

POWER, DISRUPTION AND REVOLUTION

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The younger generation is struggling for new conceptions, not only of community and identity, but also of revolutionary power. They have discovered that under certain institutional frameworks, community is almost impossible. They have also discovered that the search for one's own identity requires an examination of the institutions which have shaped that identity. The relentless pursuit of self-knowledge leads ultimately to political consciousness. Self-knowledge is not a kind of inwardness; it is an awareness of the powers and dominations under which one lives. Consequently, in becoming aware of themselves young people have simultaneously become aware of the American way of life as "a system": a unique composition of economic power, class structure, political interest, and cultural myths.

I. THE SYSTEM

Culture is constituted by meaning.¹ When an anthropologist examines the ruins of an ancient civilization, he studies its artifacts, its documents, its cities, its burial mounds, and every available aspect of its life. He studies these remnants as if they were signs, and he reads them with all the empathy and acuity he can muster, in order to regain the intentionality—the understanding and emotional tone—which they once expressed. Even simple things are fraught with symbolic power.² A great many people in contemporary American society thrill at the sight of a huge jet plane climbing steeply into a grey sky; many others are thrilled by the first sight of the annual line of new automobiles. The removed, naked human heart has one significance for a primitive tribe, and another for a Catholic nun in the nineteenth century, and yet another in a society where four hearts have been transplanted from human being to human being within the space of four weeks.

¹ Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, Prentice-Hall Inc.: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966, Chapter 1.

² Weller Embler, *Metaphor and Meaning*, Everett Edwards, Inc.: DeLand, Florida, 1966, pp. 27–44.

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So long as one lives within a culture, of course, it is difficult to state the meaning of that culture. For the meaning is lived rather than thought. So long as one stands within the frame of a language, one cannot talk about that frame; as Wittgenstein pointed out, one can only mount the ladder and kick it away, one can only *show* but cannot *say*. Yet just because the American way of life seems to be a system of meaning undergoing rapid transition, some of the factors that constitute the older set of meanings are beginning to come into focus. A new framework is coming into being, and the older one is receding toward a distance in which it may be spoken of. Still, to try to state the meaning which has constituted the American way of life for at least the last two or three generations is too formidable a task. It will seem easier and clearer if we try to speak about the meaning of American culture not in its most general structure, but rather in connection with a limited number of questions of economic power, class structure and political interest.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., averred in *The Vital Center* that "modern science has given the ruling class power which renders mass revolutions obsolete."³ But if revolutions are impossible, does that mean that we are trapped? Does that mean that there can be no new beginnings, no new radical upheavals, no matter how badly things might go? For a long time, this country has progressed through and by means of a pragmatic consensus, a judgment that fundamentally we are on the right track and that at the center our direction is humanistic and progressive. There might be aberrations this way and that, mistakes here or there, as there would be expected to be in any dynamic society, but our center of gravity is such (we thought) that we serve as the leading edge of the western world. We were taught that the center of history lies in the west: in Palestine and Athens and Rome and Paris and London and now in New York. Nations were to be called developed or underdeveloped in accordance with the degree to which they resembled us.

From a theological point of view, Americans are pelagians concerning the structure of our country: we tend to think that it is not and cannot be evil at the center. We habitually believe that American intentions are good ones, that America has never started a war, that America is always on the side of democracy and justice and liberty, that American officials are to be trusted until proven untrustworthy, and that Americans are unusually innocent, generous, and good in their relationships with other people. We believe that at home we are free, and that while there are blemishes upon our performance we are essentially committed to the rights of every individual, regardless of race, color, or religion. We believe that we are free and responsible citizens, in command of our personal destiny and of our common government. We believe that

³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center*, The Riverside Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1962, p. 151.

American instincts are so sound that evils have only to be pointed out in order that American public opinion will rise up against them in outrage.

Young people have been brought up sharing beliefs like these. They have been forced by events to discard them one by one, events which since the Korean war have exposed the inner life of America in an unprecedented way. Many in the younger generation have experienced America as overtly and clearly racist, even though Americans do not usually describe themselves as racist and even though Americans commonly make statements of principles and ideals which are not racist. Let us dwell on this issue a moment. To some extent, the cynicism of explicit racism, like that announced by Adolf Hitler, is much worse than a hypocritical, implicit racism; one could not accuse Hitler of violating his own most cherished and publically stated ideals when he set the master race the task of eliminating the Jews. On the other hand, a latent, hypocritical form of racism is much more difficult to deal with because few people are aware of sharing it and few, even after rather serious introspection, even notice that they share it. In American culture, the meaning of the word "racist" is difficult to specify exactly. It seems clear that a great many people believe spontaneously that the white race is superior to other races, and that many people have spontaneous and profound emotional reactions when placed in close contact with people of other races. Different standards are employed in measuring what happens to the white race and what happens to other races. However, individuals need not commit specific racist acts; racism can occur in acts of the total white community against the black community. "When white racists bomb a black church and kill five black children, that is an act of individual racism . . . But when in that same city—Birmingham, Alabama—five hundred black babies die each year because of the lack of food, shelter and medical facilities, that is a function of institutional racism."⁴ Many sophisticated Americans, of course, have come to recognize the degree of racism that infects American life,⁵ but it is astonishing how many Americans there are, even in professional life and in the universities, who still do not recognize it.

For most Americans, the study of world history seems to focus mainly upon the history of the west and to terminate in the history of America. It is basically a history of the white race. When this view of history coincides with the arrangement of political and economic power in the contemporary world, the suggestion cannot be repressed that such

⁴ Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power*, Vintage Books: N.Y., 1967, p. 4.

⁵ Taught largely by Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man*, The New American Library, Inc.: N.Y., 1965; James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, Dial: N.Y., 1963; and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Grove Press, N.Y., 1966.

a view of history is highly ideological; that, whatever other value it may have, it also serves as a screen for certain economic and political policies. The war in Vietnam, coming as it did on the heels of short revolutions in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, brought into focus for young men, who were being called upon to fight for them, the goals of American economic and political programs. As Richard H. Rovere has made plain in a recent, candid article in *The New Yorker*,⁶ an older generation of Americans grew up fighting in the defense of liberty against Adolf Hitler and then, somewhat less clearly, in the defense of the people of South Korea. It was possible in those days to view the spread of Nazism or of Communism as one might view the spreading of black ink and then red ink across a map of the world. It was the task of America to hold back that spreading ink. Yet the myths of Nazi expansion and Communist expansion were clearly enough grounded in actual events. As time has gone on, however, the power of the United States has grown to be so huge that the map of the world would have to show another color of ink: the slow advance of the United States, its military bases, its economic interests, and its political policies into the inner lives of other nations. It appears that the United States is no longer guided by the defense of liberty or by national self-determination. It seems, rather, that the policies of the United States are now aimed at maintaining stability. From liberty to stability: a shift in the goal and center of gravity. It appears that no revolution, anywhere on the face of the world, will be allowed to continue unless the United States approves of its continuation. The United States appears to be the world's foremost counterrevolutionary power.⁷

The struggle against the Third Reich and the Communist powers altered the life of the people of the United States in one further important respect. During every war in the history of the United States up until Pearl Harbor, there was great resistance to the idea of military conscription; draft riots broke out when such conscription was imposed. Since 1941, however, Americans have accepted the imposition of the draft supinely. For more than a quarter of a century, Americans have become accustomed to the draft as a fact of life. Yet the shift in fundamental American policy, the shift from the defense of liberty to the defense of stability, has transformed the meaning of military conscription. Nowadays, the same rhetoric is used as in 1941: one is drafted in order to "defend liberty," "to serve one's country," and "to do one's duty." Government officials continue to defend the war in Vietnam as if it were a continuation of the war against Communism in Korea and Nazism in Europe. Yet it is a little difficult to believe that the National

⁶ "Letter from Washington," Dec. 9, 1967, pp. 150-155.

⁷ Carl Oglesby and Richard Shaull, *Containment and Change*, The Macmillan Company, N.Y., 1967, Chapter 4.

Liberation Front, which has neither a navy nor an air force, and the North Vietnamese, with a navy of small junks and an air force of hardly three score fighter planes, pose a threat against San Francisco.⁸

Meanwhile, the war in Vietnam could not have become so large with so little political debate unless there had already been in existence a draft system to which Americans had been inured and now hardly notice. The escalation has been gradual and it has been accepted by degrees. At no point did there have to be a major policy change which might come to the immediate attention of the voters, as would have been the case had there been no selective service law already in existence. Without even noticing it, American society has been organized along militaristic lines and the war in Vietnam, which so far as air power is concerned already exceeds the ferocity of the war against the Nazis,⁹ could be drifted into without advertence.

In brief, "the system" of American life, as it has been perceived by young people, is racist, counterrevolutionary, and militarist. The "mainstream of American opinion" seems to accept the system as it is and to be rather complacent about its health and vitality. More exactly, American opinion seems in recent years to be showing signs of uneasiness—and symptoms of a bad conscience—but the policies espoused by government officials of nation, state, and city seem to be policies of repression. What many Americans see as a matter of great urgency is to silence "outside agitators," "pseudo-intellectuals," and other "trouble makers." Few seem willing to face matters as they are, and to begin the necessary changes.

Now in such a situation there seem to be two general lines of response. The traditional, liberal, pragmatic response appears to be that the direction of American life is essentially right, but that certain mistakes have occurred and certain temporary malfunctions have arisen in the machinery—bad leadership, inadequately informed public opinion, the failure of intellectuals, and the like. The advantage of this response is that it remains close enough to the mainstream of American discourse to seem "reasonable" and "responsible." The difficulty with this position is that it shares the same fundamental assumption about American life that forces of racism, counterrevolution and militarism share: that the health of the nation is fundamentally sound.

The second line of response is, of course, a diagnosis that is much more radical. The technological revolution which has taken place since the Second World War has so altered the conditions of American life,¹⁰

⁸ Bernard Fall points out how much more difficult it is to promote hatred of Ho Chi Minh than of Hitler, Tojo or Stalin in World War II. See *Last Reflections on a War*, Doubleday & Co.: Garden City, N.Y., 1967, pp. 59, 60.

⁹ See Frank Harvey, *Air War—Vietnam*, Bantam Books: N.Y., 1967.

¹⁰ See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Beacon Press: Boston, 1966.

the radicals argue, that American society is no longer turned in a humanistic direction. Conditions favorable to liberty, justice, and truth are no longer the aim of American life. Personal integrity and the sense of genuine community have never been easy to achieve, but life in the United States is now so organized that they are, just possibly, more difficult of achievement than ever. Technology has given the state so much power in the formation of opinion and in the creation of those images and symbols which generate action that democracy in the United States no longer means what it once did.¹¹ The evils of racism run more deeply than we thought.¹² The mark of violence is more deeply set upon our forehead than we had recognized. The ambitions of imperialism are nearer to our heart than we had admitted. The inequities of our economic arrangement divide us more thoroughly into classes than our rhetoric allows us to believe.¹³

The conclusion of this line of reasoning is that evolution is not sufficient; there must be a fundamental change in direction. Those who propound this more radical analysis wish to differentiate it from the liberal, pragmatic analysis which is evolutionary. The only word which remains at hand, once evolution is rejected, is "revolution." But what content can be given to that word in American life two centuries after the original revolution of 1776?

II. THE REVOLUTION

Once a pragmatic and realistic tradition has taken hold—a tradition in which compromise and adjustment are the ordinary procedural methods—the word "revolution" sounds extraordinarily romantic. Whether one thinks of the Bastille, the barricades of 1848, or the galloping Cossacks of 1917, the imagery associated with "revolution" clashes much too harshly with our experience of American life. Yet once young men have been awakened from their pragmatic slumbers, no other word will quite do, even though the armed forces of the United States, together with the many police forces of the country, make any sort of armed uprising seem futile.

There is a second meaning of revolution which has also come to seem empty: the meaning of revolution which is the political equivalent of a moral conversion. We might call this meaning the socratic meaning: it is the tendency to believe that knowledge is virtue, that awareness of evils is identical with the will to uproot evils. At the beginning of the

¹¹ See Robert P. Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, Beacon Press: Boston, 1965.

¹² See Thomas Hayden, *Rebellion in Newark*, Vintage, Books: N.Y., 1967.

¹³ See Robert L. Heilbroner, "Who's Running the Show?" *New York Review of Books*, Vol. IX, No. 12, Jan. 1968, pp. 18-21. (Review of G. William Donhoff, *Who Rules America?*, and Arnold M. Rose, *The Power Structure*.)

civil rights movement, a great many young idealists seemed to believe that to alter the age-old injustices of American life it would suffice to expose these injustices to the plain view of the American people. The newspapers and television would show the country what was actually happening. And, outraged, the American citizen would set about making matters right. To change the direction of America, all one had to do was change the awareness of Americans. Such naïveté was short lived.

On the one hand, a revolution by the force of arms and in the romantic European tradition does not seem probable, realistic, or desirable. On the other hand, a revolution through greater public awareness has proved to be illusory. What then is left? If it were not for the war in Vietnam, it might well be that the need for revolutionary thinking would appear to be much less pressing. Yet the war places a burden of death and decision immediately upon the shoulders of the young. They are faced with military service in support of a cause they find to be both illegal and immoral. Moreover, their analysis of American society teaches them that the war is not merely a mistake, not an accident which a different sort of leadership might have avoided, but a strikingly clear exemplification of the fundamental direction of the mainstream of American life. Since the war faces them with a kind of involuntary servitude, and possibly with death or the need to kill, they experience the sort of desperation from which alone, it seems, a revolutionary frame of mind derives.¹⁴ Since some of them are going to go to prison, or to die anyway, it does not seem to them unrealistic to stake everything upon the possibility of bringing about a change of direction in American life. But what sort of change shall this be? What kind of strategy should be adopted in order to effect it? In what new direction ought America to be turned?

The first requirement of revolutionary action is to bring more and more others to "revolutionary consciousness." Those who have come to see how profoundly their lives have been shaped by "the system," and how deeply it has insinuated itself into their sense of their own identity, need first to bring others to this same state of consciousness. Most young people did not come to "revolutionary consciousness" by thinking about it; it is not something that they were taught by their professors. They learned it by acting against the system. At one point or another, whether in the pursuit of civil rights or in an effort to bring about certain reforms in the university, they came face to face with attitudes, myths, and unyielding policies which they could not share. They discovered that beneath the idealism, the principles, the rhetoric, and the complacent good conscience of American society—even the most liberal and reasonable elements of American society—there was a hard core of resolute

¹⁴ Régis Débray stresses the power of desperation in *Revolution in the Revolution*, Grove Press: N. Y., 1967.

and unquestionable inhumanity. Moreover, when challenged, this inhumanity was defended not with reason but with the application of counterforce. At the end of every argument there was the barrel of a gun: a policeman's club, a censure, a suspension, a dismissal, a jail sentence, the spraying of mace, the employment of tear gas, the charging of a phalanx of policemen. To less innocent young people, the fact that society is based upon force would not have come as a surprise. The experience of being at the wrong end of the barrel of a gun is, however, the most formidable "radicalizing" tactic that middle-class students in America have yet discovered. Consequently those who are already radical constantly try to drive the flexible, resilient, pragmatic American system into crises of naked confrontation, and they try to bring as many other students into the experience of this confrontation as they can. Those who pass through it are never the same afterwards.

Overt violence is so far unacceptable; awareness gained through ordinary educational means is ineffectual. The tactics of disruption have proven extraordinarily fruitful. Moreover, without young men the American army simply cannot function, and so the issue of the selective service has been seized upon as the point in the system where (it is thought) the young have real power, and where the application of power can have a maximum effect. Resistance to the draft has become the most tangible and realistic way of bringing some young men to a sense of their own identity, a willingness to stand by their own integrity, and a sense of comradeship and community with others who are in danger. Resistance to the draft can at one and the same time be nonviolent and disruptive; it brings about a highly emotional and inwardly searing confrontation without resort to violence. Moreover, it both draws upon and nourishes the widespread resistance to the war and what the war stands for in American life. On the other hand, President Johnson sent one hundred FBI agents to break the back of the resistance movement; district attorneys are arraigning more and more antidraft demonstrators. The number of resisters seems to be far too few.

Still, resistance to the selective service system is only one front on which the battle must be fought to change the direction of American life. The university campus promises free speech to any who come to argue their views according to the conventions of reasonable discourse. At the present moment in history, however, government officials employ the rostrum on university campuses, not for purposes of reasonable argument and discourse, but to announce the official views of the government. Representatives of the Central Intelligence Agency and of the producers of war materials come to the campus, not to argue for the merits of their respective activities, but to recruit candidates for their ranks. Radical students wish to confront the government officials and the recruiters and make them argue for their positions, face to face, in

the traditions of the university. But government officials commonly insist upon rigging the rules of the debate so that they will never be embarrassed, and the recruiters do not come to argue but to recruit. In their desperation, the radicals believe that the conventions of reasonable discourse have been abandoned, and that they must face the employment of power with power. They try to bring about a confrontation, hoping thereby to involve other students in their vivid contest against the industrial state.

Nevertheless, the tactics of disruption are contrary to the traditions of this country, and the prejudice of Americans weighs heavily in favor of officials so long as they act with decorum; thus the radical students seem to reap as much divisiveness and ill will as further radicalization. Moreover, if it is true that the conventions of reasonable discourse have actually broken down in our society, then the logic of disruption is actually the logic of armed revolution. If you really want to halt a local induction center, then you must employ means commensurate with your aim. Against armed ranks of policemen, a grenade is more serious and effective than calling names.

Still, young people who hope to make a revolution in the name of humanity come face-to-face with the major ethical dilemma of all such revolutionaries in our century: is it right to kill a human being in the name of his and one's own humanity?¹⁵ If you turn to armed violence, are you any better than those whose policies have outraged your own moral sensitivities? If one accepts the fact that political life is a balance of powers, gun barrel against gun barrel, then the moral claims of humanism seem to be diminished. For if man is, in fact, incapable of community and reasonable discourse as a means of reconciling differences, then all the revolutions in the world are not going to alter that fact. There is no longer any room for moral outrage of an innocent and direct sort. Faced with a balance of forces, one may either try to accumulate more force so as to bring opposing powers into equilibrium, or one may try to preserve an always precarious stability.

The conflict in the consciousness of young radicals is extraordinarily poignant. On the one hand, they find the present direction of American life intolerable. On the other hand, they also find the logic of revolutionary consciousness, in so far as it ultimately leads to armed violence, intolerable. If they try to reconcile themselves to the second point of the dilemma, namely, to the fact that every social arrangement involves them in violence and even in murder,¹⁶ then they may commit themselves to armed violence; but in the same stroke, they lose the ground on which their own humanistic aspirations were rooted. If they

¹⁵ See, for example, Irving Howe, *Politics and the Novel*, Fawcett Premier: N.Y., 1967, Chapter 8.

¹⁶ Paul Hanley Furfey, *The Respectable Murderers*, Herder & Herder: N.Y., 1966.

try to reconcile themselves to the first horn of the dilemma, namely, to the fact that the present system is corrupt, as all systems inevitably are, they have to absorb a guilt and a responsibility that they are ill prepared to absorb. For they have not been taught that American society is guilty and corrupt, but that it is just and free and noble.

Moreover, the young have moved rapidly from ethical and abstract issues to practical, political issues. Here their frustration is even more intense. One young man, having read an earlier version of this paper, recently typed me a note which read, in part: "Many are no longer asking whether they can kill as an ethical question, but as a political question, and *this* is the most frustrating problem. Who can you kill in this country so that it makes any difference? So what if you kill Johnson and Rusk and Rostow and Humphrey and all the Chiefs of Staff? There are thousands more who are scrounging for their positions and will carry out the same, if not more repressive, policies. And so what if you kill two hundred Oakland policemen with a grenade? The military in this country is strong enough to kill everyone who doesn't wear a uniform. So where can we turn? There are many dropping out every day."

The radical movement, therefore, has reached a point of hesitation. The most sensitive radical students ask themselves, alone and in the night, and occasionally in conversation: "Am I capable of killing another man? Can I live with myself if I shed the blood of others?" In an earlier generation of humanists, Sartre and Camus and others wrestled with this question; but they did so when the enemy was a clear and present aggressor, cynical and thorough in his methods of repression and his commitment to violence. When the Nazi tide had receded, Camus at first felt the same instincts of retribution and vengeance against those Frenchmen who had collaborated with the Nazis; in a short time, he changed his mind.¹⁷ And he began to argue in *The Rebel* that in the choice between an ideology and a human life one must always choose in favor of the human life; this was the lesson to be learned from the ideological wars of our century. But the lesson of *The Rebel* could only be learned after the first lesson of resistance through armed violence had also been learned and had been proven successful by victory. To which Camus should the young American turn, the Camus of 1942 or the Camus of 1945? The issue is not abstract. Next month, this summer, next year, violence may again erupt in American cities. A young man may well think: "If I am going to die in Vietnam anyway, why not die on the side of the revolution in America?" Such a stray thought is not at first taken seriously; it is too romantic, too un-American. But it returns like a haunting nightmare.

¹⁷ See Emmet Parker, *Albert Camus*, University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, Wisconsin, 1966, p. 95; and Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, Vintage Books: N.Y., 1956.

III. IDENTITY OF THE ENEMY

What is a Christian theologian to say about the dream of violence? Christianity began in an act of violence, and its first act was to show that violence, no matter what its sources, can be redemptive. If the Word who reveals to us God's nature and our own is to be understood, the Christian must confront the naked power of violence in every human situation. Nietzsche's accusations against Christianity must not be allowed to stand: the Word does not reveal that human life is pastoral, peaceful, nice, genteel, or reasonable, but that it is violent. Blood runs down the wood of the cross. On the other hand, woe to them by whom the blood is made to run! The revolutions of 1776, of 1789, of 1848, of 1917 have been affairs of blood. Good has been brought forth from them, although at immense cost: it is impossible to deny the fact that—in Hegel's words—history is a butcher's bench. The first word must be that revolution, even a bloody revolution, is not *a priori* to be judged immoral.¹⁸ All the more is this true because *every* social order rests upon a base of violence,¹⁹ covert or overt, orderly or anarchistic. Politics is not a science of reason but of power.

To judge the morality of violence, one must think concretely. "Revolution" is too large an abstraction. By whom? When? Where? To what end? By what means? To take up the banner of violence is to invoke violence in return. The revolutionary must think clearly, under pain of romantic gesture-making.

There are many different kinds of revolutionary situations, many different kinds of revolutionary method, many different kinds of revolutionary person.²⁰ What, *roughly* (it is impossible to be "precise" in any normal sense), is the situation in the United States in the present decade? The feature of American life most disheartening to the young, if I read them correctly, is the tyranny of an immoral majority—a majority that would prefer to wage war upon a mythical enemy embodied in other races in other nations, rather than to face its own rotten core and incipient civil war at home. The state of American cities, the relationships between Americans of differing races, the general pursuit of mere expertise and the wealth that flows from it—these grave moral illnesses are not met by a majority with the will to alter its way of life. The majority remains unmoved. In this light, proof is given that democratic processes in fact are subject to the poisons of irrationality, corruption, and evil, just as other systems of government are. In other words, it is not true that majority rule necessarily leads to freedom. It

¹⁸ Raghavan Iyer, "The Ethics of Revolution" in *The Center*, Vol. I, No. 2, January 1968, pp. 85–88.

¹⁹ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Charles Scribners Sons: N.Y., 1960.

²⁰ Flexibility in analysis is Regis Débray's fundamental point. *Op. cit.*

is conceivable—it seems to be the case in America today—that a democratic majority would systematically prefer a high standard of living to justice, freedom and truth: bread and circuses to adult responsibility.

When young Americans attack “the System,” therefore, they are not necessarily attacking every institution, procedure, or achievement carried along by the American tradition. A great deal would be gained if this point could be made plain. The revolution of which the young speak, it is true, sometimes carries a nihilistic ring: burn down everything, destroy, halt, stop. The more accurate and commendable impulse, however, contains both a positive and a negative note. On the one hand, the inadequacy and hypocrisy of the present democratic machinery—chiefly due to the preference of Americans for a high standard of living over every other consideration—cannot be too sharply denounced. On the other hand, the tradition of free inquiry, integrity of conscience, compassion for the suffering, community with all men, and rule of the people by the people for the people must be *extended*. If there is need for a revolution in America (even perhaps a bloody revolution), it is in continuity with the revolution of 1776, not in denial of it. The morally genuine impulse of revolution is a forward movement: it is to be a revolution in the name of human values now and in the future.

The great hope of the liberals is that such progress can be achieved without bloodshed. But such hopes rest upon the assumption that a majority of the American people either now have or can be led to have the wisdom and the will to make the inherited democratic processes work. The new left has been led to doubt that assumption. The new left has lost faith in the American majority. This loss of faith is very recent; its taste is bitter and painful. When the present mood passes, however, it will not be enough merely to hate. Alternatives must be imagined, programs created, and actions launched. It is far easier to destroy than to create. I do not think the new left desires to be merely self-indulgent.

The enemy in America, then, is the tyrannical and indifferent majority: the good people, the churchgoers, the typical Americans, the ones who have been taught that to be an American is by that very fact to be moral, just, free, generous, and trustworthy. So long as such a majority controls the destiny of America, it appears, the nation will remain militarist, racist, and counterrevolutionary; the wealth of the United States will increase; conscience will be suffocated; the wretched of the earth will suffer yet more. The revolutionary problem is how to fight the moral sickness of the democratic majority: a revolutionary problem unique (so it seems) in history. It would be a grave mistake to destroy the machinery of democratic *process*, if it is true that the enemy is the democratic majority. The system of representative government, so far as it goes, is healthy; *it does not go far enough* and

that is what makes it function as if it were sick. Moreover, the mechanisms by which our democratic processes were thought to be self-reforming have proven, instead, to be lamentably inadequate. Pragmatic adjustment of the available machinery is no longer sufficient. The democratic process needs a further extension, and the mechanisms of reform need extension: which is to say, much more rapid means of change are required.

Yet how can one rearrange the power bases of American democracy, both economically and politically, so that changes can come rapidly and effectively? It seems futile to believe that a majority of Americans will be persuaded by reasonable argument or by the manipulation of public opinion to consent to such a rearrangement. It is at this point that tactics of disruption become feasible. The American majority must be shown how desperately inadequate our society is; and they themselves must be placed, for a change, in the line of fire. To be sure, persons who are threatened may respond with repressive violence; further, it is wishful thinking to imagine that the later contemplation of their violence will move them to regrets. Yet if the democratic majority represses disruption with force, then at least the heretofore covert violence of the respectable will become overt. There is an undeniable satisfaction in making hypocrisy yield to honesty. Yet such satisfaction is not political power. Disruptive tactics seem to have as their premise either (a) that the democratic majority can yet be shocked into mending its ways; or (b) that disruptive confrontation is an indispensable first step in a long-term revolutionary process, insofar as it serves to increase the number of those who are aware of the role of naked force in a society which likes to pretend that it is reasonable and free.

The notion that a revolution is a long-range project, meanwhile, relieves some of the emotional stress which members of the new left commonly feel. It is easier to keep cool if not every day is regarded as the last. Like early Christianity, the new left sometimes suffers from an eschatology whose fuse is unconscionably short. Patience, nonetheless, is the first virtue of the revolutionary. His courage is proved more thoroughly in steady endurance than in flashes of instantaneous action. Moreover, though the question of the employment of arms and open violence must remain open, it does not follow that violence is the only or even the ordinary method of the revolutionary. The opposite, in fact, seems to be the case. Most of the actions of the revolutionary are aimed at schooling himself in the aims of the revolution, so that others will find him trustworthy and so that others will learn by the way he lives the meaning of the revolution. Without the establishment of a community of revolutionary consciousness and trust, living by the ideal of the society of the future, no revolution worthy of the name can succeed. In the beginning, the forces of revolution are weak and the forces

of tyranny (even the tyranny of a democratic majority) appear to be immovable.

In the United States at the present time, the moment has clearly not arrived for armed revolution. Riots in the cities may well be a foretaste of what is ahead, and those who serve now in the Army may one day be grateful to have learned military skills. At the present moment, more than anything else, the new left requires fresh economic, political, and social imagination, so as to imagine the manifold ways in which the genuine achievements of American society can be extended. To displace the democratic majority, whether by changing the minds of a great many people or by so altering political and economic relationships that the present majority is fragmented, almost certainly will require strategy and tactics not presently part of the normal processes of change in our society. If we proceed with coolness and skill, the revolution will not be a step backward; if we are blessed, it may be a long step ahead.