

# *The New Strategy of Revolution: The "Long March" through the Institutions*

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THE POLITICAL strategy of the left-wing radicals is directed towards "the conquest of the system (*Systemüberwindung*)."

This strategic aim accounts for its political unity more than any explicit agreement about the structure of that system which would come into existence once the "conquest is successful." Since they are united by this strategy of revolutionary action, organizational differences and cleavages or ideological disputes are little more than surface phenomena. The unity of "left-wing radicalism" which resides in this consensus regarding strategy embraces the German Communist Party and its university affiliate "Spartakus," as well as the most diverse anarchist groups, the leadership of the Young Socialists (JUSOS) as well as important sections of the Young Democrats (JUDOS). Large groups of West German journalists, the younger theologians of both major churches, most of the spokesmen for students and assistants in the universities, as well as important groups of young teachers, are adherents of this movement, even

though they have no formal affiliation with left-wing organizations.

This strategic revolutionary aim—the "conquest of the system"—entails the destruction of the most significant features of West German political democracy, its constitutional foundations and the pluralistic distribution of leadership and authority within it; underlying this strategy is the intention to root out the fundamental political and social ideals and the corresponding patterns of life of the major groups of the Federal Republic which rest on them. The aim is not confined to Western Germany but in principle extends equally to all of Western society. The revolutionary strategists aim to do this by discrediting the values and the intellectual outlook which lie at the foundation of the social and political institutions of the Federal German Republic. This strategic idea is carried by a vague "revolutionary state of mind" in all those who are embraced in the unity designated above; to the extent that they are under the direct guidance of organizations, they find their

leadership more and more in ultra-left circles and their cadres. Some of the latter are affiliated to organizations linked with Eastern European countries. It makes little difference to the strategy of the conquest of the system whether the subjective intentions of many of the individuals are permeated by the humanitarian ideals of the Enlightenment and by genuine ethical convictions, or whether the assertion of these ideals is only a demagogic and tactical mask, since the strategy is only concerned with the effects of the expression of these attitudes (*Gesinnungen*) on its antagonists. The optimal effect on the "enemy" is sought through a mixture of idealistic convictions and demagogic phraseology; the presence of enough "convinced" and hence convincing idealists is necessary to the strategy since otherwise, the credibility of its ostensible goals would be placed in question both for its sympathizers and its "enemies." On the other hand, a preponderance of "activists motivated by ethical conviction" within any group would lead to recurrent disorder and indiscipline in the conduct of the political strategy being pursued.

The strategy is thoroughly "revolutionary." Its aim is to conquer the "system" by transferring the decisive means of exercising power into hands other than those now possessing it. Changing the personnel of dominant groups by gaining control of the instruments and position of authority and power has, for a long time, been the basic strategy of any revolution such as is now being conducted in Western Germany under altered circumstances. Its main prospect for success rests on an analysis of the mode of domination characteristic of modern Western industrial and bureaucratic society; this analysis is more realistic than that made by those who govern or seek to justify that society. Revolutionary movements which direct their attention to the theoretically or symbolically characteristic institutions of the modern state, namely, the monopoly of the use of force, and which thereby commit themselves to overcoming the military and the police

by force, are just as antiquated as the strategy of the *coup d'état* which in the Trotskyite recipe, or in Malaparte's fascist version, aimed to achieve success through gaining control over and occupying the centers of technological power. Present-day society, and the type of state which has developed with it, are more complex than their predecessors; they are protected by a network of institutions which rest on opinion rather than on force. As a result, a revolutionary strategy which operates within such a society and which does not count on the intervention of some foreign power has to pursue the strategy of "the long march through the institutional system," as Rudi Dutschke has aptly put it. Nothing can be accomplished any longer by a "march on Rome." Revolutions nowadays must proceed according to different principles.

Before we discuss the revolutionary conception of institutions, let us first briefly define the enemy as it is conceived by the neo-revolutionary strategy. Put in abstract terms, the enemy is "the system," personified in its "rulers," who form the "establishment." There is hardly any revolutionary movement which has given itself less intellectual trouble than this one to define its enemy. It proceeds largely by defamatory and polemical concepts. The "authorities" in all institutions are designated as the "establishment" or the "rulers" regardless of how democratically or legitimately they have come to their leading positions and regardless also of which political and social tasks and beliefs they acknowledge and represent. Thus, this mode of characterization is eminently suited to the dissolution or "enfeeblement" of the entire group. The polemical and strategic intentions of this type of analysis permit it to be applied equally to conservative politicians like Kiesinger, Barzel and Strauss and to social democrats like Schiller, Leber and Helmut Schmidt, to trade union leaders just as much as to businessmen and bankers, to Mayor Vogel as much as Cardinal Döpfner; naturally it refers to university profes-

sors as much as it does judges or army officers. This common designation makes it possible for the revolutionary strategy to effect a collective "decoupling" of generations, which spares young persons the slow and achievement-demanding path of ascent through integration into the "system." This adds a very important psychological motive power to the strategy. The aggressive generational partisanship and the contentless sociological abstractness of the definition of the "enemy" obscure to the followers the fact that the triumphant culmination of this strategy is only a new system, and in it, only the authority and the establishment of a new generation of rulers.

What are the prospects of this strategy of the "long march through the institutions"? In order to answer this question we must distinguish among different types of institution, each of which calls for an adaptive strategy in which diverse strategic and tactical weapons are variously applied. The common element of this strategy lies in the perversion into weapons of the fundamental moral and political values which underlie these institutions; the aim is to undermine their stability by the use of their own values and beliefs.

### *The Western Cultural Revolution*

The institutions to which the "system-conquering" revolutionary strategy is directed in the first instance are those concerned with the "socialization" and "communication" of beliefs about the world, of moral judgments and "factual" representations about society. These include all institutions of education and training, from kindergarten through all school grades up to university, from adult education to the training and retraining institutions in all sorts of organizations and all the arrangements for information and the formation of opinion, *i.e.*, press, radio and television and, in a certain sense, all entertainment and similar institutions such as theaters, cinemas, museums and artistic and literary associations. To these should be added the churches as

institutions which offer "interpretations of the meaning of life," and political parties which provide political information and which form political opinion.

The strategic goal of the left-wing radicals as far as these institutions are concerned is simply "the seizure of power," *i.e.*, the occupation of the crucial positions of authority and determination of their policies by fellow-believers, followers and sympathizers. The partial autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state and the economy enjoyed by these institutions, on the basis of certain fundamental rights such as the freedom of research, teaching, expression and belief, all of which have been won through long struggles, is the point of entry through which power can be gained. This autonomy offers an opportunity for the seizure of these institutions by a revolutionary, "system-conquering" attack; the government and the economic and social institutions which are endangered are unable to prevent this seizure of power effectively without laying themselves open to the charge that they are suspending that fundamental "autonomy" which is a value essential to the democratic constitution of these institutions. In this sector of our society, a "cultural revolution" with a Western tinge is in process.

The revolutionary strategists have understood very well that the "interpretation of the meaning of events" has become a decisive element in the exercise of authority and in the stability of an advanced and complex society; they understand equally well that incumbency of the key positions in which interpretations are made and from which they are diffused is of crucial importance in a revolutionary transformation of society. Expressed in the language of political economy, "information," broadly understood, has become the decisive "instrument of production" of modern society. The monopoly of this factor of production offers the most promising means for the seizure of political authority. Naturally, this revolutionary strategy has historical roots. The educational revolution from Plato,

through Rousseau and Karl Mannheim, to modern educationists like von Hentig, operates through the use of information as a political weapon in a manner similar to that in which news was utilized by Lord Beaverbrook and Joseph Goebbels. The present strategy of the left radicals goes, for the first time, beyond the merely academic claims of the educational revolution and the merely supportive role of information policy within the framework of the existing structure of authority; it transforms the conquest of the institutions which interpret meaning into a major objective of the revolution.

Certain features of "the interpretation of meaning" which used to be of marginal significance are now exploited. The structure of a large-scale, specialized society provides an opportunity to attribute and communicate "meaning," *i.e.*, information, norms, ideals, orientations, ostensible results of research, news reports, etc., without being checked by the audience's own experience; indeed the individual's need for information grows with the fact that in complex societies with a highly differentiated division of labor, those factual situations which he can assess on the basis of his own experience, and the actions of which he can realistically estimate the consequence, become confined to a more and more narrow sector while, at the same time, he is increasingly affected by influences flowing from an unprecedentedly wide and inaccessible structure. Indeed because the world of modern man is almost entirely constructed from paper, sound and picture, those who communicate—as the masters of paper, sound and picture which are essential for forming an image of the larger society—assume the role of a dominant class in our society.

An additional strategic opportunity lies in the institutional provision for the communication of ideals or normative ideas, since these possess a certain conceptual distance from the reality which an individual experiences directly; indeed to be able to fulfill their role in the moral guidance of

conduct, they must do so. The construction and communication of fundamental ethical convictions which are disconnected from actual conduct or particular events or any awareness of their consequences is the most effective line of this strategy.

The systematic attack on the real world through the use of moral arguments as a political tactic which aims at the conquest of power is a perversion of the human aspiration to perfection. Seldom has there ever been such a systematic perversion of this aspiration. Authors as different in their political outlook as Arnold Gehlen<sup>1</sup> and Gerhard Szczesny<sup>2</sup> have recently shown how the fundamental intellectual and ethical values of the Enlightenment, such as humanity and freedom, have been disparagingly reinterpreted as belonging to the realm of "the *so-called* good" and turned into instruments of power and terror, without the coolly calculated strategic design which underlies that reinterpretation being perceived by many who are under its influence. The "terrorism of virtue" which Hegel was the first to see embodied in Robespierre has become the fundamental principle of a professionalized revolutionary political strategy, which in this way can call to its service as auxiliaries and sympathizers all those who espouse moral principles. It can naturally be most successfully applied in the case of institutions, having the function, which their members understandably take seriously and depend on, of interpreting events and moral rules and giving them meaning. Insofar as revolutionary strategy puts the noose of their own moral convictions around the necks of the persons ostensibly served by these institutions, the institutions themselves come to serve a revolutionary function. It becomes uncertain whether any abstract, idealistic, normative demand is put forward with the intention of perfecting human conduct or whether it masks the aim of gaining power through insistence on the complete and unqualified fulfilment of the moral norm. For the strategists of the conquest of power, moral and idealistic convictions are only

a tactical façade. For this reason, a criticism which discloses the ideological character of such "so-called goods" as the ideals of humanity or freedom might influence the sympathizers and well-intentioned but simple-minded accomplices; it makes no difference to the revolutionaries who exploits these idealistic beliefs since they do not believe in them anyway.

### *The Self-Deception of the Liberals*

From all this it should be clear why the conquest of the universities and of teacher training colleges occupies a key position in this strategy. Once these have been taken over—the revolutionaries all the while insisting that the autonomy of these institutions be protected and that challenges to their monopoly of the highest "interpretation of meaning" be beaten down—it is only a question of time until all educational institutions, the churches and the institutions which provide interpretation and entertainment, and which are staffed predominantly by university graduates, are also taken over. It will moreover not be a very long time either, given the rapid rate of growth of the occupations filled by university graduates in our society. These "socializing" institutions, *i.e.*, those which educate and train, as well as the institutions of communication, constitute precisely the operational field of what has been called "extraparliamentary action"; they are the objects of the positive action of the "extraparliamentary opposition" whose negative attitude towards the parliamentary and party system is only a polemical veil to cover their precisely concentrated campaign to gain control of these cultural institutions.

This transformation of the moral standards of others into strategic weapons of revolutionary conflict and conquest is most successful among the exponents of liberal political values. This "thinking minority" has almost inevitably been forced into the role of an accomplice of the revolutionary movement which masquerades in the garb of moral values. It is forced into this role

because its strengths—tolerance towards the moral convictions of other persons, moderation, readiness for compromise and openness to the lessons of experience, on all of which the stability and effective functioning of democratic systems as well as their progress and well-being depend—cannot be sustained in severe revolutionary crises. The liberals are forced, willy-nilly, to take sides in an extreme, polarized situation, with the result that they deny their own postulates; they lock themselves out of their own house. The precipitation of an ideological polarization in liberal-democratic societies is a critical aim of the revolutionary strategy, and the Federal German Republic is not their only objective. (To avoid any misunderstanding, I wish to make it clear that by liberal I refer not only—as far as the Federal Republic is concerned—to the FDP but also to the vast majority of the old SDP and growing groups within the CDU and above all the older generation of the professions which since 1945 have been responsible for education and information in the Federal German Republic.)

As far as the chances for the success of this revolutionary strategy are concerned, it may be said without being very pessimistic that it has already been far-reachingly successful. The groups which have been attacked in these institutions are without exception already on the defensive; they have developed an attitude of resignation. The triumph of this strategy which is still obscured in publicistic discussion will be accentuated with the succession of generations in the coming decade.

### *Destroying the Self-Confidence of the State*

The second group of institutions which are the targets of the revolutionary strategy includes all those which are responsible for performing the classical functions of the state, *i.e.*, foreign policy, defense, justice, internal security and administration. It is characteristic of the revolutionary strategy that, in contrast with all hitherto

known revolutionary movements, it does not regard the direct attack on these "classical" organs of the state and taking them over as a first priority; it regards them rather as of secondary importance. The new strategy believes that once it is successful, these institutions will fall into their power automatically. This view is based on the belief that the security and stability of modern society are not primarily dependent on the powers of the state which represents the "generality," *i.e.*, the common weal in which all citizens are equally involved; they see that the stability of society depends on the cooperation of the large-scale organizations acting on behalf of particular group interests. This is an insight which is obscured in the traditional German academic theory of the state (although there are exceptions). Hence, the goal of the revolutionary strategy is not the taking over of power in these functional organs of the state but rather rendering them insecure through discrediting them. The aim is to weaken the capacity for self-defense of these traditional organs in the face of a revolutionary movement which operates through the use of techniques not directly involving the state but entailing the manipulation of particularistic interests. The "state" must be rendered suspect; it must be shown to be incapable of standing up to or coping with a flood of particularistic, sectional, and ideological demands.

The most appropriate means of achieving this end is the exacerbation of demands for individual freedom and for the constitutional rights of the individual which have been established in the past against oligarchical resistance. The rights of the individual to his own protection and freedom are transformed into weapons for attacking the legitimate activities of the state. The judicial system, particularly the institutional system of constitutional and administrative law, designed for the protection of the individual against the abuses of the state, is probably not capable of resisting this strategic transformation of its political function; it is in consequence in danger of be-

coming an involuntary accomplice of the revolutionary strategy.

In order that the strategy of exploiting individual constitutional rights and liberties as weapons against the state's performance of its legitimate tasks should not become too transparent, in order that this deformation of the rights of the individual into techniques for the seizure and exercise of power by the revolutionary group should not be understood by its victims, the revolutionaries attempt to portray the state and its organs as an authoritarian institution which increasingly oppresses the individual while claiming at the same time the legitimacy of a self-alleged democracy operating within the rule of law. This systematic discrediting campaign compels the various institutions of the state to observe an extremely strict interpretation of constitutional rights and to adhere to them with pedantic rigor, although it is quite clear that in so doing it hampers itself in the performance of its legitimate tasks. This revolutionary tactic of shaking its self-confidence in the performance of its legitimate functions leads the state to take refuge in a painstaking adherence to the letter of the law at the cost of its effectiveness in the performance of the legitimate tasks, while avoiding any concern for the real consequences of its actions for society, thereby leaving in the lurch lower officials who have to deal directly with the public. This is the "soft trend" which is now commonly observed among the police and soldiers, in the courts and in administration. Alternatively this revolutionary tactic forces the government to use measures which strike the revolutionary strategy at its heart but which are legally questionable and thereby seem to vindicate the discrediting agitation which proclaims the authoritarian and oppressive character of the state. The unequivocal performance of his legitimate duties by a federal German diplomat in Portugal, by the officer of a company in the federal armed forces, by a police chief, by a judge in an administrative court, by the rector of a university or the principal of a

*Gymnasium* can no longer count on the support of the present "policy" of his political superiors. The uncertainty and diminishing self-confidence which the revolutionary strategy produces are "passed downwards"; the state, which has been deprived of confidence in its own legitimacy, shifts its difficulties down to the lower levels of the executive where they cannot be dealt with efficiently. This situation is evidence of the far-reaching success of this strategy in this particular institutional sphere.

It is appropriate here to say something about the role of violence in this strategy. The classical revolutionary strategy attempted, by revolutionary counterviolence, to break the power of the state to impose sanctions by means of its legitimate coercive powers. The present-day revolutionary strategy rightly regards this technique as antiquated. The establishment of a subversive "Red Army" applying force directly against the organs of the state is contrary to the neo-revolutionary strategy and prejudicial to its chances of success. In this new revolutionary strategy, violence has only two functions: it is either the carefully managed and apparently trifling harassment and threatening of the personal security of particular individual antagonists ("*Psychoterror*"), or it takes the form of specific acts of violence committed with the intention of provoking the police to respond by excessive, authoritarian countermeasures. In this way, the state's use of its legal monopoly of force and coercion against even those individuals who have behaved illegally, is discredited, the state itself is fundamentally discredited and its representatives are deprived of the self-confidence in their own legitimacy which they need in order to fulfil their obligations.

### *The Misuse of Constitutional Rights*

Instances of this transformation of the constitutional rights of the individual into weapons for discrediting and destroying legitimacy are too numerous to describe. A few indications will have to suffice. One instance is the discrediting and "dislegiti-

mation" of the armed forces through unqualified insistence on the constitutional right of refusal of military service on grounds of conscience—a "conscience" which has moreover been systematically contrived. This constitutional right is extended to apply to patently political beliefs although it was originally intended to apply only to uncompromising religious beliefs.

Another instance is the systematic discrediting and "dislegitimation" of the police whose powers in dealing with criminality are subordinated to measures which "guarantee the personal rights of the criminal"; the full rigor of these measures is luckily not applied to university students, out of "pedagogical solicitude." A further instance still is the systematic discrediting of the judicial system inside and outside the courts; this is typical of the way in which the desirable investigation of the social aspects and tasks of the judiciary has been systematically transformed into a deliberately discrediting sociology of the legal profession, carried out by politically engaged radical young sociologists. The term "law and order" has become an intellectually discrediting stigma as if those who take the responsibility for the continuous maintenance of the constitutional regime are identical with that representative of the authoritarian system who declared that "public peace is the first obligation of the citizen." Finally we may cite the extremist interpretation of the freedom of assembly which, as an individual constitutional right, has become problematic in the contemporary system of information and publicity. Demonstrations nowadays are only very rarely occasions on which ordinary people or minorities make representations to their legitimate auditors, namely legislators and governments; they have rather become efforts to gain attention on television and in the press; they aim only to be reported in the media of mass communication and thereby to gain publicity for expressions of sentiment without rational argument. The freedom of assembly has become a

“constitutional right” not for the articulation of grievances and to obtain their redress but to transform public opinion into a swirl of emotions and hence to block rational political discussion.

In a paradoxical reversal of fronts, the intellectual undermining of the federal German constitution by this revolutionary strategy repeats the process by which the Weimar republic was brought to its end. Whereas, at that time, only a handful of progressive intellectuals committed themselves to the constitution and the conservative, educated classes either yearned for or at least accepted its overthrow, today the great majority of professional intellectuals support the “conquest of the system” and a revolution against the constitution. Only a small group of intellectuals whom the progressives stigmatize as conservatives and as “the establishment” (e.g., the full professors) and who are without any political or intellectual connection with the rightful protectors of the constitution, i.e., the reigning ministers of the federal republic and the states, vainly attempts to protect the foundations of the present state. The “end of the intellectual legitimization of the state” (Forsthoff), of the liberal, bourgeois constitutional state which was introduced by men like von Stein and von Humboldt, is now being brought about through ministers of culture like von Friedeburg in Hesse and von Oertzen in Lower Saxony.<sup>3</sup> The strategy of “conquering the system” which politically means supplanting the constitution, undoubtedly enjoys the support of the majority of the professional intellectuals of the Federal Republic.

### *The Exploitation of the Working Class*

The economy, the fields of social security and welfare—so important for the stability and the good functioning of society—are the last institutional sectors to which the strategy of conquest of the system directs its attention. Business enterprises, trade unions, professional associations, social welfare institutions, municipalities and finally the political parties, which set the political

directions of all of these, all fall within this group of targets of the revolutionary strategy. The strategy aims, not, as it does in the case of the cultural sector, to staff these institutions and to run them, or as it does in the case of the state, to disrupt its functioning or to cripple it. The revolutionary strategy, when it deals with these economic and welfare institutions, aims to dominate those who run them. In their own terminology, their goal is to exploit the labor of those whose work consists in the operation of these institutions. By “labor” here is meant the commodity-producing and service-producing activities of the workers, the activities of managers and enterprisers in the economy, the payment of taxes and contributions by the broad mass of the population, the provision of services by municipalities and welfare institutions, etc.

It seems improbable that these sharply defined interests in a society which like ours is organized in interest groups could be brought under control and exploited in this way. Yet there is a plausible strategic device for attaining this goal. This is the intensification of demands without regard to the functional and productive capacities of the institutional system. In a society in which the demands for social justice lie at the foundation of the value-system which guides the society, the further raising of the level of demands is always likely to win the effective support and call forth the hopes of broad sectors of the population which do not themselves have the responsibility for fulfilling those demands or for concerning themselves with their costs and structural repercussions. There are abundant examples of these exacerbated demands; the free use of urban means of transportation (*Nulltarife*), the 36-hour week with two months of paid leave (especially “study-leave,” which the proponents of the “cultural revolution” regard as simultaneously a professional and a political opportunity of hitherto unsuspected dimensions), increased taxation on the “rich” and on the economy generally (Steffens<sup>4</sup> refers to this as “testing

the limits of the tax-burden"), the unchecked large-scale financial support for occupational retraining, appropriations for "social housing policy, exaggerated demands for wages and salaries. Unchecked and exaggerated demands in the spheres of education and transport are self-evident since any reference to controls or checks in these spheres comes up against long standing and well-established taboos.

To render these exaggerated demands plausible, it is necessary to discredit those who insist that there is a determinate relationship between the productivity of the economy and the provision of services in social welfare, education, etc. Thus the target of this discrediting campaign is in the first instance the entrepreneurial sector of the market economy (whose group interest in the holding down of social demands must be recognized); it is directed equally at the hitherto economically responsible responses of the trade unions (whose antagonism, in principle, towards the entrepreneurial economy is no less legitimate). The discrediting campaign has for a long time also been aimed at the social democratic municipal politicians, and those concerned with economic and fiscal policy who wish to "keep the glasses in the cupboard." The invocation of the traditional ideology of the class struggle is, according to the newer revolutionary strategy, not addressed primarily to the broad stratum of the working classes which is well capable of realistically assessing its own situation and interests. It is used rather for purposes of the intellectual and emotional integration of the revolutionary intellectual leaders and their sympathizers. It is also used as a pseudo-scientific theory in the campaign of discredit and "dislegitimation."

The danger inherent in this psychological strategy of the heightening of social demands is twofold: the first is that every spokesman for a "concrete" utopia, every unrealistic, unworldly humanist who demands "more social justice," becomes, in fact, without taking on himself the respon-

sibility for its realization, a potential supporter of the revolutionary strategy, which in this case, as elsewhere, uses the ideals of the system as a weapon for its destruction. Secondly, every justified conflict of interests and its resolution within the framework of the existing economic and social system is immediately aggravated to a level of confrontation which endangers the "system" itself. One consequence of this "functional transformation" (*Umfunktionierung*) of legitimate social conflict is an understandable, even though wrong, response of the proponents of the present economic and social system, to the criticisms made by the revolutionaries; this response consists in emphasizing the harmony and absence of conflict in the system more than reality justifies and in becoming equally unrealistic, although in an opposite direction from that of the revolutionaries.

Let us cite one example of how the strategy works in this sphere: however severe the disagreement over wages might be in a market economy, the outcome carries with it its own sanctions in the form of effects on the price level, the rate of economic growth, profit, investment, and job security. These consequences refute unrealistic demands made solely for political purposes and they do so at the expense of those who make them. But where these demands are put forward as a technique in a campaign for the conquest of political power, these negative consequences are exactly what is sought since they damage the stability of the "system" and thereby ostensibly demonstrate its incapacity to function effectively.

### *The Exacerbation of Demands*

The revolutionary significance of this social-psychological strategy of exacerbating demands, which masquerades as "reforms which go beyond the framework of the system" becomes apparent when it is seen that it is largely a tactic for acquiring power on the part of the groups which pursue the revolutionary strategy within the above mentioned institutions. The strategy in-

volves the use of a technique of democratic cooperation developed within the system for the purposes of taking over power. E. Helmstedt has shown (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 26, 1971) that this strategy entails the use of "co-determination (*Mitbestimmung*)" as a surrogate solution for political revolution" in the economic sphere; he has also shown that the tactic of the conquest of power through the practice of co-determination is an application by the revolutionaries of what they learned in their university student days, for that was when they learned "from the ground up the business of co-determination, with all its tricks and techniques." It involves the usurpation by a group of power-hungry professional politicians of the emotions of those who have no prior stable opinions and who are politically inactive. Only gradually is it dawning on the responsible political and economic leaders that the same fate is being prepared for them as has already befallen the professors in the universities. The same is true for trade union and labor leaders. Who can doubt that the generation of labor leaders, like Brenner or Bleicher of the *IG Metall*, or of social democratic leaders like Wehner or Leber, who have come out of the working classes and who are intimately familiar with their real situation, their outlook and their interests, would be displaced after the seizure of power by a group of intellectuals who pushed their way into political leadership directly from the sociology and political science seminars of the universities which they had overpowered through the exercise of co-determination. The revolutionary strategy, if successful, would establish a social supremacy over the workers at all levels which differs from the patriarchalism of the capitalistic enterpriser of the nineteenth century only through the up-to-dateness and refinement of its techniques of leadership. (The "culturally revolutionized" television, in its report on the last congress of the Social Democratic Party, made it clear that the apparently most just demands were being put forward by a

group of politicians who in bearing and tone, in argument and outlook are university intellectuals who show no trace of any experience of working class life and who have no real ties to it but who claim the legitimacy conferred by co-determination.)

One of the most distinctive practices or tactics of the seizure of power through co-determination is the revolutionaries' most minute exploitation of the literal interpretation of the rules of legal and administrative procedure for their own advantage while at the same time denouncing them as "legal formalism" and as a device used by the establishment for oppressive purposes. This stratagem may be called the "principle of revolution by procedure": the strategic trick lies in their tacit refusal to show that fundamental readiness for cooperation which is at the basis of all rules of judicial and administrative procedure. As a result, the antagonist is one-sidedly bound by the obligations of legal procedure while the revolutionaries do not accept that obligation, using it only when it is to their advantage. A thoroughly consistent adherent of the rule of law and of constitutional order cannot cope with this situation. This varying combination of techniques of attack which conform to the system with techniques which are destructive of it is a genuine refinement of the "dual strategy" to which the Young Socialists have expressly committed themselves. The Young Socialists have on the one side conformed, by co-determination, with the rules of the system within the Social Democratic Party and within political and economic institutions and on that basis they have sought to gain power, while at the same time they have sought, by spreading their revolutionary opinions through extra-parliamentary and "cultural revolutionary" actions, to attack the foundations of these institutions. To observe this with indignation is pointless and ineffective because, as Bismarck said, "indignation is not a category of political action."

## *The Idols of the System*

The strategy of "conquest of the system" is already largely successful as an effort by a group of intellectuals of one generation to take over the positions of power in our society; it is bound up with the aim of establishing a system of social supremacy over the workers under a new ruling class. I regard the ideological components of this strategy, however brilliantly they are expounded by the supporters and analyzed by opponents of this development, as only a façade which hides a purposeful and realistic machiavellian political strategy of the pursuit of power. Because its fundamental principle consists in turning the basic values of the system into a weapon against the system, the inherent defense

mechanisms of the system cannot work effectively. Neither can an idealistic value-orientation nor the institutional defenses (e.g., the constitutional courts) be effective since these strategists act "legally"—even though their legality is like that of Hitler before his seizure of power.

Simone Weil rendered a judgment on our time when she said, "Both the ego and the social are idols." Indeed since the freedom of the individual and social justice are the bases of our society, all that has to be done is to idolize them in order to discredit them and the human reality in which they are embodied. A great future for a new hierocracy—the rule of a new priesthood—is being opened by the revolutionary "strategy of the conquest of the system."\*

\*This article first appeared in English in *Minerva* (Vol X, No 4), October 1972, in London.

<sup>1</sup>Gehlen, Arnold, *Moral und Hypermoral: Eine pluralistische Ethik* (Frankfurt: Athenaeum Verlag, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>Szczesny, Gerhard, *Das sogenannte Böse: Vom*

*Unvermögen der Ideologen* (Hamburg: Rowolt Verlag, 1971).

<sup>3</sup>Both of them were university professors of sociology and political science before becoming ministers. (Editor.)

<sup>4</sup>The political leader of the Social-Democrats of Schleswig-Holstein.