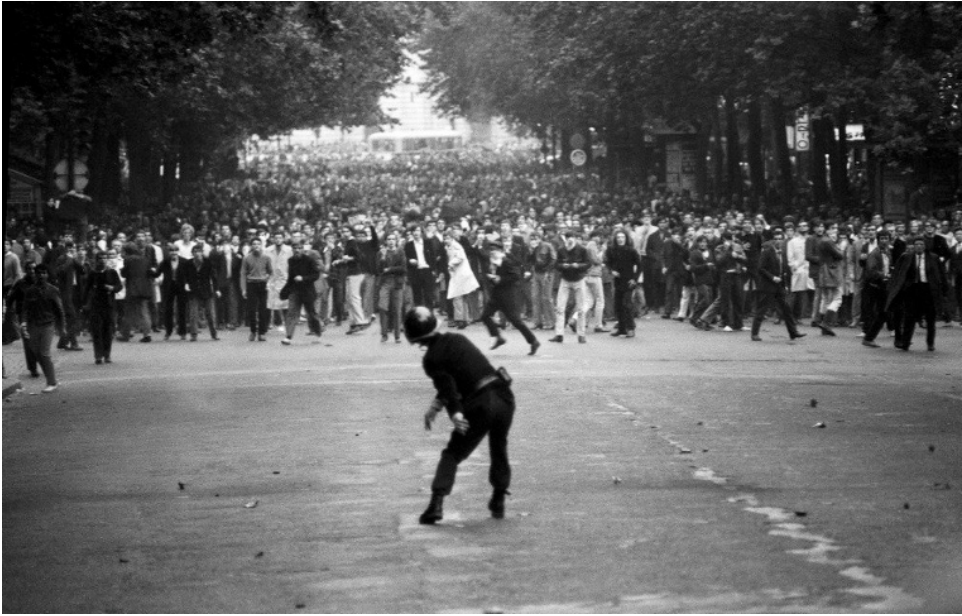


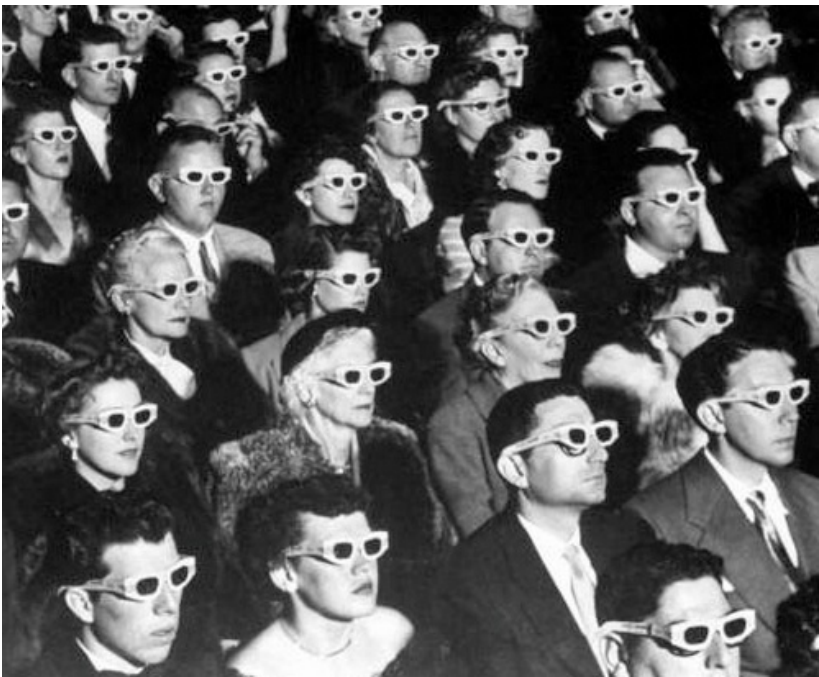
# exmilitary



An Anthology of  
Revolutionary Theory of the Late 60s

Guy Debord, Selections from Ch. 1 of *Society of the Spectacle*, 1967

The spectacle is the existing order's uninterrupted discourse about itself, its laudatory monologue. It is the self-portrait of power in the epoch of its totalitarian management of the conditions of existence. The fetishistic, purely objective appearance of spectacular relations conceals the fact that they are relations among men and classes: a second nature with its fatal laws seems to dominate our environment. But the spectacle is not the necessary product of technical development seen as a natural development. The society of the spectacle is on the contrary the form which chooses its own technical content. If the spectacle, taken in the limited sense of "mass media" which are its most glaring superficial manifestation, seems to invade society as mere equipment, this equipment is in no way neutral but is the very means suited to its total self-movement. If the social needs of the epoch in which such techniques are developed can only be satisfied through their mediation, if the administration of this society and all contact among men can no longer take place except through the intermediary of this power of instantaneous communication, it is because this "communication" is essentially unilateral. The concentration of "communication" is thus an accumulation, in the hands of the existing system's administration, of the means which allow it to carry on this particular administration. The generalized cleavage of the spectacle is inseparable from the modern State, namely from the general form of cleavage within society, the product of the division of social labor and the organ of class domination.



The spectacle originates in the loss of the unity of the world, and the gigantic expansion of the modern spectacle expresses the totality of this loss: the abstraction of all specific labor and the general abstraction of the entirety of production are perfectly rendered in the spectacle, whose mode of being concrete is precisely abstraction. In the spectacle, one part of the world represents itself to the world and is superior to it. The spectacle is nothing more than the common language of this separation. What binds the spectators together is no more than an irreversible relation at the very center which maintains their isolation. The spectacle reunites the separate, but reunites it as separate.

The alienation of the spectator to the profit of the contemplated object (which is the result of his own unconscious activity) is expressed in the following way: the more he contemplates the less he lives; the more he accepts recognizing himself in the dominant images of need, the less he understands his own existence and his own desires. The externality of the spectacle in relation to the active man appears in the fact that his own gestures are no longer his but those of another who represents them to him. This is why the spectator feels at home nowhere, because the spectacle is everywhere.

The worker does not produce himself; he produces an independent power. The success of this production, its abundance, returns to the producer as an abundance of dispossession. All the time and space of his world become foreign to him with the accumulation of his alienated products. The spectacle is the map of this new world, a map which exactly covers its territory. The very powers which escaped us show themselves to us in all their force.

The spectacle within society corresponds to a concrete manufacture of alienation. Economic expansion is mainly the expansion of this specific industrial production. What grows with the economy in motion for itself can only be the very alienation which was at its origin.

Separated from his product, man himself produces all the details of his world with ever increasing power, and thus finds himself ever more separated from his world. The more his life is now his product, the more he is separated from his life.

The spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image.

Using all the means at its disposal, the existing System strives to prevent us from introducing those conditions in which men can live creative lives without war, hunger, and repressive work. Every radical opposition to this System must necessarily assume a global dimension today. In the current historical period, the globalization of the revolutionary forces is the most important task of those who are working for the emancipation of the human race. The underprivileged in the whole world constitute the historical mass base of liberation movements. In them alone lies the subversive-explosive character of the international revolution.

A new stage began in the 1960's with the revolutionary upheavals in Algeria and Cuba and the unbroken struggle of the South Vietnamese Liberation Front against the Diem dictatorship. Only the latter achieved world-historical significance for the worldwide opposition movement. The American aggression in Vietnam, too blatant and brutal to be overlooked, took place at a time when imperialism's various mechanisms for influence and control could no longer prevent the victory of the revolutionary liberation forces in South Vietnam. [...] This apparent contradiction dissolves once we understand that imperialism had to recognize the ideology of coexistence, sponsored by the Soviet Union, in order to stabilize a calm zone of the System, at least in middle and Western Europe, and in order to "cover its rear" for the short-term and effective destruction of the revolutionary movements of the Third World. The historical guilt of the Soviet Union consists in its complete failure to grasp this strategy of imperialism in a deep and fundamental sense and to counter it in a subversive and revolutionary manner.

When, in the middle 1960's, Vietnam became a living issue for us through lectures, discussions, films, and demonstrations, we revolutionary socialists were able historically to sublimate, so to speak, our guilt feelings over the existence of the Berlin Wall and of Stalinism in the German Democratic Republic by propagating the specific difference between seizing power through force, without, however, revolutionizing the masses and the collectivization of the idea of social liberation in the process of revolutions, as in Vietnam.

As students - although varying from faculty to faculty - we find ourselves in an intermediate position in the total social reproduction process. On the one hand, we are intellectually and educationally a privileged fraction of the people, but actually this privilege signifies nothing but frustration. Frustration because the student, especially the politically committed student, day after day experiences critically, and sometimes materially, the stupidity of the cliques of political hacks who do the bidding of the irrational authorities. Moreover, these anti-authoritarian students have not yet assumed any materially secure

positions in society and are still relatively far from power interests and power positions. This temporary subversive position of the students by itself engenders a dialectical identity between the immediate and the historical interests of the producers. Hence, the vital needs and interests in regard to peace, justice, and emancipation can best materialize in these sociological positions. But students develop with real virulence only when they become politicized in the anti-authoritarian struggle against the bureaucracy within the milieu of their own university institution, when they more resolutely engage in the political struggle for their interests and needs. We must not forget the direct relationship of the student producer to his educational milieu. His learning situation in the university is determined by the dictatorship of examinations, rising in an inflationary way, and by the dictatorship of professorism. In turn, the professors are the servants of the State. The present day nationalization of the whole society creates the basis for an understanding of the anti-state and anti-institution struggle of the radical extraparliamentary opposition.

The ruling class has undergone a deep transformation. For a long time now it has no longer been identical with the nominal owners of the means of production. Marx had already seen the dawn of a new "class" of "industrial bureaucracy." This class cannot overcome the fundamental contradiction of bourgeois capitalist society. Rather, it brings it to a climax and ushers in its last phase, in which all capital functions have been socialized and delegated to certain groups and institutions. "The more a ruling class is able to absorb the most impotent men of the oppressed classes, the more solid and more dangerous is its rule" (Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3). The development has gone beyond this phase and has completed the repressive socialization of capital. Therein lies the strength and the weakness of the system of late capitalism. In fact, this development does not leave any groups outside the total context and tries to dominate all through "a system of concessions within the capitalistic framework" (Sering). This structural framework is guaranteed by the "dull compulsion of conditions," the internalized norms and ideas of bourgeois capitalistic society. But if a socially relevant fraction of the underprivileged outside the circle of vested interests, where the national product is distributed, bursts asunder this matter-of-course restriction of interests and needs to the ruling framework, the whole system is called in question. "Thus the breaching of false consciousness can provide the Archimedean point for a more comprehensive emancipation-on an infinitely small place to be sure but the chance for a change depends upon the widening of such small places." (Herbert Marcuse, *Repressive Tolerance*).

Our historically correct limitation of our action to the university should not be made into a fetish. A revolutionary dialectic of the correct transitions must regard the "long march through the institutions" as a

practical and critical action in all social spheres. It must set as its goal the subversive-critical deepening of the contradictions, a process which has been made possible in all institutions that participate in the organization of day-to-day life. There no longer exists a sphere in our society which would be exclusively privileged to express the interests of the whole movement in its cultural revolutionary phase.

The old concepts of socialism must be critically suspended, not destroyed and not preserved artificially. A new concept cannot yet be realized. It can be worked out and brought into being only in the practical struggle, in the constant mediation between reflection and action, practice and theory. Today revolutionary science is possible only within the anti-authoritarian movement, as a productive force for the liberation of man from the uncomprehended and uncontrolled powers of society and nature. Today we are not bound together by an abstract theory of history but by an existential disgust in the presences of a society which chatters about liberty and yet brutally oppresses the immediate interest and needs of individuals and peoples fighting for their social-economic emancipation.

But let us not succumb to any illusions. The worldwide net of organized repression, the continuity of power, will not be easily broken. The "new man of the twenty-first century" (Guevara, Fanon) who represents the preconditions of the "new society," will be the product of a long and painful struggle in which temporary upsurges will be followed by unavoidable "defeats." viewed in terms of classical revolutionary theory, our cultural revolution is a transitional re-revolutionary phase in which persons and groups still yield to various illusions, abstract ideas, and utopian projects. It is a phase in which the abstract ideas, and utopian projects. it is a phase in which the radical contradiction between revolution and counterrevolution, between the ruling class in its new form and the camp of the anti-authoritarian and underprivileged, has not yet matured in a concrete and immediate sense. What in America is already a clearly defined reality has a great significance for use, with some modifications. "This is no time for sober reflection but a time for adjuration. The task of intellectuals is identical with that of the organizer of the street, the conscientious objector, of the Diggers: to talk with the people and not about the people. The literature that leaves a mark is now the underground literature, the speeches of Malcolm X, the writings of Fanon, the songs of the Rolling Stones and of Aretha Franklin. All the rest sound like the Moynihan Report or a Time article which aims to explain everything, understand nothing, and change nobody." (A. Kopkind, *From Nonviolence to Guerrilla Warfare*, in *Voltaire-Flugschriften*, No. 14 ). We still do not have a broad, continuous underground literature, the dialogues of intellectuals with the people are still missing, that is to say, from the standpoint of the real, immediate, and historical interests of the people. There is the beginning of a



desertion campaign in the American occupation army, but there is no organized desertion campaign in the Bundeswehr. We dare to attack American imperialism, but we do not yet have the will to smash our own power structure.

True revolutionary solidarity with the Vietnam revolutions consists in the actual weakening of the centers of imperialism and in their processual overthrow. The roots of our ineffectualness and resignation thus far lay in our theory. The decisive precondition for the revolutionizing of the masses is the revolutionizing of revolutionaries.



Benno Ohnesorg, German university student, Berlin, 1967



Paris, May 1968



## Members of the Internationale Situationniste, Selections from On the Poverty of Student Life, 1966

We might very well say, and no one would disagree with us, that the student is the most universally despised creature in France, apart from the priest and the policeman. Naturally he is usually attacked from the wrong point of view, with specious reasons derived from the ruling ideology. He may be worth the contempt of a true revolutionary, yet a revolutionary critique of the student situation is currently taboo on the official Left. The licensed and impotent opponents of capitalism repress the obvious--that what is wrong with the students is also what is wrong with them. They convert their unconscious contempt into a blind enthusiasm. The radical intelligentsia (from *Les Temps Modernes* to *L'Express*) prostrates itself before the so-called "rise of the student" and the declining bureaucracies of the Left (from the "Communist" party to the Stalinist National Union of Students) bids noisily for his moral and material support.

Up to now, studies of student life have ignored the essential issue. The surveys and analyses have all been psychological or sociological or economic: in other words, academic exercises, content with the false categories of one specialization or another. None of them can achieve what is most needed--a view of modern society as a whole. Fourier denounced their error long ago as the attempt to apply scientific laws to the basic assumptions of the science ("porter régulièrement sur les questions primordiales"). Everything is said about our society except what it is, and the nature of its two basic principles--the commodity and the spectacle. The fetishism of facts masks the essential category, and the details consign the totality to oblivion.

Modern capitalism and its spectacle allot everyone a specific role in a general passivity. The student is no exception to the rule. He has a provisional part to play, a rehearsal for his final role as an element in market society as conservative as the rest. Being a student is a form of initiation. An initiation which echoes the rites of more primitive societies with bizarre precision. It goes on outside of history, cut off from social reality. The student leads a double life, poised between his present status and his future role. The two are absolutely separate, and the journey from one to the other is a mechanical event "in the future." Meanwhile, he basks in a schizophrenic consciousness, withdrawing into his initiation group to hide from that future. Protected from history, the present is a mystic trance.

"There is no student problem." Student passivity is only the most obvious symptom of a general state of affairs, for each sector of social life has been subdued by a similar imperialism.

The student is a stoic slave: the more chains authority heaps upon him, the freer he is in phantasy. He shares with his new family, the

University, a belief in a curious kind of autonomy. Real independence, apparently, lies in a direct subservience to the two most powerful systems of social control: the family and the State. He is their well-behaved and grateful child, and like the submissive child he is overeager to please. He celebrates all the values and mystifications of the system, devouring them with all the anxiety of the infant at the breast. Once, the old illusions had to be imposed on an aristocracy of labour; the *petits cadres-to-be* ingest them willingly under the guise of culture.

The student's old-fashioned poverty, however, does put him at a potential advantage--if only he could see it. He does have marginal freedoms, a small area of liberty which as yet escapes the totalitarian control of the spectacle. His flexible working-hours permit him adventure and experiment. But he is a sucker for punishment and freedom scares him to death: he feels safer in the straight-jacketed space-time of lecture hall and weekly "essay." He is quite happy with this open prison organized for his "benefit", and, though not constrained, as are most people, to separate work and leisure, he does so of his own accord--hypocritically proclaiming all the while his contempt for assiduity and grey men. He embraces every available contradiction and then mutters darkly about the "difficulties of communication" from the uterine warmth of his religious, artistic or political clique.

Driven by his freely-chosen depression, he submits himself to the subsidiary police force of psychiatrists set up by the avant-garde of repression. The university mental health clinics are run by the student mutual organization, which sees this institution as a grand victory for student unionism and social progress. Like the Aztecs who ran to greet Cortes's sharpshooters, and then wondered what made the thunder and why men fell down, the students flock to the psycho-police stations with their "problems".

The real poverty of his everyday life finds its immediate, phantastic compensation in the opium of cultural commodities. In the cultural spectacle he is allotted his habitual role of the dutiful disciple. Although he is close to the production-point, access to the Sanctuary of Thought is forbidden, and he is obliged to discover "modern culture" as an admiring spectator. Art is dead, but the student is necrophiliac. He peeks at the corpse in cine-clubs and theaters, buys its fish-fingers from the cultural supermarket. Consuming unreservedly, he is in his element: he is the living proof of all the platitudes of American market research: a conspicuous consumer, complete with induced irrational preference for Brand X (Camus, for example), and irrational prejudice against Brand Y (Sartre, perhaps).

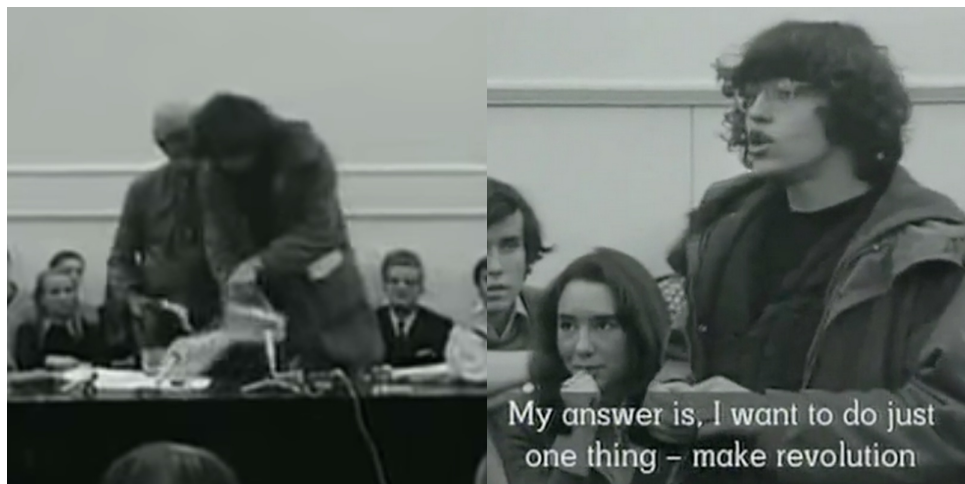
He thinks he is avant-garde if he has seen the latest happening. He discovers "modernity" as fast as the market can produce its ersatz version of long outmoded (though once important) ideas; for him, every rehash is a cultural revolution. His principal concern is status, and he

eagerly snaps up all the paperback editions of important and "difficult" texts with which mass culture has filled the bookstores. (If he had an atom of self-respect or lucidity, he would knock them off. But no: conspicuous consumers always pay!). Unfortunately, he cannot read, so he devours them with his gaze, and enjoys them vicariously through the gaze of his friends. He is an other-directed voyeur.

The Right is well aware of the defeat of the workers' movement, and so are the workers themselves, though more confusedly. But the students continue blithely to organize demonstrations which mobilize students and students only. This is political false consciousness in its virgin state, a fact which naturally makes the universities a happy hunting ground for the manipulators of the declining bureaucratic organizations. For them, it is child's play to program the student's political options. Occasionally there are deviationary tendencies and cries of "Independence!" but after a period of token resistance the dissidents are reincorporated into a status quo which they have never really radically opposed.

The student, if he rebels at all, must first rebel against his studies, though the necessity of this initial move is felt less spontaneously by him than by the worker, who intuitively identifies his work with his total condition. At the same time, since the student is a product of modern society just like Godard or Coca-Cola, his extreme alienation can only be fought through the struggle against this whole society. It is clear that the university can in no circumstances become the battlefield; the student, insofar as he defines himself as such, manufactures a pseudo-value which must become an obstacle to any clear consciousness of the reality of his dispossession. The best criticism of student life is the behavior of the rest of youth, who have already started to revolt. Their rebellion has become one of the signs of a fresh struggle against modern society.

The revolt of youth was the first burst of anger at the persistent realities of the new world--the boredom of everyday existence, the dead life which is still the essential product of modern capitalism, in spite of all its modernizations. A small section of youth is able to refuse that society and its products, but without any idea that this society can be superseded. They opt for a nihilist present. Yet the destruction of capitalism is once again a real issue, an event in history, a process which has already begun. Dissident youth must achieve the coherence of a critical theory, and the practical organization of that coherence.



### Selections from Lacan - Atlas discussion, 1972

Atlas: "I'd just like to add that I specifically chose this moment to intervene and that the composite body which up to fifty years ago could be called 'culture' - that is, people expressing in fragmented ways what they feel - is now a lie, and can only be called a 'spectacle', the backdrop of which is tied to, and serves as a link between all alienated individual activities. If all the people here now were to join together and, freely and authentically, wanted to communicate, it'd be on a different basis, with a different perspective. Of course, this can't be expected of students who by definition will one day become the managers of our system, with their justifications and who are also the public who with a guilty conscience will pick up the remains of the avant-garde and the decaying 'spectacle'. That's why I chose this precise moment to have some fun to be like those guys who express themselves authentically. I didn't do it to annoy you but I did choose this particular moment."

Lacan: "So... let's see what we can do. By expressing yourself in this way in front of this audience which is more than ready to hear these revolutionary statements what was it exactly that you wanted to do?"

Atlas: "That's the question which parents, priests, ideologists, beaurocrats, and the cops always ask the growing number of people who act like me. My answer is, I want to do just one thing - make revolution. It's obvious that at the stage we've reached at this moment one of our main targets will be exactly these moments when people like you are bringing to people like these justification for their miserable lives."

Angela Davis, Selections from Prison Interviews, 1972

The court system in this country is increasingly becoming a powerful instrument of repression. It is being used to crush the struggle for the liberation of oppressed people and not only to crush the conscious revolutionary but to break the rebellious spirit of black people, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans in general. And I think that one of the best methods of radicalizing an individual today is to have him spend a day in court witnessing the way we are unceasingly railroaded into the jails and prisons. Therefore we cannot expect justice from a repressive judicial system and i'm sure that an exclusively legalistic approach to my defense would be fatal. Oppressed people must demonstrate in an organized fashion to the ruling class that we are prepared to use every means at our disposal to gain freedom and justice for our people.

One can't really be a true revolutionary without being cognizant of the need to link up forces all over the world battling with imperialism. My trips abroad most of which were undertaken for purposes involving my university studies, contributed a great deal to my own political development. In Paris in 1962 experiences which were transmitted to me by partisans of the Algerian struggle provided a stark contrast to our civil rights struggle in the United States. The increasingly aggressive posture being assumed by the Algerians gave me a concrete idea of the general direction in which our own movement should be heading; that is, if we were really serious about total change. As for the French themselves, they conveyed to me the idea, free from abstraction, that repression was a universal phenomenon wherever there were people struggling for freedom and justice. In a number of demonstrations, I personally felt the cutting streams of water from the firehoses manned by French police. And of course my Algerian acquaintances were incessantly subjected to police harassment.

My trip to Germany, inspired by a desire to learn more about the philosophical tradition out of which Marxism arose, taught me one basic fact. Marx was right when he said in the 11th of the Feuerbach theses that philosophers as philosophers have simply interpreted the world and that the point, however, is to change it.

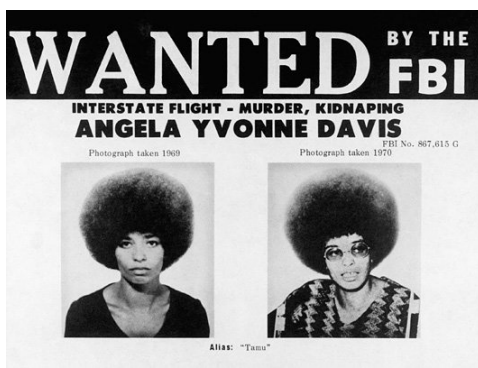
This I experienced by witnessing and participating in the student movement growing conscious of itself, growing conscious of the need to break away from the mentors - the very philosophers who had stimulated the students to comprehend the nature of Marxism - and begin to act, to act directly. This action took the form of increasingly militant demonstrations against U.S. imperialism, its aggression in Vietnam, its flunkies in West Germany and also the form of moving to organize the dispossessed at a grassroots level and the attempt to involve labor. It was my involvement in the demonstrative political activity led by German SDS (Socialist Students League) which made me realize that I had to



come home to wage the fight among my own people, black people.

My decision to join the Communist party emanated from my belief that the only true path of liberation for Black people is the one that leads towards a complete and total overthrow of the capitalist class in this country and all its manifold institutional appendages which insure its ability to exploit the masses and enslave Black people. Convinced of the need to employ Marxist-Leninist principles in the struggle for liberation, I joined the Che-Lumumba Club, which is a militant, all-black collective of the Communist party in Los Angeles committed to the task of rendering Marxism-Leninism relevant to Black people. But mindful of the fact that once we as Black people set out to destroy the capitalist system we would be heading in a suicidal direction if we attempted to go at it alone. The whole question of allies was crucial. And furthermore aside from students, we need important allies at the point of production. I do not feel that all white workers are going to be inveterate conservatives. Black leadership in working class struggles is needed to radicalize necessary sectors of the working class.

And we should never forget that fascist tactics have been employed against Black people, Black communities, for centuries. Fascist tactics of repression should, however, not be confused with fascism. To do so would be to obfuscate the nature of our struggle today - for once we have acknowledged the existence of a mature fascism our struggle takes on a purely defensive character and virtually all of our energies are concentrated on the task of defending ourselves from the onslaught of oppression, for the circumstances surrounding our existence have so degenerated that we have lost all possibility of movement; that the only alternative for organizing is the clandestine type. Conditions in this country have not yet deteriorated to that level, We still retain a slight degree of flexibility. Therefore, we must continue to make use of the legal channels to which we have access which of course does not mean that we operate exclusively on the legal plane. At this point, the underground movement has its role to play also, The important thing is to realize that we must do everything in our power to consolidate and solidify a mass movement devoted to struggling not only against repression but with the positive idea of socialism as its goal. This means, of course, that we assume an offensive rather than a defensive posture.



## Herbert Marcuse, Selections from Repressive Tolerance, 1965

Tolerance is an end in itself. The elimination of violence, and the reduction of suppression to the extent required for protecting man and animals from cruelty and aggression are preconditions for the creation of a humane society. Such a society does not yet exist; progress toward it is perhaps more than before arrested by violence and suppression on a global scale. As deterrents against nuclear war, as police action against subversion, as technical aid in the fight against imperialism and communism, as methods of pacification in neo-colonial massacres, violence and suppression are promulgated, practiced, and defended by democratic and authoritarian governments alike, and the people subjected to these governments are educated to sustain such practices as necessary for the preservation of the status quo. Tolerance is extended to policies, conditions, and modes of behavior which should not be tolerated because they are impeding, if not destroying, the chances of creating an existence without fear and misery.

This sort of tolerance strengthens the tyranny of the majority against which authentic liberals protested. The political locus of tolerance has changed: while it is more or less quietly and constitutionally withdrawn from the opposition, it is made compulsory behavior with respect to established policies. Tolerance is turned from an active into a passive state, from practice to non-practice: laissez-faire the constituted authorities. It is the people who tolerate the government, which in turn tolerates opposition within the framework determined by the constituted authorities.

Tolerance toward that which is radically evil now appears as good because it serves the cohesion of the whole on the road to affluence or more affluence. The toleration of the systematic moronization of children and adults alike by publicity and propaganda, the release of destructiveness in aggressive driving, the recruitment for and training of special forces, the impotent and benevolent tolerance toward outright deception in merchandizing, waste, and planned obsolescence are not distortions and aberrations, they are the essence of a system which fosters tolerance as a means for perpetuating the struggle for existence and suppressing the alternatives. The authorities in education, morals, and psychology are vociferous against the increase in juvenile delinquency; they are less vociferous against the proud presentation, in word and deed and pictures, of ever more powerful missiles, rockets, bombs--the mature delinquency of a whole civilization.

In the interplay of theory and practice, true and false solutions become distinguishable--never with the evidence of necessity, never as the positive, only with the certainty of a reasoned and reasonable chance, and with the persuasive force of the negative. For the true positive is the society of the future and therefore beyond definition and determination,

while the existing positive is that which must be surmounted. But the experience and understanding of the existent society may well be capable of identifying what is not conducive to a free and rational society, what impedes and distorts the possibilities of its creation. Freedom is liberation, a specific historical process in theory and practice, and as such it has its right and wrong, its truth and falsehood.

The danger of 'destructive tolerance' (Baudelaire), of 'benevolent neutrality' toward art has been recognized: the market, which absorbs equally well (although with often quite sudden fluctuations) art, anti-art, and non-art, all possible conflicting styles, schools, forms, provides a 'complacent receptacle, a friendly abyss' in which the radical impact of art, the protest of art against the established reality is swallowed up. However, censorship of art and literature is regressive under all circumstances. The authentic oeuvre is not and cannot be a prop of oppression, and pseudo-art (which can be such a prop) is not art. Art stands against history, withstands history which has been the history of oppression, for art subjects reality to laws other than the established ones: to the laws of the Form which creates a different reality--negation of the established one even where art depicts the established reality. But in its struggle with history, art subjects itself to history: history enters the definition of art and enters into the distinction between art and pseudo-art. Thus it happens that what was once art becomes pseudo-art. Previous forms, styles, and qualities, previous modes of protest and refusal cannot be recaptured in or against a different society. There are cases where an authentic oeuvre carries a regressive political message--Dostoevski is a case in point. But then, the message is canceled by the oeuvre itself: the regressive political content is absorbed, aufgehoben in the artistic form: in the work as literature.

With all the qualifications of a hypothesis based on an 'open' historical record, it seems that the violence emanating from the rebellion of the oppressed classes broke the historical continuum of injustice, cruelty, and silence for a brief moment, brief but explosive enough to achieve an increase in the scope of freedom and justice, and a better and more equitable distribution of misery and oppression in a new social system--in one word: progress in civilization. The English civil wars, the French Revolution, the Chinese and the Cuban Revolutions may illustrate the hypothesis. In contrast, the one historical change from one social system to another, marking the beginning of a new period in civilization, which was not sparked and driven by an effective movement 'from below', namely, the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West, brought about a long period of regression for long centuries, until a new, higher period of civilization was painfully born in the violence of the heretic revolts of the thirteenth century and in the peasant and laborer revolts of the fourteenth century.

Liberating tolerance, then, would mean intolerance against

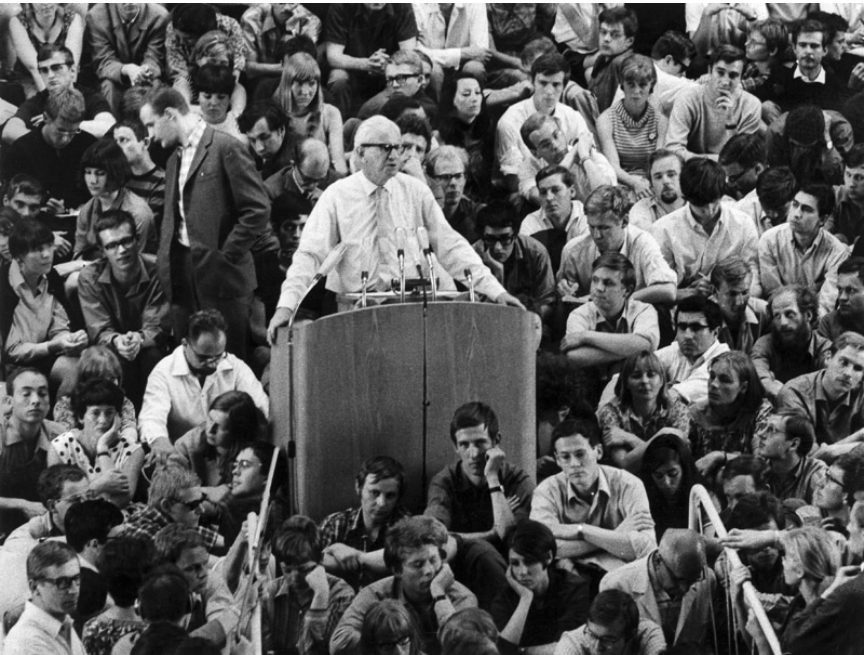
movements from the Right and toleration of movements from the Left. As to the scope of this tolerance and intolerance: ... it would extend to the stage of action as well as of discussion and propaganda, of deed as well as of word. The traditional criterion of clear and present danger seems no longer adequate to a stage where the whole society is in the situation of the theater audience when somebody cries: 'fire'. It is a situation in which the total catastrophe could be triggered off any moment, not only by a technical error, but also by a rational miscalculation of risks, or by a rash speech of one of the leaders. In past and different circumstances, the speeches of the Fascist and Nazi leaders were the immediate prologue to the massacre. The distance between the propaganda and the action, between the organization and its release on the people had become too short. But the spreading of the word could have been stopped before it was too late: if democratic tolerance had been withdrawn when the future leaders started their campaign, mankind would have had a chance of avoiding Auschwitz and a World War.

Education offers still another example of spurious, abstract tolerance in the guise of concreteness and truth: it is epitomized in the concept of self-actualization. From the permissiveness of all sorts of license to the child, to the constant psychological concern with the personal problems of the student, a large-scale movement is under way against the evils of repression and the need for being oneself. Frequently brushed aside is the question as to what has to be repressed before one can be a self, oneself. The individual potential is first a negative one, a portion of the potential of his society: of aggression, guilt feeling, ignorance, resentment, cruelty which vitiate his life instincts. If the identity of the self is to be more than the immediate realization of this potential (undesirable for the individual as a human being), then it requires repression and sublimation, conscious transformation. This process involves at each stage (to use the ridiculed terms which here reveal their succinct concreteness) the negation of the negation, mediation of the immediate, and identity is no more and no less than this process. 'Alienation' is the constant and essential element of identity, the objective side of the subject--and not, as it is made to appear today, a disease, a psychological condition. Freud well knew the difference between progressive and regressive, liberating and destructive repression. The publicity of self-actualization promotes the removal of the one and the other, it promotes existence in that immediacy which, in a repressive society, is (to use another Hegelian term) bad immediacy (*schlechte Unmittelbarkeit*). It isolates the individual from the one dimension where he could 'find himself': from his political existence, which is at the core of his entire existence. Instead, it encourages non-conformity and letting-go in ways which leave the real engines of repression in the society entirely intact, which even strengthen these engines by substituting the

satisfactions of private, and personal rebellion for a more than private and personal, and therefore more authentic, opposition. The desublimation involved in this sort of self-actualization is itself repressive inasmuch as it weakens the necessity and the power of the intellect, the catalytic force of that unhappy consciousness which does not revel in the archetypal personal release of frustration - hopeless resurgence of the Id which will sooner or later succumb to the omnipresent rationality of the administered world - but which recognizes the horror of the whole in the most private frustration and actualizes itself in this recognition.







Berlin, 1967

КЛИНОМ

КРАСНЫМ

БЕИ

БЕЛЫХ

