

# The Cult of Violence

—A Special Report from Germany—

SUBTLETIES AND DISTINCTIONS are no longer necessary for those, on either side, who want to put an End to Things, "*die Schluss machen wollen*." One way or another it comes to force and violence. Semi-tones are hardly noticeable, now that revolutionaries—or those who consider themselves such—go about breaking windows, smashing down doors, and then ask the Establishment to pay the bill. The SDS catchphrase in Frankfurt is: "*Terrorise the terrorists!*" The reply from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is: "It's time to break the terror. . . ." Terror, so it seems, is always on the other side, like intolerance and inhumanity. A Babylonian confusion of tongues reigns in Germany as the charge of "fascism" echoes from Left to Right and back again.

But there are real limits to the rhetoric. If Chancellor Kiesinger's warning of "approaching civil war" were realistic, then one might think whole areas of German cities were about to be burnt down, as in the U.S. race riots. And if the CDU cry that "The Viet Cong is among us" had a point, then snipers would be opening fire from the roof-tops. Yet the fact is that the disorders are for the most part confined to university terrain, and only occasionally spread to the city centres.

Radical students occupy institutes and administrative offices, break open locks, and burn files and documents. APO (Extra-parliamentary Opposition) groups smash plate-glass windows, as during a recent fortnight in Hamburg (America House, the PanAm Building), Frankfurt (Deutsche Bank, Stock Exchange), Berlin (the KaDeWe store); windows were broken in Spanish, Greek, and Portuguese Consulates and trade missions. Students and professors jostle with each other, and as always the Ultra Left cries "Repression" and "Victimisation!" when the police use truncheons—as they did recently in Heidelberg in removing a student commando which had been occupying university premises.

Behind this screen of words and slogans an

impenetrable thicket proliferates with all kinds of causes, motives, frustrations, and aims. There are the forces of authority who want to re-establish law and order; and there is an impassioned political movement, trying to modernise the universities, and fighting for reforms, sometimes protesting in the name of good sense, sometimes craving for "Happenings" out of neurotic tension or revolutionary zealotry.

Just as the student body is composed not only of rebels but also of the disinterested, the *engagés* and the *enragés*, so the abbreviation APO means more than the collective title "Extra Parliamentary Opposition" suggests. There are liberals and anarchists grouped together here, together with every variety of Old Marxist and New Leftist; and the various factions, in interminable disagreement, are constantly disassociating and putting "distance" between themselves. What is too strong for one is too mild for the other. If the preparation of a Molotov cocktail is a "putschist" act, some are horrified, some elated. It is undeniable that a revolutionary core has become more militant, particularly in the SDS; and although it may be true that the youthful rebels in other countries (i.e., France) are often more violent than in Germany, it is also true that the Germans—thorough as always—go beyond the others in the extremism of their theories.

What boils up in the way of extremes, particularly in little groups which prefer to stay underground, is not typical of the APO, but it is there. As the Berlin anarchist paper *Radikalinski* recommends, "Don't forget to take the gun from the lousy cop when you've bashed his face in."

PEOPLE CAN—and do—get hurt: this is no longer a vague fear born in the excited atmosphere which followed the shots fired at Rudi Dutschke. At that time students threw stones in anger and despair. Today some do it with calculated deliberation, as on 4 November when APO commandos injured 130 policemen in Berlin with a barrage of bricks and stones.

A Molotov cocktail thrown during the night of 29 January exploded in the room of the caretaker and his wife in the Heidelberg Town Hall. After the incidents of the smashed windows in Frankfurt (America House, U.S. Trade Centre,

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American Express Bank), the police discovered that, in one instance, the windows weren't only smashed with marbles but with bullets from a small-bore rifle. It is not to be wondered at if the German citizenry, not knowing who the actual culprits are, tends to assume them to be the Left radicals who talk this kind of violence.

Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger, floundering in general weakness, could play a strong hand here in an election year. "Law and order" (*Gesetz und Ordnung*) is his slogan for the electoral contest, and he may well go far with this. "Four, eight, twelve, perhaps even another twenty years of conservative rule," complained the liberal-left *Frankfurter Rundschau* recently, "are possible if the APO and SDS continue with stone-throwing, door-smashing, and document-burning. It is all preparing public feeling for giving power to the 'Reaktion...'." Günter Grass, also a man of the Left (but to the right of violence), puts it this way: "The activities of the Ultra-Left are contributing to a picture of student protest which can be used by any right-wing demagogue longing for the return of fear psychoses..." In this "German circus act" illuminated by "Left and Right irrationalism" (Grass), violence is more and more advocated as a means of political struggle. "*Die Zeit der Spielerei ist vorbei* (the time for fun and games is over)," says SDS leader Dr. Phil. Reinhard Wolff.

Socialist students who used to be beaten up have now turned to the offensive. Those who have rid themselves of old-fashioned German obedience use their new and famous *kritische Bewusstsein* (critical consciousness) to strike out at anything they take to be "fascist." They belong to the "small radical minority": a few thousand activist APO members—and nobody really knows how many of them are capable of reaching for a cobblestone or a match. "One has simply no idea what they will get up to," says an SDS leader. Doesn't that mean that the announced university reforms, so difficult to put into practice, will only stagnate? But then, according to the SDS, the university deserves its death blow. And if the Bonn government became tough and introduced preventive custody and other tightening-up measures, well, why not—since "capitalism leads to fascism anyhow." It is a matter of indifference to them when Ho-Ho-Ho-Chi-Minh slogans and growing violence propel frightened citizens to the Right.

IT IS "the Revolution" that motivates the hard core of the SDS—even when no revolutionary situation exists. Yet, as Wolff elucidates:

The revolutionary situation is not determined by the fact that we will take over the govern-

mental apparatus or storm the Winter Palace or the Bastille. The question of power today has shifted to different points. This is a new and profound development, historically speaking. The government suddenly feels itself ideologically insecure when certain means of manipulation are no longer available. Here is the total sphere of provocation. Rituals become uncertain, etc. A university can no longer afford to celebrate the appointment of a new Rector. Those days are over....

The question of power is determined today by the systematic mobilisation of human beings to recognise their own interests. French workers who go out into the streets and no longer listen to their trade union functionaries are putting the question of power; and that's also possible in Germany. Existing consciousness is deceptive; German conditions are basically no different from other countries in Western Europe....

The strongest basis for this kind of revolution is the University because—the SDS recognised this early on, and correctly—it is the "weakest point in the system." Mass attack, structural weaknesses, arguments about legal competence, and some doubtful academic practices have rendered the German universities so vulnerable that they are creaking as if on the verge of collapse.

Large parts of the student body are "to the Left" of the Establishment, yet the SDS can only rarely play a clear leading role (as it did in Berlin). It operates rather as a catalyst, starting the process of rebellion over and over again. Nowhere can it impose its tactics on the students, let alone its revolutionary theses.

The APO and especially the SDS have tried again and again to expand their "mass basis" and to initiate the so-called "Process of Becoming Conscious" outside the universities. That worked with teenage school-children, who gave the revolutionary movement a bawdy slogan or two; but it did not come off with the workers. All the same, the SDS theoreticians feel so certain about the "new radicality" phase of the dormant mass potential that they—and agit-prop expertise is their forte—now speak of "a radical minority of the rulers."

FOR A SHORT PERIOD ONLY did it seem that the rebellion at the universities would actually spread to wider sectors of the populace, as for instance when ten thousand marched through Berlin with red banners during the disturbances at Easter last year, and on 1 May.

The rebels often encountered sympathy where their eager efforts to achieve solidarity failed. The APO, at its zenith, gave a new meaning to the art of political demonstration. The APO strained the existing laws, thereby focusing on many of their antique absurdities. No intel-

lectual critique could have exposed some aspects of the encrusted structure of German law more poignantly than the words of *Kommunarde* Fritz Teufel when a Berlin judge asked him to stand up in Court: "*Na ja*, if you think it will be of some help in the quest for truth..."

The mixture of militance and wit, of provocation and demonstration, worked. Much was unmasked. It was a spirited technique of rule-breaking about which Professor Habermas said: "It leads to strong defensive reactions, but also to curative shock, provoking surprised second thoughts about routines and standardised feelings and complexes..." A year ago, in mid-1968, it even seemed credible to the Frankfurt professor of philosophy that this kind of protest could open up the perspective of "a transformation of our highly developed industrial societies" in the direction of a de-bureaucratized socialist system. But even then he warned against a "false appraisal" of the social crisis. "The new techniques can only embrace symbolic actions. But in the minds of diehard SDS members they emerge as methods of real and decisive revolutionary struggle..."

**T**HAT'S HOW IT WAS. SDS members and militant APO groups took to the course of "revolutionary struggle" after the anti-National-Emergency campaign had established the lack of a real response in the public. The revolutionaries adjusted themselves to the new situation after an intermediary phase of disappointment at the two SDS conferences in 1968 which had brought confusion and frustration. Now they no longer discuss whether, but rather when and how and which kind of violence is to be used. They want *so much* to be revolutionaries!

If, however, they are to be effective as revolutionaries, the essential question is whether they are basing themselves on a sound evaluation of the social situation and whether their methods will prove adequate. If they are mistaken, their prophet Marcuse's remark is even more significant, "They know the risk of their being thrashed..."

Today there is hardly an SDS ideologist who would subscribe to what Rudi Dutschke once said: "Terrorist violence against human beings is no longer necessary in the cities..." No longer heard are SDS appeals to stand, as the Mainz group put it last year, "with all our strength for the principle of Non-Violence towards other human beings." Comrades who rejected the use of Molotov cocktails at the Easter riots in 1968 as "politically stupid" or "ridiculous" are today held in contempt.

The majority of rebels were then already agreed that a "radical democratic movement does not achieve goal-consciousness by sitting at

a desk." This was said by SDS theoretician Wolfgang Lefèvre; and they were sure that dissenting minorities "would not be noticed at all... without provocation" (Dutschke). Even so, the rites and customs of the rebels came to Europe from Berkeley and the American civil rights movement. It was a transplantation of Sit-ins and Teach-ins, of street marches and slogans and graffiti. Then the philosophy was "passive resistance" with all its appropriate forms of protest. These methods did not appear to the students to need any revision until later, after confrontations with the official Establishment view (in the words of a Berlin professor of philosophy, Wilhelm Weischedel, at that time) "which considers demonstrating in the streets... an irresponsible idleness, or even a terroristic exercise." The Establishment felt challenged and hit back.

One Frankfurt policeman, putting away his truncheon after the Easter riots last year, babbled: "*Ach*, does my arm hurt! One's not used to this any more..." It was a remark which symbolised a weak authority trying to use strong measures. At the time SDS chairman Klaus Ahlheim (of Mainz) described the automatism of the counter-violence which necessarily evolved from such special treatment. "No one... had intended to throw rocks but when the truncheons and horses arrived, when one saw unconscious people and heard anguished cries... young people in blind rage tore up the turf and searched for stones."

**D**ISGUST, ANGER, and the newly discovered awareness of "repressive authority" drove thousands into the open ranks of the APO. Many took Marcuse's words to heart: "There is a natural right for oppressed and subjugated minorities to resist, to exercise unlawful methods as soon as the lawful ones become inadequate. 'Law and order' are everywhere and always law and order for those who protect the established hierarchy. It is senseless for those who suffer and resist to appeal to the absolute authority of this law and this order..."

The traditional monopoly of force and violence by the state was put in jeopardy. Those who came in contact with a theory or a truncheon found intellectual support in the theoretical difference between "reactionary violence" and "progressive violence." Dr. Oskar Negt, APO philosopher (and assistant to Habermas), explained. Reactionary violence: "Destruction of Vietnamese village by Americans." Progressive violence: "Burning down and looting American stores" by Negro minorities. Practice in street fighting brought out new distinctions. Violence itself was of two further varieties: "Violence against Things" (which was

permitted) was replaced by "Violence against Persons" (which was still disapproved).

Yet, last April, after the Easter disturbances, APO lawyer Horst Mahler blurred the border line when he replied, after the death of an innocent bystander, to the question whether one should "calculate" on fatal casualties at demonstrations. He said: "That is exactly the same as calculating that, when I am driving my car, a tyre may burst..." Six months later SDS leader Christian Semler confirmed that "the old differentiation" between violence against things and violence against persons was "überholt (out-of-date)."

The "turning point" at which a "new level of militance" (Semler) had been reached came in November 1968, when students and "Rockers" advanced on the Berlin police with stones and the casualty list included 130 injured policemen (six times more than the aggressors). Johannes Agnoli, a Free University don, stated that "one of the most interesting and weighty German taboos had been smashed—to wit, that demonstrators in Germany must never be militant against the police..." The Berlin underground paper *Radikalinski* (with the heads of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao on the cover) reported: "130 cops now have a hole in the head. Few can complain about that..." When Berlin's self-styled *Kommunarde* Fritz Teufel demanded, satirically, that department stores be set on fire, he was (in May 1967) promptly expelled from the SDS for "sham radicalism."

The SDS leadership announced that it was "deeply upset" about the damage (2.2 million D-Marks) caused by incendiary bombs in two Frankfurt stores in April 1968. Yet Teufel's *Kommune 1* expressed the hope that "a possible conviction of the Frankfurt fire-raisers does not rule out the tactic of political fire-raising in the future..." Five months later delegates at the SDS conference applauded when the expelled Teufel re-appeared. They invited him to rejoin them. ("People who burn down stores are preferable to those who own them.") In October, when the fire-raisers were in court, the SDS and the German-French student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit declared their solidarity: "*Sie gehören zu uns* (they belong to us)!"

As always, the SDS itself and the other New Left groups who want to renovate the world by violence, produced ideological justifications. As SDS-delegate Reinhard Wolff stated: "One can't talk about violence without referring to the conditions in which violence occurs..." And these are the conditions, according to a recent Agitator's Brochure in Berlin: "There are two kinds of weapons systems used by the State." First: "machine-guns, tanks, aeroplanes, truncheons." And second: "Rules; also called

'morality,' 'order,' 'decency.' The second system serves to save money and obtain law and order on the cheap..."

Morality and metaphysics have been invented because one cannot lock up entire peoples in concentration camps and one cannot have two policemen guarding every citizen. This invention was so ingenious that today parents say to their children: "You must not steal," although they let themselves be burgled all their lives, by a small "radical minority" of capitalists who know how to disguise their gigantic thievery by careful manipulation.

Accordingly, whoever breaks through the barrage of existing order gets caught in the trap of Class Justice—or beneath the police truncheon or army bayonets... Capitalism leads to Fascism, Capitalism must go...

Acts of violence which appear utterly senseless to the uninitiated are newly defined as "actions of resistance" against "crimes of exploitation." The indictment is relentless: "The Capitalists are responsible, together with their corrupt political parties, for the misery of millions... for hundreds of thousands who waste away their lives in prisons, for hundreds of thousands of the mentally ill, for millions of alcoholics... for thousands of dying mothers and dying babies, for thousands of deformed children... for millions of homeless..."

THE RADICAL LEFT realised that such misery could not be changed with just any ordinary kind of revolution, particularly because the miserable masses were hardly aware of their own tragedy. Ergo, it became necessary to "unmask" the Ruling Class and its System and thereby reveal to the masses their own second and true character.

The revolutionaries think this is possible through a "*Propaganda der Tat* (propaganda of the deed)," especially since all the printed leaflets and pamphlets have been completely ignored by the factory workers. This same tactic was outlined in Russia by Michael Bakunin a hundred years ago, when he wrote in 1869, in one of his anarchist manifestos:

To begin with, such deeds will appear very exceptional, as actions taken by fanatics in rage. They must occur again and again in varied forms, and then they will become a contagious passion of the youth, and, finally, turn into general rebellion.

A hundred years later this is the contemporary Left version:

This permanently practised terror will result in the open unmasking of that State power which is



## "The Revolution Is Devouring

CHANCELLOR KIESINGER need not yet go in fear of his life. The S.D.S. still has no machine-guns; so far this year no blood has flowed; and the combat formations of the radical students are still being beaten up by the police. But in recent months, as they resumed the battle in Munich, Berlin and Frankfurt, they heard for the first time, and in their own lecture-rooms, the counter-cry of, "S.D.S. raus! Wir haben die Schnauze voll!" (S.D.S. out, we've had a belly-full!)

Things have reached the point where the distracted German universities may well be on the verge of civil war. Still tentatively, but provoked by the "geistige Rockertum (spiritual hooliganism)" of the S.D.S. cadres, in the words of a left-wing Catholic student, groups of hitherto moderate students are preparing for the eventual necessity of "militant action against these lunatics, whose views terrify us and who encourage the worst elements of German reaction..." If these anti-S.D.S. groups were capable of operating as fanatically as their opponents, then good-night to German lecture halls and institutes of higher learning.

The S.D.S. leaders, quarrelling among themselves, furiously exasperated because their political theories cannot be realised overnight, and afraid that their organisation may fall to bits, are taking refuge for the time being in window-smashing, "simply in order to keep things happening..." So much has been admitted by Professor Ludwig von Friedeburg, the Frankfurt sociologist, who with his colleagues T. W. Adorno and Jürgen Habermas is among the ideological progenitors of the revolutionary movement, and was recently obliged to stand by, pale and helpless, while his uncontrollable students were turned out of the "Institut für Sozialforschung" by the police.

THE REVOLUTION IN FRANKFURT has devoured, not its children, but its parents. The Institute for Social Studies (only administratively linked with the University) was built up after the war with American money by Professors Adorno, Horkheimer, and Pollock, upon their return from exile. Its radical-critical attitude to society formed the minds of the students who now comprise the S.D.S. leadership. Horkheimer (now Emeritus Professor) and "Teddy" Adorno illustrated in Marxist terms the wretched insufficiencies of present-day capitalist society, and proclaimed that only by the enlightenment of the mindless masses could the socialist transformation be achieved.

If not much in the way of practical militance was heard from the theoreticians, their students, on the other hand, among them the present Frankfurt leader, Hans-Jürgen Krahle, accepted the doctrines of the "Frankfurt School of Criticism" as a challenge to begin fighting today for the better world of tomorrow. And now that their response to the challenge has led to riots on the streets, Professor Adorno says:

"All I did was to propound the theory. How could I guess that some people would want to realise it with Molotov cocktails?..."

He uttered these words as the mass of rebellious students led by Krahle were marching towards his Institute.

The aim of the Krahle commandos is to "re-function" Adorno's academic seminars into a system of sociological "working-parties," in which theory will be converted into political action. The S.D.S. then propose to form similar parties in all the faculties, thus broadening their base of operations. A few days previously Adorno's colleagues, Habermas, had closed the doors of the Seminar building on the Myliusstrasse, which forms part of the Institute, against Krahle's marchers. The "rote Professor" had come to the conclusion that the S.D.S. movement, which originally he had supported, was in danger of being carried away by "megalo-mania."

One of the things which caused Habermas to change his mind arose out of the demonstration against the Karajan Festival (a benefit concert for the encouragement of German sport). Krahle's cadres considered themselves entitled to organise the protest by making use of the Institute's facilities—telephones, typewriters, and duplicating-machines for leaflets. Habermas, however, wanted to prevent the lavishly equipped and endowed premises of the Institute from becoming the headquarters (as they did) of rowdy demonstrations against Kiesinger, or rotten eggs thrown at Ludwig Erhard's limousine.

THE WORKING PARTIES DEBATED the matter for hours on end, until finally Habermas turned them out. They stood and sat huddled together like the devout in a confined place of worship. The main revolutionary orators were of course Hans-Jürgen Krahle, the son of a Prussian countess, and Frank Wolff, a talented cellist. Although the matter under discussion was only the undoing of the patrons of sport, the whole of S.D.S. political theory was passed under review. Who could define "legality," and who could prevent "polarisation"? When, however, cautious objections were raised to strong-arm and terrorist methods the generally persuasive speakers tended to grow ill-tempered: with sharp rejoinders like "Schnauzehalten!" or "Scheissargument!" ("belt up," "bloody tripe.")

IT WAS NOT UNTIL long after the windows of Frankfurt's American House, several travel agencies and a number of consulates had been shattered, and the mass of police with their water-cannons, barbed wire and dogs had retired, that the rebels resumed their political campaign in the University. While 15,000 students proceeded with their normal routines in the dreary surroundings of student lodgings and study-rooms, the hundred-odd radicals from the Myliusstrasse provoked an incident which was intended to bring the non-political majority over to their side.