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# The Role of Youth and Students in Society

Jack Woddis

*(The following article is an extract from New Theories of Revolution, a new book by Jack Woddis which examines in depth the theories of Franz Fanon, Régis Debray and Herbert Marcuse in relation to twentieth century revolutionary processes in Africa, Latin America and the western imperialist countries. This important book will shortly be published by Lawrence & Wishart).*

So emphatic has been the revolt of young people in the 1960's, in country after country, that it seems unnecessary to emphasise the point. But for serious revolutionaries it is not enough to be aware of this revolt, nor even of its extent; what is more important is to probe into its causes, to assess correctly its character, to be fully conscious both of its great potentialities and of its limitations.

Marcuse is fully justified in drawing our attention to this phenomenon even though we cannot accept most of his conclusions. It is perhaps not out of place to recall that young people have always played a prominent part in all revolutionary movements, and this is certainly so for the twentieth century. It was true in 1905 and in 1917. It was true in Spain in 1936-39, both for the Spanish people who took up arms to oppose Franco, and for the International Brigades which came to their defence. (The 28 members of the British Young Communist League who died in Spain tell only part of the story, for many of the British Communist Party members, as well as Labour Party and non-Party people who laid down their lives for Spain, were also young people). Young people were prominent, too, in the war-time resistance movements in Europe. The same was true of the guerrilla forces which fought Japanese fascism in Asia; those who can recall the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army representatives who marched down the Mall in the Victory Parade in 1945 will remember the youthfulness of these heroic fighters; similarly those who met Aung Sang and the other liberation fighters of Burma after 1945 will have been struck by their remarkably young age and

appearance. In China, too, alongside the veterans of 1925 who marched in the victorious armies of 1949 were to be found thousands of youngsters. And so in Cuba, and again in Vietnam—when it came to the crunch, young people, girls as well as boys, threw themselves into the struggle and generously gave their lives for the revolution.

In this respect, the present revolt of young people in the industrialised capitalist countries and their participation in modern revolutionary movements is no new departure. Yet it would be wrong to consider this participation as a mere repetition of past patterns of behaviour, for the present revolt has many new features and arises from new circumstances.

Many adult workers, when they reflect on their present conditions of life, consider they have secured significant material gains. Television, a washing machine, perhaps a car and holidays abroad, the children attaining a higher educational standard than themselves—a number of such material advances are weighed up and compared with the past. Not that life for adult workers has become adequate. Many do not enjoy these improvements. Those who do have to work overtime; the intensity and strain of work increases: the threat of unemployment or premature retirement hangs over them. Yet they feel, despite the difficulties and strains, that life is better than it was 20 or 30 years ago, and certainly better than what *their* fathers enjoyed.

## **Youth Eager for More**

But for the younger generation in the West the

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material changes of the past 30 years do not have the same significance. What the adult worker often regards as an achievement, the young worker sees as his starting point; he is eager to press forward and win still more. He is scarcely aware of the long, dogged and bitter struggles his father had to wage to reach his present level of livelihood. When he looks around him he sees the same rich class at the top of the pyramid, a class which becomes more powerful every day, accumulating immense wealth by exploiting all the new techniques of production, by swallowing up lesser firms, and by finding ever new ways of separating people from the money they have earned.

Young people in the West today awaken to adulthood and mature earlier, both physiologically and emotionally, have access to better information, stay on at school longer, and live in a society which generally requires more educated people. It is an age of scientific and technological revolution, with a whole series of dramatic changes in methods of work, in man's mastery over nature. As man's horizons of knowledge expand, so he travels further out into space to probe ever deeper into the mysteries of the universe. Schoolboys trace space vehicles on their tracking equipment. They carry out mathematical calculations which are completely alien to the knowledge of their parents. They study subjects which their parents are not even aware of. The television cameras have opened up an entirely new world of knowledge, along with a torrent of rubbish. There is an immense speed of change, both physical and political. New scientific breakthroughs are attained with ever shorter passages of time—and each breakthrough opens up another new world to be explored, and the opportunity for the new knowledge acquired to be applied. And the time gap between each discovery, as well as the gap between its discovery and its application in production, becomes shorter and shorter. The spirit of slow, seemingly static conservatism has gone.

But with all this rapid change, the young person of today is also increasingly aware of the faults of this society. The wars in Indochina, and Biafra, the flood disaster in East Bengal, the genocidal massacres in Bangladesh—all vividly portrayed on television screens—bring home to him that millions of people live in conditions of incredible deprivation, hunger, poverty and disease. He is mindful of the hazards of nuclear fall-out—and the greater threat of a nuclear war. On every side he witnesses the destructive results of unbridled capitalism—luxury flats, offices, hotels, car parks, when millions are in need of a decent home of their own. The rich grow richer, while the poor become poorer. The noise of our cities becomes more and more unbearable, and the very air we breathe becomes more poisonous. Daily he is told that we are on the verge of an ecological

disaster, that the blind greed of this system is destroying our very resources of life.

It begins to dawn on him that the ostentatious wealth which his own rulers enjoy is based on the misery and exploitation of millions of people in the Third World as well as on the speed-up and exploitation of the workers in the metropolises, and the creation of new oceans of poverty.

#### Awareness of Struggles

He becomes aware, too, of the struggles of the people to end these appalling conditions. Significantly he finds it easier to identify himself with Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara and Angela Davis, than with Nixon, Heath, Wilson or Pompidou who represent all the negative values of modern capitalist society—its smugness, hypocrisy, greed, conservatism philistinism, and destructiveness.

He lives in an age of transition from capitalism to socialism. The influence of the great ideas of socialism, of Marxism, spreads wider and deeper all the time.

Of course, it would be absurd to pretend that all this is part of the conscious make-up of the majority of young people today, or that the majority are actively opposed to the system. As Marcuse and other commentators have rightly noted, the ruling Establishments in the imperialist countries have perfected a whole array of propaganda methods and instruments with which to bamboozle the people, including the youth and the students. Monopoly control of the major newspapers, control over radio, television and films, control over the education system—all is bent in the service of the rule of monopoly capitalism. The scale of this propaganda, as well as the sophistication of its methods, enables the real problems to be distorted and the real enemy, capitalism, to be partially hidden from most people. An immense service in this work of obfuscation is rendered by the Harold Wilsons of this world who endeavour, not without success, to divert the wrath of the working people away from their real targets, to blunt their struggles, and to persuade them to accept a reformed *status quo*.

But to see only, or mainly, this immense ideological power in the hands of the capitalist class, and not to see the countervailing forces, is to present an unbalanced and distorted picture of reality. The very awakening of important sections of young people today is itself proof of man's ability to break through the barrage of lies and confusion. The wave of struggle of the 1960's is but a portent of the tidal wave that is yet to come. And proof, moreover, of the ability of the people to smash through the walls of Marcuse's "integrated society".

Marcuse, and those who base themselves very much on his ideas, speak and write as if they had discovered something entirely new when they draw

attention to the revolutionary role of young people. Marx and Engels repeatedly drew attention to the importance of this role, stressing, on the one hand, the dangers that could attend the movement if the young people were neglected, and on the other hand, the successes that were to be won by their incorporation in the struggle. Writing on the 1848 revolution in Paris, Marx stressed that the bourgeoisie, being unable by itself to cope with the working class, resorted to the only way out: "to play off one part of the proletariat against the other".<sup>1</sup> To this end, the bourgeoisie organised 24 battalions of the mobile guard of young people from 15 to 20 years of age. Though many of them came from the ranks of the *lumpen-proletariat*, their commanders, noted Marx, were "young sons of the bourgeoisie whose rodomontades about death for the fatherland and devotion to the republic capitivated them".<sup>2</sup> Marx did not allow this experience to mislead him as to the role played by the working youth as a whole who, in the battles of 1848, fought side by side with their fathers on the side of the revolution. Marx was fully justified in writing that "the most advanced workers fully realise that the future of their class, and, consequently, of mankind fully depends on the education of the rising workers' generation".<sup>3</sup>

Engels, too, noted that the students had a particular role to play alongside the young workers. In his message to the International Congress of the Socialist Students, held in Geneva in December 1893, he wrote:

"May your efforts lead to the development among students of awareness that it is from their ranks that there should emerge the proletariat of mental labour called upon, *shoulder to shoulder and in the same ranks with other working brothers* engaged in manual labour, to play a substantial part in the oncoming revolution".<sup>4</sup>

Lenin, also, was only too aware of the importance of winning young people to the side of the revolution, and of their readiness to join the struggle and make sacrifices. This, he saw, was particularly the case with the young workers. "The youth", he wrote, "the students and still more so the young workers—will decide the issue of the whole struggle".<sup>5</sup> Lenin regarded it as only natural that young people predominated in the Party since, he declared:

"We are the party of the future, and the future belongs to the youth. We are a party of innovators, and it is always the youth that most eagerly follows the 'innovators'. We are a party that is waging a self-sacrificing struggle against the old rottenness, and youth is always the first to undertake a self-sacrificing struggle".<sup>6</sup>

### Youth's Role Today

Today, as we have already noted, the youth generally speaking plays an even more weighty role than hitherto, including in the imperialist countries. Within this general activity of young people, students have been very prominent.<sup>7</sup> This is not the first time that students have made an important contribution to the revolution. We have already referred to the way in which Marx and Engels assessed this. It would be strange if they did otherwise, since it was as young students that the founders of Marxism first entered the revolutionary movement, and many of their early collaborators and co-workers came from the ranks of the young students and intellectuals. Lenin, in his wellknown article, "The Student Movement and the Present Political Situation", described the students' strike at St. Petersburg University in 1908 as "a political symptom . . . of the whole present situation brought about by the counter-revolution. Thousands and millions of threads tie the student youth with the middle and lower bourgeoisie, the petty officials, certain groups of the peasantry, the clergy, etc."<sup>8</sup> Lenin saw the great importance of this strike and gave it his full support, calling on "the party of the working class" to make use of this action "however weak and embryonic this beginning may be". Yet, although this student action came at a time when the working class movement itself was temporarily at low ebb, Lenin, unlike Marcuse, never allowed himself to form an unbalanced judgment; and, in words which remain valuable advice to this very day, he wrote:

"The proletariat will not be behindhand. It often yields the palm to the bourgeois democrats in speeches at banquets, in legal unions, within the walls of universities, from the rostrum of representative institutions.

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels: *Selected Works* (two volumes), Moscow, 1950: Vol. 1. p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels: *Works*, Vol. 16. p. 198 (in Russian).

<sup>4</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels: *Works*, Vol. 22. p. 432 (in Russian).

<sup>5</sup> V. I. Lenin: *Collected Works*, Vol. 8. p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> V. I. Lenin: *Collected Works*, Vol. 2. p. 354.

<sup>7</sup> One should never ignore the fact that the struggles of young workers receive far less attention than the somewhat more sensational activities of the students; nor that in all the big working class actions large sections of young workers take part. A recent notable example in Britain was that of the young girls during the postal strike of 1971.

<sup>8</sup> V. I. Lenin: *Collected Works*. Vol.

It never yields the palm, and will not do so, in the serious and great revolutionary struggle of the masses".<sup>9</sup>

In Asia, too, the students have been very prominent in the revolutionary movement throughout this century. In the aftermath of the 1905 revolution, students in Persia were to the fore in the great upheaval which culminated in the Shah being forced to introduce a new constitution allowing parliamentary government. The struggle had begun in December 1905 with a general strike by the workers in Teheran; but the students soon joined in. In the Turkish Ottoman Empire too, students and young intellectuals supported the revolutionary Young Turk movement led by Mustafa Kemal after 1905, a movement which won supporters in Cairo, Damascus and Salonika, as well as in the capital.

Under the impact of the October Revolution of 1917, huge waves of struggle swept over Asia. Students, in a number of countries, played an important part in these events. This was notably so in the May 4 movement in China in 1919. This time the students acted as catalysts for the mass movement; more, they acted as direct initiators of mass action, following up their own demonstrations and other activities with a call for a general strike which won an immediate response from every corner of the country. In later years in China, right up to the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek, the students played a key role in the struggle, notably in Shanghai where many became martyrs to the revolution.

In India, student participation in the anti-imperialist struggle began at the beginning of the twentieth century. By the 1930's this had become a marked feature of the political scene in India, notably in Bombay.

"The Bombay Students' Union entered the broader political movements of the city. Students became active in labour organising and worked with the Communists and, after 1934, with the Congress Socialists. The students were a valuable source of active cadres to the trade union movement.

Students were an active element in the Congress. Moreover, the student movement publicly demanded complete independence before the Congress had officially adopted this policy in January of 1930".<sup>10</sup>

Students in India have continued to take part in the political movement, and have provided cadres for all the main parties. In Burma and Korea, too, students have traditionally played an important role in revolutionary struggles. In Latin America and in the Middle East, especially since the second world war, students have been prominent in the national liberation struggles.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Philip G. Altbach: *Student Politics in Bombay*: London 1968, p. 76.

### British Student Fighters

Even in the West student activity in the past decade has not opened an entirely new page. It is true that in Britain the 1926 General Strike witnessed students—sons of the bourgeoisie in the main—playing the ignominious role of strike-breakers. But already by the 1930's there were signs of a significant change. John Cornford and other Communist students spoke at trade union meetings, organised solidarity for the unemployed marchers, and developed a conscious socialist movement in the universities. The young Communist, Richard Freeman, was flung into a Brazilian prison when he visited Brazil to express his solidarity with the imprisoned Communist leader, Luis Prestes. When the International Brigades were set up in Spain, a number of British students and young intellectuals went out to fight and amongst those who sacrificed their lives were John Cornford, David Guest, Lorimer Birch and Christopher Sprigg (better known as Christopher Caudwell)—all four of them young communists.

In the United States, too, as Bettina Aptheker has reminded us<sup>11</sup> ". . . there is ample evidence of massive student protests in the late 1920's and throughout the 1930's. By 1939 more than one million college and high school students participated in student strikes for peace. Students of past generations utilised many of the same tactics which are used today—petitions, referendums, sit-ins and strikes. And the college and university administrations responded in like manner: suspensions, expulsions and arrests".

Nevertheless, widespread and often dramatic activities of students in Western Europe and in the United States in the past decade, as expressed particularly in the great upheavals of 1967 to 1969, in West Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Great Britain and the United States, (as well as in Japan), cannot be regarded as a repetition or continuation of these earlier struggles. Student actions in the West in the 1960's are distinguished by a number of particular factors connected with changes in the system of monopoly capitalism itself: and, as a consequence, these student upheavals are having a significant influence on the general struggle against the domination of monopoly capitalism.

As Marcuse and many other commentators on the student movement have rightly emphasised, the role played by students in politics today is clearly connected both with the scientific and technological revolution and with the growing domination by the military-industrial complex of modern state monopoly capitalism over all aspects of life and social activity in the capitalist countries.

<sup>11</sup> Bettina Aptheker: 'The Student Rebellion': *Political Affairs*, March, 1969.

The growth of productive forces in the major capitalist countries, and the development of the scientific and technological revolution has had a profound effect on both the scale of higher education and on its function. Science has become a direct productive force; there is an increasing demand for scientific and technical cadres, for engineers and specialists of every kind to play their part in modern industry. In addition to those directly geared to production there is an entire army of ideological specialists—sociologists, personnel managers, economic advisers, industrial psychologists, market researchers, public relations personnel and a whole range of other experts who are engaged in helping the monopoly firms run smoothly, mystifying the workers, providing the arguments and the public case for employers in dispute, and persuading the people to purchase the goods and gadgets produced so that the monopolies are able to realise their profits.

The swollen state bureaucracy, too, needs its growing army of technically trained people. The army, the security organs, the policy rely more and more on modern equipment, on an ever increasing array of sophisticated weapons and instruments—and these, in their turn, require thousands of specialists, including in the upper echelons of control. Overseas interests of the big monopolies and their State demand a further host of advisers and practitioners—irrigation experts, geologists, economists, agronomists.

Radio and television commentators, journalists, “expert” commentators—these, too, are needed to sell the policies of the monopolies and the monopoly capitalist state to the people. And to train up this vast army of experts of all kinds, the universities proliferate and expand, and in their turn demand a bigger and bigger supply of professors, lecturers, research workers, many of whom double up their function on behalf of monopoly capitalism by their lofty opinions which they hand out over TV and radio networks or in the press.

This technological progress and the new needs of modern capitalism have called for ever higher educational standards among those drawn into all spheres of production and social activity. In the United States, for example, the number of jobs requiring 16 years or more of education has gone up by 67 per cent in the last decade, while jobs requiring secondary education have increased by 40 per cent. United States estimates indicate that by 1975 the number of “white-collar” workers will form 48 per cent of labour requirements in the US.<sup>12</sup>

### The Student Explosion

As a consequence there has been a remarkable expansion of the student population, and, at the same time, a change in its social composition. Alongside this, the institutions of higher education have become more closely tied up with big business and the state; their functioning, their curricula, their administration is all subordinated to the interests of the monopolies and the state including, in particular, the military.

The explosion of the student population has been really phenomenal. In the United States it has increased from 2 million to 7 million in the ten years 1958-1968. In the 15 years from 1950 to 1964 the student population in France, West Germany and Belgium trebled, and in Sweden it increased almost four times. In the ten years up to 1968 the number of students in West Germany went up from 110,000 to 500,000, in France from 200,000 to 680,000, in Britain (which had only 70,000 before the war) from 216,000 to 418,000. Today there are more than 3 million students in Western Europe and one million in Japan. And the figures are still soaring upwards. Clearly, what we are confronted with is a new mass social force of rapidly growing dimensions—a force, moreover, which as Lenin noted, is tied by “thousands and millions of threads . . . to the middle and lower bourgeoisie”, and we might add today to a growing yet still limited degree, to the working class as well.

One result of this quantitative leap is a certain change in the physical character of universities and other institutions of higher education. While the more traditional, comparatively quiet and cloistered conditions of the older universities remains, the new colleges acquire a mass character, and become more like factories of study. The large student canteen, with cheap subsidised meals, plain tables and chairs, cheap utilitarian crockery and cutlery, the noise of hundreds eating simultaneously—all seems very similar to a factory canteen, and very far removed from the sedate High Table atmosphere. The superficial and somewhat juvenile atmosphere of the old debating societies makes way for the mass meeting and the serious discussion intended to lead to some specific decisions and action, and no longer to be terminated simply by a vote to express an opinion in general principle. In this new mass atmosphere students acquire a greater sense of cohesion, and of their collective power. It is a situation which is more conducive to propaganda, to organisation and to speedy mass action.

The development of communications, too, has had its effect. Students, being mainly single men and women, are naturally less home-tied than other adults; but now there is an increase in mobility and communication. News and personal contact between one college and another takes place in a matter of

<sup>12</sup> See P. Reshetov: ‘The World of Capital and the Alienated Youth’, *The Youth & Contemporary Society*, Moscow, 1970, p. 85.

hours, even of minutes; and the speed up of international transport and communications, and the greatly increased habit of young people to travel abroad, means that there is a great increase in the international mobility of students too. As a result, ideas flow from one country to another very rapidly; solidarity actions are more easily organised; personal contacts between students of one country with those of another takes place more frequently and with greater ease. There is no doubt that this international mobility was one of the factors leading to the outcrop of big student actions in 1967-9 in Western Europe, aided, of course, by the news coverage of these events, which also helped to spread ideas of student revolt across the globe.

But the student population is not simply larger; its social composition has undergone changes, too. This is a natural outcome of the changed function of the university, of its becoming more directly a servant of big business, the army and of other sections of the State. Formerly students were mainly sons of the bourgeoisie, trained in the arts and in law, to become administrators, leaders of the bureaucracy, higher civil servants, colonial administrators, teachers and professors, even Tory MP's. Such categories are still required; but with the growing need for trained personnel demanded by developed capitalist society, the scientific and technological revolution, and the militarised state, it has become necessary to reach out beyond the families of the rich and the aristocracy, and to scoop up the sons and daughters of the small and middle bourgeoisie, and even from the working class. The latter still remains a minority, ranging from some 26 per cent in Britain to about 12 per cent in France, 5 per cent in West Germany and 3 per cent in Spain.<sup>13</sup>

### New Problems

These new armies of students, no longer drawn mainly from the upper ranks of the Establishment, face entirely new problems. They have to make their way without rich parents; even in countries like Britain where they receive State grants, these are so inadequate as to face students with permanent

<sup>13</sup> Britain's lead over other capitalist countries as regards the percentage of working class students is challenged in a recent report (*Statistical Supplement to the Eighth Report*, Universities Central Council on Admissions, September, 1971), which argues that the basis on which figures are calculated in Britain place in the category of "working class" a number of students who are not so classified in other countries. By adjusting the figures to make them more comparable, the report arrives at a set of figures which do not alter Britain's percentage of working class students but which increase those of other countries, and in consequence place France, West Germany, Norway, Sweden and Denmark all above Britain.

financial worries throughout their student careers. Their wardrobe is limited and their clothes utilitarian rather than fashionable; their meals are modest and their general pattern of life tends to be frugal. Work during vacations, in order to pick up some extra cash—and the work is usually unskilled and low-paid (postal sorting, holiday camp waitresses, harvesting, deck chair attendants at seaside resorts, etc.)—is now a common practice amongst British students. And at the end of it all is the uncertainty and the insecurity. Even with qualifications, the student knows he will have to enter the capitalist rat race—and is not even certain that he will find a job to which his qualifications entitle him.

Above all, he becomes more and more aware that he is being trained to become a cog in the capitalist machine, serving the interests of the big international companies, of the military-industrial complex and its imperialist State.

How far this has gone was revealed, for example, during the crisis at Warwick University in 1970.<sup>14</sup> The connection between this university and big business is revealed by a look at the personnel who make up the Council of the University. It includes directors of Hawker Siddeley, Phoenix Assurance Co., Lloyds Bank,<sup>15</sup> Courtaulds, Reed Paper Group, Barclays Bank, Portland Cement, Rootes Motors, Jaguar Cars, British Leyland Motor Holdings. A veritable roll call of major British monopolies, many of them connected with the car industry whose interests the University is expected to serve. Noticeable also, as pointed out by E. P. Thompson, at least three of the companies concerned have interests in South Africa. All these representatives of big business generally dominate the Council of the University, determine its policies and administration. "When it comes to the crunch," declares Thompson, "they win".<sup>16</sup>

Under these circumstances it is really not surprising to find that Warwick University was urged by the Vice-Chancellor in 1966 to place "automobile engineering . . . high in the University's priorities". Nor that the University has been carrying out research on metal fatigue (Massey-Ferguson), fuel-injection system (Rover Company), vehicle instrumentation (Rootes and Ford Motor Company), and fatigue in tyres (Dunlop). Thompson correctly draws attention to "the danger that some local industrialists might see the University largely as a laboratory for their own research and development".

<sup>14</sup> See E. P. Thompson (Editor): *Warwick University Ltd*: London, 1970, for an excellent analysis of these developments.

<sup>15</sup> E. P. Thompson (op cit) notes that at least 13 of the 31 directors of Lloyds Bank are governors, pro-chancellors, etc., of the universities and colleges. (p. 31).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 61.

But the University was not only pressured to act as a technological aid (and a very economic one, at that) for the motor monopolies, but also to assist in training its management personnel. Consequently, "at some point the Institute of Directors' Professor of Business Studies (Houlden)<sup>17</sup> the Pressed Steel Professor of Industrial Relations (Clegg)<sup>18</sup> the Barclays Bank Professor of Management Information Systems (R. I. Tricker) and the Clarkson Professor of Marketing (J. D. Waterworth) were brought together in a single Jumbo Pack as the School of Industrial and Business Studies".<sup>19</sup>

A brochure produced for the University in 1967 in order to explain the general nature of the management courses proposed by this "Jumbo Pack" included the following:

"Basic concepts of profitability, risk and uncertainty in relation to investment, the management and evaluation of assets, capital budgeting under certainty, the incidence of taxation, capital replacement decisions. The choice of finance, the new issue market, institutional leaders, leasing, capital gearing and the cost of capital, taxation and company policies, take-overs, long-term financial planning."

### The General Trend

We have taken Warwick University as an example, but the trend is noticeable elsewhere, not only in Britain but throughout the capitalist world, and especially in the United States, where the tie-up between the campus and the military-industrial complex is far more advanced. In a speech at a Parents' Convocation in 1961, John A. Hannah, at that time President of Michigan State University, urged: "Our colleges and universities must be regarded as bastions of our defence, as essential to the preservation of our country and our way of life as supersonic bombers, nuclear-powered submarines, and inter-continental ballistic missiles".<sup>20</sup>

Building on the developments of World War Two, when US universities in the words of Gerard Piel, "transformed themselves into vast weapons development laboratories",<sup>21</sup> the US military

authorities expanded this co-operation after the war as part of their world strategy for "containing communism" and pursuing the Cold War. For this purpose the Defence Department was prompted to "establish military research centres at selected universities, to enlist the help of university administrators in the creation of independent research organisation (as in the case of the Institute for Defence Analyses), and to offer financial incentives to universities which agree to adopt an existing facility (as witnessed in the University of Rochester's agreement to administer the Centre for Naval Analyses). Where direct university participation has not proven feasible, the Pentagon has found it expedient to create a network of para-universities— independent research organisations which boast a "campus-like environment" and adhere to the many rituals of academic life (the most famous example of this kind of institution is the RANK Corporation).<sup>22</sup>

It is not only military weapons that arouse the military interests, and neither therefore do they limit their university links to questions of science and technology in their most direct and practical sense.

"... even the humanists, who had previously been confined to such servile chores as consulting on official histories of the last war, have found more positive assignments in 'area and language training for military personnel and studies of certain strategic peoples'. With funds abounding for projects in every field of learning, the university campus has come to harbour a new kind of condottieri, mercenaries of science and scholarship with doctorates and ready for hire on studies done to contract specification".<sup>23</sup>

As one would expect, the military tie-up of the universities and research institutes also serves the interests of big business. Technological spin-offs from military research are sheer profit for private industry, especially when they do not pay for the research itself. And how substantial this research is indicated by the fact that the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory and the Los Alamos Scientific Lab., which come under the University of California, have a combined staff of no less than 11,850 scientists, technicians and support personnel, and an annual budget in 1968 of 288 million dollars.

Among the Trustees of Columbia University are directors of Lockheed Aircraft Corporation and General Dynamics, the first and third largest contractors for the US Defence Department for the year 1969. Of the top 75 contractors for the year 1968, directors from 19 are represented on the governing body of the Massachusetts Institute of

<sup>17</sup> He is also Operational Research Consultant for NATO.

<sup>18</sup> Formerly of the Prices and Incomes Board, and the Donovan Commission.

<sup>19</sup> E. P. Thompson, *op cit.* p. 74.

<sup>20</sup> Cited in *The University-Military-Police Complex* (Compiled by Michael Klare: North American Congress on Latin America: New York, 1970). This unique study is a startling exposure of the extent to which US institutions of higher education have been made to serve the interests of the US military.

<sup>21</sup> US House of Representatives, Committee on Government Operations, *Conflict Between the Federal Research Programs and the Nation's Goals for Higher Education*: Washington, 1965, p. 362.

<sup>22</sup> *The University-Military-Police Complex*: *op cit.* p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Gerard Piel: Talk to the American Philosophical Society, 1965.

Technology. If one takes multiple directorships into account, the total reaches 41.

Thus, the traditional idea of universities as independent centres of knowledge and research completely unconnected with sordid questions of war and politics, has completely gone. Not that it was ever true; but in the past two decades the university, especially in the United States, has tended to become completely subservient to the plans of big business and the military.

### Police and the Universities

It is not only the military and the CIA which has a big stake in the US universities. In recent years the police, too, have strengthened their connections with these institutions. More than 750 American colleges now offer courses in "police science"—a fivefold increase since 1960, which is partly explained by the deepening crisis within the United States, and also by the new turn towards taking an interest in the police forces of Latin America in view of the recent tendency for military officers in some Latin American countries to adopt anti-imperialist positions. Police training and instruction by US personnel in Third World countries has become normal routine, and the universities are increasingly being involved in such enterprises.

"Both police and military officials" writes Webb<sup>24</sup> "believe that sophisticated systems and weapons being introduced require manpower with more than high school education. . . . New 'command and control' systems, communications equipment, 'night vision devices', and computerised intelligence systems can only be operated by skilled and trained personnel. A college education is now being viewed by top police officials as yet another weapon for controlling insurgent groups within the population". As a consequence, over 65,000 police are being trained in this way in the American Colleges.

This massive invasion by the military and the police, alongside the subordination of the universities and the colleges to the plans and programmes of the big monopolies, has been one of the most powerful factors generating the wave of revolt among US students. Such army and police interference has not yet reached the same proportions in British institutions of higher education, but no one should doubt that the same process is taking place. A recent report reveals that a secret and heavily guarded department in one British college of art turned out to be producing military maps, allegedly for the US military authorities in Britain.

The new requirements which US monopoly capitalism demands from the universities affects their whole structure, curricula and administration. In the big mass universities the small, quiet, intimate tutorial retreats in the face of large-scale education. The ratio of students to tutors mounts. In the worst cases in the US hundreds of students, packed in lecture halls, are taught via closed-circuit television, with the professor simultaneously lecturing to hundreds. The state departments and private monopolies which provide funds for different disciplines in the colleges demand an ever narrower specialisation. Physical and biomedical sciences, chemistry and engineering receive the major preference, and the humanities hardly anything. At a time when wide sections of people are insisting on more control over their own destinies, on greater participation in decision-making in all institutions, and an extension of democratic rights, the military industrial complex seeks more and more stringent and authoritarian domination over all aspects of university life. The centralised bureaucratic state demands the centralised bureaucratic university.

In the face of these developments it is not surprising that students have rebelled. It would be strange if they had not done so. They have revolted against the function of the university as an annexe of big business and the military. They have protested against the lack of democracy. They have struck for higher student grants. They have organised sit-ins and other actions in defence of freedom of speech, against the keeping of secret files on students, to change the curricula, in protest against bureaucratic and reactionary administrators or chancellors. But they have acted not only in connection with their own problems at the universities; they have taken part, too, in major political manifestations, demonstrating against Greek fascism and apartheid, or in support of Bobby Seale, and, above all, against the war in Vietnam.

The importance of these developments should not be minimised. Where formerly, in the major capitalist countries, the radicalisation of students was confined to a relative handful who broke away from their original environment, and joined the revolution, now we are witnessing a mass phenomenon. Whole sections are beginning to cut away, to protest against the defects in the university system, and to question and challenge the system of society itself.

One should not over-estimate how far this process has gone. It still embraces only a minority of students. But the fact that students are turning towards the revolutionary movement not individually but as part of a growing mass trend is in itself a significant victory for the revolution which is only to be welcomed.

<sup>24</sup> Lee Webb: "Training for Repression": *The University-Military-Police-Complex*, op cit., p. 63.