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PARIS, 11 JUNE 1968



RESTLESS YOUTH

Student protest is visible, highly vocal, increasingly militant and feared by many to be interconnected world-wide.

In the last few months, it has closed down several great universities, fomented civil strife and altered political careers in more than twenty countries. Indeed, if one accepts Richard Neustadt's definition of power as "the effective influence upon the conduct of others," then Student Power is no longer a chimera. It is a reality which has similar characteristics even though its form may vary from country to country.

Students are an elite and volatile group--to a great degree imbued with an almost mystical faith in the ability of an aroused "people" to generate reform and with a marked distrust of governmental bureaucracy. They have a knack for being among the first to espouse unpopular causes and have been quick to call society to account for its shortcomings.

Student rebelliousness is not a recent phenomenon. It predates the university: it was commonplace in ancient Athens and in imperial Rome. Socrates complained woefully that the students of his time had "bad manners, contempt for authority, disrespect for older people." In the Thirteenth Century students in Paris elected their professors and the illumined texts of the time describe the rampages of medieval English students who burned lecture halls and sacked nearby villages when their wishes were unheeded.

However, it was not until the early Nineteenth Century, following the rise of the nation-state, that students became an important force for social and political change. They were in the forefront of the revolutions in 1848 in Germany and Austria, went "to the people" in Czarist Russia, and to their deaths or

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exile in 1905. At home and abroad, African and Asian students agitated against colonial regimes during the interwar and post World War II periods.

During the 1950s, aroused students figured in the downfall of Peron in Argentina in 1955 and Perez Jimenez in Venezuela in 1958; students rashly encouraged Imre Nagy and fought Russian tanks in Budapest in October-November 1956, as they seemed prepared to do in behalf of Gomulka during Poland's all too brief "October" of the same year. Rioting Japanese students forced cancellation of President Eisenhower's trip to Tokyo and the ouster of the Kishi Government in 1960. That same year, Korean students were in the van of the anti-Rhee riots in Seoul and in Turkey they took to the streets against Menderes.

In the United States, beginning early in 1960, students supplied much of the manpower and inspiration for the Civil Rights Movement. At first tentatively and then with growing confidence, American students used the sit-in and similar tactics to confront the power structure of the south--appealing for the support of a lethargic but influential public far beyond the confines of Mobile or Birmingham. And they demonstrated to their satisfaction that the tactics of confrontation work; indeed, many came away from Civil Rights with the conviction that *only* confrontation works.

Student activism depends for much of its strength on the way it is regarded by the adult citizenry. In most Western countries, at least, there has long been a feeling that politics is not a proper arena for students. This notion has been strengthened by the fact that in Europe and the United States student movements hitherto have proved transitory and vulnerable to fragmentation.

The incidence in the past of student demonstrations in widely separated places, the Middle East, Japan, or even Latin America did not excite undue concern in the U.S.--even when such outbreaks impinged briefly on American interests, as in the case of President Eisenhower's abortive trip to Tokyo in 1960. They passed unnoticed by all but a few or were dismissed as some kind of seasonal madness.

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In many countries, however, student political activism has been a more durable phenomenon and because of its durability has been accommodated in the political process. Argentine students won recognition of their political rights and a role in the administration of the universities in the Cordoba reform of 1918. That reform opened the door to many abuses and is at the root of much of the difficulty which besets Latin American education today, but it has served to sanction student political activity to the extent that participation in campus organizations more often than not constitutes entrée to adult careers in government and law. Since World War II, Japanese demonstrations have become so common a tactic of the political opposition that they are taken for granted and occur within guidelines accepted by the public. Japanese student agitators enjoy a quasi-legitimate place in the legislative process. Indonesian students were a bulwark of Sukarno's regime for most of its existence--but turned against him because of his suspected complicity in the attempted Communist coup of 1965. African students are xenophobic; accorded special recognition and privileges, they hunger after more tangible rewards and pose a threat to several governments.

Campus activism may not be the central issue of our times; but none other now excites a greater response. Those who view the dissidents as fledgling conspirators are constrained to blame too permissive parents or lackadaisical teachers. Some point to a general breakdown in public morality for the unease which permeates so many campuses. Others credit the dissidents with reacting to the oppressive demands of an outmoded educational system and to the growing impersonalization of everyday life, to stagnation, to racial injustice. Yet a third group points with alarm to the influence of the mass media, warning that radio and television have a curious "three-dimensional" quality which exposes sham and stimulates discontent. There is no simple explanation.

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Leaders + Issues = Followers

The interplay of emotions, ideologies, and attitudes which constitute the motive force behind youthful dissidence is infinitely complex. Those who would lead the dissidents, or stay a step ahead of them, are constrained to identify and exploit issues which promise the support of a wide following. Quite naturally, some issues prove more meaningful and therefore evoke a greater response. Naturally, too, the issues change or are replaced by broader demands as protest develops and a confrontation with authority ensues. At Columbia University, for example, an ad hoc protest against an administration decision to erect a much disputed gymnasium was transformed by the effects of outside intervention into an assault on the structure of the university itself. But by far the largest number of students who participated toward the close of the crisis were moved to do so out of indignation over what they regarded as police brutality. A similar evolution of issues and substitution of targets took place during the French disorders in May.

This substitution of issues and broadening of demands has been dubbed "expedient escalationism" by Zbigniew Brzezinski. It often begins with a series of minor confrontations between university authorities and a small band of dissenters whose complaints are limited to some facet of university life. The authorities do not entertain whatever proposals the dissenters are advocating--either because they are too far removed from day-to-day developments within the university to appreciate what is occurring or because they are unsure of their own position and prefer to procrastinate in the hope that time alone will solve the problem. The dissenters, rebuffed, become increasingly vocal and search out allies among other students or, crucially, among faculty members who have their own grievances.

There follows a series of "dress rehearsals," such as attempts to interrupt ROTC exhibitions or to mar faculty convocations in honor of visiting dignitaries. In some instances, the dissenters are turned

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upon by student critics and are assaulted--as at Nanterre where a rightist clique, the Occident, several times manhandled leftist students. The authorities respond with minor administrative sanctions or do not act at all out of fear of calling attention to a situation going out of their control.

A spontaneous incident, perhaps the arrest of a student away from the university, electrifies the community. A picket line or sit-in follows, and the students seek to negotiate with the authorities. Rather than confront the dissidents directly, however, the authorities welcome the advent of self-appointed middlemen, often disgruntled faculty members. The brokers attempt to clarify the issues and in doing so prolong the crisis.

Under pressure from all sides, the dissidents seek to legitimize their stance by demanding more and more, particularly if authorities dribble out piecemeal concessions which have only a negative impact, thus buttressing the popular view that they have lost the initiative. Reconciliation becomes impossible, and the authorities, after having sought to avoid confrontation, rashly invoke force without regard to its ultimate consequences. Bystanders are involved, sometimes injured, and a cause celebre results.

Sociologists have come to call the process by which more and more participants are drawn into protest radicalization. There is little agreement over the dynamics involved--and less evidence that any great number of students remain radicalized once the initial exhilaration of combat is past.

Certain considerations become extremely important to the leader. He must seek to sustain the protest, flexibly moving it to new ground when the occasion permits. To achieve this escalation, he must be prepared to welcome and adjust to the participation of a variety of people--negotiators, the voices of authority, public commentators, etc. Their involvement will tend to broaden the protest, spread its effects, and touch a multiplying number of people--students and non-students alike--each at his own level or point of sensitivity.

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