International Student Protest

THE SHAKEN IVY

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For some time now, but especially during the last decade, massive student protest has been trying to tell us something. It doesn't matter whether we listen to the harangue in 1966 at the Capuchin Monastery of Barcelona, or the shouts along Bismarkstrasse in 1967 or read the Morningside Heights flyers in 1968. All these demonstrations at one point proclaim a revolt against technological society with its inequitable distribution of affluence, the problem of war, racial prejudice, poverty and the alienation of man. Mixed with the slogans of rebellion and anarchy, we also hear of universities run like medieval fiefdoms whose technology, resources and social structure are completely inadequate for the demands of modern society. Throughout the world it is the young who are shouting and the aged who have trouble hearing. At Rome, Paris and Berlin — sites of just some of the most dramatic street confrontations between students and authorities — it is not unusual for students to attend lectures so crowded that they cannot sit down, to endure years of boredom and finally to graduate into a world that has no use for their talents thus, only confirming their worse fears. It is no wonder that the prime demand being made in every university around the world is the student's right to say what and how he will be taught. The implications of such demands are of course that something is seriously out of order in our traditional university structure. What is wrong and why the university has ceased to
perform smoothly is the subject of this paper. It draws upon specific instances of student protest in the United States and Europe to emphasize the student point of view of school and society.

This focus on emerging intellectuals, their behavior and ideology is not new; C. Wright Mills regarded students as a source of creative change in modern society and more so after his disenchantment with the spent American working class movement. Recently, S. M. Lipset has studied the political dimensions of student ideology, especially in relation to governmental power. But neither has gone so far as to suggest that student protest be used as an index of social malaise in Western society in precisely the same fashion that Durkheim employed the concept of suicide. To do so (this is the functionalistic dilemma) would say nothing of the morality of protest; nor would its absence indicate a benign state of society. What is does proclaim is a gap between educational institutions and the needs of contemporary life.

The University in the Late Industrial Stage

The unfortunate paradox in the modern university consists on the one hand of an increasing control over all aspects of its affairs by the politico-military combination and at the same instant a lessening of the opportunities, relevance and training offered to students. These are two separate structures which must be carefully distinguished before the meaning of protest can be clarified. The former condition pertains to the statutory, police-enforced administrative structure which has in some cases not changed in a thousand years. The latter function pertains to the cultural economic and psychological needs of students in modern society. These change at an accelerating pace and those most acutely aware of these changes are the young students in school today.

To demand even the most minor changes in courses or grading or admissions, they may easily be involved in direct confrontations with civil and military authorities. Consequently for them, there is no distinction between the academic and governmental machinery ruling arbitrarily over an inferior constituency of students and lesser academic cadres. In Rome for example, the Rector,
is elected by a University Council of 260 full professors who in turn rule over 7,000 untenured teachers and 60,000 students. The full professors, despite their power, need seldom appear in class and indeed may pursue an entirely different career simultaneously — as did several post war Italian premiers who executed that high office without relinquishing their teaching posts.

In Paris, once a professor has been nominated to a "chair" there is no need for him ever to update his lectures. All university policy including the curriculum is fixed by the Ministry of Education and is difficult to change. In the University of Barcelona, all officials are Falangist approved and the Rector there, Professor Garcia Valdescasas, was one of the founders of the party. The same is true of Warsaw University. Even Oxford and Berlin, where either the faculty or the students have traditionally had more say in internal affairs, are subject to governmental dictates simply because they require the increasing appropriations of state funds. And in the United States, the dominant role of the political power in University affairs at San Francisco State and at other more prestigious institutions has been made abundantly clear.

Despite this cozy, symbiotic relationship between government and academic authorities, students feel they are not being trained for the society they must learn to face as responsible future citizens. Their cry of "relevance" that is often heard not only pertains to a liberalization of curricular offerings to include such areas as Black Studies but more often simply calls attention to an outmoded syllabus actually inhibiting their chances of professional success. At Berlin there is no such thing as team research, tutorials or the use of an interdisciplinary approach in teaching. In Paris, the lack of space is a national disgrace and student demands have included emphasis on modern science and more frequent exams that do not call for mere memorization. At Oxford the cry has been for more research and greater relevance of the material being taught. Barcelona and Rome have both suffered from the underemployment of their graduates, few books in the library and the appallingly small education budget. The Shell Italiana Report became almost a cause célèbre because it showed that, of the thousands of applicants with Italian degrees, very few were qualified for the jobs the Shell Company had to offer.
A second area of student concern has focused on the tension that arises in the modern university because of its class bias on the one hand and the rising enrolments with their large working class representation on the other. Despite recent innovations in the character of colleges, especially in America which emphasized their “service” function to the community, most universities are based on the medieval concept of a single community of scholars with a unified curricula. The aim of such institutions is to turn out well-rounded scholars — not specialists and technicians for modern industry. Most universities remain self-satisfied and resistant to change which would compromise their elitist character and part of the chagrin of administrators in the face of student demands derives from this threat to further the democratization of their schools to a point which will alter its traditional character.

In Berlin for example only 5% of the students came from working class backgrounds in 1959. In France the estimate is 10%; in Italy, 10% of the population supplies 90% of industrial leaders, and even today 85% of graduates are from the middle and upper classes. No matter which school we examine the same skewed pattern of class favoritism is evident. We might expect that as a result of this privileged position there would be less chance of student protest since these people stand to gain most from “going along” and not causing disturbances. If they remain docile and quiet, their society will reward them with the same enviable position to which they are accustomed.

Despite resistance, enrolments in higher education have increased all over the world. These numbers are out of all proportion to the population growth, and reflect both the increasing demand for some form of post secondary education as well as the fact that students now stay in school longer. In France, for instance, the number of students at sixteen universities rose from 170,000 in 1958 to 514,000 just ten years later. This has brought greater representation to the campus from groups previously not in evidence there. This is especially true of women, working class youth and, in the United States, of Negroes. While this trend continues slowly of its own volition, impelled by the driving demand of industrial growth, it is
also pressed by the spread of the values of democratic expectations.

Both factors contribute to the conflict that has developed around the issues of admissions. The conservative nature of the institution collides with the demands of social egalitarianism. And both appear simultaneously in the college or university where the administration normally declines to share the responsibility for admissions with student groups. At Oxford, where only mild protest has been voiced, the Franks Commission asked for revised admission requirements and the determined entry of more women.8 At Rome University in June, 1968 students demanded an end to examinations as class instruments of selection.9 The same thing was heard in France for the first time when the activists sought the abolition of traditional assessment,10 and at San Francisco State during the Fall riots of 1968 the call was for admission of all Negroes who applied regardless of qualifications.

**Increasing Disesteem of Universities in Contemporary Society**

These pressures for and against democratization have not deterred professional educational publicists and some sociologists from emphasizing the positive contributions universities are making to society. Usually the numbers of graduates are cited, as well as some vague correlations between education and productivity or per capita gross national product. The argument aims at demonstrating the importance of universities in national development through the training of professional manpower. But what it does not dwell upon is the relative contribution to productivity of other institutions such as labor unions, business or military establishments. These comparisons reveal that the relative importance of universities has declined when measured by the income of professors; and precisely because they are less productive today than previously. This academic depreciation means that only the less able intellectually and spiritually tend to be drawn to the academic environment and it is these persons who are now called upon to deal with the crisis facing higher education.

One index of this loss in academic prestige is the salaries paid to teachers in colleges and universities. According to the International Association of University Professors and Lecturers, the position of teachers has "slipped" as compared with other professions.
“In 1959 among the top thirteen professions surveyed, academics were near the bottom of the list...” In the United States the income of an average college graduate stood at $11,100 in 1968. This figure was about what professors with their many more years of training and special intellectual talents could command.

This disesteem of the teaching profession has had unfortunate consequences for the quality of intramural life with its increased competition for security and search for outside sources of added income. The institutional response to this disaffected and beggarly faculty has been to force unnatural and arbitrary standards of excellence on their performance. Usually in the form of quantitative publication. The emphasis has further diminished the significance of “teaching” and deepened the schism between the student and the school. For his part the individual faculty member is alienated from the institution and forced to seek emotional satisfaction in inter-university professional societies or in futile dissent.

Consequences of Deteriorated Academic Work Conditions

Accompanying the exodus of talent from the campus has been the rise of research in national bodies unconnected with teaching. In the United States the National Institutes of Health form a dynamic and creative assembly of scientists effectively cut off from contact with students. Rand Corporation, Chemstrand, Xerox, Dupont and other industrial giants similarly attract large staffs of ex-professors who find either the earnings or opportunities more attractive than those at the university. In this way, one of the traditionally most vital functions of such schools, namely the creation of new knowledge, is not only removed from the campus but the training of new personnel is also cut off.

What results is an environment less responsive to the needs of society and less willing to experiment in areas that are not already well established. Unorthodox approaches are shunted off the school grounds and forced to find financing from private sources. Examples come easily to mind: J. B. Rhine’s work at Duke University is now conducted privately outside the auspices of that institution, just as Masters’ and Johnson’s work in sexual behavior was forced to leave Washington University. Two of the most pressing areas of need are largely ignored in schools of education. One of these con-
cerns the development of teaching machines, a direction avidly pursued by private corporations because they see the immense financial reward awaiting the successful production of such equipment; the other is cross-cultural training of teachers of inner-city youth, now largely handled by school districts through in-service training programs. All of this further diminishes the universalistic character of the university and means it now shares with other agencies what were formerly its exclusive prerogatives; namely the selection of priorities and the creation of new knowledge.

The Student Response

Many of these gradual changes in the university are too subtle for any single generation of students to appreciate fully. Their sense of disquiet and alienation forms a general background to their daily lessons and only breaks through the surface when some special event or occasion arises. Student protest may be a direct response to some pressing immediate issue or an apparently irrelevant issue. At Berkeley in 1964, what began as a demonstration against the curtailment of an established freedom to publicize unpopular causes on campus, soon developed into a condemnation of the total "Multiversity" with its impersonal lectures, remote administration and I.B.M. cards.

In Berlin, 1967 saw the beginning of a major upheaval sparked by the visit of the unlikely Shah of Iran. At that time, Benno Ohnesorg was killed and in the wake of that, the S.D.S. Socialist German Students Federation) came into prominence. At the time Teufel, one of the student leaders with Rudi Dutschke said, "I started reading socialist literature... last Spring I joined Commune I, a group of students who pattern their behavior after Mao-tse-tung." It was later in November that 200 radical left wingers met to organize the Critical University which asked the pertinent question: Is it better to reform or to destroy society? Their immediate concern however was to reform the University and they offered lectures on thirty-six subjects in an effort to replace the outdated academic institution.

In France, student activism began at the suburban campus of Nanterre outside Paris where initial demands were for greater
autonomy, more student participation, a changed curriculum and
greater contact with teachers. In May, 1968, after six months of
agitation, the government closed the school. Two days later the Sor­
bonne was closed for the first time in its history. Thirty thousand
students demonstrated, led by Cohn-Bendit, Jacques Sauvageot,
President of the UNEF (Union Nationale des Etudiants de France)
and Alorn Geismar, Head of the University Teachers Union. The
barricades, the torn up cobble stones, the pitched battles with police
reminiscent of the Paris Commune of the last century have all
become common legend already. But what drove these highly-
selected French students into confrontation tactics with the De
Gaulle government is startling. Peter Brooks said:

What finally brought them into the street in the
Thousands was a visceral protest against a system:
the bourgeois capitalist state in its incarnation in
the bourgeois university, preserver and transmitter
of a culture of exploitation and dehumanization,
a culture which they reject, purveyed to them in a
manner designed to destroy its last vestiges of
plausibility.¹⁸

He went on to describe the university in France as the most inef­
ficient corporation ever devised; strangled by archaic organization
and principles. Students reject the thought that this is the best
institution society could devise for their training. They, like the
Critical University, want to use the campus as a perpetual arena
for questioning everything.

In Rome there has been no single dramatic student flair up
though students have been protesting there for a long time. As early
as June 1958, students demanded the elimination of exams as
"devices that the ruling class use to measure the suitability of
the student for filling the role the class society assigns to him."¹⁹
In October 1962, students struck for lower medical care costs and
cheaper restaurants and were joined by the junior faculty seeking
job security.²⁰ Again in 1965, after Parliament had rejected any
university reform bill, the students and faculty went out again. In
1966 a three day strike occurred in which the students occupied a
hostel from which the police sought to eject the students by cutting
off all facilities.²¹ Most recently, 2,000 students seeking representa­
tion on the University academic council battled police at the Rome Architectural School. They claimed they were trying to end the feudal power of the full professors and democratize the school. After twelve days and 200 injuries, the school was closed.22

At the Universities of Warsaw and Barcelona, perhaps because of the more repressive political environment in which students study, attention has been directed more clearly against the governmental regimes in power than the university structure as such. Barcelona University closed the medical faculty in March, 1958 because of a student boycott. In the same month of 1965, two other colleges were closed when 1,000 students petitioned the Archbishop for the return of the exiled Abbot of Montserrat who had been sheltered in the Vatican after denouncing the Franco government.23 For many years the recurrent issue of Spanish politics has been the S.E.U. (Sindicato Espanol Universitario), its compulsory membership and control by the government. Founded in 1933 to attract all students, only Falangists received scholarships, and all officers were appointed by government. In 1965 the government offered to restructure the S.E.U. so that students could have greater freedom in the election of delegates but this was rejected. In March 1966 at the Capuchin monastery in suburban Sarria, police confronted 500 students holding a free assembly of a secretly elected student union. The resulting arrests and demonstrations for the release of these students continued into April when some of the younger clergy joined students and together brought the closing of Barcelona University for the first time in forty years.24 All during 1967 the demonstrations and arrests continued. In April the police entered the university and in May all student leaders of the Barcelona University Democratic Association of Students were arrested. Last year (1968) began with expulsion by the Minister of Education of twenty-two students.

At Warsaw, also, student efforts have been directed at protecting the small amount of freedom allotted to them. After some initial enthusiasm for the Gomulka regime, the student newspaper Po Prostu (Plain Talk) was closed in 1957. Some 2,000 students demonstrated in downtown Warsaw’s Narutowicy Square and were attacked by the police. Four days were required to put down this demonstration. In 1964, thirty-four intellectuals protested the censorship and government controls on freedom. One of these was ar-
rested and the subsequent demonstrations evoked a government ban on university-wide gatherings and an end of discussion clubs. Since these early demonstrations the issue of intellectual freedom has dominated as well as inspired protest at Warsaw. In 1966 it was sparked by the expulsion of Professor Lesyek Kolakowski for criticism of the Party and freedom of assembly. A student supporter of the professor was arrested and again thousands of students went out in protest.25 The most recent student action occurred in early February 1968 when the work of a 19th Century romantic playwright named Mickewicy was banned by party officials. The play, “Dziady” (“Forefathers”), had been required reading in the schools because it showed the suffering of Poles under the Russian Czar. Students had applauded such lines as “We Poles have sold our souls for a couple of silver roupes,” and “The only thing Moscow has sent us are jackasses, idiots and spies.”28

Reaction to The Student Protest

By the Authorities

In many cases of protest, the immediate inspiration for a demonstration may be trivial but the threat to the government or the university is viewed as of much greater magnitude. Perhaps for this reason the response of the authorities is often out of all proportion to the nature of the disturbance. In Warsaw during the “Dziady” demonstration, the police viciously attacked the students21 in a fury reminiscent of the Chicago brutality during the Democratic Convention. At Barcelona in March and April of 1966 students and clergy were indiscriminately beaten by police.

When massive police force is necessary to keep students in line, it is in a sense a last resort. Usually the authorities first try to employ a series of lesser sanctions in the hope that overt coercion will not be necessary. At one end of the scale we find government sponsored reforms such as the changes the Spanish government instituted in the S.E.U. in 1965 and which were subsequently rejected.29 These may be followed by suspension, expulsion, closing of the university and the arrest of leaders.30 Although none of these
devices is very popular with students, the most provocative act is probably the killing of one of the protestors. This has occurred twice in Berlin and once at Rome, the case of Ohnesorg and the attempt on the life of Dutschke in Berlin and the death of Rossi in Rome in 1966. At both schools other students, not the authorities, appear to have perpetrated the crime, but in each case, the result was a massive student response that must have frightened those in power.

*By the Public*

While student protest is probably most disturbing to the university authorities charged with the maintainance of discipline, it also affects the political regime of the region in which the disturbance takes place. This is particularly true in totalitarian countries, but it is also the case in so-called democratic societies. Even in developing countries, as S. M. Lipset has said, the lack of well-defined institutions between a mass of illiterate peasants and the governmental apparatus makes any student disturbance a danger. In advanced industrial societies this type of direct menace is absent but the equivalent result can take place if sufficient public sympathy is aroused.

Although alliances of young intellectuals and working class youth have often been attempted, they have never had any measurable impact on the outcome of campus protest. During the Columbia University riots it was feared that the solid black community around the school would join to support the white students, but they did not. At San Francisco State the local labor council supported the faculty strike at that school but to little effect. Even the most successful example of student-worker cooperation that Paris witnessed in 1968 brought no permanent changes. It is estimated that at that time there were one million demonstrators in the streets and ten million workers on strike. From time to time, public support for student protest has risen but is rarely sustained. In Berlin after the shooting of Dutschke there was a rare outpouring of sympathy as thousands of Berliners and politicians marched in unison with the students. In Warsaw, the existence of similar sentiments may be surmised from the fact that twice as many non-students as students were arrested in March, 1968. And at Barcelona when issues such as opposition to high prices have been voiced by students, they have been able to widen their appeal.
More typically however, public reaction has been not supportive but negative. In Berlin the Springer press, controlling over 80% of Berlin's newspapers, has been strongly opposed to the student demands. A typical Springer statement would be:

Students should not demonstrate but they should study, that's why they're at the university anyway. Students are not really a part of society because they do not earn money; therefore, they have no right to criticize it; why should we have to pay taxes to send Communists to our Universities; we ought to throw them over the wall where they come from — then they won't bother us anymore.34

In March of 1968 there were demonstrations against the Berlin students with signs reading "No money for long haired monkeys" carried by trade unionists. For their part the Berlin leftists regard such persons as tools of the establishment,35 and see workers attracted to the neo-Nazi N.P.D. party as closely akin to the blue collar workers appealed to by Governor Wallace during his presidential campaign.

_Protest And Institutional Reform_

After the noise and the tumult, after the crowds have passed and the emotion cooled, what changes are taking place in the universities today? Despite the unambivalent repression of student protest everywhere and the uncertain and tenuous support students have found amongst the general population, there are significant and far-reaching changes taking place everywhere. In this sense the students' action is achieving tangible results despite their failure to attain political power. At most institutions student representation and participation in the decision making process has increased markedly and freer admissions in terms of social class have resulted. At Berlin the highest governing authority of the University is the Senate, which consists of fourteen full professors and the Rector. On that body there now are two elected students with full debating and voting rights.

In France after the De-Gaulle elections Premier Pompidou said "the entire educational system would have to be rethought." Faure, who replaced Peyrefitte as Minister of Education in the new cabinet,
said the ministry would never again serve as a dictator with complete control over curriculum, examinations, admissions and facilities. The new proposals made by government call for the creation of an additional 20,000 places for Paris students, the creation of smaller universities of 10-12,000 students, and more frequent examinations emphasizing a scientific approach rather than memorization.

At Barcelona besides the changes which now allow some free student elections to their own representative bodies, there has been a general liberalization of laws governing protest. Government tactics seem to have shifted from oppression to persuasion, negotiation and more permissiveness. A new press law allows for the end of censorship, at least in its statutory forms. Private universities have been permitted to open and now share the previous state monopoly over higher education. Spain remains a totalitarian state and there gains have been uneven. It is still not possible for students to demonstrate freely and often they are liable to arrest and trial — but change is coming. In Rome also, despite the failure of Parliament to pass a liberal educational reform bill, that law is bound to come in time. New proposals call for more student representation on university councils and the creation of tenured posts for teachers below that of professors in order to weaken the dictatorial power of the full professor. At Oxford too, the change in admissions advocated by the Franks report and the deemphasis on tutoring will enhance the ability of that prestigious institution to deal with technological subjects more adequately. In Warsaw the changes have been most dramatic in that worker representation has been increased on all admission boards. The system of professorial chairs has been eliminated and now peasants and workers hold seats in the academic councils. These measures have not resulted in greater autonomy for the university however, since through such devices the governing party has actually increased its control over academic affairs. Before admission a student must demonstrate, not only that he is able, but that he is also a dedicated communist through reference to his earlier record of youth activity.

These changes have been taking place at not the poorest educational centers, but the best universities in Europe. As some schools allow greater student participation in the decisions affecting them, we can anticipate increased pressure at lesser institutions with the result that the medieval character of the modern university will
quickly change. Most important will be the erosion of the traditional autonomy associated with the idea of the university. As power is shared with students there is no way of anticipating how effectively the institutional or national goals will be realized through such arrangements.

Even more serious perhaps is the attack on university autonomy from the enhanced role of the government in university affairs. As the police power of the state is increasingly relied upon for the maintainance of order and the government is looked upon as a source of revenue, it is not difficult to imagine the greater role of the state in university affairs. This is already clearly the case in such diverse places as Warsaw, California, India, and China. But whether such controls can more effectively harness the intellectual talents of professors and students remain to be seen. Both student and government pressures contribute to the changes that are affecting the structure of the university today. Because of the magnitude of these pressures, the university as we know it is probably doomed. There will be more battles here but the process of interment has already begun.

References

2. The most rapid development in higher education in the United States has occurred at the Junior College level. Today 70% of California students above high school are enrolled in such institutions.
3. Of the 2,080 American colleges and universities, 37% are small with less than 5,000 enrolled. Only 93 have enrolments over 10,000.
4. *New York Times*, November 29, 1959, p. 3. 30% were from academic families and 50% from white collar parents.
5. “Need to Transcend Classicism,” *op. cit.*
7. In the United States, for example, the out-put of degree holders for a ten year period changed from 300,000 in 1900-1910 to ten times that number in 1950-1960.
27. Nowak, *op. cit.*
28. These called for the popular election of some student representatives who in turn were approved by the Dean.
29. In Warsaw, Gomulka announced that of 1,008 arrests made in March of 1968, 367 were students and of these 60 were fined or sentenced. *New York Times*, March 29, 1968, p. 1.
30. In Berlin, Springer was partially blamed and, in Rome, the right wing students.