

we dedicate this
issue to BARRY BOND-
HUS who emptied 2 buckets
of human shit into the
files of the SHERBOURNE-
COUNTY DRAFTBOARD
at ELK RIVER, MINNESOTA
& s. story on p. 23



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"We only want to make things a little better".

Bernhard De Vries (at the
Mahatma Ghandi Hall.)

For moribund organisations such as the Committee of 100, the Provos of Holland seemed to be a gift from the Gods - but the value of the gift is as dubious as the existence of the gods. For the Provos grew and developed in an environment containing many important differences from England, even though the basic social problems in both countries might be the same. The evils the Provos are attacking: air-pollution, overcrowded cities, the growing power of the police and bureaucracy are the problems of the modern bureaucratic industrial society. That the Provos have had the courage to confront these problems with imaginative answers is to their credit, but their reception in England by the Committee of 100 and other idea-hungry groupings was insulting to the intelligence of the Provos, and uncritical to the point of absurdity. For the Provos represent a great many shades of opinion, and it follows, are by no means in agreement over actions. This is a good thing. For it is by their action we must evaluate them.

The Provos maintain that they are theoretical anarchists who wish to achieve certain important reforms in Holland. Their protest is against authority, against its brutalising of both society and the individual. If their ideas are to have effect it is important that those sections of society that the Provos consider significant, in their terms, should understand the nature of authority. To this end the Provos demand the constant provocation of crises of authority.* These crises of authority are the occasions for encounters between the creatures of authority (the police and army), and the PROVOTARIAT (the disaffiliated youth).

The word Provotariat is an invention of the Provos, and in the context of recent events begs the question: - Are the Provotariat the Provotariat?

*The best source of information on the Provos is the first issue of the magazine "HEATWAVE", which gives a full translation of the Provo manifesto, and an on-the-spot report from Amsterdam.



Before the June riots in Amsterdam the Provos called for the continuous provocation of authority, and the physical destruction of the bureaucracy, but when the dissident youth (the Provotariat) poured into Amsterdam to intensify the crisis of authority the Provos called their supporters out of the demonstrations and denounced the youth for their violence and unnecessary destruction (meaning the breaking of shop windows) - but more significantly they were disowned by the Provos because they were not Provo-educated. And yet surely the youth in attacking property and the police were attacking the appurtenances and props of bureaucratic society. They were taking the Provos seriously.

The Amsterdam riots clarified the deepest contradiction in the Provos position: authority in crisis re-acts with violence and will defend the institutions from which it derives - but the mere provocation of authority is sterile and disillusioning; an actual crisis of authority is, explicitly, a revolutionary situation, and if the people involved against authority, those who denounce them are finally on the side of the authority they believe themselves to be condemning.

We would regard the June Riots as a "happening" in which when events took an unexpected course, most of those involved acted predictably: the leadership feared the Provotariat, the police had a field-day, and the Provotariat had to fight what was after all their fight, and they gave up the streets when the odds were too great and the rain too heavy which is sensible enough.

The youth in the streets were attacking property, and while probably lacking the sophistication of the Provos, they also appear to lack their naivety. If the Provos could not accept the actions of the youth confronting authority with its gloves off, they could, at least, have restricted themselves to non-participation and constructive criticism. They acted like a party in embryo with much to lose if the people they claim to be education get out of hand.

The best one may hope is that the Provos may have learned from the Provotariat and will not become trapped in the self-contained logic of a movement which perpetuates itself at the expense of its objects.

The Provos can be contacted at: 14, Karthuiserstraat,
Amsterdam.

THE DECLINE AND THE FALL OF THE “ SPECTACULAR ” COMMODITY - ECONOMY

From the 13th to the 16th of August, 1965, the blacks of Los Angeles revolted. An incident involving traffic police and pedestrians developed into two days of spontaneous riots. The forces of order, despite repeated reinforcement, were unable to gain control of the streets. By the third day, the negroes had armed themselves by pillaging such arms shops as were accessible, and were so enabled to open fire on police helicopters. Thousands of soldiers - the whole military weight of an infantry division, supported by tanks - had to be thrown into the struggle before the Watts area could be surrounded, after which it took several days and much streetfighting for it to be brought under control. The rioters didn't hesitate to plunder and to burn the shops of the area. The official figures testify to 32 dead, including 27 negroes, plus 800 wounded and 3,000 arrested.

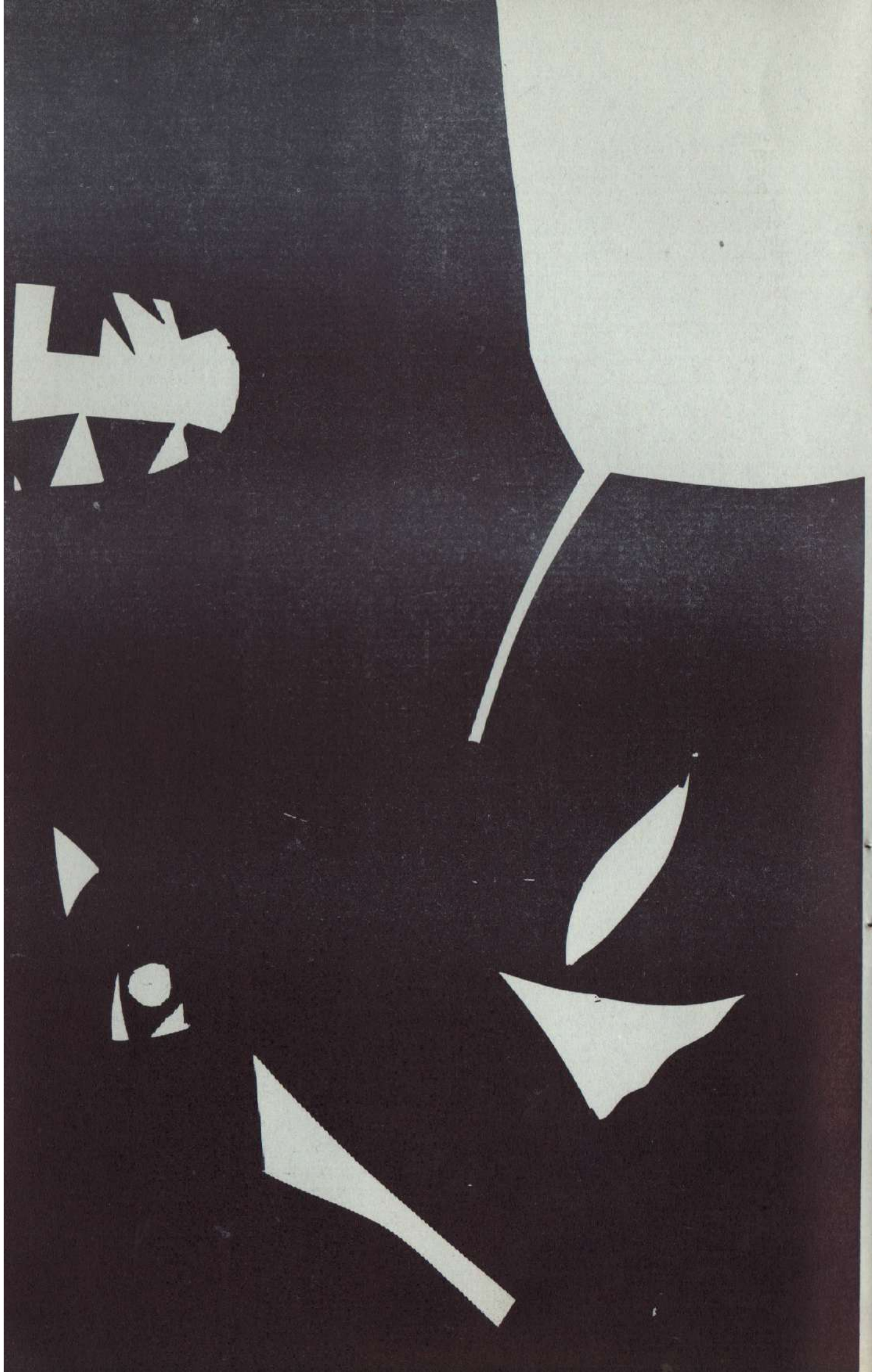
Reactions on all sides were invested with clarity : the revolutionary act always discloses the reality of existing problems, lending an unaccustomed and unconscious truth to the various postures of its opponents. Police Chief William Parker, for example, refused all mediation proposed by the main Negro organizations, asserting correctly that the rioters had no leader. Evidently, as the blacks were without a leader, this was the moment of truth for both parties. What did Roy Wilkins, general secretary of the NAACP, want at that moment ? He declared that the riots should be put down « with all the force necessary ». And the Cardinal of Los Angeles, McIntyre, who protested loudly, had not protested against the violence of the repression, which one would have supposed the subtle thing to do, at the moment of the *aggiornamento* of the Roman church ; instead, he protested in the most urgent tones about « a premeditated revolt against the rights of one's neighbour ; respect for the law and the maintenance of order », calling upon catholics to oppose the plundering and the apparently unjustified violence. All the theorists and « spokesmen » of the international Left (or, rather, of its nothingness) deplored the irresponsibility and disorder, the pillaging and

above all the fact that *arms and alcohol* were the first targets for plunder ; finally, that 2,000 fires had been started by the Watts petrol throwers to light up their battle and their ball. But who was there to defend the rioters of Los Angeles in the terms they deserve ? Well, we shall. Let us leave the economists to grieve over the 27 million dollars lost, and the town planners over one of their most beautiful supermarkets gone up in smoke, and McIntyre over his slayed Deputy Sheriff ; let the sociologists weep over the absurdity and the intoxication of this rebellion. The job of a revolutionary journal is not only to justify the Los Angeles insurgents, but to help uncover their just reasons : to explain theoretically the truth for which such practical action expresses the search.

In Algiers in July, 1965, following Boumedienne's *coup d'etat*, the situationists published an *Address to the Algerians and to revolutionaries all over the world*, which interpreted conditions in Algeria and in the rest of the world *as a whole* ; among their examples, they evoked the American negroes, who if they could « affirm themselves significantly » would unmask the contradictions of the most advanced of capitalist systems. Five weeks later, this significance found an expression on the street. Theoretical criticism of modern society, in its advanced forms, and criticism in *actions* of the same society, co-exist at this moment : still separated but both advancing towards the same reality, both talking of the same thing. These two critiques are mutually explanatory, each being incomprehensible without the other. Our theory of « survival » and the « spectacle » is illuminated and verified by these actions so unintelligible to the American false consciousness. One day these actions will in turn be illuminated by this theory.

Up to this time the Negro « Civil Rights » demonstrations had been kept by their leaders within the limits of a legal system which overlooked the most appalling violence on the part of the police and the racialists : in Alabama the previous March for instance, at the time of the Montgomery March, and as if this scandal was not sufficient, a discreet agreement between the Federal government, Governor Wallace and Pastor King had led the Selma Marchers of the 10th of March to stand back at the first request, in dignity and prayer. Thus the confrontation expected by the crowd had been reduced to the charade of a merely potential confrontation. In that moment, Non-Violence reached the pitiful limit of its courage : first you expose yourself to the enemies' blows, then force your moral grandeur to the point of sparing him the trouble of using more force. But the basic fact is that the civil rights movement, by remaining within the law, only posed legal problems. It is logical to make an appeal to the law legally. What is not logical is to appeal legally against a patent illegality as is this contradiction would disappear if pointed out. For it is clear that the superficial and outrageously, visible illegality — from which the blacks still suffer in many American states — has its roots in a socio-economic contradiction which existing laws simply cannot touch, and which no future juridical law will be able to get rid of in face of more basic cultural laws of the society : and it is against these that the negroes are at last daring to raise their voices against and asking the right to live. In reality, the American negro wants the total subversion of that Society — or nothing.

The problem of this necessity for subversion arises of its own accord the moment the blacks start using subversive means : the changeover to such methods happens on the level of their daily life, appearing at one and the same time as the most accidental and the most objectively justified development. This issue is no longer the status of the American negro, but the status of America, even if this happens to find its first expression among the negroes. This was not a *racial* conflict : the rioters left certain whites that were in their path alone, attacking only the white policemen : similarly, black solidarity did not extend to black shopkeepers, not even to black cardrivers. Even Luther King, in Paris last October, had to admit that the limits of his competence had been overshot : « They were not race riots », he said, « but class ones ».



The Los Angeles rebellion was a rebellion against commodities and of worker consumers *hierarchically* subordinated to commodity values. The negroes of Los Angeles — like the young delinquents of all advanced countries, but more radically because at the level of a class globally deprived of a future, a sector of the proletariat unable to believe in significant chance of integration and promotion — take modern capitalist propaganda *literally*, with its display of affluence. They want to possess *immediately* all the objects shown and made abstractly accessible: they want to *make use* of them. That is why they reject the values of exchange, the *commodity-reality* which is its mould, its purpose and its final goal, which has *preselected* everything. Through theft and gift they retrieve a use which at once gives the lie to the oppressive rationality of commodities, disclosing their relations and invention to be arbitrary and unnecessary. The plunder of the Watts sector was the most simple possible realization of the hybrid principle: « To each according to his (false) needs » — needs determined and produced by the economic system, which the act of pillaging rejects.

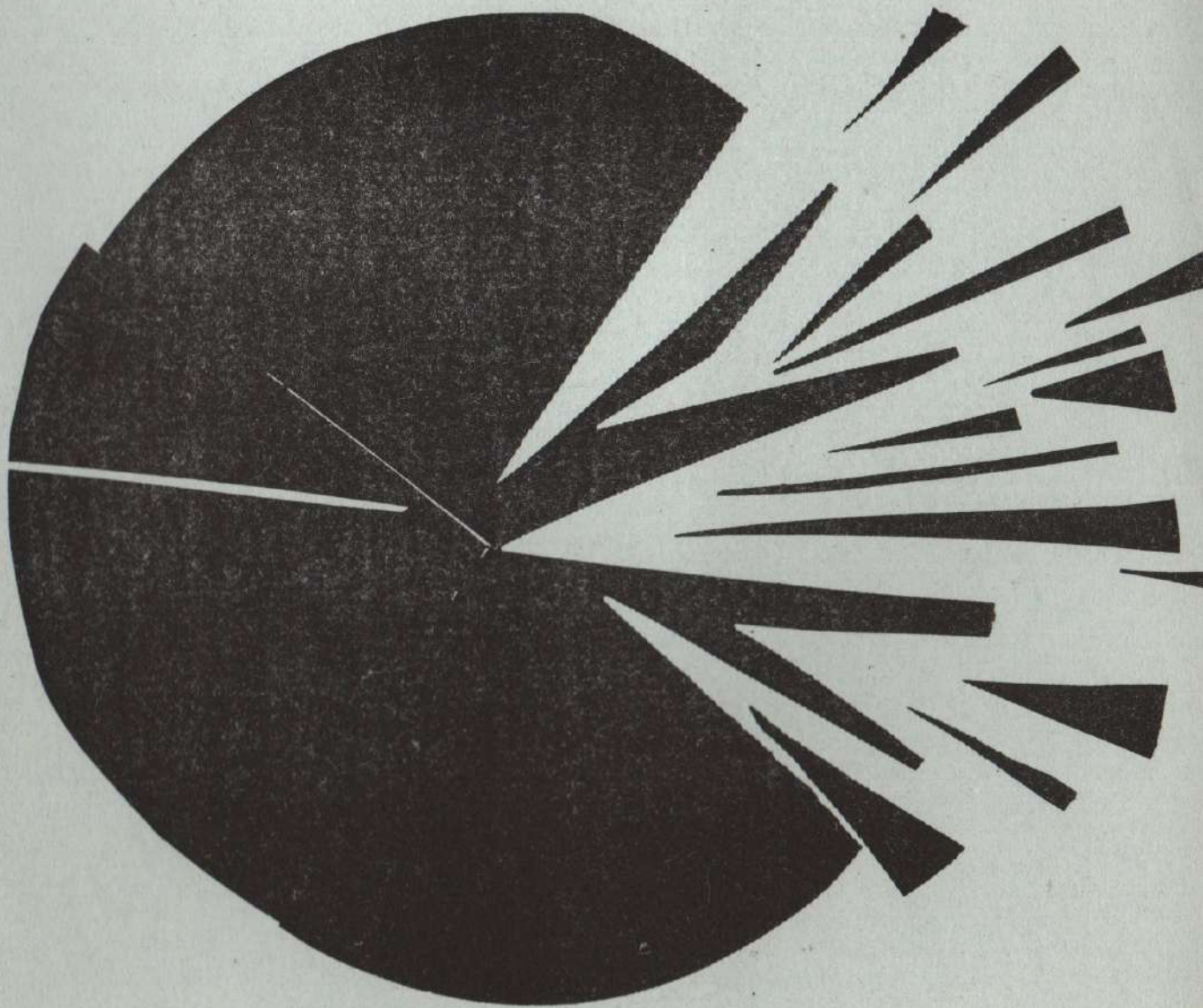
But the fact that the vaunting of abundance is taken at its face value and discovered *in the immediate* instead of being eternally pursued in the course of alienated labour and in the face of increasing but unmet social needs — this fact means that real needs are expressed in carnival, playful affirmation and the *potlatch* of destruction. The man who destroys commodities shows his human superiority over commodities. He frees himself from the arbitrary forms which cloak his real needs. The flames of Watts consumed the system of consumption! The theft of large fridges by people with no electricity, or with their electricity cut off, gives the best possible metaphor for the lie of affluence transformed into a truth *in play*. Once it is no longer bought, the commodity lies open to criticism and modification, and this under whichever of its forms it may appear. Only so long as it is paid for with money, as a status symbol of survival, can it be worshipped fetishistically. Pillage is the *natural* response to the affluent society: the affluence, however, is by no means natural or human — it is simply abundance of goods. Pillage, moreover, which instantly destroys commodities as such, discloses the *ultima ratio* of commodities, namely, the army, the police and the other specialised detachments which have the monopoly of armed force within the State. What is a policeman? He is the active servant of commodities, the man in complete submission to commodities, whose job is to ensure that a given product of human labour remains a commodity with the magical property of having to be paid for instead of becoming a mere fridge or rifle — a mute, passive insensible thing, itself in submission to the first comer to make use of it. Over and above the indignity of depending on a policeman, the blacks reject the indignity of depending on commodities. The Watts youth, having no future in market terms, grasped another *quality* of the present, and the truth of that present was so irresistible that it drew on the whole population, women, children, and even sociologists who happened to find themselves on the scene. A young negro sociologist of the district, Bobbi Hollon, had this to say to the *Herald Tribune* in October: « Before, people were ashamed to say they came from Watts. They'd mumble it. Now, they say it with pride. Boys who always went around with their shirts open to the waist, and who'd have cut you into strips in half a second, used to apply here every morning. They organised the distribution of food. Of course it's no good pretending the food wasn't plundered... All that Christian blah has been used too long against the negroes. These people could plunder for ten years and they wouldn't get back half the money that has been stolen from them all these years... Myself, I'm just a little black girl. » Bobbi Hollon, who has sworn never to wash from her sandals the blood that splashed them during the rioting, adds: « All the world looks to Watts now. »

How do men make history, starting from the conditions preestablished to persuade them not to take a hand in it? The Los Angeles negroes are better paid than any others in the US, but it is also here that they are

furthest behind that high point of affluence which is California. Hollywood, the pole of the worldwide spectacle, is in their immediate vicinity. They are promised that, with patience, they will join in America's prosperity, but they realise that this prosperity is not a static sphere but rather a ladder without end. The higher they climb, the further they get from the top, because they don't have a fair start, because they are less qualified and thus more numerous among the unemployed, and finally because the hierarchy which crushes them is not one based simply on buying power as a pure economic fact — an essential inferiority is imposed on them in every area of daily life by the customs and prejudices of a society in which all human power is based on buying power. So long as the human riches of the American negro are despised and treated as criminal, monetary riches will never make him acceptable to the alienated society of America: individual wealth may make a rich negro but the negroes as a whole *must represent poverty* in a society of hierarchised wealth. Every witness noted this cry which proclaims the fundamental meaning of the rising: « This is the Black Revolution, and we want the world to know it! » *Freedom now!* is the password of all historical revolutions, but here for the first time it is not poverty but material abundance which must be controlled according to new laws. The control of abundance is not just changing the way it is shared out, but *redefining its every orientation*, superficial and profound alike. This is the first skirmish of an enormous struggle, infinite in its implications.

The blacks are not isolated in their struggle because a *new proletarian consciousness* — the consciousness of not being the master of one's activity, of one's life, in the slightest degree — is taking form in America among strata whose refusal of modern capitalism resembles that of the negroes. Indeed, the first phase of the negro struggle has been the signal to a movement of opposition which is spreading. In December 1964 the students of Berkeley, frustrated in their participation in the civil rights movement, ended up by calling a strike to oppose the system of California's « multiversity », and by extension the social system of the U.S. in which they are allotted such a passive role. Immediately, drinking and drug orgies were uncovered among the students — the same supposed activities for which the negroes have long been castigated. This generation of students has since invented a new form of struggle against the dominant spectacle, the teach-in, a form taken up by the Edinburgh students on October 20th apropos of the Rhodesian crisis. This clearly imperfect and primitive type of opposition represents the stage of discussion which refuses to be limited in time (academically), and in this its logical outcome is a progression to practical activity. Also in October, thousands of demonstrators appeared in the streets of Berkeley and New York, their cries echoing those of the Watts rioters: « Get out of our district and out of Vietnam! » The whites, becoming more radical, have stepped outside the law: « courses » are given on how to defraud the recruiting boards, draft cards are burnt and the act televised. In the affluent society, disgust for affluence and *for its price* is finding expression. The spectacle is being spat on by an advanced sector whose autonomous activity denies its values. The classical proletariat, to the extent to which it had been provisionally integrated into the capitalist system, had itself failed to *integrate* the negroes (several Los Angeles unions refused negroes until 1959); now, the negroes are the rallying point for all those who refuse the logic of integration into that system — integration into capitalism being of course the *nee plus ultra* of all integration promised. And comfort will never be comfortable enough for those who seek what is not on the market — or rather, that which the market eliminates. The level reached by the technology of the most privileged becomes an insult — and one more easily expressed than that most basic insult, which is reification. The Los Angeles rebellion is the first in history able to justify itself by the argument that there was no air conditioning during a heatwave.

The American negro has his own particular spectacle, his press, magazines, coloured film stars, and if the blacks realise this, if they spew out



this spectacle for its phoneyess, as an expression of their unworthiness, it is because they see it to be a *minority* spectacle — nothing but the appendage of a general spectacle. They recognise that this parade of their consumption-to-be-desired is a colony of the white one, and thus they see through the lie of this total economico-cultural spectacle more quickly. By wanting to participate really and immediately in affluence — and this is an official value of every American — they demand the equalitarian *realization* of the American spectacle of everyday life : they demand that the half-heavenly, half-terrestrial values of this spectacle be put to the test. But it is of the essence of the spectacle that it cannot be made real either immediately or equally ; and this, *not even for the whites*. (In fact, the function of the negro in terms of the spectacle is to serve as the perfect prod : in the race for riches, such underprivilege is an incitement to ambition). In taking the capitalist spectacle at its face value the negroes are already rejecting the spectacle itself. The spectacle is a drug for slaves. It is not supposed to be taken literally, but followed at just a few paces' distance ; if it were not for this albeit tiny distance, it would become total mystification. The fact is that in the US today the whites are enslaved to commodities while the negroes negate them. The blacks ask for *more than the whites* — that is the core of an insoluble problem, or rather one only soluble through the dissolution of the white social system. This is why those whites who want to escape their own servitude must needs rally to the negro cause, not in a solidarity based on colour, obviously, but in a global rejection of commodities and, in the last analysis, of the State. The economic and social backwardness of the negroes allows them to see what the white consumer is, and their justified contempt for the white is nothing but contempt for any passive consumer. Whites who cast off their role have no chance unless they link their struggle more and more to the negro's struggle, uncovering his real and coherent reasons and supporting them till the end. If such an accord were to be ruptured at a radical point in the battle, the result would be the formation of a black nationalism and a confrontation between the two splinters exactly after the fashion of the prevailing system. A phase of mutual extermination is the other possible outcome of the present situation, once resignation is overcome.

The attempts to build a black nationalism, separatist and pro-African as they are, are dreams giving no answer to the reality of oppression. The American negro has no fatherland. He is in *his own country* and he is *alienated* : so is the rest of the population, but the blacks differ insofar as they are aware of it. In this sense, they are not the most backward sector of their society, but the most advanced. They are the negation at work, « the bad aspect producing the movement which makes history by setting the struggle in motion ». (Marx : *The Poverty of Philosophy*). Africa has nothing to do with it.

The American negroes are the product of modern industry, just as are electronics, advertising or the cyclotron. And they carry within them its contradictions. These are the men whom the spectacle-paradise must integrate and repulse simultaneously, so that the antagonism between the spectacle and the real activity of men surrenders completely to their enunciations. The spectacle is *universal* in the same way as the commodities. But as the world of commodities is based in class conflict, commodities are themselves hierarchic. The necessity of commodities — and hence of the spectacle whose job it is to *inform* about commodities — to be at once universal and hierarchic leads to a universal hierarchisation. But as this hierarchisation must remain *unavowed*, it is expressed in the form of unacknowledgable hierarchic value judgements, in a world of *reasonless rationalization*. It is this process which creates *racialisms* everywhere : the English Labour government has just restrained coloured immigration, while the industrially advanced countries of Europe are once again becoming racist as they import their sub-proletariat from the Mediterranean area, so exerting a colonial exploitation within their borders. And if Russia conti-

nues to be antisemitic, it is because she is still a society of hierarchy and commodities, in which labor must be bought and sold as a commodity. Together, commodities and hierarchies are constantly renewing their alliance, which extends its influence by modifying its form: it is seen just as easily in the relations between trade-unionist and worker as between two car-owners with artificially distinguished models. This the original sin of commodity rationality, the sickness of bourgeois reason, whose legacy is bureaucracy. But the repulsive absurdity of certain hierarchies and the fact that the whole world strength of commodities is directed blindly and automatically towards their protection, leads us to see — the moment we engage on a negating praxis — that every hierarchy is absurd.

The rational world produced by the industrial revolution has rationally liberated individuals from their local and national limitations, and related them on a world scale; but denies reason by separating them once more, according to a hidden logic which finds its expression in mad ideas and grotesque value-systems. Man, estranged from his world, is everywhere surrounded by strangers. The barbarian is no longer at the ends of the earth, he is on the spot, made into a *barbarian* by this very same forced participation in hierarchised consumption. The humanism cloaking all this is opposed to man, and the negation of his activity and his desires; it is the humanism of commodities, expressing the benevolence of the parasite, merchandise, towards the men off whom it feeds. For those who reduce men to objects, objects seem to acquire human qualities, and manifestations of real human activity appear as unconscious *animal behaviour*. Thus the chief humanist of Los Angeles, William Parker, can say: « They started behaving like a bunch of monkeys in a zoo. »

When the state of emergency was declared by the California authorities, the insurance companies recalled that they do not cover risks at that level: they guarantee nothing beyond survival. Overall, the American negroes can rest assured that, if they keep quiet, at least, their *survival* is guaranteed; and capitalism has become sufficiently centralised and entrenched in the State to distribute « welfare » to the poorest. But simply because they are *behind* in the process of intensification of socially organised survival, the blacks present problems of *life* and what they demand is not to survive but to live. The blacks have nothing to insure of their own; they have to destroy all the forms of security and private insurance known up to now. They appear as what they really are: the irreconcilable enemies — not of the vast majority of Americans — but of the alienated way of life of all modern society; the most advanced country industrially only shows us the road that will be everywhere followed unless the system is overthrown.

Certain black nationalist extremists, in showing why they could never accept less than a separate State, have advanced the argument that American society, even if it someday concedes total civic and economic equality, will never get around to accepting mixed marriages. *It is therefore this American society which must disappear*, not only in America but everywhere in the world. The end of all racial prejudice (like the end of so many others prejudices such as sexual ones related to inhibitions) can only lie beyond « marriage » itself: that is, beyond *the bourgeois family* (which is questioned by the American negroes). This is the rule as much in Russia as in the United States, as a model of hierarchic relations and of the stability of an *inherited power* (be it money or socio-bureaucratic status). It is now often said that American youth, after thirty years of silence, is rising again as a force of opposition, and that the black revolt is their Spanish Civil War. This time, its « Lincoln Batallions » must understand the full significance of the struggle in which they engage, supporting it up to the end in its universal implications. The « excesses » of Los Angeles are no more a political error in the Black Revolt than the armed resistance of the P.O.U.M. in Barcelona, May 1937, was a betrayal of the anti-Franquist war. A rebellion against the spectacle is situated on the level of the *totality*, because — even

were it only to appear in a single district, Watts — it is a protest by men against the inhuman life; because it begins at the level of the *real single individual*, and because community, from which the individual in revolt is separated, is the *true social nature* of man, human nature: the positive transcendence of the spectacle.

December 1965.

SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL.

Supplement to number 10 of the review « *Internationale Situationniste* ».

Correspondence : B. P. 307-03 PARIS.

« *Internationale Situationniste* » is a review expressing the thought of a group of theorists who, over the last few years, have undertaken a radical critique of modern society: of what it really is and of all its aspects.

According to the situationists, a universally dominant system tending towards totalitarian self-regulation is being resisted, but only apparently, by false forms of opposition which remain trapped on the territory laid down by the system — a system which these illusions can thus only serve to reinforce. Bureaucratic pseudo-socialism is but the most grandiose of these guises of the old world of hierarchy and alienated labour. The developing concentration of capitalism and the diversification of its machine on a world scale have given rise both to the forced consumption of commodities produced in abundance, and to the control of the economy (and all of life) by bureaucrats who own the State; as, similarly, to direct and indirect colonialism. But this system is far from having found the definitive answer to the incessant revolutionary crises of the historical epoch which began two centuries ago, for a new critical phase has opened: in Berkeley and in Warsaw, in the Asturias and in the Kivu, the system is refuted and combated.

The situationists consider that the indivisible perspective of this opposition is the effective abolition of all class societies, of the commodity production system, of wage-labour; the transcendence of art and of all cultural acquisitions, by their re-entry into play through free creation in everyday life — and, thus, their true fulfilment; the direct fusion of revolutionary theory and practice in an experimental activity excluding the possibility of all petrification into « ideologies » expressing the authority of experts and always in the service of authoritarian expertise.

The factors put in question by this historical problem are the rapid extension and modernisation of the fundamental contradictions within the existing system; between the system and human desires. The social force which has an interest in — and is alone capable of — resolving these, are all those workers who are powerless over the employment of their own lives, helpless to control the fantastic accumulation of material possibilities which they produce. Such a possible resolution has already been sketched out in the model of the democratic worker's council, which takes all decisions itself. The movement required from this new proletariat for it to form itself into a class, unmediated by any leadership, is the sum of the intelligence of a world without intelligence. The situationists declare that outside the whole of this movement they have no interest. They lay down no particular principles on which to base a movement which is real, which in fact is being born before our eyes. Faced with the struggles which are beginning in various countries and over various issues, the situationists see their task as that of putting forward the whole of the problem, its coherence, its theoretical and therefore practical unity. In short, within the various phases of the overall struggle, they constantly represent the interest of the whole movement.

Scalding summer flings dollars -

Land flat, big discs on thirsty asphalt.

My apparition prays in Manor Road

(How long to pretend in this ghost
sheet of bleached skin?)

The privet, laurel, maggot-nibbled roseblossoms

Curdle in their separate masses

· Crowding seething textures

Hungry tribes around the first and solitary coins

Miserly like a flower trap snapped on a fly:

In the female steam

Rising perfume from the afternoon avenues

(Woman's Hour music from a distant bay) -

In the cauldron where perverted vegetation boils in

a tight silence

Bubbling maggots and myriad leaves (clipped
secretive)

My ghost lifts a head like a festering rose

To open for the vertical rush

When the brimful bucket of suspended storm is poured

Cataract down the sticky tunnels of the flowers

And all the sick compartments lie agape like a glad wife.

Jeff Nuttall

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED....

arthur moyse

We of the western world have an innate love of the ineffectual protest. It is one of the less pleasant traits we share with our middle class, and it permeates our pulp literature, our culture, and much of our social activity.

We, the children of the working class ghettos, dream out the short years of our childhood learning from our middle class teachers to admire the Cavaliers and despise the Roundheads, learning nothing of the Levellers and having our sympathies conditioned to an acceptance of the nineteenth century industrialists and a complaisant rejection of the Luddites. We were taught to accept Robin Hood as a creature of kinky myth yet to hold Richard as an historic personage whose authority one accepted without question or query. Of Cade, Jack Straw, Wat Tyler, and John Ball there is not one honest mention - for to examine their actions is to question the very basis of our own society, and those who teach within those primary school walls are but the creatures of their own class accepting and propagating the values of their own middle class backgrounds. So for them it must always be the unquestioning acceptance of authority based on inherited property, and protest must be either the Greenwood or border outlaw protesting at one single act of injustice, yet ever ready to bend the knee to his true lord. And in those houses of our childhood, in the warren of the Council flats our literature was written for us by our middle class administrators; it held that the supreme happiness for any working class boy was to merge into the fantasy world of the middle class dream public school where summer died to the sound of bat against ball, winter was a world of warm baths and toasted muffins and the climax of each term came when the boys mutinied against the brutality of a single housemaster whose expulsion finally gave them victory and a return to normalcy, with a ritual flogging as a penance and a mass cheering of the father-figure headmaster. But of the British soldiers that were shot in India for the same act of mutiny there will appear not a word in the comic paper or the fiction of school history books.

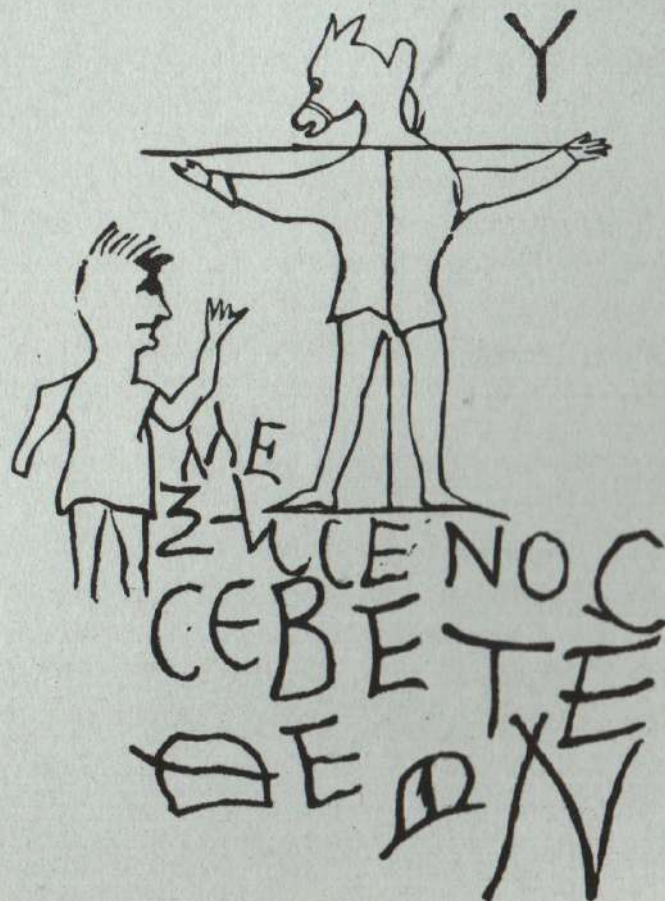
Always the act of revolt must be contained and never carried to its logical conclusion - and authority, be it abstract

or concrete, must never be questioned, for our middle class by the very nature of their situation must seek the approval of those whom they obey, for if they succeed, in spite of themselves in overthrowing their own accepted authority, then they will die with it. So in politics it is always the plea to be heard and the request to be allowed to advise, but never to overthrow those who must be expected to act on the organised plea. They will speak for the rights of the coloured man but never of the worker, they speak in the defence of the homeless but never question the right of the landlord to profit from the misery of the poor; they accept that all men have the right to avail themselves of proper medical care yet never challenge the entrenched economic hold of the middle class medicine man or undermine his social position by opening up his closed shop to the intelligent children of the proletariat to practice the trade as skilled technicians and not gifted members of a well rewarded secular priesthood. For the act of revolt must always be contained within the social class that thrives within that society, and as liberal minded men and women they feel that when they have healed the scab in the body politic they have served their conscience and their class. There is nothing particularly evil in their attitude, for it is in the nature of man to develop a conscience when his own belly is full and to take a pride in the righting of some personally perceived wrong.

As with their politics and their social lives, so with their culture, for though they hold themselves to be the guardians of their social groupings the young bucks of that social stratum have always been active in seeking to break the closed shop of the art establishment - for despite the beliefs of the art schools one cannot acquire talent, and still less genius, by sitting for examinations. Yet though their ordinary acts of rebellion may draw the ire of the already established (by virtue of age or competence) they have little need to fear that their own cultural existence is endangered. Every act of cultural revolt has ended with the rebels becoming the new academicians, for their protest is, and always has been, that they are not accepted, so they scream in plaster and paint for attention, and having won that attention they will then join the ranks of the established schools and guard their own teeny sacred flame against the new wave flooding in from the suburbs.

But the mechanical means of mass communication are such that to make an impact on the public mind, it must be more freakish and banal than the last wave. The days when the Dadaists could hold the stage by the simple act and the long playing legend passed with the birth of the coloured supplement, and the Surrealist movement would now have a life span no longer than that of the Pop Art phase.

A new middle class has arisen, fluid in its allegiance, and still enjoying the novelty of loose money - they demand to be amused and not informed. But the very ease of communication and the demand for a constant supply of new material has opened the doors of avant garde culture to the proletariat of this seedy but affluent society. Repeat: affluent not prosperous. No longer is the poet and the painter the creature of established leisure, for the spawning art galleries are ready and willing to shake any grimy hand for a quick guinea. But with an art that seeps through the social strata it must follow that extremes in taste must be reached and the gentle piss-taking of the Dadaists and the randy symbolism of the Surrealists can have little impact on an age that has accepted two, or is it three world wars and between five and ten million government sponsored private murders. In an age that can take Bruce Lacey's plastic shit covered bubbling human intestines in its



stride the nadir of human insensitivity must surely have been reached for what is left but the actual act itself mounted within some quiet Bond Street gallery. And how long before the actors fucking upon the stage before a paying audience rate a pedantic review in the Sunday Times, or the broken and rotten body of a child, the burned and breaking face of a napalm victim, or a genuine starvation corpse from a concentration camp shall be tastefully mounted in the gallery and earn its half column of aesthetic applause. Yet let us have no illusions about these things, for we of the lumpenproletariat have long enjoyed them. We have bought our plastic shit in the funfun shops of the Tottenham Court Roads, paid to peer at the wax models of syphilitics in the seaside carnival shows, and watched the male and female prostitutes publicly copulating in the basements of military brothels. And now in the marriage of two cultures the middle class art world is beginning to accept these values of the real as opposed to the artificial.

But the real in the world of art can have no lasting or retainable value, for in the end only the human act itself is reality and every product of the hand is but an imperfect record of a half-realised intellectual conception. It was this that a few critics realised when they expounded the theory that in Action Painting the act of painting was of more importance than the resultant painting. Only in the physical act of painting could there be that sense of fulfillment, and what happened afterwards to the painting was a matter of complete indifference. But the time must come when the audience will demand to participate in this solitary action, and they found a slight measure of collective responsibility in cultural nihilism. Not for them the minority act of creation as a permanent thing, but the acceptance of death as a creative force, if not in life, then at least in art. And as they always turned to the past for their examples, they found it in the Dadaist myth of the chopper handed to the spectators with the invitation to destroy any work, with that particular exhibition, what they disliked. That the story is untrue does not, at this stage, matter much; but if we destroy, it should not be the things we hate but the things we love for it is only in that act that we can finally become free. But the theories were spun and no-one destroyed anything and they talked and talked.

Some weeks ago a small meeting was held in Better Books, in the Charing Cross Road, to discuss a forthcoming symposium on destruction in Art. Key figure of the group was Gustav Metzger, and as chief theoretician and practitioner of the cult he led the discussion. Yet as in all these acts it was talk and yet more talk and a deliberate avoidance of the logical outcome of what was being advocated. When one examines the claims made on behalf of this new art form one realises that once again banality and a desire not to cause offence to the authorities is the guiding spirit for almost all that has been achieved. Millares has torn canvases. Pro-Diaz has painted with exploding petrol, Tinguely has made auto-destructive sculpture, Latham a burning Skoob tower, Vostell smashed a Mercedes-Benz with an express train, and the Japanese Gutai group publicly tore up paper. Which means that they have done nothing but play a simple and ineffective little game. They have taken the fairground show of smashing chipped plates and tried, unsuccessfully, to elevate it into an art form. The talk went on in that bookshop, and when one member suggested that if one had a discussion on destruction then one should at least invite a member of the public who has been fined or imprisoned by the courts for smashing government property it was brushed aside as unworthy of the rarified air of the discussion.

And yet here was the very reason that these people fail and are doomed to fail, for they will not accept their own logic. If one destroys then one must hurt, and it is useless to break or burn useless objects for the amusement of a paying audience, and this is their intention; for in the suggested programme for the September symposium it was clear that the artists must accept full legal responsibility for their "events", and that the paying public will be admitted to witness controlled destructions.

Only once was a case of genuine destruction mentioned; and this was discussed in whispers between two members of the group: - an American was to burn himself to death on the steps of the American Embassy, but Independence Day passed without this stupid act taking place. Such a stupid and negative act can be repeated and repeated without causing the slightest change in public tastes or attitudes. The money changers and generals have, between them, done a far finer job than any small group (whose activities rise or fall to the level of tearing paper in public) could do. For there is only one act of aesthetic destruction and that

is to kill, coldly and deliberately, a small innocent child. This is the logical end for those that cry for destruction, and they stand condemned for their futility and inhumanity. Within all this talk of destruction as a social and artistic, but never political, force, mention was made of the American destructions of Oldenberg and his happening. This in truth, is what many of those present and absent mean when they talk of destruction. For the happening is here to stay and it can operate on different levels: with or without violence, be randy or prudish, gay or just plain boring. The happening is that event which takes place within another event when the spectators are unprepared for it. It demands, on the part of the audience, a violent rejection and acceptance of both areas of interest; and as it cannot exist without an audience, the audience - by virtue of that fact - become an active, yet passive, part of the new whole. Brought down to its most moronic level, it is the schoolboy joke where one boy asks another to smell a flower and spurts water into his face. At its most traumatic it is the assassination of President Kennedy. The leader rides through the Texan town. The sun is warm and bright. The guards are alert and the people stand and cheer. Here is the accepted ritual willingly played out by the chief actors - when one man, uninvited shoots and kills the chief actor. From this point on the whole course of the action must change and focal points must be drastically realigned; the president is no longer the chief figure in the play - for the shooting has forced the audience to participate in the action of a play they had come to as mere passive spectators. Whatever the nature of the happening, it can only be part of the original whole and a synthese of a general but unrealised aim.

Some time ago in the city of Edinburgh an Arts Festival was held and the only successful happening, in this country, took place: men and women, for no reason at all, wandered in and out of the audience and a nude woman was wheeled, in a barrow, along the gallery. The action chosen was in line with the avant garde nature of the assembly and the reaction from the local establishment followed its expected pattern in that the clowns screamed for the police. Each group reacted predictably, when without warning they were faced with a situation in key with the climate of the moment - all that happened was that the obvious was proved and everybody, from the dirty-minded bourgeoisie to the dedicated soul-searchers, had a good time.

On July the third of this year Dick Wilcocks decided to organise a happening at the village of Alconbury near the large USAF base. It was to be a thing of non-violence and love and it was to be organised with the full knowledge of the public - and therein lay its failure, for you cannot publicly announce that you are going to organise a happening, for a happening can only take place if it is not foreseen. So they came and they performed and they failed and in their failure lay their success for instead of a well-organised event a happening took over. The Ghost Trap broke and died on the roof of the van carrying it, men and women wandered about with flowers without knowing what to do with them, a young girl had to be told that she was shouting the wrong slogans and the Top Brass went home with the sulks. And this was a happening, and through sheer bad organisation they held the attention of those to whom their message was directed. Yet like all demonstration of protest it was ineffectual in that the happening is an end in itself, for it is merely another way of pleading to be heard, and having caught the attention of the crowd it is then exhausted.

The death of President Kennedy - the nude woman in the Edinburgh hall - the broken Ghost Trap on the road to Alconbury were but negative protests by militant nihilists and liberal humanitarians. As a **political or cultural** weapon it can only be used by those seeking to be accepted. It can kill or amuse but it can never create, for it can only exist within the established political or cultural society that brought it into being. And when the Honorary Committee of the destruction in Art Symposium begin to charge for admission to witness their death-defying paper-tearing act then it is time for us to go home - the new Academicians are taking over.

The text reprinted below (courtesy of HEATWAVE) is that of a leaflet issued by the Chicago Anarchist in April, this year.

S H A P E O F T H I N G S

Barry Bondhus, a 20 year old Big Lake youth was being held in Hennepin County Jail under \$10,000 bond on the charge that he dumped two buckets of human excrement into the files of the Sherburne County draft board at Elk River.

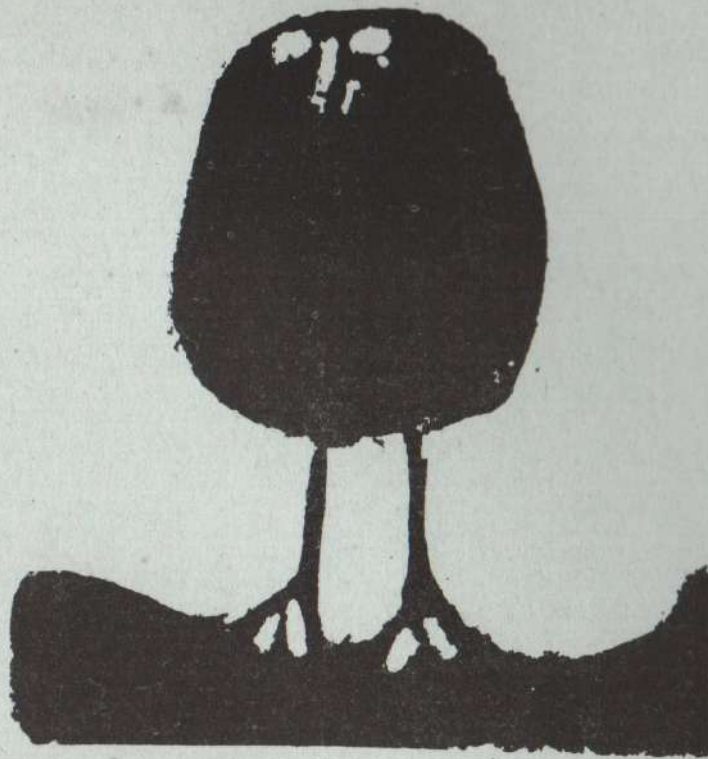
The arrest climaxed a series of difficulties he and his father have had with the draft board, The elder Bondhus said he has told the board repeatedly that he is opposed to any of his sons serving in the Armed Forces. "If you draft Barry I have nothing to look forward to for the next 24 years but flag-draped caskets," he said.

Barry is the second oldest of the 10 Bondhus boys. After a board hearing, February 15, the youth was classified 1-A and ordered to take a pre-induction physical examination in Minneapolis. The FBI said the youth had refused to co-operate.

Wednesday, the complaint charged, the young Bondhus walked into the board's office and dumped the substance into six draft board file cases. His draft board status is still pending.

....from the Minneapolis Star.
February 25, 1966.

The anarchists wish to express their collective support for Barry Bondhus' noble and appropriate response to the most obscene attempts by the State's flunkies to enslave and possibly murder him. Barry has renewed our faith in mankind and for that we must thank him, but more, we must develop in ourselves, and of course, others, the same altogether exquisite outrage which moved him to so poetically reveal his profound humanity. Along with the wheelbarrows of desire buckets of shit will stop the War in Vietnam.



The CRISIS MONGERS

albert meltzer

We have had recurrent crises for so long that half the British people believe they are like fairies and do not exist. But if one believes in fairies, there they are at the bottom of the garden. (Swish, Tinkerbell! Ho, Peaseblossom!) There are crises at the bottom of our garden right enough. (Swish Bankers! Ho, Little Man Wilson!) They

are part and parcel of the stuff and texture of what today's politics is all about. This is the programme that the punters voted for, not a "betrayal", not an "unprecedented" crisis, not an act of God or Queen's Enemies, but Socialism Victorious, Democracy in action, the new meritocracy coming into power.

• The rewarding all round of the upper bracket professional men (judges, generals, doctors, higher civil servants, M.P.'s and Ministers - anyone upstairs we left out? Good, now we can have a wage freeze) was followed by a mounting attack upon the working-class. For the first time the Government feels strong enough to fight organised labour and make strikes illegal. Now comes an "economic crisis" in which we are to be subjected to cuts, rising prices, lowered wages, and rationing of sorts, allied with unemployment. This is not what you thought a Labour Government would do? Brother, this *is* the revolution!!

A new era was heralded in 1939. The nation was exhorted to work harder, forget about self, and sacrifice for victory. There may be dim-eyed mugs about today, in their early forties, who started work in the factories as bright-eyed boys, who have been trying to work harder ever since. The war over, we still were supposed to tighten our belts and meet every recurrent crisis with a resurgence of the war-time spirit. (If somebody mentions the words "economic Dunkirk" again, Baby Economist will just throw up). These crises do exist, but they are all the warp and woof of a revolution, just as dispossessing the crofters was part of the Industrial Revolution. A new class is coming to power. When they told us the "working class would disappear", surely you did not imagine we would all become advertising executives, or something in the film world? The "disappearance" of the working class means that it is being dispossessed as a useful class wielding potential economic power, and the economic crises are part of this dispossession just as much as liquidating the kulaks was part of another.

The so-called "meritocracy", or "technocracy", is a powerful ruling class; it is in a process of revolution. Their top men have already ousted the profit-making capitalist. It is the chartered accountant, not the captain of industry,

who plots the course of economic power. The United States, despite an affirmed belief in Private Enterprise as God, has pushed private enterprise to the fringes of industry. In the big industries, a process of state sovietisation makes the chairman of a company the equivalent of an old-time commissar. He moves from company to company without actual personal interest in its profit-making capacity; his position is a salaried one. The archetype is the late Louis B. Mayer who controlled the vast empire of M.G.M. but never, on principle, bought shares in his own company because he did not like the idea of gambling his own money on the kind of people he brought into the industry. He was the highest paid man in the States (when asked why he should earn more than the President, he said, "Look at my responsibilities"). He passionately detested communism, yet was, in effect a State commissar of the film business. (They used the word "mogul" out of politeness.)

Today this type of boss is superseding the old type of capitalist. So far as Britain is concerned, he is represented in the Labour Party. It is Wilson's Britain. He is concerned with nobody else. When he addresses the nation on television, he speaks to the chairmen of companies, exporters, sales-managers, technocrats. When he speaks of increased productivity (and who does not, these days?) he no longer appeals to the workers to work harder but threatens them with unemployment. He does not want them to gum up the works with strikes - that is against the national interest - but being sacked is another matter. That must be in the national interest, because the national interest (i.e. the interests of the "meritocracy") is displacing them from being a usefully productive class to being on the mere periphery.

The technological Utopia is a kind of Rhodesia, where one class, distinguished perhaps by its colour is served by a patient and socially separate class. Immigration was part of this pattern as seen by the technocrats; it had nothing to do with their tolerant liberalism and everything to do with the fact that they wanted coloured labour for the jobs that the workers no longer wanted to do; and when they found there were other problems attached, they needed another crisis to push the native worker down a peg or two.

The ignorant may assume that all there is to communism of the Russian variety is the midnight knock on the door, and the train to Siberia; or that all there is to fascism is the gas chamber. But these are only the trappings of totalitarian societies. It is true that a growing bureaucracy, in order to perpetuate its rule, evolves and may need to perpetuate some sort of terror. There is more to the technological revolution than the recurrent economic crises. The politicians pose for cameras with tense faces, and walk in and out of buildings clutching briefcases. Only in an atmosphere of crisis can they hit out at the workers as they have done. Only by evoking the "wartime spirit", by speaking of an "economic Dunkirk" (Yarroooo!!!!) can they bring back the Combination Acts and fasten the shackles of the State more firmly on the industrial worker.

For one thing, alas, is certain. All classes can be revolutionary in their rise to power. But only the productive classes - such as workers and peasants - can be libertarian. The technocracy will, very likely, consist of tolerant, liberal, benign characters who imbibe the philosophy of the Observer as they read the extravagantly paid jobs advertised in its columns - suitably separated from the editorials on the economic crisis. It may as well be as ruthless and unscrupulous as capitalism in its heyday, or State Communism. But it will never be able to leave us alone. The conception of the barricades is old-fashioned (vide Prof. Sir Hugo Entwistle: Outdated Social Conceptions in the Working-Class). You bet it is. And the sooner they come back into fashion the better, before we get turned into computer-fodder as social misfits who knew nothing but how to work for a living and aimed at living.

If I remember
 rightly
 Stirner's Poem I think that
 every man should be free and
 to his Alter Ego that means
 (if he had one) mainly from the
 next
 who as it happens is you this
 week
 M.J.Walsh. so kindly
 don't play the monkey
 this week
 as well as freedom
 I also
 believe
 in the great
 Bishop of Aux
 who said
 Trust in God and a strong right Arm
 and quite
 frankly what is good enough for the
 French Assembly
 is good enough for
 me.



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