

Violence and the Student Movement

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THE VIOLENCE which has occurred on many American campuses, and at the Democratic convention in Chicago, has not been accidental. It has not been the result of brutality by the police, although in a number of instances the police have been brutal.

It has, instead, been carefully planned by the most radical elements of the youthful protest movement. This is, of course, something which the student militants do not hesitate to state frankly for all to understand.

Violence is an intrinsic part of the politics of revolt which threatens to erupt on campuses and in cities throughout the country. Only by appreciating the perspective within which the advocates of such violence operate can society prepare itself for the confrontations which lie ahead.

A leaflet prepared in Toronto, Canada, and reported to have been distributed to Students for a Democratic Society chapters throughout the country contains instructions on how to make Molotov cocktails and incendiary time bombs.

Urging sabotage as "the next logical step toward obstruction and disruption of the U.S. war machine," the leaflet says that it is ludicrous to think that demonstrations closing down an induction center for a few hours will really hurt Selective Service.

"On the other hand," the leaflet says, "is there anyone who doubts that a small home-made incendiary device with a timing mechanism planted in a broom closet at the Oakland induction center could result in fire and smoke damage to the entire building, thus making it unusable for weeks or

months? One person with a fair knowledge of chemistry could build such a device easily and cheaply and could plant it with almost no chance of being detected.”¹

Joel R. Kramer, President of the *Harvard Crimson*, stated that “Students have learned from history that blood must be shed on the way to the voting booth. They have learned from experience that rocking the boat and making headlines accomplish what could not have been done peacefully.”²

Discussing the goals of many student activists, Kramer explained the place that force and violence occupy in their tactical strategy:

The “new university” that students from Berkeley to Paris seek is a university in which students have real power . . . “student power” does not mean total student control of the university. It does not mean the elimination of a university administration, or the elimination of faculty power. Students seek a shift in the balance of power. At most universities, the administration and trustees have most of the power and the faculty has what is left. Students would like to see most of the power divided between themselves and the faculty. . . . If students are to have any of the real power, they know they must take it forcibly, or at least use force to focus public attention on their claims. . . . Force is becoming a popular student tactic because students are learning that it works. . . .³

Steve Weissman, a student leader at Stanford University, expresses the view that the time for rational discourse has ended and the time for violence has arrived:

What the University has done is to get us to think for a number of years that social problems can be solved by rational discussion. . . . There’s no conversation between us and the C.I.A. We’re on

different sides. I hope people will now see that force is a part of the world—it’s not a very pleasant fact, but it’s true.⁴

A similar view was echoed by Steve Kindred, a member of the Students for a Democratic Society at the University of Chicago. He said that “This university owes quite a lot of reparations. This whole society owes quite a lot of reparations. With what the university’s done, and the way it’s followed in the footsteps of the other major institutions of this society, it may burn some day. It doesn’t deserve not to burn.”⁵

Not only do student militants show no hesitation in defining and defending their use of violence, but they also do not hesitate to criticize such concepts as tolerance for differing points of view.

University of California Professor Herbert Marcuse, called the “foremost literary symbol of the New Left” by the *New York Times*, has highlighted the intolerance of the student movement. In his book *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, Marcuse tells why the New Left is so strenuous about claiming liberty for itself but unwilling to grant liberty to others. People confused about politics, he says, don’t really know how to use freedom of speech correctly—turning such freedom into “an instrument for absolving servitude,” so that “that which is radically evil now appears as good.” They employ their freedom for improper purposes.

Having established this premise, Marcuse recommends “the withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements which promote aggressive policies, armaments, chauvinism, racial and religious discrimination, or which oppose the extension of public services.” He says that the correct political attitude is one of “intolerance against movements from the right and toleration of movements from the left.” He proposes, in ef-

fect, a dictatorship.

This philosophy was put into action by the rebels at Columbia University. In the violence at Columbia, private papers representing ten years of research were taken from the files of Orest A. Ranum, an assistant professor of modern history, and burned.

Supporters of the student strike are said to have been antagonistic toward Mr. Ranum since he issued a paper opposing the student position early in the crisis when five buildings were occupied by student demonstrators.

Leaders of Students for a Democratic Society disavowed the destruction of Mr. Ranum's research. "We deplore the burning of the professor's papers," one S.D.S. leader said, "but we deplore the provocation of the University even more." Of the burned papers, Mr. Ranum said: "All of this is personally irreplaceable."⁶

The New Left's assault against the American university is less an effort to reform it than to, in effect, destroy it. This point was made in an editorial in the *Berkeley Barb*, a leading underground newspaper:

The universities cannot be reformed. They must be abandoned or closed down. They should be used as bases for actions against society, but never taken seriously. The professors have nothing to teach. . . . We can learn more from any jail than we can from any university.⁷

The fact that student strikes and campus take-overs are less related to particular campus issues than to the general desire by militant student leaders to effect a revolution, not only in the university, but in the society at large, was reaffirmed by Mark Rudd, the leader of the turbulent Columbia University rebellion in the Spring of 1968. In a letter addressed to Columbia

University President Grayson Kirk, Rudd did not hesitate to name "revolution" as the real issue at Columbia:

You are quite right in feeling that the situation is "potentially dangerous." For if we win, we will take control of your world, your corporation, your university and attempt to mold a world in which we and other people can live as human beings. Your power is directly threatened, since we will have to destroy that power before we take over. We begin by fighting you about your support of the war in Vietnam and American imperialism—IDA and the School for International Affairs. We will fight you about your control of black people in Morningside Heights, Harlem, and the campus itself. And we will fight you about the type of mis-education you are trying to channel us through. We will have to destroy at times, even violently, in order to end your power and your system. . . . We, the young people whom you rightly fear, say that society is sick and you and your capitalism are the sickness. You call for order and respect for authority; we call for justice, freedom and socialism. There is only one thing left to say. It may sound nihilistic to you, since it is the opening shot in a war of liberation. I'll use the words of Leroi Jones, whom I'm sure you don't like a lot: "Up against the wall, motherfucker, this is a stick up."⁸

There were two major demands presented by the Columbia student rebels: (1) A halt in the construction of a gymnasium in Morningside Park. The project had become highly controversial. It was opposed by many Harlem groups as well as a growing segment of the Columbia faculty. At issue were both the use of public park land and the architectural design which provided for separate facilities and entrances for community users and university personnel, inviting the charge that the struc-

ture which was actually intended as a service to the community might be turned into a symbol of segregation; (2) termination of contracts with the Institute for Defense Analysis which, Students for a Democratic Society charged, "works on military projects aimed at the oppression of the people of Vietnam" and "develops riot equipment to commit mass genocide against black people" in the United States.

There is much evidence leading to the conclusion that the take-over of Columbia had nothing whatever to do with the construction of a gymnasium or the University's connection with the Institute for Defense Analysis. These, it appears, were simply pretexts for a long-planned exercise of power.

Two graduate students, Dotson Rader and Craig Anderson, presented this information:

Months before, at an S.D.S. conference in Maryland, the decision had been reached to take physical control of a major American university this spring. Columbia was chosen because of its liberal reputation, its situation in New York and the fact that it was an Ivy League school. S.D.S. felt it was important at this time to disrupt a private, prestige, tactically vulnerable university. Columbia's relations with the West Harlem community, which borders it on two sides, had steadily deteriorated over the years. The decision to begin construction of a gymnasium in Harlem's Morningside Park had united the community against the university. It had evicted hundreds of people from buildings around the university in order to allow for expansion of the campus.⁹

According to this analysis, the issues which were presented by the student rebels were simply pretexts, "the point of the game was power." To members of the S.D.S. steering committee, Columbia itself

was not the issue: "It was revolution, and if it could be shown that a great university could literally be taken over in a matter of days by a well organized group of students then no university was secure. Everywhere the purpose was to destroy institutions of the American Establishment, in the hope that out of the chaos a better America would emerge."

The alleged "success" of the take-over of Columbia University has added to the militancy of the New Left movement. Philip Abbot Luce, himself a former leader of the pro-Peking Progressive Labor Party, discussed the plans of New Left leaders to stimulate Columbia-like confrontations across the country:

The Columbia experience is being touted by various S.D.S. leaders as an example for other student revolutionaries to emulate in the coming school year. Stealing Che Guevara's call for the creation of many "Viet Nams" throughout this hemisphere, the S.D.S.ers now claim as their goal the "creating of two, three, many Columbias." According to one S.D.S. leader this means that they will expand the violence "so that the U.S. must either change or send its troops to occupy American campuses."¹⁰

Tom Hayden, one of the founders of S.D.S. who was blamed by Newark, New Jersey, police officials for helping to instigate the riots in the Negro areas of that city, candidly stated the S.D.S. political approach. Writing in *Ramparts Magazine*, he declared:

Columbia opened a new tactical stage in the resistance movement which began last fall: from the overnight occupation of buildings to permanent occupation; from mill-ins to the creation of revolutionary committees; from symbolic civil disobedience to barricaded resistance. Not only are these tactics al-

ready being duplicated on other campuses, but they are sure to be surpassed by even more militant tactics.

In the future it is conceivable that students will threaten destruction of buildings as a last deterrent to police attacks. Many of the tactics learned can also be applied in smaller hit-and-run operations between strikes; raids on the offices of professors doing weapons research could win substantial support among students while making the university more blatantly repressive.¹¹

The fact that many in the New Left do not believe in the democratic process was further shown in the May-June, 1968 issue of *Dissent* magazine. This magazine contains a letter from a Columbia University student member of S.D.S. According to the writer "S.D.S. asserts that resistance to Dow Chemical Co. by communities of people is both justified and democratic—even if 51 per cent of the community believes otherwise." This S.D.S. communication goes on to assert that "if the New Left possessed the power to blow up with impunity all Dow Chemical plants making napalm (along with the plants of Lockheed, Boeing, etc. which make weapons) it would do so. . . ."

The revolutionary strategy is to gain student appeal by raising broadly supported issues and then forcing the college administration into refusing to accept student demands. Thus is created a direct "confrontation" between the revolutionaries and the administration. According to Columbia's Vice-President, the S.D.S. had sought throughout the year to provoke such a "confrontation" with the college administration.

Roger Taus, a member of the pro-Peking Progressive Labor Party, an S.D.S. member, and an alternate member of the Columbia Strike Steering Committee, has stated that:

The Columbia sit-in confronted tens of thousands of students with a question they must answer: Which side are you on? The side of racist exploitation and imperialism? Or the side of the liberation movement? Carefully planned confrontations like this can sharply expose to thousands the real imperialist and racist nature of this system and win them to fighting on our side against it.¹²

Confrontation as a revolutionary tactic works like this: Manipulate people into a posture in which they are in direct conflict with a power source. Violence can then be created. The first element is to enlist broad support for the stated cause through the raising of false issues. Secondly, the power source must be asked to make concessions which they cannot, or will not, accept. The claim is then made that the student will have been thwarted and the only answer is peaceful but extra-legal measures to gain the demanded changes.

While declaring their non-violence and their desire to make only reasonable changes in campus policy, the revolutionaries attempt to gain strength from outside forces. Unless the school Administration has taken a strong stand against the revolutionaries from the beginning, they will soon be forced to call in outside help. According to Phillip Luce, "this call for the police is exactly what the revolutionaries want at this point in their program. . . . Suddenly from somewhere, a policeman is hit and he, in turn, retaliates and hits a demonstrator. This has a chain reaction and soon there is a near riot."

As the violence increases, spectators, who have no idea how the violence started, are pulled into the riot by their emotional reaction to seeing the police employ defensive strength to restrain the now-fighting students. Once violence develops, the police become rough. Often they are guilty of brutal excesses of their own. This, Luce

notes, "is a classic example of how to create a riot condition and then utilize the shock reaction of onlookers to perpetuate it . . . this is exactly the successful strategy utilized by S.D.S. and various . . . instigators at Columbia."

One end product of a successful confrontation theory is the apparent acceptability of violence. The revolutionaries claim that police brutality forced them to prevent further violence by employing the counter-violence of self-defense. Ultimately, the theory leads to the revolutionary proclamation that violence must now be accepted by the previously passive students.

In fact, New Left philosopher Herbert Marcuse has made a case for what he terms "socially useful destructiveness." It is his thesis, expressed in the book *The One Dimensional Man*, that by providing man with an abundance of food, clothing, and material comforts, this society robbed the individual of his desire for intellectual growth and self-expression. Since it is obvious that a Socialist revolution will not be brought about by the now docile masses, Marcuse abandons the proletariat as the medium for the desired social upheaval. Instead, he finds much promise in students and the "oppressed" minorities. Using "socially useful destructiveness," they will apply the pressure necessary to obliterate our bourgeois-industrial state. What would come after the Revolution? It would be rule by an elite, for Marcuse would replace democracy with a dictatorship controlled by those who rigidly adhere to his Marxist views. According to the professor, majority rule would be replaced by the "morality" of a presumably infallible minority.

The tactic of violence and disruption erupted in a manner to shock the nation and the world at the Democratic National Convention held in Chicago in August, 1968. The available evidence leads to the conclusion that such violence was planned

long in advance, that "confrontation" with the police was sought, and that such confrontation was achieved.

As far back as November 16, 1967, the *Village Voice* reported the leader of the Youth International Party, Jerry Rubin, as saying: "See you next August in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention. Bring pot, fake delegates' cards, smoke bombs, costumes, blood to throw and all kinds of interesting props. Also football helmets."

Early in 1968 the National Mobilization Committee Against the War in Vietnam, headed by David Dellinger, organized a Chicago project committee and placed Rennie Davis in charge with instructions to work closely with Tom Hayden, leader of Students for a Democratic Society, and Jerry Rubin, of the Progressive Labor Party and also of the Youth International Party, more commonly known as Yippies.

Dellinger and Hayden held a press conference in New York on June 29 and were quoted by the *National Guardian* as saying: "We are planning tactics of prolonged direct action to put heat on the government and its political party. We realize that it will be no picnic but responsibility for any violence that develops lies with the authorities, not the demonstrators."

Early in August, Rennie Davis appeared before a meeting of the Chicago Peace Council held at the Lawson Y.M.C.A. He displayed two large 3' by 3' maps of the area surrounding the International Amphitheatre, noting locations where police, National Guard, F.B.I., and other security forces would be situated during the proceedings. He stated that if trouble starts at the Convention, among other things, "the Loop will fall," implying demolition of the downtown Chicago area.¹³

The violence which occurred in Chicago was predicted almost precisely by the August 9th Intelligence Division Report of the

Chicago Police Department. That report concluded with this statement:

Due to the talk around the office of the National Mobilization Committee and the general attitude of Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden, the reporting investigator feels that the night of 28 August 1968 there will be wide-spread trouble through efforts of Davis and Hayden. It is felt that there will be trouble in the Loop Area and possibly on the South and West sides. This would be done in an effort to draw the Police away from the Amphitheatre.

The issue of the police conduct, the fairness of the communications media, and the role of Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley will remain subject to much discussion. That the police force did over-react in many instances is clear. That this is exactly the response which extremist leaders sought to produce is also clear.

Perhaps the most important lesson to emerge from Chicago was the fact that the violence which occurred in that city was long planned by the most militant members of the New Left. It was carried out under the leadership of men such as David Dellinger, Tom Hayden, and Jerry Rubin, the same people who led the march on the Pentagon. This was no idle political demonstration to its leaders, although it was surely viewed in those terms by many of the innocent and idealistic young people who were its participants. Writing in *The New Republic*, James Ridgeway, an eye-witness observer of events in Chicago, stated the following:

The clashes between police and demonstrators began as calculated maneuvers by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, and the Youth International Party. The strategy was to confront the police, and thereby

demonstrate that America was a police state. . . . Following out their scheme to promote a continuing confrontation between growing numbers of people and the police—they figured that the Chicago officials would respond by bringing in more police and troops, and so make clear to all those looking on that Chicago was an armed camp and America was a police state—the radicals talked enthusiastically about little acts of violence, like a stink bomb in the hotel, or dirty words on some walls, to provoke the police and manipulate the liberal McCarthy youths into their own ranks. In effect, the idea was to stimulate a little guerrilla war. . . .¹⁴

Tom Hayden, a leader of the Mobilization Committee To End The War In Vietnam, was not satisfied with the violence he and his group had managed to provoke in Chicago. Addressing a rally in Grant Park, he urged youths to go home and create "One, two, three hundred Chicagos." Hayden cried:

If they want blood to flow from our heads, the blood will flow from a lot of other heads around this city and around this country. We must take to the streets, for the streets belong to the people. . . . It may well be that the era of organized, peaceful and orderly demonstrations is coming to an end and that other methods will be needed.¹⁵

While the New Left militants seek violence, and the overthrow of the established order of society, it is important to place the movement in a proper and balanced perspective. What the militant leaders want is one thing; what the alienated young people who follow them want is something else entirely.

The fact remains, however, that the movement has turned more and more toward the acceptance of violence as a

proper and legitimate tactic. It is a tactic which they openly proclaim, and which

society must learn to cope with if anarchy and disorder are to be prevented.

¹*U.S. News and World Report*, May 20, 1968.

²*New York Times Magazine*, May 26, 1968, p. 90.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Washington Post*, June 30, 1968.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*New York Times*, May 27, 1968.

⁷Quoted in *The New York Times Magazine*, May 19, 1968, p. 104.

⁸*National Guardian*, May 11, 1968, p. 4.

⁹*The New Republic*, May 11, 1968, p. 9.

¹⁰*Human Events*, June 15, 1968.

¹¹*Ramparts*, June 15, 1968.

¹²*Human Events*, June 15, 1968.

¹³*Intelligence Division Report, Chicago Police Department*, August 2, 1968.

¹⁴*The New Republic*, Sept. 7, 1968.

¹⁵*U.S. News and World Report*, Sept. 9, 1968.