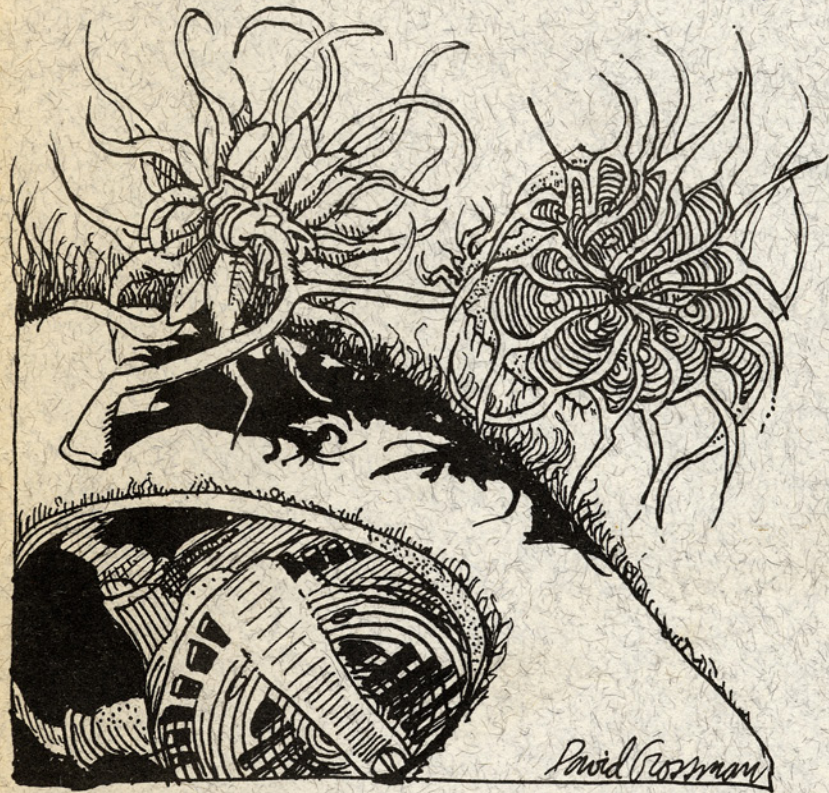


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# RADICAL AMERICA

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## Radicalism & Culture

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# Toward a Radical Theory of Culture

David Gross

Today culture is generally thought of in terms of entertainment. It is acknowledged as escape from everyday routine, and consequently it is associated with leisure, relaxation, and comfort of the mind. The humdrum life of the workaday world, and the world of "culture" are seen as opposites, each belonging to a fundamentally different sphere of activity. When one attends a "cultural event" he literally enters a qualitatively different realm, in time as well as space. Familiar reality temporarily recedes into the background and culture is experienced as absolute separateness from ordinary life. This is why the acquisition of culture has lately become such a popular pastime; it promises a sublimity that routine existence cannot possibly supply. If one's job is miserable, then culture can soothe him after hours; if one experiences life as boorish and oppressive, there is the stereo set and the recent crop of "best-sellers" to make him forget (and of course become cultured at the same time). Culture is always the medication waiting to be applied to disaffection. The more intolerable contemporary life becomes, the greater will be the demand for culture.

So firmly implanted is the idea that culture is the opposite of everyday life that the argument of this essay may at first glance appear absurd. What I want to pursue in the following pages is the dual notion (1) that culture, far from being an escape from oppressive conditions as is generally believed, is actually the foremost instrument of oppression; and similarly (2) that culture no longer stands aside or remains epiphenomenal to the struggle for a better society, but is, in fact, at the very center of that struggle. In the Twentieth Century, Thomas Mann has said, "everything becomes politics". This statement might more accurately be re-phrased by saying that in the Twentieth Century everything, including politics, eventually becomes "culture". If this is so, then no radical critique of society can dispense with a cultural critique—or perhaps even be conceived of apart from one. At present, the insufficiency of contemporary life is made palatable by the culture that accompanies it; but if the falsity of this culture were exposed, then the true nature of social reality would be revealed for what it is: simple oppression. The job of cultural criticism is to remove the masks that now disguise the otherwise bare facts of social domination.

One of the weaknesses of the American Left in contrast to the European is that it has never developed a genuinely radical theory of culture. With few exceptions, the traditional Left accepted the bifurcation of (elite) culture and ordinary life as natural and inevitable. As a result it never achieved any insights into the crucial role that culture plays in legitimizing and solidifying

capitalist society; nor did it see the liberating possibilities that new concepts of culture could offer for the fight against an increasingly totalitarian and regimented way of life.

Two recent works help to correct this oversight: Theodor W. Adorno's *Prisms*, translated by Samuel and Shierry Weber (London, 1967), and Herbert Marcuse's *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, translated by Jeremy Shapiro (Boston, 1968). Both contain important essays that go a long way toward defining the reactionary nature of modern culture (and also its revolutionary potential). In what follows I rely to a great extent on these two books in an attempt to sketch what might be termed a radical theory of culture.

## CULTURE IN THE BOURGEOIS EPOCH

The bourgeois epoch of culture should be considered apart from its present-day successor for reasons which will be developed later. For the moment, the bourgeois cultural age refers to the period of Western history—roughly from 1820 to 1920—when the traditional bourgeoisie was at its height. During this time culture, like everything else, fell under the prevailing influence of the middle class. A number of consequences followed from this.

For one thing, culture was compartmentalized. It was understood to be a quality of mind, a certain sophistication of thought, which was quite far removed from the realm of necessity. Culture meant appreciation of eternal values and an easy familiarity with the elevating thoughts of former ages. As such, it was identical with Matthew Arnold's phrase "sweetness and light", but had nothing to do with the material or "lower" aspects of human existence. Thus a cleavage emerged in the domain of middle-class values which was never overcome. Between useful and functional activity on the one hand, and thought or art on the other, an absolute barrier was erected. There came to be no effective communication between the two—and none desired. The result of this division was not only the relegation of culture to a world of pure essences above and beyond the "real" world, but also an irreparable split between thought and action, mental and spiritual work. This schizophrenia of the psyche has remained characteristic of bourgeois consciousness to the present time.

The bifurcation between the "realm of necessity" and the "realm of culture" led to something unexpected: material practice was "exonerated from responsibility for the true, the good, and the beautiful", since these were already realized in the exclusive sphere of culture. In other words, culture became an independent realm of value separated from the struggle for existence; it was not expected to react back upon the factual world, but rather to stay apart from it. Similarly, an individual became "cultured" by realizing culture "from within" and "without any transformation of the state of fact". In the world of abstract culture, he could experience everything that is denied to him in ordinary existence, including the feeling of permanence in change, purity amidst impurity, freedom amidst unfreedom. Culture, by opposing the beauty of the soul to bodily misery and external bondage, "entered increasingly into the service of suppression...once bourgeois rule began to be stabilized". (Herbert Marcuse: "The Affirmative Character of Culture", in *Negations* (Page 92 *passim*)) As Marcuse summarizes it most succinctly:

work capacity. This is the real miracle of affirmative culture. Men can feel themselves happy without being so at all." (Negations, Page 122)

That was the first consequence of culture in the bourgeois epoch. By leaving the material world to itself, it allowed the natural laws of society (the laws of the market economy) to work themselves out unchecked. For the middle class as a whole the arrangement was ideal because it permitted the bourgeois to live a humane and cultured life at home and a ruthless one at work without seeing any contradiction in his behavior.

But a second consequence followed which was equally important. This was the realization that culture was not only a respite from labor; if utilized in the right way it was also much more—a helpful accoutrement for social and economic advancement. The possession of culture was drawn upon for its hidden use value, that is for the magical qualities it seemed to confer over and above one's working productivity. Becoming "cultured" was one means of ascending the social scale, and the ability to speak of cultural matters was a mark of status, a symbol that one had arrived. Even though culture itself (as a collection of eternal, super-mundane values) remained apart from the material world, in practice the venter of culture was increasingly "used" for purposes exterior to it. At first distinctions were made between pure culture on one hand and its practical use on the other; but eventually even these became blurred or non-existent as large segments of the middle class began to look to culture for what it could offer in real, tangible terms. Thus the bourgeoisie began to talk about the "benefits" of culture rather than about its spiritual truth; they gradually came to think of it as a means to an end and no longer as an end in itself.

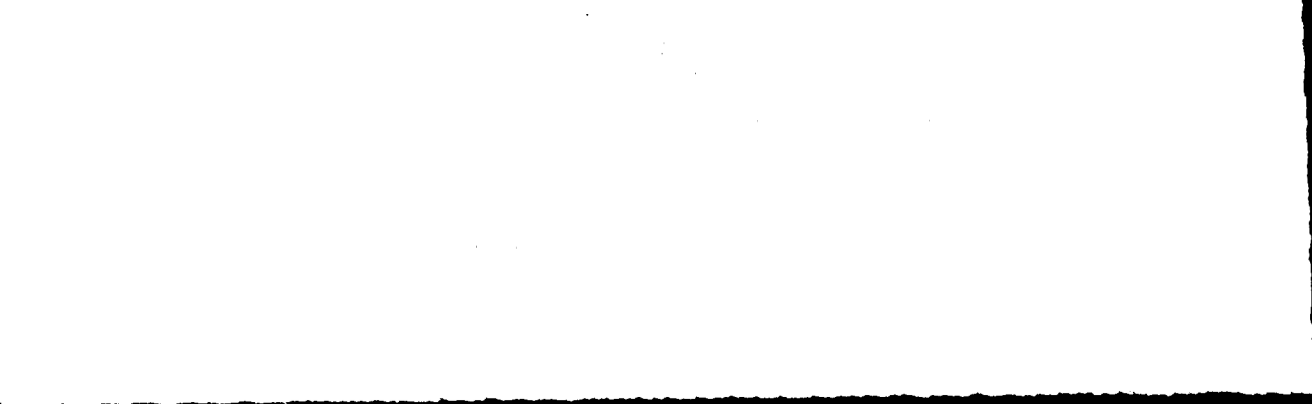
This development, however, was not simple or clear-cut: it had at least two discernible aspects or phases to it. In the beginning, the utility value of culture was viewed in terms of the status-knowledge it bestowed upon its aspirants. At this stage culture in the abstract was still thought of as a spiritual dimension, but this did not prevent the middle class from converting it into something more practical. Like everything else, culture was dissolved in the "icy waters of calculation" (Marx). This meant, in effect, that culture was transformed into knowledge, its most immediate exchange value, and increasingly came to be thought of as the spiritual equivalent of money.

It was in opposition to this development that the term "cultural philistinism" was coined. The cultural philistine was simply the bourgeois who equated culture with knowledge, and knowledge with power. To him, culture was "a social commodity which could be circulated and cashed in on as social coinage for the purpose of acquiring social status. Cultural objects were transformed into values when the cultural philistine seized upon them as currency by which he bought a higher position in society—higher, that is, than in his own opinion he deserved either by nature or birth." (Hannah Arendt: "Society and Culture", Daedalus, Spring 1960, Page 281)

Whereas real culture aims at inner, personal qualities, the educated bourgeois of the early Nineteenth Century sought just the opposite: objectified knowledge. By confusing learning with culture he attempted to acquire an extensive familiarity with cultural values as objectively given. As a result,

### ERRATUM

The complete quotation from Marcuse on page 3 reads: "The injection of cultural happiness into unhappiness and the spiritualization of sensuality mitigate(d) the misery and sickness of that life to a "healthy" work capacity. This is the real miracle of affirmative culture. Men can feel themselves happy without being so at all". (Negations, p. 122)



the idea of culture was cut off from its subjective moorings; it became, in a word, crystallized thought or what Hegel called "objectified Spirit". (Georg Simmel: "Der Begriff und die Tragodie der Kultur", in *Philosophische Kultur* (Leipzig, 1911), Page 240ff; in English, Nicholas Spykman: *The Social Theory of Georg Simmel* (New York, 1964), Pages 238-239) No longer was it essential that one really be cultivated. All that were necessary were the signs and symbols of culture which one could display quickly and facilely for rapid advancement.

This development already foreshadowed the second phase of the bourgeois concept of culture. In the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century its meaning changed once again. This time culture came to be identified not with a quality of mind, and not even with knowledge per se, but rather with the possession of certain kinds of cultural objects, which by their very nature conferred a prestigious cultural status on their owners. This new notion of culture grew concomitantly with the rise of industrial production and the absolute ascendancy of the bourgeoisie in the social and economic spheres. The difference between culture as useful learning and culture as material display may simply be the difference between an early and a late phase of bourgeois thought. The first reflects the spirit of the middle class jockeying for position, and the second reflects their self-satisfaction as a firmly established leisure class.

Another way to put it is as follows: In an age of economic scarcity and limited production an aspiring class is forced, almost by necessity, to define culture as knowledge, for it alone is accessible in virtually unlimited quantities. However, in a period of greater wealth, culture can be thought of in other ways—in terms of material goods, for example. This change actually occurred in the second half of the Nineteenth Century. Culture came to be thought of as commodity acquisition. Instead of being defined as knowledge, which has a ready exchange value, it was objectified and materialized into exquisite and hard-to-come-by objets d'art. Culture, then, became something that accrued to things, and therefore to the owners of things. The new cultural style manifested itself most visibly in hoarding.

One of the few who saw this development as it happened was Thorsten Veblen. In his *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), he pointed out that the individual bourgeois, though still interested in improving his position in the social hierarchy, had discovered new ways of doing it. He simply spent his money as uselessly as possible, proving thereby that he was wealthy enough to do so. For him, culture meant ostentation and conspicuous display. Consequently, it was viewed in terms of material objects that could be purchased, or rather as the honorific prestige that went along with the purchase. As such, it was an aesthetic way of advertising prowess—a refined but unmistakable means of flaunting one's power, loot, and profit. As Adorno aptly put it, "culture turn(ed) against utility for the sake of a mediated utility". (Theodor Adorno: "Veblen's Attack on Culture", in *Prisms*, Page 76)

By the beginning of the Twentieth Century, and more particularly after the First World War, the late-bourgeois notion of culture began to be democratized. Culture began to be synonymous with "cultural goods", and the "fanaticism of utensils" (which Baudelaire had earlier recognized only in the middle class) now became standard throughout all of society. Only at this point—when the



idea of culture as a commodity became widespread—did critics begin to speak with horror of “mass culture”. They forgot that the materialization of spiritual values into manipulatable objects was fully developed in upper-bourgeoisie circles well before it became popular among the “masses”.

#### CULTURE IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

In the contemporary period the legacy of bourgeois culture remains, but at the same time it has been transformed into something nearly unrecognizable. The main reason for this change (which has made culture qualitatively different from what it was in the bourgeois era) is the new phenomenon of technical mass production. Once this had been introduced on a large scale, the old spiritual and elitist notion of culture began to fade. In its place came a new concept of culture—one that was in harmony with a more advanced stage of capitalist production.

This is made clear by comparing the culture of Veblen's time with that of the present day. It is true that in 1900 culture was already materialistic since it was thought of as so many commodities which bestowed cultural importance on their possessors. Nevertheless, this view demanded that the cultural goods be rare and relatively limited, or else they would lose their status signification. The last thing this kind of culture wanted was to become “common”. It fought against the rise of a cultural industry, and insisted that culture remain exclusive if it was to continue to be culture at all. The enemy was not so much the traditionally uncultured population as it was the market managers and the psycho-technicians who would bring the world of culture to everyone—and at enormous profits to boot. (This reactionary attitude still persists among many cultural critics today. See, for example, Ernest van den Haag: “A Dissent from Consensual Society”, Daedalus, Spring 1960.)

In this the conservative elements of the old middle class lost out to the new progressive wing. The more aggressive bourgeois of the Twentieth Century had essentially different ideas—not about the nature of culture, but about its use—and were eager to put these ideas into effect. Though in agreement with their predecessors that culture appertained more to objects than to indeterminable spiritual values, they struck out on untried paths by turning culture over to the consumer. It was through their initiative that a whole new market was opened up: the cultural market. Because of these entrepreneurs the notion of culture as sacrosanct was destroyed. Instead, culture was described as everyone's possession; there was no man or woman who could not be cultured or have the appurtenances of culture (in the form of reproductions and cheap imitations) in the home. In the Twentieth Century, then, a totally novel field of enterprise was discovered and exploited; but this was possible only after the notion of culture was entirely removed from the realm of scarcity and turned over in toto to the realm of production. (It was also necessary, in the short run at least, for profit to be more important than culture. The old established bourgeoisie were often willing to forego absolute profit in order to “enjoy” culture, and this is one reason why they did not exploit the new markets.)

The shock effects of this development were cataclysmic as far as the meaning of culture was concerned. Now it no longer meant, as it did earlier, the retreat from the processes of production and consumption. On the contrary, culture

increasingly came to be identified with the very processes themselves. The gap between the spiritual and material dimensions of life began to close for the first time; but this was not because a *modus vivendi* had been reached between them, but rather because the spiritual elements of culture tended to disappear altogether. Formerly the middle class made distinctions between culture and everyday life, between the ideal and the real worlds; but in the Twentieth Century culture gradually began to be associated with ordinary consumption. As Adorno put it, culture became simply the extension of production. (Theodor Adorno: "Cultural Criticism and Society", in *Prisms*, Page 26) As a result, its transcendental and spiritual qualities vanished as it became increasingly bound up with the commercial market.

A related consequence is also worth mentioning. As culture moved into the fields of mass production it became indistinguishable from mass entertainment. This, too, was something new. By being trivialized into an amusement or a leisure-time diversion, culture began to be closely identified with the entertainment industry—even to the extent of catering to "mass opinion, the mass recreational product, and the generalized emotional response". (Richard Hoggart: *The Uses of Literacy* (London, 1957), Page 280) Hannah Arendt has commented on this by noting that culture has ceased being the "social commodity" it had been in the last century. At that time it was used, abused, or desecrated for a variety of selfish reasons, but it was not consumed like all other commodities. (Hannah Arendt: "Society and Culture", *Daedalus*, Spring 1960, Pages 281-283) Today it is otherwise, for the needs of advanced capitalism demand that traditional culture become consumer culture—that is to say, entertainment. Cultural goods must literally be "used up", devoured, and destroyed so they can make way for new ones which are now merchandised at an ever-quickenning pace.

If culture is becoming synonymous with mass entertainment, it is also becoming the linear continuation of production, and hence an integral part of the rationality of the system. Yet it is usually experienced as something quite different: the liberation from production or the "flight from an unbearable reality". (Leo Lowenthal: "Historical Perspectives of Popular Culture", in Bernard Rosenberg and David White (editors): *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America* (Glencoe, 1957), Page 55) This is perhaps the most striking example that one can find of contemporary false consciousness. The idea that culture is an escape from the workaday world is illusory, because in truth it is a preparation for more consumption and for a re-invigorated working day in order to keep the economy going. (See Max Horkheimer: "Art and Mass Culture", in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* (1941), Page 292f) The cleavage between culture and the routine of daily life (which really existed in the past) is now only apparent. It survives in the minds of people who think that in the enjoyment of culture they are separating themselves from the tedium of the customary. In reality they are immersing themselves more deeply in it, for consumer culture is an indispensable adjunct to modern capitalism—even when it seems to be a respite from it. At the present time, culture of this kind binds one more closely to the economy and legitimizes the status quo by beautifying and even advertising in it. In the words of the Situationists, culture becomes the "ideal commodity, the one which sells all the others".

This state of affairs is properly referred to as "mass culture". (This is an apt description, but only to the extent that it means the wholesale distribution

of false values and the prostitution of real cultural objects into marketable "things"; if the phrase is used contemptuously, as it often is, to describe the vertical filtering of values from an elite to the larger whole, then it becomes a meaningless term of snobbery and reproach.) The most pronounced feature of contemporary "mass culture"—the one thing which most clearly distinguishes it from bourgeois culture—is that between the cultural object and the individual there is a new mediation that never existed before: namely technology. This intervening factor has had a profound effect on the shape of modern culture. Not only has it been responsible for the mass production of cheap imitations, of rewritten and digested copies, of condensed and fabricated versions of great art and literature, but it has also greatly affected, and in some cases determined, what will be called culture, what it will look like, and what its message will be. Technology is not simply a means of cultural reproduction; it actually has a decisive role to play in deciding the form and content of the cultural product. Now for the first time what is produced becomes destined for reproduction. (Walter Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Epoch of Mechanical Reproduction", translated by Hans Gerth, *Studies on the Left*, Winter 1960, Page 33) The value of a work of art no longer lies in its autonomy, but now lies in its ability to be manufactured and sold on a mass scale. The result is that the authenticity of a cultural artifact, its immediacy and historicity, are seriously damaged. As Walter Benjamin put it, "The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. It substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence... (This) lead(s) to a profound shattering of tradition which is the reverse side of the contemporary crisis and the renewal of humanity". (*Studies on the Left*, Winter 1960, Page 31)

What has been described so far is the devolution of high culture into mass culture. This means, among other things, (1) that high culture has lost its transcendent spirituality; (2) that it has been metamorphosed into a fetishized object; (3) that it has become subject to the laws of the market, thereby losing its autochthonous value; and (4) that it has become tangled in the web of technology in ways which harm its very essence.

(Of course this is not true of all culture today. "High Culture" still exists even though "society has been closing the mental and physical space in which this culture could be understood in its cognitive substance, in its exact truth". (Herbert Marcuse: "A Redefinition of Culture", *Daedalus*, Winter 1965, Page 195-196) There is also another type of culture which has not been mentioned: folk culture. It still persists in certain localities, but its future is threatened by the growing penetration of mass culture into every area of life. Like imperialism, mass culture is compelled to expand its markets; hence its own dynamic forces it to usurp the old forms of folk culture and integrate them into a homogenized popular culture. The "traits" of folk art and music continue to survive even within popular culture, but they become contrived rather than spontaneous, strained rather than natural. Today genuine folk culture exists only where the mass media have not yet reached.)

All of this has to do with the deteriorating effect that the bourgeoisie, and later the phenomenon of mechanical reproduction, have had on the quality of culture, but it says nothing about the effect that contemporary culture has had upon society. What role does culture play in the present age? Is it a critic

of society or an accomplice? Is it antagonistic or integrative? Does it stand apart or is it in the center of contemporary social life?

These questions open up a whole new area of discussion which for lack of space cannot be gone into in great detail. Sufficient documentation exists to indicate that popular or mass culture serves the interests of social domination. It tends to legitimize and sanctify the status quo, and induce the individual to adjust to the "givenness" of society as it is presently constituted. For example, when culture is defined in terms of amusement or enjoyment it helps solidify the powers-that-be since it makes no unreasonable demands on them. It asks for nothing that cannot be satisfied, and in some cases it asks for only that which can be satisfied. This only tends to reinforce one-dimensionality because it narrows consciousness to a safe social level. Similarly, a culture that maintains a steady level of banality and compels passive acquiescence to it because "that's all there is" lays the groundwork for social and political manipulation. People come to expect little from life; they become conditioned to the mediocre even while they secretly crave for things to be different. In this state of mind they become grateful for every novelty presented to them under the guise of cultural innovation. The art of improvising and distributing these novelties, however, lies with the existing power structure, which uses them for purposes of social stabilization and "undreamed-of psychological control". (Theodor Adorno: "Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture", in Rosenberg and White: *Mass Culture*, Page 476) By instilling automatized reactions and a mood of general receptiveness, mass culture weakens the tendencies of individual resistance to social domination. The result is that people forget how to act by waiting to be acted upon. Closely related to this is still another point. Popular culture tends to define "reality" as the immediate given, the concrete. This implies that what exists does so necessarily, and that what is natural must for that reason be real. In an age of mass culture, men are prevented from seeing other dimensions to life—and consequently they come to believe that there must not be any. Culture, which should be a means of heightening awareness, now works for the opposite principle: the contraction of awareness. The result: culture continues and intensifies the hypertrophy of human consciousness, whereas it should point the way toward total renewal. As Irving Howe has noted, people "accept mass culture and daily experience precisely to the degree that the two blend. By now neither can be maintained without the other, which is why there prevails in this country such a blurred notion of what human experience is and such an inadequate notion of what it should be". (Irving Howe: "Notes on Mass Culture", *Politics*, Spring 1948, Page 120 (my emphasis)) In other words contemporary culture, by being incorporated into daily life and work, serves to meliorate the status quo, and teaches men to accommodate themselves to it.

In intriguing and not always visible ways, culture in the age of mechanical reproduction has a constraining effect upon modern consciousness. At the same time it also performs a valuable social function (for the rulers) by contributing (perhaps even unwillingly) to the solidification of the "given" in society. This is clearly an unsatisfactory and unworthy role for culture to fulfill. The question now is what can be done about it.

## THE TASKS OF CULTURE

To the question of the future of culture nearly everyone has an answer, but in most cases the solution is based on a retreat to an earlier, more "ideal" stage of development. Some critics want a return to the original compartmentalization between culture and life. Others, like Ashley Montagu, want to think of culture in terms of knowledge again. (See *The Cultured Man* (New York, 1958), which contains, besides an introductory essay, two hundred pages of questions and answers which are supposed to reveal the marks of a cultured man (in terms of quantifiable knowledge).) Still others want art and life to be fused into a meaningful whole, but only for the very few, the cultural elite. These latter (T. S. Eliot, Ortega y Gasset, Dwight Macdonald among others) want to establish well-defined boundaries between high and low culture which will prevent the two levels from mixing or interpenetrating.

These solutions are inadequate even if they are sometimes compelling. They offer no way out of the morass except through retrenchment. But a serious confrontation of the problem must be forward-looking; it has to shatter the falseness of present-day culture and at the same time lay down guidelines for a new culture free from sentimental illusions about the past. At this point no one can be presumptuous enough to outline a program for culture. New directions come not from programs but from fresh and original perceptions of reality combined with a spontaneous mode of expression unhampered by convention. Nevertheless, it may be helpful to suggest some of the tasks culture should (and in all likelihood must) fulfill if it is to transcend the shortcomings of both the past and the present.

(1) Culture must once again become detached from the rationale of existing society.

It is imperative that culture disassociate itself from the rationale of existing society as it is now constituted. It must be pulled out, uprooted from its servile relationship to the status quo.

The first step is to stop thinking of "culture" as somehow residing in the possession of material goods and commodities. This only perpetuates culture's dependence on the processes of production.

The second step is to oppose all popular culture which is pushed by the mass media and cultural industries. It only legitimizes a hypostatized order and partakes in the barbarism of society to the extent that it dignifies a bad social reality.

So far, the traditional Left has done neither. It considered mass culture acceptable (because it harmonized with popular tastes) and "progressive" (because it joined hands with advancing technology). Only rarely did the Left see that modern culture was by its very nature exploitative—that common tastes were made and manufactured from above, and often with predetermined goals in mind. Marxist theory in the 1930s, for example, rested with an attack on the economy and not on the culture which sustained it. The errors of this position show that even a radical theory which views culture as merely epiphenomenal "aids pseudo-culture to run rampant and collaborates in the reproduction of the evil". (Theodor Adorno: "Cultural Criticism and Society", in *Prisms*, Page 28) The critic as well as the creator of culture must do

whatever possible to remove culture from its submissive acquiescence to the given. At every turn they must expose culture's capitulation to facticity, and its legitimation of life-as-it-is.

(2) Culture must become "utopian".

Once culture begins to sever itself from the falsity of contemporary life, it can become the crucible for the possibilities of life.

In the past, before it surrendered to the reality principle, culture was the home for everything homeless—the gathering place for that which was unexpressed, unreal, and impossible. As such, idealistic culture had an illusive quality to it. In short, culture was "utopian", but not in the usual radical sense of the word. It was utopian only to the extent that it "assimilated men's longing for a happier life: for humanity, goodness, joy, truth, and solidarity", but not to the extent that it became an imperative for change in the real world. The utopian culture of the past was either internalized, therefore personalized, or turned into objets d'art, in which case their message was "relegated to a realm essentially different from everyday life". (Herbert Marcuse, *Negations*, Page 114) In both instances, the social imperative which lies at the root of utopianism disappears. What remains is an artistic utopia, where the free play of ideas takes place only so long as they do not intrude upon real life.

What is required of culture now is that it become "utopian", but not in the confining sense mentioned above. It must once more strive to be the domain of phantasy, rebellion, and unfettered consciousness, where no restrictions prevail, and where even "sensuality" is given free reign. (The word "sensuality" has connotations of wantonness and dissipation, but this has been historically conditioned during the bourgeois period. Marcuse salvages the term from its bourgeois repressive meaning and makes it a natural characteristic of the whole man. See his excellent chapter, "The Aesthetic Dimension", in *Eros and Civilization* (New York, 1955).)

But in no case should culture accept the restraining limitations that society—particularly bourgeois society—has traditionally put upon it. To do so would only continue the split between art and life, thought and daily existence. It would simply revive the "cult of inwardness" while the oppressive outer reality continues to follow the madness of its own logic. Once again culture would be where it was at the beginning of the bourgeois epoch—locked in a watertight compartment, and free only in its own unfreedom.

Radical utopianism, on the other hand, would have culture burst its bonds and dissolve all links with the fragmented consciousness of the past. A "new culture" would no longer accept the subjugation of art to life, but would demand, in the words of Nietzsche, the "dominion of art over life". (Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted by Marcuse in *Negations*, Page 118) This is a genuinely revolutionary and utopian conception of culture which rests on the principle that art should not beautify things as they are, but begin to transform them into what they should be. Ideally, the goal would be life as a mode of aesthetics, where happiness consists in "doing nothing other than promot(ing) culture". (Nietzsche, quoted by Marcuse in *Negations*, Page 133)

### (3) Culture must become critical.

The coalescing of life and art would require a revolution in society no less than in thought. However, even if such a reevaluation of values is not imminent, culture has an important task to perform within the existing structure—a task which is all the more necessary the further away the revolution seems. This consists in bringing the utopian concepts of culture to bear on the real relationships of everyday life; it means establishing with the merely existent a dialectical relationship which would permit culture to be the embodiment of critical perception, if not the embodiment of criticism itself. If this happened culture would not be what it was in the early bourgeois era—a spiritual ornament; rather, it would be what Marcuse has called “an indictment of the institutionalized destruction of human potentialities, (and) a commitment to a hope which the established civilization denounces as ‘utopian’”. (Herbert Marcuse: “A Redefinition of Culture”, *Daedalus*, Winter 1965, Page 193) Hence the duty of culture for the future is to fuse utopian insight with an immediate critique of experience.

Previously this was not done and the critical possibilities of culture were never developed. In the last century, for example, the estrangement of culture from life was intended to elevate culture, but in effect it only de-spiritualized life. This meant that the “truth” of art concealed still another truth: that a better material world could be created.

A healthy culture would demand that this dichotomy be abolished. It would insist that culture be an integral part of life—but not in the way mass culture has become a part of mass society. In the latter case, culture sold its birthright and forfeited its critical content because it submitted to the given and became synthetic to meet synthetic demands. Genuine culture, on the contrary, always remains dialectical, utopian, and critical. Hence it always carries with it an essential aspect of truth, since “culture is only true when implicitly critical”. (Theodor Adorno: “Cultural Criticism and Society”, in *Prisms*, Page 22)

In practice, the critical nature of culture might be expressed in a number of ways. For instance it could expose the social and economic contradictions that have supposedly been eliminated, or it could lay bare the lies, the images, and the non-facts on which the power of social domination depends. (For further elaborations on the critical potential of culture, see Theodor Adorno: “Spengler After the Decline”, in *Prisms*, Pages 51-73; Hannah Arendt: “Truth and Politics”, in Spitz: *Political Theory and Social Change* (New York, 1967); and Raymond Williams: *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York, 1960).)

But perhaps the best way is simply for culture (or art in general) to be itself, to follow its own spontaneous development; for authentic art is most critical when it is most naive and natural. This is also the source of its threat to the status quo. In reality, there is no such thing as “revolutionary art”; there is only art which happens to be revolutionary because it happens to be true.

### (4) Culture must seek to infuse meaning into those areas of modern culture which are considered meaning-less.

This does not mean that a new culture is obliged to revalue everything that is presently deemed worthless. What it does mean is that culture should attempt to re-assess all those values which have not yet been integrated and debased, that is everything which still stands outside of mass culture and attempts to resist it. These unassimilated modes of expression are important because they are the reverse side of current values: the negation of the negation. Just as the best culture of the past drew on and redeemed discarded bourgeois values (for example, Baudelaire found beauty in evil, Rimbaud salvation in dissolution, Nietzsche joy in the abyss, George renewal through decadence, et cetera), so, too, a future culture should draw out and develop the possible antitheses of present-day values. One should go on the assumption that what is currently called "decadent" may well be the refuge of a potentially better life. At least that which is decadent has already renounced its allegiance to the present age and is no longer willing to prostrate itself before contemporary idols. This is a beginning—a place to look for future reevaluation of values. As Walter Benjamin has reminded us, all decisive blows are struck left-handedly. Or, as Raoul Vaneigem has more recently put it: "You always learn to dance for yourself on the off-beat of the official world." (*Traite de savoir-vivre a l'usage des jeunes generations* (1967), translated in King Mob Echo, Situationist International pamphlet)

(5) Culture must become a question of quality not quantity—of values not goods.

Modern capitalism can solve most questions of quantity but few of quality. It can fulfill cultural expectations so long as they are expressed in a demand for material goods, but it cannot satisfy the demand for authenticity, immediacy, genuineness, or authenticity in the work of art or any other artifact of culture. Therefore the insistence on quality in culture is radical because it transcends what the economic system can provide. As Marx pointed out, society does not raise more questions than it can solve at any given time. Consequently, the task of culture, radically understood, is to do precisely that: to raise more questions than society can solve.

In this the work of Andre Gorz is important, for his critique of advanced capitalism is essentially qualitative, and hence "cultural" in the broadest sense of the word. (See Andre Gorz: *Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal* (New York, 1967) and "Capitalist Relations of Production and the Socially Necessary Labor Force", *International Socialist Journal*, August 1965.)

The Old Left made the mistake of attacking capitalism only as an economy and not as a civilization. But the most immediate experience of poverty among millions today (at least in this country) is the poverty of culture. The widespread rejection of the American "way of life" is a response to cultural oppression; so, too, is the disgust with the mass media and with mass-produced Kitsch. Here is where a *Kulturkritik* becomes necessary—exactly at the point where oppression is felt as real among countless numbers of people, especially in the ranks of the young. When a significant segment of the population refuses to accept popular culture as a "substitute gratification" for real needs and desires, then the groundwork for a future, more humane kind of culture can be laid.



(6) Culture must work to transform attitudes within "civil society".

This notion was originally suggested by Marx, but it was not developed fully until the Twentieth Century, by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci.

Gramsci was the first to see the struggle for the transformation of society as primarily cultural. According to him, the Hegelian division between civil society and the state is not a valid one: the two are in fact closely related since both work to support one another. The attitudes within civil society help legitimize the state—and with it, of course, the ruling class that controls it. In the last analysis, real social control lies on the level of civil society (that is, the level of taste, morality, customs, and culture) and not with the state itself. Generally, state force is used only in a time of crisis when cultural control has broken down.

(Unfortunately, Gramsci's "Prison Notebooks" (which contain most of his cultural criticism) have not been translated; but some selections from his work can be found in *The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci*, translated and annotated by Carl Marzani (New York, 1957), and *The Modern Prince and Other Writings of Italian Communism* (Stanford, 1967); Eugene Genovese: "On Antonio Gramsci", *Studies on the Left*, March-April 1967; and Gwyn Williams: "Gramsci's Concept of Egemonia", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Volume 21, Number 4.)

Gramsci calls this cultural domination by the ruling class "hegemony", which he defines as "an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations...and all social relations, particularly



in their intellectual and moral connotations". (Gwyn Williams: "Gramsci's Concept of Egemonia") In effect hegemony means conditioned value-control through mass opinion and mass culture, and this control is used to stabilize the existing social structure. In Gramsci's view there can be no overthrow of the state until there is first a revolution in civil society. Thus a "cultural front" has to be established whose task it would be to change people's perceptions of themselves, to eradicate false consciousness, and to bring about a "cultural revolution" as a prelude to fundamental social change.

To achieve this is an immensely difficult job. For one thing, new cultural values would need to be diffused where only mass culture now exists; and for another, cultural demands would have to be articulated in terms of politics. Previously these two worlds were kept apart so that cultural needs, where they were expressed or even perceived at all, were never translated into political language. This split needs to be brought to an end. Today the task of culture is to become a form of politics, and make politics (in its widest sense) a form of culture.

The struggle for culture is really a struggle for the emergence of new values within civil society. It is essentially a revolutionary undertaking to the extent that it fulfills Sartre's definition of revolutionary activity: the substitution of a new conception of value for that of the ruling class. (Jean-Paul Sartre: "Materialisme et revolution", *Les Temps modernes*, July 1946)

(7) Culture must be partisan in the cause of humanity.

It is not enough for culture to detach itself from existing conditions and become "free-floating" again. That would end its direct complicity with the social system, but it would not absolve it from responsibility for what happens here below. In the 1930s, much of German culture became more "spiritual", more internal, even more elevated, but in its abstractness it was hardly less culpable for the material developments of history than those who conspired in them. For culture to become remote or "merely" transcendental is no answer because it allows a bad reality to become even worse than it already is.

The real task of culture—perhaps its most important one—is to become partisan in the cause of humanity. Before it became reified into a thing, a commodity, or an objective quality, all genuine culture began with man in his first efforts to know and express himself. There is no reason why it cannot now be returned to him in order to struggle on his behalf against everything unhuman and dehumanizing. Today not only individual men but the very idea of humanity is being sacrificed to socially-improvised ideals which have nothing whatever to do with the interests of man himself. Culture must oppose these so-called ideals. With Flaubert it must say: "Let us by all possible means stand in the way of the merde that envelops us." This means that culture must strive to become what it has never been before: critical and utopian, transcendent and dialectical. At the same time it must work for the creation of new human values, and for a new art and literature which will give form to sentiments hitherto only half-uttered or half-recognized. Above all, culture must continue to preserve the higher image of man, and fight for its realization against everything that tends toward the fragmentation and diminution of humanity.

# Notes on a Radical Theory of Culture

Jeremy J. Shapiro

**"Auch die Kultur, die alle Welt beleckt,  
Hat auf den Teufel sich erstreckt." — Goethe: Faust**

(The culture that is licking away at the whole world  
has also extended to the devil.)

If there is talk of making a cultural revolution today both by radical philosophers and by activists in the West, it is not because of the cultural revolution in China but because the cultural revolution has already started in the West as an objective process. Its components are well known: the universal raising of the level of education throughout the world (Let us not forget that the transition from illiteracy to literacy has been at least as world historically significant as the invention of the steam engine.), the communication and cybernetic revolution, the creation of mass media and mass culture, the expansion of tertiary employment, and the ensemble of phenomena called "one-dimensionality"—the surpassing of economic needs by repressive cultural needs, obliteration of transcendent elements from culture, obliteration of the distinction between labor and leisure in a huge life-dominating apparatus, the importance of the control of consciousness, and repressive de-sublimation.

A number of these phenomena have taken on a clear outline only within the past hundred years, some of them only within the past twenty-five—that is, after the consolidation of classical Marxist theory and practice. This is why Marxists are now confronted with the task of developing a strategy and tactics for a cultural revolution, which means not so much revolting against capitalist culture or in cultural ways, but rather a conscious revolution that attempts to deal destructively and constructively with these essential new objectively revolutionary trends.

Asserting the vital role of cultural revolution does not mean losing sight of economic and political revolution. It means, rather, incorporating these into a unified theory and practice that can adequately deal with contemporary social reality. In the words of Karl Korsch (Karl Marx (New York, Wiley, 1938), Page 79), "the social law exists only in the historical development through which a particular form of society proceeds from its particular state in the past to its particular state in the present and from that to the social forms brought about by its further change. Thus the only genuine laws in social science are the laws of historical change."

To take only one important example: as Herbert Marcuse has pointed out in *One-Dimensional Man*, Marx asserts that the abolition of the determination of value by labor time through science means that the "classical" role of the proletariat in the productive process and the "classical" relation of base to super-structure has been altered. Science, as a form of "intellectual culture" (super-structure), enters into the base. Culture, economics, and politics are integrated in a new way.

Of any theory that does not take account of such changes one can only say what Marx said of the petit bourgeois socialism of his day: "In its positive aims, however, this form of socialism aspires either to restoring the old means of production and of exchange (Read here: those before the objective cultural revolution—J.J.S.), and with them the old property relations, and the old society, or to cramping the modern means of production and of exchange within the framework of the old property relations that have been, and were bound to be, exploded by those means. In either case it is both reactionary and utopian."

Unfortunately we have now on the Left many socialists who blind themselves to large areas of social development in order to attain a simple-mindedness and feeling of self-righteousness that is personally gratifying but futile from a concrete, revolutionary point of view. To promote revolution means to help the people understand the way in which the details and quality of their lives are part of a system of exploitation, for those who affirm a part inevitably affirm the whole. In this sense even Nineteenth Century Marxism aimed at cultural revolution in order to change the consciousness of workers so as to make revolution possible. (And in this sense Leninism may be said to have abandoned this goal—but it could do so only because it could count on the anti-feudal anti-capitalist consciousness of peasants, which we at present cannot do.) But it is because so much of the quality and so many of the details of life are determined by the novel cultural tendencies mentioned above that we speak of cultural revolution as a primary goal.

Before we go on to some specific problems of cultural revolution, let us consider two points which must be ever-present in the minds of American radicals: (1) there is no guarantee of the success of socialist revolution; (2) a possible socialist revolution in the US will be so dependent on international factors, many of which cannot be foreseen in detail, that revolutionaries must bear in mind a multiplicity of possibilities and related goals.

(1) This is not the place to go into the debate on optimism versus pessimism, whose mere existence reveals the theoretical backwardness of the Left. I agree with Paul Breines when he writes: "The political and strategic logic of (pessimism) is not defeatism and passivity, but principled opposition to all types of pseudo-revolutionary optimism, cant, and romanticism; to facile and parasitical phrase-mongering about this or that heroic guerrilla struggle; and to all policies and organizations which manipulate people and ideas in the name of revolution." I should like only to emphasize that there is no scientific or dialectical reason to suppose that socialism (as opposed to the nationalization of industry) will succeed rather than fail. Revolution is a struggle, and every struggle may fail. In the words of the Communist Manifesto, the class struggle can end "either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes". Failure is even more likely when

revolution depends on correct consciousness, as does socialist revolution. In the face of the enormity of the manipulation of consciousness, any socialist views based on faith in objective processes is a form of resignation, of retreat to religion. Over and above this, we can state that only those who bear in mind the possibilities of defeat will be in a position to choose rationally the necessary tactics.

(2) The weakness of radical forces in the USA today means that radicals cannot take on without question roles derived from other social and historical situations. We must be open to the opportunities that the world historical situation grants us. America has the most advanced experience of "cultural oppression" (David Gross). It is undoubtedly part of the role of American radicals to develop a theory and practice that will adequately deal with this cultural oppression. In this respect at least, American radicals can be a vanguard. Capitalism deals most easily with its opponents when they fight its obsolete forms. There is no point in making an American revolution in order to create a Soviet Union of America, which means that we must learn to deal with those forms of domination that are common to both: the interlocking of technological domination and cultural oppression. In what follows we shall discuss a bit at random and in brief some partial cultural goals of a radical movement.

#### David Gross's Article

In David Gross's article we have an attempt to bring the problem of culture into focus for the New Left based on the work of Marcuse and Adorno as well as others. Gross's most valuable points are his discussion of cultural oppression, of the blending of mass cultures and daily experience that "weakens the tendencies of individual resistance to social domination", and of the way culture "legitimizes the status quo by beautifying it".

The weak points are as follows:

(1) Gross's periodization of culture seems arbitrary and incomplete. He places the beginning of bourgeois culture in the year 1820, as though previous culture was non-bourgeois. Adorno and Marcuse place it in the Renaissance and sometimes as far back as classical Greece. Gross's periods really categorize only the utilization or modes of appropriation and distribution of culture, not the genesis of the culture itself. If there is a bourgeois philosophy, then it begins either with Descartes or with Ockham, not with Schopenhauer. If there is bourgeois literature, it begins with Boccaccio, not with Balzac. It is true that the concept "bourgeois" is one of the loosest around, and it is obviously not identical with industrial capitalist. Even so, Gross does not really discuss industrial capitalist culture, but only discusses the attitudes of industrial capitalists toward culture. And here, too, one could point out that the Renaissance popes hoarded cultural objects long before capitalists did so, and that hoarding is a pre-industrial trait.

(2) Gross's choice of this periodization is perhaps not arbitrary. For he too appears to believe that "real culture aims at inner personal qualities"—a bourgeois notion if there ever was one. Perhaps that is why he dates the fall of culture from the railroad era, somehow imagining that we need only return to the way things were before.

(3) In this connection it is crucial to note that all the aims of Gross's "tasks of culture" are simply repetitions of the programs and manifestoes of many modernist and avant-garde artistic movements of the Twentieth Century, the very movements that have already been integrated into contemporary culture, whose products are now valued commodities. What reason is there for thinking that a "new culture"—that is new utopian surrealist constructivist futurist supremacist Bauhaus art works—will get any farther? It is no longer revolutionary to ask that culture be partisan in the cause of humanity or utopian. This situation perhaps accounts for the unfortunate generality of Gross's recommendations. A critic must not necessarily make blueprints, but he must certainly do so if he wishes people to use old manifestoes and yet not come up with something obsolete.

#### NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE

(1) Utopian culture is now programmed by capitalist industry. Listen to Marshall McLuhan:

"It is this aspect of new art that Kenneth Galbraith recommends to the careful study of businessmen who want to stay in business. For in the electric age there is no longer any sense in talking about the artist's being ahead of his time. Our technology is, also, ahead of its time, if we reckon by the ability to recognize it for what it is. To prevent undue wreckage in society, the artist tends now to move from the ivory tower to the control tower of society. Just as higher education is no longer a frill or luxury but a stark need of production and operational design in the electric age, so the artist is indispensable in the shaping and analysis and understanding of the life of forms and structures created by electric technology." (Understanding Media (New York, McGraw-Hill), Page 65)

This trend goes far back. The history of the Bauhaus movement shows how revolutionary culture is absorbed by capitalism.

(2) Radicals cannot compete with capitalist industry's utopian culture. Artisans could not compete with capitalist industry's clothing (which was to be demonstrated). The legitimization of the status quo by beautifying it is the chief cultural enemy of radicalism: the seduction of the masses by the erotic-aesthetic utopia of modern design, the sexual attraction of psychedelic colors.

(3) All possible cultural objects are a priori commodities, because capitalism has transformed all objects into commodities. All traditional art forms, because they produce objects (novels, poems, paintings, sonatas), can only produce commodities. (Works of scientific knowledge are not necessarily a priori commodities because, although affected by the commodity form, they are not dependent upon having a specific given form: The microfilm of the photograph of a statue is not the same as a statue; the microfilm of a book of sociology is the book of sociology.)

(4) The belief that culture consists in producing new works is a fetishism of the performance principle, of the principle of production and achievement, of selling the competitor.

(5) It is possible today to produce aesthetically pleasing art works and such that are also morally and politically committed; however, such works can be political only insofar as they comprise the sub-culture of the "radical community". In themselves they are only "nicer" commodities. There is no reason to think that "as such" Brecht's plays have a revolutionary effect, that they convince people that the world can be transformed. In addition, Adorno has made out a good case for maintaining that formerly "apolitical" works may be more "revolutionary"—or at least critical—than political works. And if this is so, then radical art theories will not call into being radical art. It may nevertheless be important for the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic sustenance of the "radical community" that artists use new technology for radical purposes.

(6) The task of radical culture is not to create a certain kind of culture, but to create a certain kind of experience: negative experience. Negative experience is a unity of thought, perception, and imagination in which things, people, and processes are experienced in terms of their potentialities, privations, and contradictions. Negative experience may be organized in art, learning, or political action. Although it pre-supposes conceptual knowledge, it is a continuous relationship to the most trivial details of daily life. It is rooted in tradition, for it participates in the realization of the often-tabooed content of past culture; but it continually revises and transcends past culture in the light of new—especially technical—possibilities. To the extent that negative experience becomes positive and fixed in culture, it recognizes that culture has been absorbed into institutional processes and therefore attempts to create culture through institutional change. Above all: The task of radical culture is to perpetuate and develop negative experience among the young, for the spectre of new generations without negative experience is the menace of foreclosing the possibility of socialism.

These remarks may seem too general and nihilistic, but I append below some suggestions as to the propagation of negative experience.

### College Curriculum

Since the publication of the Harvard Conant report on general education, American colleges, in collaboration with publishing companies, have worked out an economy-size package deal for the consumption of "Western Civilization". Western Civilization courses form the potatoes of liberal-arts education in a diet in which the meat is represented by one-dimensional fundamentals: cynicism and relativism, a consumer's relation to culture, good science and math courses, premature specialization of humanities and social science subjects whose meanings are not comprehended because they are taught in an ahistorical, undialectical, and snobbish manner. All of this serves the function of subordinating the individual to the imperialist bureaucratic apparatus. The proliferation of readers in Western Civilization can be observed in all bookstores, drugstores, and supermarkets. Concealed in this package is the vital recognition that Western Civilization is dead. The Decline of the West is not imminent, it is obsolete. For the sake of convenience let us date it from the founding of Auschwitz. The culture of antiquity and the Middle Ages was liquidated by modern bourgeois culture, and modern bourgeois culture liquidated itself first in despotic and now in democratic totalitarianism. (On this concept

see Barrington Moore Junior's extrapolation from de Tocqueville in Political Power and Social Theory.)

The core of contemporary culture is the project of technological rationality and operationalism, which, having grown up within Western Civilization, has clothed itself with remnants of that civilization whose meaning has been castrated. Partly, of course, the obsolescence of traditional culture is just a technological necessity: We are as far from the horizon and life circumstances of Plato, Shakespeare, Kant, and Beethoven as they were from the Stone Age. Of course, this distance does not make the content of traditional culture invalid. Western Civilization, however, mutilates the content but preserves the form in order to create continuity and stability, legitimize archaic institutions in terms of cultural tradition, impede comprehension of what is going on, and create the market of the educated life style. The values and works of Western culture are studied, mouthed, and written on as rituals whose formulae are meaningless in themselves but gain entrance into the world of consumers' high culture, beneficiaries of the technological imperialist machine, and Western racism. At the same time bourgeois intellectuals are attempting to neutralize and re-interpret this culture so as to deprive those who come into contact with it of any critical concepts. So, at the end of the Roman Empire, classical Roman culture, although the basis of higher education, had become incomprehensible to those who taught and studied it, and was the object only of trivial grammatical and stylistic analysis. The same process is at work today.

To help in the development of critical consciousness, for intellectuals at least, there are several things radicals can attempt. One of the first is to destroy the existing programs of Western Civilization and re-create meaningful ones. There are some who would oppose such an effort on the grounds that radical education should consist in reading necessary works on capitalism, Marxism, revolution, et cetera, and not in reforming elite culture. But they miss the point that dialectical thought cannot survive in compartments. If a person's entire knowledge and culture is not pervaded by critical comprehension, his critical comprehension of an individual "field" must atrophy. How unfortunate to find people who are radicals in economics and reactionaries in everything else.

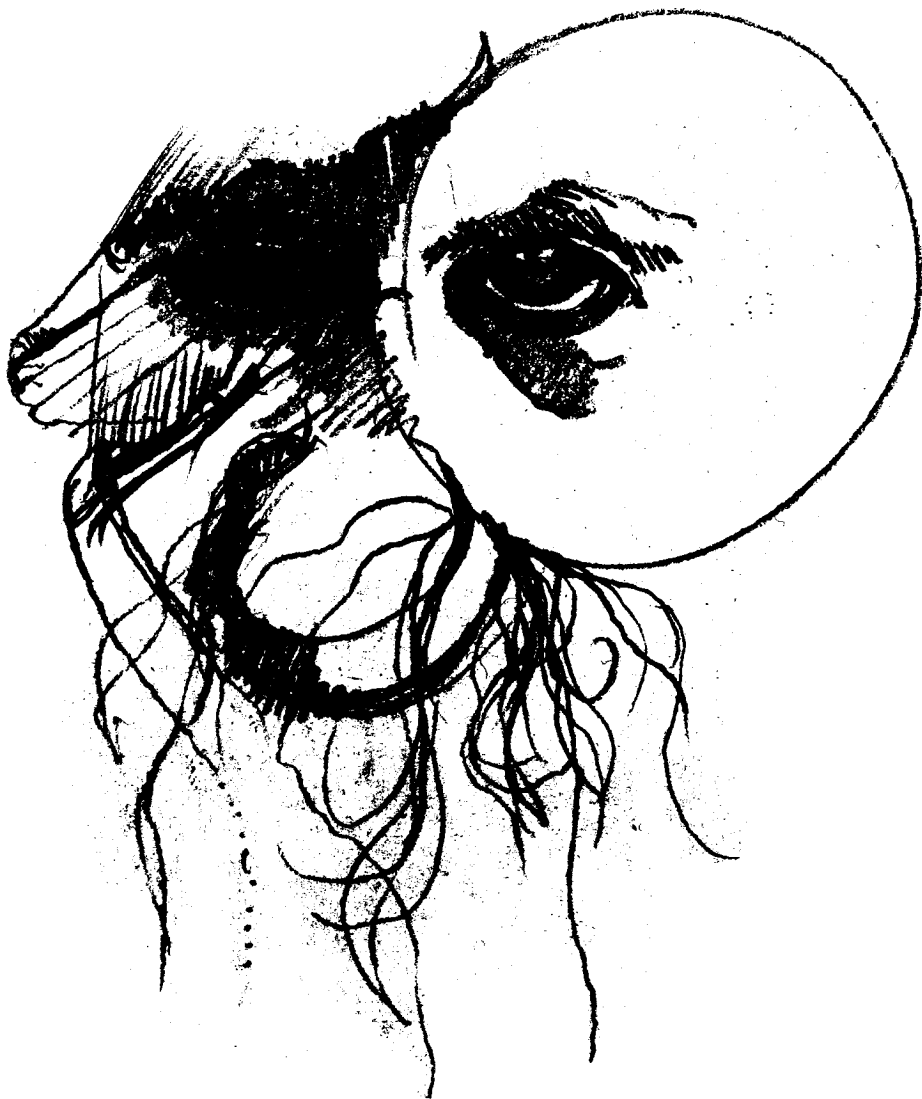
The transformation of Western Civilization will involve much self-education. It requires re-creating the historical context of works, showing the real problems that confronted earlier thinkers, sustaining interest in these problems for their own sake, teaching dialectical thought, spending more time on original works, subjecting to criticism the sterile vocabulary of Western Civilization.

At the same time radicals must undertake a variety of reforms, some of which will seem "authoritarian" because they pre-suppose imposing self-discipline in order to preserve autonomy. For the granting of student power and making "student relevance" the criterion of courses can, without a rational program, just lead to more "progressive" education that aims, under the guise of freedom, to integrate the individual into the social modes of passivity, consumption, pragmatism, and repressive de-sublimation. If students go to college, it is presumably to find out what is relevant, not to dictate what is relevant. But since under capitalism relevance is dictated by bourgeois lackeys, radicals must form counter-dictates. I have no room here to go into reforms involving reduction of inequality with regard to the class



origin of students or reforms of primary and secondary education which are in many ways more pressing than reforms of college education. But here are some suggestions for the program:

(1) Majors, or fields of concentration, should be abolished. Unnecessary specialization perpetuates alienation. As things now stand, concentration on the college level has no function in life except to create a feeling of professional snobbism. For those who do not go to graduate school, their undergraduate major has little to do with their future occupation. Those who do must usually cover the same material again. In any case, the existing specialization is a mechanism of domination and a means of preserving false consciousness,



while the manifest and potential reduction of labor time has eliminated the social rationale for extreme specialization, especially at an early age. At the same time, the "cultural implosion" and the interdisciplinary character of academic work makes it unfruitful. In a scientifically-advanced civilization there is no reason why young people should have to make such early decisions about occupation. It enforces resignation. To the extent that specialization has some value and that students should find out about it, they should concentrate on specific problems, calling on the methods of the relevant disciplines. This substitute for a major should take up no more than one fourth of their time. Education is democratic not when all are separated by their knowledge but when they are joined by it through sharing the most important knowledge.

(2) An integrated social-studies and humanities program, in content as well as in form, should be created. I believe that most radicals have some conception of what sort of things should be done here, so I shall make only one brief point, which in itself demands a lengthy treatment. It is easy to arrange courses, create reading lists, et cetera. It is difficult to teach and learn according to a good method; and there is only one good method: the dialectic. The elaboration of dialectical thought is alien to the categories of official, university thought. To teach dialectically does not mean to make radical statements about given subject matter. It means making the transition from opinion to knowledge, from subjectivity to objectivity. Learning dialectic and dialectically is one of the intellectual prerequisites of negative experience. No educational and cultural reforms will be much good if they are not guided by integration through dialectics, for they would only result in the juxtaposition of internally unrelated material. Here is a large task, which nevertheless can begin immediately in every classroom or discussion group where a radical, student or teacher, can raise his voice.

(3) The disjunction between natural science and humanities and social science should be overcome.

(4) Compulsory education in the arts to prevent atrophy of imagination and taste should be conducted.

## ONE-DIMENSIONAL SOCIETY AND SCHIZOID PERSONALITY

One of the characteristics of one-dimensional society is the institutionalization of schizophrenia, or at least of schizoid personality. For, leaving out some etiological complications, the schizoid personality is one banished to a reified world, a functional and relational world in which objects and people are deprived of meaning and in which the person's inner self cannot be realized within the world. It would be a great mistake on the part of radicals to regard as a secondary psychological characteristic what is really a basic form of social relation in one-dimensional society. For the spread of the schizoid personality affects the very people to whom radicals must direct their knowledge and consciousness.

Just as in an earlier historical period Wilhelm Reich and after him Adorno, Sanford, et cetera attempted to comprehend the authoritarian personality and, at least in the case of Reich, to develop an appropriate socialist practice with regard to this personality, so radicals today must plumb the depths of schizophrenia in order to develop a radical psychotherapy to be integrated into a revolutionary program. Without such a theory and therapy, radicals will lose

their constituency, who will become ever-farther-removed from dialectical comprehension of reality, ever-farther-removed from participation in revolutionary action (although under the proper circumstances schizophrenia is a good teacher of dialectics).

Such a theory must become part of a self-critique to prevent radicals themselves from falling into the rigidity and opportunism engendered by reification even in the ranks of its opponents. Such a theory must:

(1) develop a clear, scientific critique of bourgeois and one-dimensional trends of existing psychiatry;

(2) advocate an incorporation into psychotherapy of the recognition of culturally and socially transcendent goals and potentialities;

(3) investigate the development of forms of therapy that accord with revolutionary goals. Such authors as R. D. Laing and Joseph Gabel have already initiated useful work along these lines. Radicals must advocate a re-organization of psychiatric training to:

(4) develop psychiatrists who bring to their work a dialectical understanding of the social basis of neurosis based on:

(5) humanistic and dialectical training in philosophy, sociology, and culture;

(6) reduce the subordination of psychiatry to the medical profession (See Freud on lay analysis.);

(7) reduce the income and fees of psychiatrists;

(8) initiate self-criticism of psychiatrists according to supra-technical principles;

(9) attempt to eliminate psychiatrists with bourgeois, one-dimensional, repressive, or authoritarian mentality;

(10) reveal the "reality" with which patients must deal as the repressive structure that it is. Only in this way can the therapist avoid betraying the patient to the status quo.

(to be continued, hopefully, by others)

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## A. I. M. S.

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gets hotter  
in chicago  
at nite  
& he claimed  
fuck you  
& brot home 5 packs of kool-aid  
& 39¢ worth of  
fresh broccoli which  
struck his eye which  
sat in the icebox pretty  
& finally rotted  
becuz we dint have a pot  
in which ta cookit

time come  
to realize  
that sundowns over  
elmhurst chimneys &  
green river midwest nites  
must be accounted for  
& subway eyes lit by  
electric sugar diabetes  
cost dues (someone said)  
time to turn off them vibrations  
from south sea gulls  
reciting the sutra of the  
green grass fuck  
time to reopen  
the manhole of america  
& join the hybrid race of  
human being-machines who  
rule by sightless lust  
a craving greed

so

i yam go getta haircut  
 i yam go look for a job  
 groove my OWN geedunks  
 at 2 a.m. i yam go  
 talk to a  
 boss  
 a employer  
 a dealer in man-hours  
 a neck who speaks sounds  
 like rubbing yr fingernails  
 across a blackboard  
 a filing cabinet who shits  
 he assures you  
 like any other filing cabinet shits  
 who moves dollars  
 who worships results  
 who demands i work  
 everyday, punctual, forever,  
 w/tears of gratitude  
 when payday hits my arm  
 w/injections of wolfbane

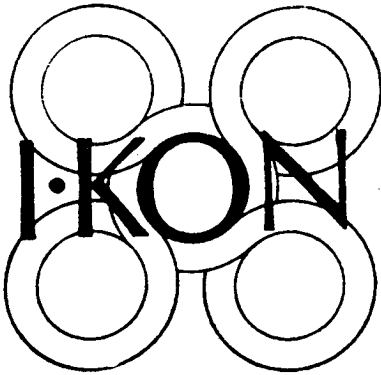
& a card punches  
 the cork  
 deep  
 in my third eye/a river runs  
 dry  
 in my spine  
 while up on the third floor  
 i push tons of textbooks  
 down coughing word canyons  
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 that relate  
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 is broken into unfamiliar humps  
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 i bum dimes at indigestion break  
 & await  
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 twice a month

when you live by the  
 alarm clock your life  
 shortens  
 you walk 30 blocks to avoid  
 25¢ subway fare  
 not seeing the streets  
 only saving the \$\$\$\$  
 you lay at nite  
 sucking dust  
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 raping it by squeezing  
 chunks of it  
 onto paper  
 the effort of occasional being  
 develops sores on yr heart  
 finally its satisfying  
 a day to day symptomatic death  
 caused by history  
 & hallucination  
 when you live by the  
 alarm clock  
 you suspend any connection  
 w/life

the days dissolve in self-treachery  
 there is enuf money  
 to buy a kilo of kool-aid  
 & we build summit conferences  
 each as opposing nations,  
 on the possibility of moving  
 i wanna move to pretty girl streets  
 pete likes the room we're in  
 im sick of "moth'fuck" melodramas  
 pete likes the room we're in  
 what shda happened i dunno  
 becuz the size of my hip pocket  
 where the spoils hang out  
 adds 13 ounces of fat  
 to my brain  
 what happens pete agrees to move  
 then counter-agrees by flipping out  
 in the subway  
 sitting in the dark part  
 observing 80 mph trains  
 brushing his elbow  
 he leaves town two days later  
 by way of cook county jail  
 & insistent invitations  
 from the local funny farm

i stop going to work  
 & one morning wake up  
 in another room, look around, see  
 a gangrene cunt  
 aiming for my face  
 & don't move as it smothers me  
 sucking oxygen from my mouth  
 after it finishes  
 i hear it shrieking  
 in the empty kitchen  
 i get out of bed  
 wash my face put on a shirt grab bag  
 & drive nonstop  
 to california

Willie



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# The New Left, 1967-68

James P. O'Brien

This is the third and last part of an overgrown article on the development of the New Left in the 1960s. Part 2 was cut off almost in mid-sentence, so if this installment begins somewhat abruptly, I can only point an accusing finger at Editor Buhle. It appears that all three—with some additions and corrections on the first two—will be printed together as a pamphlet by the Radical Education Project. In addition, as an outgrowth of this series, I am working on a doctoral dissertation on "The Development of a New Left in the United States, 1960-1965." I would be very grateful for criticisms of these Radical America articles, and for help in tracking down ephemeral Left-wing publications, correspondence, or other "primary sources". Assuming that Buhle passes his prelims and stays in Madison, I can be reached care of this magazine.

The last installment ended with a discussion of student protests in the winter and spring of 1967, generally revolving around issues concerning university involvement with the military. In a number of instances, starting at Brown University, Dow Chemical recruiters were obstructed or physically chased from campuses. In all these cases, the battle scenes were Northern, predominantly white campuses, and all but a few of the protesters were white.

## BLACK POWER COMES TO THE CAMPUS

The stirrings of militant, sometimes disruptive student protests in the winter and spring of 1967 were not confined to Northern campuses. This was a time when Southern black colleges, almost for the first time since the sit-ins began in 1960, began to show signs of life.

There were student protests, with widespread support, at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg, at Howard, at Texas Southern, at Jackson State, and at Fisk. Police fired on students in the last three places. After the Texas Southern confrontation, in which students returned fire and a policeman was killed, five students were arrested on conspiracy charges.

During most of the '60s the civil-rights battle had seemed to be off-campus, as SNCC workers and other activists left school and went to organize among the Negro lower classes. Now, especially after the defeat of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in the November '66 elections, that phase of the Movement seemed to be at an impasse. Many SNCC people were now back on the campus, and partly because of their leadership black students were no longer willing to put up with paternalism and repression.

There are several descriptive accounts of these protests: "Eight Hundred Black Students Sit In", *The Movement*, March 1967; "Black Power Revolt



at Texas Southern", The Movement, May 1967; "Cops Attack Black Students", The Movement, May 1967; and Mona Schacht: "Negro Students in Texas Press Demand for Power", National Guardian, May 20th, 1967. See also a brief interpretive interview, "Nathan Hare on Howard U.", Washington Free Press, May 22nd, 1967, and an eloquent speech by Stokely Carmichael to students at Morgan State College in Maryland: "You Better Come on Home", The Movement, June 1967. The new militancy on black campuses deserves far more attention than it has generally been given. For a picture of the repressive conditions which the students have had to contend with, see Staughton Lynd and Roberta Yancey: "Southern Negro Students", Dissent, Summer 1964.)

### CROSS-CURRENTS IN SDS

When the 1967 SDS Convention met in Ann Arbor at the end of June, the participants were confronted with a sometimes-bewildering variety of viewpoints and of suggested programs. To mention them here is not to imply that Convention delegates paid much attention to them—people were there basically to relax and see old friends—but only that the superficial conflicts at Ann Arbor provide a convenient way to structure a discussion of the different trends which existed in SDS at that time.

By the time of the Ann Arbor Convention there was one disagreement within the organization with regard to general social analysis. On one side was the position advanced most strongly by members of the Progressive Labor Party who were active in SDS. It stressed the importance of the traditional Marxist class struggle, and said that the industrial working class—especially workers in production, transport, and communications—is crucial to a revolution. It held that students had to try to form an alliance with these workers if they were to build a serious radical movement. Counterposed to this was the "new working class" position, first developed by Bob Gottlieb, Gerry Tenney, and Dave Gilbert at an SDS conference at Princeton in February, though SDS national secretary Greg Calvert and SDS vice-president Carl Davidson were to become its most influential exponents. Briefly, the "new working class" viewpoint was that technology had transformed modern capitalism to the point where the traditional working class was less central to the production process than it had once been. This theory placed great stress on the role of college-trained workers such as engineers, technical workers, and teachers, and said that this was the crucial sector of society that had to be organized. Greg Calvert, in a speech to the same Princeton conference, linked the "new working class" theory to the discovery by white radicals that they could no longer fight "other people's battles". If students saw themselves as being channeled by their universities into jobs that were both oppressive and crucial to the functioning of society, they would no longer think of themselves as missionaries reaching out to help other people such as Negroes or workers. Rather, they would see themselves as fighting to free themselves through a general revolutionary movement.

(Calvert's speech was printed in the National Guardian as "SDS Official Analyzes Struggle for Freedom", March 25th, 1967. Lengthy statements of the "old" and "new" working-class positions appeared in New Left Notes before the SDS Convention: Robert Gottlieb, Gerry Tenney, and David Gilbert: "Toward a Theory of Social Change in America", Volume 2, Number 20, May 22nd;

and Bob Schwartz, Ted Bayne, and Jared Israel: "US Capitalism—Prosperity or Crisis", Volume 2, Number 21, also dated May 22nd. Carl Davidson's pamphlet "The New Radicals and the Multiversity", first printed in the fall of 1967 and available from SDS, puts the "new working class" theory to creative use in formulating a strategy for radicals working in large universities. Recently Greg Calvert and Carol Neiman have written a four-part article in The Guardian which, under the somewhat-misleading title "Internationalism New Left Style" sets forth a revised "new working class" position. This appeared in the issues of June 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th, 1968, and is well worth reading.)

In terms of program, differences between "PL" and "non-PL" tendencies in SDS flowed largely from these differing perspectives. Progressive Labor members proposed a resolution on the draft which stressed the imperialistic nature of the Vietnam War and did not state unequivocal opposition to conscription as such; they lost badly. The PL program of a summer work-in, with student radicals getting factory jobs in order to get acquainted with the concerns of workers and win a hearing for their views on Vietnam, was discussed but was not proposed as an SDS program. Instead, the Convention did adopt a motion by Carl Davidson giving tentative approval to a nationwide student strike in the spring of 1968 against the War and against university complicity with the military.

In many ways, the most dynamic force at the SDS Convention was a new organization formed on the West Coast at the end of the spring, called The Resistance. Members of The Resistance, many of whom were also in SDS, believed that it was necessary for young radicals to force a confrontation with the Selective Service System by destroying or turning in their draft cards or voluntarily giving up their 2-S deferments. They argued that only in this manner could they convince other Americans of their sincerity in agitating against the War and the draft. They planned a nationwide turn-in of draft cards on October 16th, and hoped that the Movement would build momentum so that the Government would be faced with a choice of ending the War or jailing a steadily increasing number of people. At this time the cleavage between the Resistance's approach and what came to be a majority approach within SDS was not clear, and "October 16th" buttons were common at the Convention.

(On The Resistance, see H. Lawrence Lack: "Resistance Forms to Fight Conscription", Los Angeles Free Press, June 2nd through 9th, 1967, and David McReynolds: "The Resistance", New Politics, Winter 1967. Steve Hamilton, one of the four original founders of The Resistance, wrote an article in New Left Notes which ably expresses the second thoughts which many SDS people came to feel about it. His article is entitled "October 16th...A Moral Witness?" and appeared in the October 2nd, 1967 issue. An excellent article contrasting the Resistance with the Boston Draft Resistance Group, which works mainly with lower-class young people, is Robert Pearlman's "Two Worlds of Draft Resistance", Paper Tiger, March 1968.)

Less indigenous to SDS, and correspondingly less warmly received, were two other groups with different approaches to the problem of organizing against the War. The Student Mobilization Committee, which grouped Trotskyists, radical pacifists, and Communist Party and DuBois Club members in an unusual coalition, had voted in May to call for a mass demonstration at the Pentagon for October 21st. The Spring Mobilization had brought out more people than

had been expected, but enthusiasm within SDS for the Pentagon march was low, and no endorsement was voted. As for Vietnam Summer, a program of community education on Vietnam which was getting heavy financing (some of it, according to rumors which were common at the time, from the Kennedys), it was considered too liberal for serious consideration.

(For a strong—unduly strong—attack on Vietnam Summer, see Leif Johnson: "Vietnam Summer: Liberal Protest or Radical Action?", *New Left Notes*, June 26th, 1967. There were many serious radicals in the program, both in the national office and in the field, despite its predominantly-liberal sponsorship.)

## EXPLOSION IN THE GHETTOS

In the summer of 1967 urban violence reached its greatest level of the 1960s. In both Newark and Detroit police and National Guardsmen opened fire wantonly, resulting in the deaths of twenty-seven persons in Newark and more than forty in Detroit. By late August there had been incidents of one sort or another in dozens of cities, and at least eighty-one persons—nearly all of them Negroes—had died.

(Tom Hayden's *Rebellion in Newark: Official Violence and Ghetto Response* (Random House paperback) is an excellent account. Hayden had been in Newark with the Newark Community Union Project since the summer of 1964. The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, or Kerner Report (Bantam paperback) is an important document.)

Attention focused on SNCC as a scapegoat for the violence, and strenuous efforts were made to put H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael's successor as head of SNCC, behind bars for making inflammatory speeches. Eventually he was the victim of a brilliant one-two punch: under indictment for inciting to arson in Cambridge, Maryland, he was arrested under an obscure Federal law forbidding persons under indictment to carry firearms across state lines.

Carmichael himself spent much of the summer abroad. His speeches at the OLAS conference in Cuba, in which he identified American capitalism as the common enemy of oppressed people around the world, led to demands for punitive action, but there were no laws available under which he could be charged. Earlier in the summer, SNCC had alienated a great deal of its remaining liberal sympathy when its newsletter carried an item strongly favorable to the Arab side of the Middle East crisis.

But by this time SNCC as an organization had lost much of its strength; its members were playing an active role in bringing black college students out of apathy, but aside from the personal appeal of Brown and Carmichael SNCC had failed to develop any kind of base in the ghettos. Within a matter of months, SNCC stood to be eclipsed by the Oakland-based Black Panther Party as the most dynamic voice of radical black consciousness.

For the white New Left, the problem of how to relate to black rebellions was an extremely vexing one. It was this problem, more than any other, which made the "New Politics" convention at the end of the summer in Chicago an almost total failure. Organized by the National Conference for New Politics, an organization of left-liberals and radicals whose nominal co-chairmen were Si Casady and Julian Bond, the Convention was an attempt to pull together the



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disparate groups working against the War and racism. It was held in the swank surroundings of the Palmer House hotel in Chicago. Almost at the outset a black caucus was formed, and it demanded fifty per cent of the vote on all matters before the plenary, as well as adoption in toto of a fourteen-point platform worked out within the caucus. At the insistence largely of Old Left groups, the Convention voted to meet these demands. Proposals for an independent national Presidential ticket for 1968 were, however, narrowly defeated. Most participants left the Convention with a general sense of frustration at its inability to talk seriously about problems facing the Left. Complaints about "white guilt feelings" were common. If anyone had suggested that within months middle-class white students would be engaged in violent confrontations with the police, he would not have been taken seriously.

(On the New Politics convention see Marvin Garson: "The Whites: A Clown Show", Los Angeles Free Press, September 22nd through 28th, 1967. A good statement of the reaction of most New Leftists to the Convention and to the proposal for an independent Presidential campaign is in a two-part article by Rennie Davis and Staughton Lynd in the National Guardian: "New Politics Versus a Movement in Revolt", August 26th, 1967, and "New Politics and the Movement", September 2nd, 1967.)

#### VIOLENCE ON THE CAMPUS

Given the mood of frustration on the nation's campuses, greater than even most radicals had suspected, three factors came together to give concrete shape to the events of the fall. One was the Stop the Draft Week, planned mainly by The Resistance for October 16th through 21st; another was the big Pentagon demonstration scheduled for October 21st; and the third—which varied from campus to campus—was the schedule of recruiters for the Dow Chemical Company.

It is not easy to pick through and re-create a chronology of events, but it went something like this: Starting on October 16th, there were ceremonies all across the country in which draft cards were collected from protesters to be handed over either to Federal authorities in Washington at the end of the week or to local representatives of the Justice Department immediately. At the Oakland Induction Center, Berkeley and San Francisco State students, as well as other opponents of the War from the Bay Area, conducted demonstrations throughout the week. Arrests and beatings worked to swell the size and militancy of the Oakland protest; and on Friday, the final day, something like twenty thousand battled police for hours for control of a twenty-two block area around the Induction Center. Meantime, students at the University of Wisconsin in Madison sat in against Dow Chemical recruiters on Wednesday, October 18th; riot police were sent to break up the protest; and more than sixty students—as well as eighteen policemen—were injured. At Brooklyn College the following day, police arrested Jeff Gordon for setting up an SDS table next to a Navy recruiting table, and scores of students were beaten and over forty arrested in trying to prevent Gordon's arrest. All this set the stage for the Pentagon confrontation, and for mass protests on other campuses later in the fall.

(There is full coverage of the Oakland confrontation in the November 1967 issue of *The Movement*, several of whose editors played leadership roles in the Stop the Draft Week Committee and were later indicted for conspiracy.

On the Dow protest at Wisconsin and the student strike which followed, see the November special issue of *Connections*, the local underground newspaper, and a pamphlet published by the Teaching Assistants Association entitled *Strike*. On the Brooklyn College incident, see Jeffrey Gordon: "Notes on the Brooklyn Strike", *New Left Notes*, November 13th, 1967.)

The Pentagon march had something for everybody. For those who like big demonstrations, there were perhaps seventy-five thousand people, a very respectable turnout. For The Resistance, it was the climax of a week of symbolic acts of draft-refusal, and adult supporters attempted to turn nearly a thousand draft cards in to the Justice Department. There was civil disobedience at the Pentagon itself: areas where protesters could or could not legally sit had been carefully delineated, as had the expiration time of the march permit. Finally—giving the whole affair its distinctive flavor—there were attempts to force entry into the Pentagon building. These were led by SDS, which had announced its support of the October 21st action only weeks before when it appeared that the Government would refuse all permits, and by a New York group called the Revolutionary Contingent. Despite one or two temporary successes, these efforts failed; but they marked a distinct change from previous anti-war mobilizations. The whole affair, with middle-class American citizens face-to-face with Federal marshals and soldiers, had a nightmarish quality that seemed to drive home the point made in Calvert's earlier speech about radicals fighting for their own liberation.

(Norman Mailer's brilliant book, *The Armies of the Night*, will certainly be the best-remembered account of what took place at the Pentagon. There is a special issue of the *Washington Free Press*, put together with the help of staff members of the *Austin Rag*, which has a number of good articles and is probably the best treatment from a New Left perspective. See also Mike Goldfield's excellent "Power at the Pentagon", *New Left Notes*, October 30th, 1967.)

For the rest of the fall, campus confrontations seemed to come one right after another: at Oberlin against Navy recruiters, at Iowa against Dow, at Princeton against the Institute for Defense Analyses, at Harvard and Boston University against Dow, at San Francisco State against ROTC...and on it went. Dow alone was hit by protest of one sort or another at dozens of campuses. There was no national co-ordination of these protests; hardly anyone at the SDS National Council meeting in early October could have guessed that the campuses would come alive to the extent that they did.

(For accounts of some of the confrontations, see the special issue of *Middle Earth* (Iowa City), December 1967; Mark Kleiman: "How the West Was Won", *The Rag*, December 11th, 1967; Robert J. Samuelson: "War on Campus: What Happened When Dow Recruited at Harvard", *Science*, December 8th, 1967; and Brooks Penney: "The Battle for San Francisco State", *The Movement*, January 1968. Also, three analytical articles on the campus confrontations are well worth reading. They present distinct perspectives, and argue for them very ably. Howard Zinn's "Dow Shalt Not Kill", printed in *New Left Notes*, November 20th, 1967, and in many other papers, argues that obstructive sit-ins against Dow recruiters are not an interference with free speech, and that the horrors of napalm and the ineffectiveness of normal protests outweigh the arguments for taking punitive action against students involved in these sit-ins. Carl Davidson's "Toward Institutional Resistance", in the November 13th, 1967 issue of *New Left Notes*, summarizes the development of a student movement

against university complicity, lists various tactics that had been tried, and suggests general guidelines for their use. Jeff Gordon's article on the Brooklyn College strike, previously cited, appeared in the same issue of *New Left Notes*, and argued that radicals must concentrate on building a base of support in the student body, even if this meant embracing liberal issues.

The Resistance tried to follow up *Stop the Draft Week* with a second wave of draft-card returnings in early December, but the response was not great. The Student Mobilization Committee began to talk about a student strike for the spring, at just about the same time SDS was concluding that the strike might not be feasible. SDS itself, at its National Council meeting at the end of December, adopted instead a program suggested by Greg Calvert and Carl Davidson, ambitiously called "Ten Days to Shake the Empire". This proposed actions all across the country during the last week in April, aimed at agencies and institutions that played key roles in American domination of underdeveloped countries in the "free world". But as a national program it had little substance.

### PEACE, FREEDOM, PANTHERS, YIPPIES

While the new militancy was getting most of the attention, and different groups made their plans to give it a direction, two developments were taking place in California which were to have significance for the New Left. One of these was the formation of the Peace and Freedom Party; and the other, and more important, was the coming to prominence of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Peace and Freedom was started in the early fall, with members of the Independent Socialist Club at Berkeley playing a key role. Within a few months it succeeded in getting a hundred and seven thousand persons registered, enough to win a place on the ballot for 1968. The two basic planks in the Peace and Freedom Party were an end to the Vietnam War and self-determination for the black ghettos. More specifically, the Party pledged its support to efforts to free Huey Newton, founder and leader of the Black Panthers, who was being charged with murdering one police officer and wounding another after they had stopped him for questioning on October 28th. Newton's case, which ended with his conviction for manslaughter in September 1968, became the biggest judicial cause celebre for the Left in the entire decade.

(Two generally favorable accounts of the Peace and Freedom Party are Reese Erlich's "Radicals and the 1968 Elections", *The Movement*, May 1968, and Michael Freedman's "The Peace and Freedom Party", *New Politics*, Spring 1968. See also "Peace and Freedom: A Report", *Los Angeles Free Press*, March 22nd through 28th, 1967. Probably the best analysis of the strains within the nationwide Peace and Freedom movement is Barry Greenberg's "Reform Versus Revolution, Yuppies Versus Workers", in the *Midpeninsula Observer*, August 26th through September 9th, 1968.)

The Panthers made very effective use of a "Free Huey" campaign. Rather than simply focusing on the numerous weak points in the case against Huey, they used the case politically both to strengthen their roots in the black community and to educate white people about ghetto conditions and the pervasiveness of racism in American public life. Largely because of the Huey Newton case, the Panthers have gone in less than two years from a small and unknown local group (which attracted no attention until members went to the



state legislature in Sacramento carrying guns in the spring of 1967) to a burgeoning national movement. There are now Black Panther groups in New York, Seattle, and numerous other cities.

(So far as I know there is no single "best" account of the Black Panthers, although the Midpeninsula Observer and other underground papers have had some good articles. SDS distributes a pamphlet, "Huey Newton Talks to the Movement", presenting an interview that appeared in the August 1968 issue of The Movement. Another good interview with Newton appeared in the San Francisco Express Times, March 14th, 1968. See also Marlene Chayne: "Whites Fight to Keep Power in Ghetto, Make Outlaws of Panthers", Midpeninsula Observer, April 22nd through May 6th, 1968: "Panthers Sue Oakland", a four-page supplement to the Midpeninsula Observer, May 6th through 20th, 1968; Andrew Kopkind: "The Lair of the Black Panther", New Republic, August 13th, 1968; RKH: "Were Cops Gunning for Huey", Berkeley Barb, November 3rd through 9th, 1968; and "Panthers, Politics, and Pigs", The Movement, July 1968.)

Last February a merger of the Panthers and SNCC was announced by the leaders of the two groups, but it was at best only an uneasy alliance. Now there is intense feuding between the two groups, and SNCC has to a large extent been pushed into obscurity—an unfortunate situation, since many SNCC people are still in the South and being subjected to vicious repression by Southern courts. The case of Lee Otis Johnson, sentenced to thirty years in prison for possession of marijuana, is not untypical of the plight of SNCC workers at the present time.

(For other examples, see Randy Furst: "Orangeburg After the Massacre", The Guardian, February 24th, 1968, and P. K. Brown: "SNCC Members Shafted", Dallas Notes, September 18th through October 1st, 1968. Incidentally, an excellent discussion of Black Power, two years after the concept was first publicized by SNCC, is Robert L. Allen's pamphlet "The Dialectics of Black Power", available from the Guardian and from the Radical Education Project.)

The prospects for the Peace and Freedom Party do not look hopeful at this stage. There has been factional controversy between members of the Independent Socialist Club, the Communist Party, and Progressive Labor, with the majority of PFP activists being unaffiliated with any ideological group. Parties were started in enough other states to hold a national convention in Ann Arbor this August. Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information of the Black Panthers, was nominated for President over Dick Gregory, but the Convention refused Cleaver's request that Jerry Rubin of the Yippies be named as his running mate. Each state party was then free to nominate its own candidate (for either office—in fact some PFP groups went ahead and named Gregory for President). As of election time, it did not appear that the PFP groups, even in California, had used the election campaign successfully enough to be able to carry on active organizing efforts after the elections.

There was yet a third group which came into prominence in the late fall of 1967, the "Yippies". The chief organizers of the Yippies have been Jerry Rubin and Abbey Hoffman, both of whom have been active in radical politics for years but have felt that the Left is too dull and conventional. They have argued that there is a cultural revolt going on in American society which the Left has been unable to relate to or even understand. The Yippies emerged in the late fall, not long after the Pentagon demonstration, with a manifesto urging a gigantic festival in Chicago at the time of the Democratic Convention. This would be

a "Festival of Life" to contrast with the "festival of death" inside the Convention hall. This Yippies' call, signed by Rubin, Hoffman, Paul Krassner of The Realist, and a handful of others, was aimed primarily at hippies, rather than political radicals, and radical groups never really managed to come to terms with the Yippies' spirit.

(The center spread of the Washington Free Press for February 29th, 1968 not only makes a nice poster but tells as much about the Yippies (officially known as the Youth International Party) as any more-formal account; but Sally Kempton's "Yippies Anti-Organize a Groovy Revolution", Village Voice, March 21st, 1968, is also worth reading. The Berkeley Barb printed a number of Rubin's speeches and articles, before as well as after the formal launching of the Yippies. Although you wouldn't want to read more than one at a time, they are: "Look Forward in Anger", November 17th through 23rd, 1967; "War's End Blows Minds, Frees Spirits", December 1st through 7th, 1967; "And in America We Are All Learning To Be Vietcong", January 5th through 11th, 1968; and "Elvis Kills Ike", March 8th through 14th, 1968.)

The hippies, or "flower children", were regarded with distrust by Old Leftists and by many New Leftists as well. Although a number of SDS chapters, starting with the Austin, Texas group, had held "Gentle Thursdays" in the spring of '67, and although student radicals are generally not puritanical about marijuana whether or not they themselves turn on, the "hippie rebellion" had been almost entirely separate from political radicalism.

(There are several articles on the hippies which seem useful. These include "The Digger Papers", special issue of The Realist, August 1968; Leonard Magruder: "A Middle-Aged Beatnik Among the Hippies", Notes from the Underground (now Dallas Notes), January 17th through 31st, 1968; Jack Newfield: "Two Cheers for the Hippies", Nation, June 26th, 1967; Thomas Pepper: "Growing Rich on the Hippies", Nation, April 29th, 1968; and Don McNeill: "Saga of the Free Store: Death of the Diggers?", Village Voice, July 28th, 1967. Opposite viewpoints are given by Ralph J. Gleason: "The Power of Non-Politics or the Death of the Square Left", Evergreen Review, October 1967, and by New Left Notes: "Hippies and the Revolution", November 6th, 1967. A good account of the first "Gentle Thursday" is Gary Thiher's "Gentle Thursday as Revolution", The Rag, April 24th, 1967.)

Beneath the flamboyance and the shock effect of the Yippies' proclamations lay a two-sided critique: first, that American culture, which is the focal point for non-political alienation in this society, is inextricably related to the way in which society is run and the privileges which it preserves; and second, that people who are personally oppressed by the society need an alternative way of life rather than simply the chance to take part in political meetings and protest demonstrations. Indeed, it was clear to people in Chicago that most of the participants in the Convention Week activities had come, not because of the massive publicity put out by the National Mobilization Committee, but because of the Yippies. In nominating a pig for President, and threatening to dump LSD in the Chicago water supply, the Yippies added a note of excitement to a week whose only other source of excitement was the Chicago Police Department. What will become of the Yippies now that Chicago is over is unclear. After the Wallace campaign, the New Left is more conscious than ever of the need for a radical movement in the working class, and there is much uncertainty about the degree to which this requires organizers to adopt a more "straight" life style.

(It should be made clear at this point that I have despaired of doing justice to either the underground press or guerrilla theatre in this article. Either I or someone else will be writing a separate article on them in a subsequent issue of Radical America.)

## BALLOTS AND BUILDINGS

For the New Left in the spring of 1968, there were two events which were of immeasurable importance. One was the campaign of Senator Eugene McCarthy for the Democratic Presidential nomination, and the other was a complex of events that is usually referred to simply as "Columbia".

The McCarthy campaign began in a modest way in late November when, after sending up a series of trial balloons, the Minnesota Senator told a meeting of anti-war Democrats in Chicago that he would challenge President Johnson for the Party's nomination. At that time this seemed an impossible goal: LBJ was unpopular, but solidly entrenched, and the only one of McCarthy's stated objectives which seemed attainable was the restoration of young people's faith in the political system. But this was at the peak of the militant campus demonstrations against Dow and Armed Services recruiters, and it seemed unlikely that a quixotic Presidential campaign would attract much youthful support.

What happened to change this was that the Vietnamese Tet Offensive in early February called into question the Administration's claims of military success, and the New Hampshire primary a month later showed that McCarthy's campaign did have an outside chance of success. It began to catch fire among college students, especially in states with Presidential primaries—such as Wisconsin. The McCarthy effort in that state depended very heavily on student volunteers, and it was apparently the prospect of a lop-sided defeat that led President Johnson to withdraw from contention two days before the primary.

Although some SDS chapters did go into the McCarthy campaign, there was a clear consensus on the national level and in the larger chapters that it should not be supported: first, because McCarthy did not commit himself to a policy of withdrawal even if negotiations should fail; second, because the New Left distrusts hero worship and opposes the notion that society can be changed simply by choosing different leaders; and third, because the campaign seemed to many an attempt to co-opt radical students by convincing them that sweeping change was possible within a political structure that contains innumerable safeguards for the status quo.

(Two good articles which set forth a New Left perspective on the McCarthy campaign are Joe Davidson's "McCarthy's Circus", *Connections*, March 12th through 26th, 1968, and Clive Jones's "Who Is Eugene McCarthy?", *The Rag*, January 29th, 1968.)

Still, it was obvious throughout most of the spring that SDS had no real alternative for young people who felt that working for McCarthy was the most effective way of stopping the War. That is why the Columbia affair, when it began at the end of April, was seized upon with so much interest by New Left groups across the country. The lesson of Columbia seemed to be that a strong action such as the occupation of a building, centered around radical issues, could attract support among the students and force the Administration into making mistakes that would increase this support.

What was not clear at the time, but has become very clear since, is that such a militant action has no built-in guarantees of long-range success. By all accounts, the Columbia campus is quiescent this year. The SDS chapter has been baffled by a liberal new president and by a proliferation of student proposals for structural changes in the University that have little relevance to the questions (still raised by SDS) of the University's relationship to society. "Columbia" was certainly a moment of grandeur and of ingenuity for the New Left, and it is not a condemnation of Columbia SDS to say that its experiences have been misunderstood.

(The two best articles I have seen on Columbia are Peter Shapiro: "Columbia: A Study in Successful Environmental Adaptation", *Open Process*, May 9th, 1968, and Eric Mann: "Columbia Exam: A Special Supplement", *The Movement*, November 1968. An earlier version of Mann's article appeared in *Our Generation*. The New York Newsreel's fifty-minute film on Columbia is worth seeing. A miscellany of fairly good writings includes Paul Spike: "We Don't Want To Be Educated for the CIA! An Interview with Mark Rudd" and Dotson Rader: "Up Against the Wall", *Evergreen Review*, August 1968; Marvin Harris: "Big Bust on Morningside Heights", *Nation*, June 10th, 1968; the Cox Commission: *Crisis at Columbia* (Vintage paperback); "Columbia", *The Rag*, May 6th, 1968; and Dankwart A. Rustow: "Days of Crisis", *New Leader*, May 20th, 1968. Two excellent statements of the SDS case against Columbia as an institution are *Who Rules Columbia?*, a thick booklet prepared by staff members of the North American Conference on Latin America, and *The Columbia Statement*, drafted by Paul Rockwell and approved by Columbia SDS in September 1968.)

One salient point about the wave of student seizures of university buildings in the late spring of 1968 is the key role played by black students. A massive student sit-in at Howard University, in fact, pre-dated the Columbia affair by a month. Later in the spring students at Tuskegee Institute held the school's board of trustees captive over a period of hours. At Columbia itself black students had traditionally been very unpolitical, but they played an indispensable part in the 1968 uprising. It seems likely that the New York police would have been called in much earlier had the Administration not feared that violence against black students holding Hamilton Hall would bring reinforcements from Harlem. At Northwestern, Ohio State, and elsewhere, black students with some white support took over buildings in efforts to force University administrators to grant such demands as the admission of more minority-group students. The new mood among black university students marked a tremendous change from the situation that had existed even one or two years earlier.

(See two excellent articles by Robert L. Allen—both written before the series of building seizures—in the *Guardian*: "Black Students Seek Role", March 2nd, 1968, and "Black Campuses Today", March 9th, 1968. See also Sanders Bebra and Brenda Adams, "Howard University Students Take Over", *Washington Free Press*, March 27th, 1968; Roger Friedman: "NU Black Power Victory", *New Left Notes*, May 6th, 1968; and David Steinberg: "Black Power on Black Campuses", *Commonweal*, April 19th, 1968.)

## EAST LANSING, CHICAGO, AND AFTER

Although there were good talks in many of the workshops about chapter organizing experiences, the June '68 SDS' Convention at Michigan State University managed to evade most of the central questions that had been raised by the previous year's experiences: relationship of whites to militant black groups, cultural rebellion, attitude toward the "McCarthy kids", and role of Columbia-style militancy in building a campus movement. Instead, the Convention resolved itself into a feud between supporters and opponents of the Progressive Labor Party. PL pushed very hard for its "Student-Worker Alliance" idea, and the other side charged that PL was an "external cadre" trying to manipulate SDS. When the latter issue was brought out into the open, supporters of PL clearly had the sympathy of most delegates, simply because their arguments were better. Only the disruptive antics of the "Up Against the Wall Motherfucker" Lower East Side chapter made the plenary sessions worth attending. What was obscured by all the debates was the fact that SDS was strong, was getting stronger, and was reaching campuses which had had little contact with radical ideas in the past.

(On the SDS Convention see Bruce Detweiler: "Following the Old Left Back into the Factories", Village Voice, June 27th, 1968, and Ann Gordon's enjoyable "Conventional SDS", Connections, July 1st through 22nd, 1968. James Jacobs' article "SDS: Between Reform and Revolution", Nation, June 10th, 1968, is a very important survey of SDS and its problems in mid-'68.)

The important thing about Chicago, since not that many radicals showed up there, was that it was televised. The defeat of McCarthy, the harassment of newsmen and dissenting delegates, the wanton clubbings by Chicago police, and above all the arrogance or (in Humphrey's case) mock humility with which it was all done made indelible impressions on millions of young people.

In Chicago itself hippies, SDSers, and "McCarthy kids" had stood together against the police. Across the country the same kind of alliance seemed possible; nearly everywhere, SDS chapters reported in September, that attendance at their first meetings was greater than ever before, and the SDS national office was swamped with literature requests.

The fall SDS National Council meeting, held in Boulder, Colorado in mid-October, drew more than six hundred people and by all accounts was the best national SDS meeting in years. An ambitious program calling for a nationwide strike of high-school and college students, together with local demonstrations aimed at showing disgust with the Presidential elections, was approved. In place of polemics between PL and anti-PL delegates, there was the best discussion ever held in SDS on strategy for developing a radical working-class movement. PL's proposal for a Student Labor Action Project was decisively beaten, but this did not mean that the importance of reaching blue-collar and other workers was ignored.

The success of George Wallace's effort to attract support in working-class areas has been taken both as a sign of hope (because Wallace has appealed to the workers' sense of powerlessness) and, for obvious reasons, as a warning. The meeting also—for the first time at a national SDS conference—talked seriously about organizing in the Armed Forces, through participation in a "National GI Week" November 1st through 5th. Although the past year had seen a bourgeoning of anti-war coffee houses near military bases, as well as the

growth of Vietnam GI and other anti-war papers distributed to servicemen, these programs had gotten more support from Old Left than from New Left groups, mainly because of the New Left's advocacy of draft-refusal. Finally, the Boulder Convention also passed a resolution, submitted by High-School SDS of Los Angeles, calling for an intensification of organizing efforts among high-school students.

(On draft-refusal, see Robert Christgau: "Military Personnel Will Not Participate in Any Activity Having To Do with Creating a Union for Enlisted Men; Oh Yeah?", *Esquire*, August 1968; and two recent articles in *The Guardian*: "Fort Hood Three Return to a Movement", October 19th, 1968, and Clark Kissinger: "GI Paper on the Move", November 2nd, 1968.)

## SUMMARY

It is hard to get a clear overall picture of the new radical movement that has developed in this country during the 1960s. It started nine years ago, when the first Negro college students, wearing coats and ties, began to sit in at Southern lunch counters, and the first Northern students began to startle their classmates by carrying picket signs in support of the sit-ins. Today there is an incredible proliferation of activities that make up what we can call the New Left. While keeping in mind that historical delineations are never exact, it may be possible to distinguish four or perhaps five periods in the development of this New Left.

First was a period in the early 1960s when liberal issues were dominant: segregated public accommodations, nuclear testing, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and scattered violations of academic freedom. This was a period above all of single-issue movements and a pervasive mistrust of political ideologies. The largest student protest organization was the Student Peace Union, which was so closely identified with the issue of nuclear testing that it almost entirely collapsed after the signing of a limited test-ban treaty in 1963.

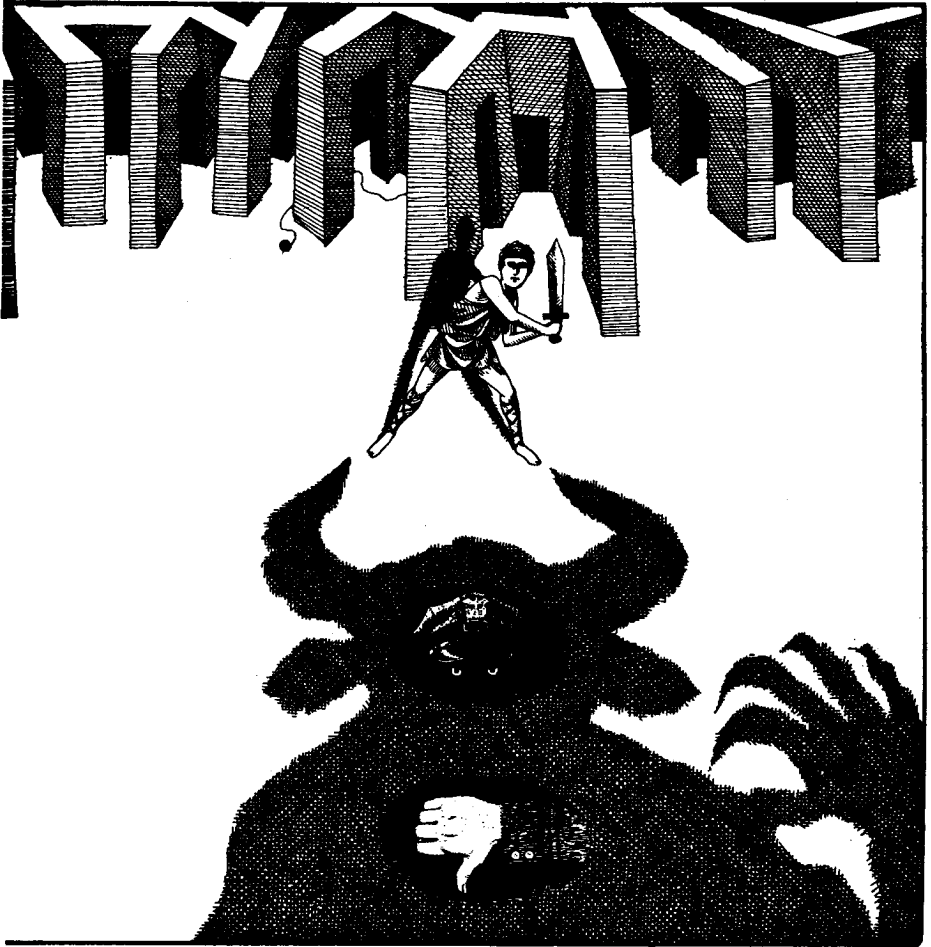
Then came a period, perhaps roughly delineated by the years 1964 and 1965, when the issue of participatory democracy came to the fore in the new radical movement. SNCC and SDS emerged as the two most vital groups, and both of them put great stress on building a movement that would give ordinary people a real voice in the decision-making process. The Federal Government's liberal bureaucracy, as typified by the Justice Department and the War on Poverty, was viewed with increasing impatience and mistrust. The new radicals came to regard the liberal style as a series of back-room deals among "leaders", in which decisions were made without the participation of the governed.

The third phase was one which lasted for about a year after the intensification of the Vietnam War in early 1965. At this time the War itself, rather than the Draft or overall US foreign policy, was the focus for radical activity. SDS enjoyed its greatest period of expansion, largely because of its identification with opposition to the War. Vietnam, because American soldiers were fighting there, was much more of an emotional issue than nuclear testing had been earlier in the decade, and the mere act of protesting the War often involved risks. Peaceful protest had not been absorbed by the society, nor had the protest movement evolved into a generalized critique of the society.

The fourth phase is one which may be dated from the spring and early summer of 1966, when SNCC formulated the Black Power concept and campus

sit-ins took place against the furnishing of draft boards with class-rank information. During this period the New Left has increasingly connected broad societal issues—such as the War and racial exploitation—with the conditions of life in middle-class as well as lower-class America. Student radicals have come to feel, as Greg Calvert has expressed it, that they are engaged in an effort to liberate themselves through an overall transformation of the society. The two are seen as opposite sides of the same coin.

What will happen next is hard to predict; the only thing which can be said with any certainty is that in nine years the Movement has come a long way.



sitting on a bench near TSquare

(for David Meltzer)

1.

through the branches of  
 the thin trees of tenth street  
 the blue sky waits  
 with me &  
 i'm waiting for god  
 (on a white horse)  
 to ride thru the  
 branches of the  
 lower east side  
 before returning to  
 cleveland  
 & something  
 tells me  
 he isn't coming

2.

i'm a levy of the levites  
 yet in cleveland  
 i have painted myself  
 celtic-blue  
 & am feeling  
 something like an outlaw

the druids give me soup  
 & think i'm a lama

its been close to 7 years  
 ive been looking for god  
 & the trails wearing as  
 thin as the trees on tenth street

i am a levy of the levites  
 & last week  
 a fanatic jew in the heights  
 called me a halfbreed  
 because my mother was a christian

i am a levy of the levites  
 & last week a rabbi  
 thought i was kidding  
 when i told him  
 i was interested in judaism



god i think yr sense  
 of humor is sad  
 & perhaps you are also  
 feeling something  
 like an outlaw

god i am wondering  
 for how many years  
 have the jew:  
 exiled you  
 while they busied themselves  
 with survival

d. a. levy

## From El Corno: A Narrative

edited by Dan Georgakas

Most Leftists don't give a shit about poetry, and most poets don't give a shit about politics. With very little coaxing this indifference becomes outright hostility. Poets are appalled by the authoritarianism of the traditional parties, and Leftists are disgusted by the erratic, naive, irresponsible, and egotistical behavior of most poets.

This mutual antagonism remains the rule as the Sixties end, but some important changes are taking place. The most obvious signs of these changes are the roles black writers are taking in the black liberation struggles and the parts played by white writers in the anti-Vietnam War movement. The few names known to most political people are only the first surfacings of a more profound and fundamental current in the literary underground.

A detailed history of the little mags and mimeos of the past decade would show most clearly the ideological breakthroughs of the past ten years. In the absence of that history, the shift could be documented in any number of ways which consist primarily of telling rather than showing that change. What follows is an experiment in showing. I have selected one of the most widely read of the

underground mags and chosen a representative paragraph from each of the one-page editorials which have appeared quarterly over the past six years. These paragraphs have been arranged in strict chronological order.

What emerges from the resulting collage is more than the development of one editor, for the magazine's content changes with the editorial changes. The contributors to the magazine include almost every writer active in the English and Spanish literary underground. Not every writer has gone as far as Margaret Randall, the editor, nor has the entire underground mag network moved in the way her magazine has, but the magazine does accurately reflect the shifting ideas of the era which began with Howl.

The theme which is crucial with the poets has tended to merge more and more with the theme Leftists are most interested in—the new man. The first editorial begins by stating that the struggle for the new man is outside politics. The last editorial, which appeared in the fall of 1968, is an attack on the Mexican Government for its slaughter of students and workers in the streets of the capital. The intervening years represent a long march of sorts, a march more and more writers are beginning to take part in:

El Corno Emplumado—The Plumed Horn—is a magazine of poetry, prose, letters, and art from two hemispheres, printed in Spanish and English and published in Mexico City out of the need for a NEW MAGAZINE, a magazine whose pages conform to the word instead of whose words conform to pages. We hope EL CORNO EMPLUMADO will be a showcase (outside politics) for the fact that WE ARE ALL BROTHERS (January 1962)

To lift the mask. The new era. Action undisturbed by reaction, up, down, left, right, inside—to the point from which it comes.

Our age—Cuba, Africa, Chessman, A-bombs, civil disobedience, abstract expressionism, electronic music, a million babies born every day—compresses the history we make to a madness which has fractured the light in which we move. The answers we seek hide behind machinery, dogma, old hates, and social functionalism. THE PLUMED HORN will continue on the premise that beyond these categories we are united by a fraternity called art.

With the publication of Number 4 we completed our first year. It is always touch and go, but the beauty remains foremost....A group largely responsible for the publication of this number was composed of forty poets in New York City who gave a public reading for our benefit.

A form emerges. A form with no name. Although his own vision may put him anywhere, today's poet is recognizable from Nicaragua to Kyoto. He no longer dresses himself in classicism. The weight of the centuries is felt from a different angle. The gods of the Greeks are not his gods, nor does he pay heed to used-up structure. He is concerned with a new form, line, space, breath, time—he touches the simple object in his line of vision—what has a new day done to the tips of his finers?

Writing from India, Allen Ginsberg says: The common saddhu scene here is, feels like just about the same as the beat scene in the US—amazing to see the underlying universality of people's scenes.

We have talked about a new era peopled by a new man. Many still ask us who this new man is and in what new age he lives. One may even feel the change within himself and be unwilling—as we, at times—to put a name

it is time for an art of the people which is not an "art of the people".

A human change no longer hovering in groupism, no longer limited by political or religious answers.

...In early February, spontaneously and with great individual sacrifice, poets from some fifteen countries on the American continent converged on Mexico City for THE FIRST ENCOUNTER OF AMERICAN POETS. These people, who for the past two years had been mysteriously connected by a network of correspondence and "little" magazines, sold their books, pianos, future peace of mind; took advantage of "fly now, pay later"; and followed hasty telegrams or arrived unannounced all through the first week of February. Here they were lodged in cheap hotels, on patios, in spare beds in the homes of Mexican peasants, and here they shared daily rations of beans and rice with us as the encounter unfolded.

(Quoting from the Village Voice, March 26th, 1964, Jonas Mekas' column:) There is no use criticizing the existing order or the bad state of man's soul; you can't change or improve man from outside; that real work must be done inside; the others can be reached only through the beauty of our own self.

a horn concert is playing. in spanish it is called 'concerto para corno y orquesta'. i remember that among other things the mayans gave us the concept of zero. in effect, they discovered the zero. their gift of total nothing was their gift of everything, an image with which to close the books. the poetic line is always born, brings itself into focus —against soft clay and streaked skies. mississippi has become a battlefield backdrop for the great pacific revolution. the line continues to pronounce itself. cuba and china resist all organized attempts aimed at damming the great social revolutions by power-fear. and the song keeps coming, keeps coming, the spiritual revolution, too, pleads for 'an agrarian reform of the soul', and here the song has, perhaps, its great active role. in mexico city a columnist writes: a noose always awaits the prophet, or, to be more up-to-date, a telescopic lens in dallas... "the Prophets" may be ordinary mayans, mississippians, cubans, angels, beatles, farmers, red-caps, clowns...ordinary MEN, but they sing, they continue to SING, their songs keep coming, and the concerto for horn and orchestra continues.

confrontation. Reading of Alice Herz, who on March 16th set herself ablaze in a Detroit street, the single and impossible sacrifice. Above all marches, sit-ins, manifestations, protests of every sort, if this act could not touch the possible bit of heart latent in the power-mad, much less the written word, this useless editor's note. And yet we cannot be still, the need to scream remains, the positive energy must accumulate and make itself felt. That, at least.

we spent almost the entire month of october in the states. there we were jolted into what will undoubtedly be a new era for El Corno...we heard poetry, read poetry, talked, listened, listened, and we walked and walked and walked, some of the walking including marching, with 30,000 other human beings... home, we read TIME magazine's report of 10,000 "vietniks", a sharp view of the great empty space between the real positive action on the part of a tremendous segment of north american youth radicals and the mass media lie

we continue to publish those writers whose work for us speaks most significantly the visionary voice of the human/social/literary revolution we live...for five years we have attempted a breaking down of barriers, an avoidance of "isms" and groups, the desire to publish a good poem by a communist guerrilla next to a good poem by a catholic monk.

El Corno is composed of many things: a continuous flow of manuscripts, letters, the constant problem of publication...alberto rabilotta came to stay from buenos aires. also from argentina, luisa pasamanik, haroldo de campo spent a week with us on his way back to brazil...george hitchcock and his wife spent a week with us on his way back to brazil...george hitchcock and his wife visiting from san francisco put number 7 of their mag Kayak in our hands, pedro alcantara spent three days on his way to cuba for the 26th july celebration and he showed us an incredible exposition of photos and clippings to be presented in memory of camilo torres.  
presented in memory of camillo torres.

poets are simply people, people who have the capacity to see and express. recently three privates in the US army received their orders to ship out to vietnam and publicly refused to go. they added their voices to the several dozen who have burned their draft cards—all of them in one way or another knew how to say no. poets in the maine woods, on an island in the lake of nicaragua, in a monastery in kentucky, or in the new movement of revolutionary poets in cuba also know how to say no, and they join in converting those "nos" to a great "yes"

it is life that counts

#### VENCEREMOS

hurry up, please, it's time

#### WE SHALL OVERCOME

form is nothing more than an extension of content. we were invited to cuba to participate in the ENCUENTO CON RUBEN DARIO. more than fifty poets and critics came from all over the world to meet on varadeo beach...we must pledge ourselves to demolish the cultural blockade which in many ways is more harmful than its economic counterpart. our entire issue number 25 will be devoted to the cuban experience in honor of the 26th of July

cuba happens to be the only country on the continent to have completely eradicated illiteracy, with free educational and medical facilities for all, where misery has been stamped out, and where an armed people walk hand in hand with their government. all this having taken place under the hardships of an economic blockade designed to sink the entire island.

who is not my lover

who is not my lover

art meaning something is LIFE; and el corno—for six years—has been life through the eyes and ears and hands of poets living and interpreting their years. this issue, perhaps more than any other, is an exchange of that interpretation; williams in spanish, cardenal in english, Blackburn wildly open, morales climbing out of his small significant country, and tribute—inadequate as it may be—to ernesto che guevara:

with the death of "el che" many things die. someone said OUR FATHER IS DEAD: NOW WE ARE OUR OWN FATHER. someone else said: COMPROMISE

DIED WITH EL CHE: THERE IS NO MORE COMPROMISE NOW, for me, and i pass this on with all the strength of conviction, FEAR DIED WITH EL CHE. the hippies sense this when they say "do your thing", though many of them do not weigh that yet. in the US the blacks come out of the ghettos; their fear is dead. the guerrilla, living his fear in whatever mountain, has known the greater fear as dead for a long time; now is only confirmation for him, and for the poet, let it be a confirmation also. a painful bath of fire from which to rise.

Our children will not see the world we know. The change is upon us, in our hands, and in our mountains, and in our cities—brute and sure. Vietnam, Korea, Guatemala, Guiana, Tierra Amarilla, Detroit. Artists and writers no longer content to bear witness; looking to DeBray, to El Che, to Carmichael, and to Cesar Montes are making their acts a new kind of witness. In Cuba, the real mirror in which we care to see ourselves reflected, 6,000 intellectuals from 70 countries met in January and talked about THIS in all its details and facets. The "official" press everywhere is already engaged in its strategy of slander; but we are no longer on the defensive. Our offensives will be known through our action, our eyes, the objects and lines we create, and the news media, small press and little magazines, by which this reality goes out to you.

WORLD REVOLUTION is not yet a global reality, but a new and world-wide generation is reacting against the impossible status quo—in the streets of Detroit and Newark and Rio de Janeiro, before the Russell tribune, in the halls of Columbia University, in the middle of Paris (for "peace talks" which now do not even fool those who want to be fooled), before induction centers in the US, in the new revolutionary offensive in Cuba and in the mountains. Even the "academy" is splitting apart. Che, of course, said it years ago: "And the University should be flexible, paint itself black, paint itself mulatto, paint itself the colors of workers and peasants, or stand without doors for the people to break in and paint it with the colors they feel.

the POEM and the LIFE ACT are drawing closer together, they are being drawn closer together precisely by the diminishing credibility gap between WHAT IS and WHAT IS SAID TO BE. In the recent violence in Mexico City, no deaths were reported in the "democratic" press. Obviously, there were interests at work that didn't care to have the student deaths made public. The reality became public knowledge, however...it is not the small-scale hysteric rightist press which is most to be feared but the "liberal" enormous "objective" democratic news media which do service to no one but their masters. we sift WHAT IS from WHAT IS SAID TO BE. How can we tell others WHAT IS? How can we prepare ourselves, inwardly and outwardly, to hear WHAT IS?

—Dan Georgakas, compiler of Margaret Randall's editorials in *El Corno Emplumado*—January 1962 through September 1968

#### POSTSCRIPT

....We have come out every three months with approximately 200 pages of people like Ginsberg, Cardenal, Hesse, Patchen, Levertov, Paz, Rulfo, Creeley, Kelly, Wakoski, Owens, and anthologies of good new work from places like Argentina, Mexico, Cuba, Greece, Finland, and Canada. Through poems, prose,

articles, art work, and letters, a definition of the world we live in has emerged through the perceptions of its vanguard artists.

In seven years of publication we have had many problems, of course; the life of a "little" magazine with no foundation or institution behind it is precarious at best. Many people have helped us through difficulties: individuals, poets who have read on our behalf, painters who have contributed to group benefit shows, and the Mexican government which has, almost from the outset, granted us a subsidy amounting to nearly half of what we need to publish each issue.

The current student strike, however, with the government's answer of incredible brutality and repression, demanded our taking a stand. If we had remained silent before an army that surrounded and came in firing on a peaceful public demonstration of 10,000 citizens—killing at least 200 in one night of horror only—then we would have betrayed everything the magazine has stood for.

We published the facts and our protest in the editorial of EL CORNO EMPLUMADO #28. As could be expected, the government withdrew its support immediately. (Subsidy often shows itself to be a form of control.)....

Now, more than ever, we are convinced of the real need for a magazine of this kind. Our only hope of continuing publication, however, is the possibility of augmenting the half of our funds which comes from subscriptions and sales with the half which must come from subsidy. And the only way we can raise this new subsidy is by writing people everywhere, people who have expressed their appreciation and support of EL CORNO EMPLUMADO, and people who are new to the project, asking for support. If you are able to send a contribution only once, it will help us make good on our printer's bill for this issue. But if you can pledge a regular amount, however small (every three months, for example)—if enough of you share our desire to keep the magazine alive—then perhaps, in spite of the very real political repression we are suffering, we can keep going.

(Margaret Randall and Robert Cohen: "Appeal to Friends", October 1968)



# el corno emplumado

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## CARTWHEEL NEWSFLASHES OF PAPER CUT -OUTS

My corroded red tongue  
 bleeding red speckles of Geraniums  
 eyes clutching at all  
 expert at falling in love  
 with helpless red flowers that  
 can't defend themselves

I lie down  
 & all sidewalks run thru my ears  
 down to my medulla  
 all red flowers are formed in gray matter  
 & this poem becomes  
 a geiger counter to my attachment.

We are all made of paper  
 pasted onto the walls of kaleidoscopes  
 floundering like newspapers in a sewer —  
 writing down thoughts  
 as if thoughts were tickets to salvation  
 am I too poetic? too dramatic?  
 but tell me, the images I get, the impressions,  
 birds pecking words with their beaks in mirrors  
 how do I write them so they will be voltage  
 instead of Walgreen aspirin labels?  
 don't you know all I write is REAL,  
 is coroner's reports  
 is cop's bullets!?

Poetry is useless  
 unless we try to capture  
 every second of our existence  
 like wild buffalos, like hummingbirds

Even if this means  
 sitting in someone's backyard  
 with neck branded by pokers of Geranium.

A "good" poem is written  
 with NO CONTROL  
 the way a "good" woman is loved  
 &, afterwards, throw away the word "good."

Hammering Swiss steak with a 10 lb. sledge  
 it is lethal to THINK  
 hammers plummet the meat in my temples  
 dragging my claw-earth body to the coffin's  
 inner tapestry.

My brain is a bent slug that  
 keeps jamming in each poem I write –  
 the purchase key on the register  
 is pressed before I write the first word:  
 I cannot help but buy myself,  
 my REAL self,  
 crossing my legs  
 in the cross-hairs of a red flower  
 I have no control  
 except to be slaughtered  
 by the scissors of life  
 splitting the thought of Ultimate Hysteria  
 with laughter  
 which is,  
 as my friend would say,  
 a funny way to be serious.

Doug Blazek

OUR CONTRIBUTORS: DAVID GROSS AND JAMES O'BRIEN are graduate students in history at the University of Wisconsin; JEREMY J. SHAPIRO, translator of Negations, is a graduate student in the History of Ideas at Brandeis; THE WILLIE is putting together a book of poetry on hitchhiking; DAN GEORGAKAS is compiling a series of little poetry books, The Heroic Guerrilla; DAVE WAGNER is editing a special Connections poetry supplement; DOUG BLAZEK heads Open Skull Press in San Francisco; DAVID GROSSMAN is an undergraduate in art at the University of Wisconsin.



# Three Poets

Dave Wagner

Ole number 7, edited by Doug Blazek: Open Skull Press, 1379 Masonic Avenue, San Francisco, California 94117, \$5.00

Life in a Common Gun, by Doug Blazek: Quixote Press, 315 North Brooks Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53715, \$1.50

All Gods Must Learn To Kill, by D. Blazek: Analecta Press, Box 133, Demarest, New Jersey 07627 (or from Open Skull), \$1.50

UKANHAVYRFUKINCITIBAK, by d. a. levy, edited by rjs: Ghost Press, Post Office Box 91415, Cleveland, Ohio 44101, \$6.00

THE WILLIE, numbers 1 and 2, edited by The Willie: Manic Press (c/o Open Skull), \$1 each

This group of books will give the interested reader a direct path into the underground poetry scene. They are products of what is called, for want of a more descriptive term, the "mimeo revolution", a phenomenon in American poetry which has its roots in the Beat insurrection of the '50s and its first, best flowering in the more general alternative-culture movement of the '60s. Several of these books are indispensable to an understanding of the importance of this movement to American poetry; others are representative of the direction and attitudes of a much larger body of work which is still being produced in this country, England, India, and a few other places. ("Representative", it should be added, here refers to the best work I could find from the variety of collections which share a similar historical impulse.)

Ole number 7 is the oldest publication in this group. It was printed less than two years ago (May '67) and stands nevertheless as one of the most important documents of underground poetry in its self-conscious development. The title page carries this heading: THE GODZILLA REVIEW ISSUE OF SMALL PRESS PUBLICATIONS/COMPREHENSIVELY ENCOMPASSING BOOKS PUBLISHED OVER THE LAST HALF-DECADE. It contains more than eighty pages of reviews by some forty hands. Almost all of the reviews concern small-press poetry publications, and nearly all the reviewers are poets themselves. Now, it is probably not well known that the hard work of keeping this art vigorous and relevant is carried on almost exclusively in little magazines and in inexpensive books published by small presses; the academic and commercial presses turn

out only the safest work—on one hand for the English professors who must insure the development of new sources of dissertation topics in an already overcrowded profession, and on the other for that small portion of the bourgeois public which demands a respectable concern for "culture" from its more Liberal publishing corporations. As a result of this inversion (by which, for example, young professors are denied tenure because they publish poems rather than articles about poetry) it is necessary for small, active presses to maintain communication and a self-consciousness of purpose among themselves if they are to survive, grow, and subvert the institutional order which oppresses the poetry of uncompromised expression and the active role it must play in social change. In bringing these particular poets and books together under one cover, Doug Blazek, the editor, has laid the foundation for this kind of resistance. But the role Blazek plays as co-ordinator—vortex of information—goes beyond the first, important step of compiling the necessary range of subjects for review. He has also established standards of critical expression which threaten to undermine the autocratic position of the academic critic in bourgeois culture. If poetry works to "change people's lives" (as the SDSers like to say), then the only valid critical evaluation lies in expressing the significance of the poetry in the experience of the reader. How does it change his perception of his own life, of his society?

"The Fug puts all of us in the courtroom & places us naked on the police blotter! We watch the various cases come before us. We see the various criminals as they are dragged off the streets...I place myself on the witness stand & take oath & become one of the criminals Caught in the Act" (review of Fuli Kupferberg's book of the same name by George Montgomery).

At the heart of experience and the act of comparing the changes in experience is the metaphor. The metaphor is the poet's rope and gun, with which he ties down or shoots mental energy at himself and his reader. These reviews are filled with that energy, you know exactly who the reader is, how his likes and dislikes are ordered, and out of that expression comes a clear vision of what your experience with a particular book is likely to be. Honesty, depth, energetic interest. Is it a loss that the positivist, "objectivist" critics will have to become scholars again?

The other two Blazek books show from different angles what poetry means in the understanding of a man's experience of himself. *Life in a Common Gun* is a collection of letters to friends who are involved, like Blazek, in the struggle to grow out of the reasonable, everyday perception of things. Meaning must grow out of a daily wrestling-match with experience, out of the confrontation in a life wary of its own death. As a matter of fact, this struggle is present in all of Blazek's work. In *All Gods Must Learn To Kill*, his most recent books of poems, it is more evident than ever before. Every piece begins in the present tense, and this immediacy hovers over everything in an urgency which demands that the poem (life) reveal its shape, once and for all, and get caught finally, for Christ's sake, there on the paper. Not all the poems work as far into the struggle as Blazek himself does: the metaphors with which he tries to slice and scrape the easy everyday illusions away (until the truth of experience is so trapped and exposed that it can't possibly escape) are sometimes honed to such a sharpness that the blade of meaning is ground away entirely, and the

truth in the moment slips away unmolested. But when he hits, and he often does —ARGHH—the experience is impaled and the reader comes away knowing his own death a little better.

d. a. levy's book, UKANHAVYRFUKINCITIBAK, is a monster mimeo edition of just about everything he wrote up to summer of this year. Anything I could say about it would be insufficient, since there's hardly any doubt that his poetry is of the strongest being written anywhere in the country today.

There is more than three hundred pages of writing which leaves the word "poetry" shuffling around in embarrassment like a disappointed kid who can't go along on a dangerous trip. levy has been busted twice by the Cleveland cops—not for drugs, but for reading his work out loud in a coffee house! Oh yeah, and he contributed to the delinquency of a minor by publishing a seventeen-year-old's poem on his mimeo machine. But the issue was never obscenity, though that's the pretense on which at least a dozen underground poets have been busted (and Blazek checked by the FBI). The real problem is that levy's poems are filled with Cleveland—how the power is distributed and used; what the minds of the cops, city bureaucrats, and bankers are like; what the stinking pollution of Lake Erie means to people every day—and that they are also filled with a vision of peace, love, and power which, if they are ever taken seriously, will mean the death of corrupt insanity.

It may or may not be surprising to some people (like the writer of the article in the Guardian called "Where Are the Poets?"), that poetry has become dangerous, that there are poets up front taking chances, getting arrested and generally harassed—Steve Richmond, rjs, levy, Ed Sanders—wholly for the sake of getting some meaning back into the gullet of "belles lettres".

Randolph Bourne saw "Culture as a living effort, a driving attempt both at sincere expression and at the comprehension of sincere expression wherever it was found". Today that definition goes down hard with American culture.

no picture is made to endure nor to live with

but it is made to sell and sell quickly

as Pound put it. levy's poems meet Bourne's definition. There is no separation of thought and expression in his writing, no ornamentation or affection. The amount of work he has produced—some very long poems like "The North American Book of the Dead", "Cleveland: The Rectal Eye Visions", "Kibbutz in the Sky", "Cleveland Undercovers", which are made to endure and to live with—is astonishing. (He is twenty-five years old.)

Rich Mangelsdorff was pretty accurate when he wrote of this book: "Its monumental size has everything to do with the nature of the poet d. a. levy, with the Cleveland poetry and publishing underground, with the importance of the task; it is a monument to a lot of things. Mainly to some people's urge to write, publish, disseminate poetry they believe in regardless of the odds."

All this is necessary to say. But the point must be kept clear that "the precise danger of the tributes that have been paid d. a. is not that they will somehow affect the clarity of his vision, but that they will construct a phony image in the minds of a public vastly unaware of levy's poetry" (T. L. Kryss). Vastly.

The Willie is a magazine, its editor, and a poet. The magazine, while it doesn't have any of the editor's work in it, has in each of the two issues printed so far some of the best shorter poetry available from the underground. Besides

levy and Blazek it contains pieces by Kryss (also from Cleveland, also one of the writers whose work it pays to search for), Charles Bukowski (who is already well-known), Marcus J. Grapes, Brown Miller, Don Cauble, and others. If you read these two numbers you'll find more sources to investigate. Cockroach Hotel, The Willie's new book (containing "Follettes & Further", which is reprinted this issue) is a narrative sequence about the author's experiences living in Chicago's bungalow, 8th and State Street. This book is, to say the least, "the effort of occasional being" we need to stay awake, and alive.

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### NEW LITERATURE AVAILABLE

Robert L. Allen, DIALECTICS OF BLACK POWER  
(Guardian Pamphlet) (35¢)

BLACK AND RED (A journal; "A New Revolutionary  
Front") (35¢)

Stu Dowty, THE ACADEMIC QUAGMIRE (10¢)

Allen Krebs, THE UNIVERSITY (10¢)

Adam Schesch, AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF  
VIETNAM (35¢)

WHAT IS GUERRILLA THEATER ANYWAY? (A  
Summer with the Wisconsin Draft Resistance  
Union Caravan) (15¢)

Keith Buchanon, THE THIRD WORLD (15¢)

Jerry Farber, THE STUDENT AS NIGGER (5¢)  
(Special bulk rates available on request)

George Hanley, BUS STOP: ALICE'S RESTAUR-  
ANT REVISITED (5¢) (Special bulk rates available  
on request)

John and Margaret Rowntree, THE POLITICAL  
ECONOMY OF YOUTH: YOUTH AS CLASS (15¢)

Charlie Simpson, KENNEDY'S CULTURAL CENTER  
IS A LEOPARD-SKIN PILLBOX HAT (5¢)  
(Special bulk rates available on request)

While this number of RA was at the printer's we learned of d. a. levy's death; on Nov. 23, 1968, he shot and killed himself in his Cleveland apartment. He was one of the greatest poets of a generation which is still so young that the loss to it of a voice so clear, simple and direct can hardly be estimated.

The following section is the conclusion of his last long work, completed in August of this year.

## **SUBURBAN MONASTERY DEATH POEM**

### **PART SIX -A SMALL FUNERAL**

"the only difference  
between matadors & poets  
is that one flirts with death  
and the other with insanity"  
rik davis

theyve almost all lied to you  
including me i suppose  
"the poet gambles with insanity"  
thats ridiculous - we are all insane

it is up to you to wake up the poets  
 lost in their eriee pasts  
 the poet just eats & sleeps & pisses  
 & farts & shits & writes  
 poems - is that insanity  
 thats a zen master on phenobarbital!

its the businessman, the salesman  
 who gambles with insanity - the  
 doctor playing medicine - the printer  
 the bomb-maker & the man  
 who makes donuts & bagels from 9 to 5  
 awake at 6 AM  
 driving a truck  
 across the city  
 to put in day after day  
 in the same meaningless  
 dance routine

without even time  
 to ask why

poets lost in the luxury of being  
 able to question being  
 able to beat their head against the wall  
 & say "well its my job"  
 & they already know - they dont want the answers

ah but that rapid transit matador  
 being forced each day with invisible  
 horns - internally  
 & business transactions that didnt come  
 & the CTS cowboy sitting silently  
 trying to get a job - any job  
 knowing he'll die of TB at 65  
 or cancer and unable to find a shred of  
 meaning in the whole game  
 ah the sweat insanity of being  
 able to put away each hopelessly identical day  
 while the matador gets a rose  
 from a fat little greasy teenybopper  
 in the crowd  
 he gives her the bulls ears later in bed

& a homy poet with poor vision  
 cleans the picture up for you  
 to help you dream  
 but now you have television  
 & you dream too much

the garbage man in the morning  
 knows his own reality  
 garbagemen never get shot during riots  
 perhaps they are the real holymen  
 with an aura of protection  
 their reality - the shit in yr  
 bedroom wastebasket

you have to be a zen master  
 to be a garbageman  
 & poets lie when they marage to find  
 some object of beauty in the garbage heap

garbage is garbage  
 poetry is emotional garbage - leftovers  
 and beautiful things are just dreams  
 but now you have television  
 to help you dream

the soulless men  
 bullfighters of insignificant stockrooms  
 mindless phantoms who never possessed a spirit  
 to gamble with  
 men with high school television dreams  
 who cross themselves in rituals of death  
 who whisper "jesus" before deuling  
 with their competitors each day  
 playing war games - becoming policemen  
 gambling with insanity  
 their drive their autos  
 laugh at hippies drink on fridays  
 go bowling shit on God each day & they die  
 & they die & they f die alone  
 wrapped in flags

proud of their insanity  
& the academic poets  
write their cleaned-up dreams for you  
pretend it is all beautiful  
sitting in a bar  
the alcohol confessional

& everyday i sit here  
trying to become one of you  
after another  
trying on those high school dreams  
for size  
it doesnt work  
you dont fit me

as a poet i try to learn  
how to remain human.  
despite technology  
& there is no one to learn from  
i am still too young to  
be quiet & contemplative

i dont want to become a golden ager  
cowering before the tube in religious awe

businessmen on amphetamine ego trips  
telling me about their latest coup

i visit churches & temples & ask questions  
& i am handed some meaningless book  
or pamphlet  
it seems as if there is no one  
to answer my questions but me

a hideous responsibility  
with worse implications

my peer group?

goodbye television  
im going back inside my head



my wife & i  
 take an evening walk  
 around the block  
                   (are we that old)  
 there is something beautiful  
 about her                   something  
 some dream thing in the cloudless sky

i know my dreams are unreal  
 but they are my dreams

sometimes  
 on hot summer nights  
 we hate each other  
 & it is beautiful...

august 1968  
 e. cleveland ohio

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from

CLEVELAND: THE RECTAL EYE VISIONS

R. E. Vision #2

YOU - lost in dreams of stallions &  
television violence

YOU ARE DYING in yr suburban homes  
YOU ARE DYING - the 11:20 NEWS is a lie  
the 7:30 news is a lie  
huntley & brinkley are lies  
the weather report is a cartoon  
YOU ARE THE LATE MOVIE

BLOOD GUTS DEATH MURDER LAW CRASH WAR  
the angel of death is not news  
you failed in yr toilet training you dreamers  
without identities

YOU ARE NOT JEAN HARLOW  
JAMES DEANS DEATH IS NOT YRS  
GARY COOPERS COOL IS NOT YRS  
LIZ TAYLORS DREAM TWOT IS NOT YRS  
BRIGIT BARDOT IS NOT RIMBAUD

you are sitting there  
sucking it up  
the friday night horror movie is really  
a HAPPENING in viet nam  
the prisons of Spain are packed like a tin  
of sardines  
you are paying for them  
you are paying for the death of others  
you are paying

with yr hemmorhoids  
& wet dreams...shooting up with channel 3/5/8  
& it is killing you faster than shooting  
methedrine crystals on the beaches of lake erie

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