The Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties: Voices of Reaction, Protest, and Permeation
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The Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties:
Voice of Reaction, Protest, and Permeation

Most of the ‘voices’ from the late 1950s to the middle 1970s – to deploy a metaphor not uncommon in historical discourse – are those that one ‘hears’ in the archives, though the period was characterized by voices raised in rock songs, poetry readings, experimental theatre, teach-ins, and conferences. Sometimes, personal letters and diaries give us insights into what people believe and why they behave in the way they do, not available from official documents. For recent history, archival sources are accessible in Germany, Italy, and France, as well as the United Kingdom and the United States; there is plenty of material with which to support the contention that the cultural revolution of the Long Sixties was international in scope. Although there was no political revolution nor any possibility of one (the fundamental fallacy that rendered much of the action futile), the 1960s was a time of political manifestos, many badly typed and amateurishly reproduced, sometimes partly hand-written: to find these, we have to go to the archives. But as archives can be tiresomely full of items of little real interest, and frustratingly silent about pressingly important issues, one needs to draw also on other types of sources. The published memoirs of those who lived through the 1960s sometimes articulate themes only hinted at in contemporary archival sources. The ‘voices’ of people at all levels of society are often to be found in interviews published in newspapers and magazines; particularly valuable are opinion polls elaborated with direct quotations from the persons interviewed. The readiness with which today’s researchers reach for their tape recorders invites scepticism. I have made use of interviews conducted by others, but have conducted none of my own. Where I have personal memories, I have sought corroboration or correction from the written record.

Long enveloped in nostalgia, the 1960s are today widely recognized as a

2 Personal reminiscences of the 1960s are, in their own way, valuable. Among recent ones are I Want to

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suitable case for scholarly treatment, though French scholars, still largely relying on well-known published sources, continue to emphasize ‘contestation’ and the emotive year, 1968. Others prefer to emphasize ‘measured judgement’: the tolerant and progressive responses on the part of those in authority, and the moderation on the part of protesters. Michael Seidman, for example, demonstrates from the Paris police archives the collaboration between students and police in rooting out the dangerous gun-carrying elements. Society, rather than being dominated by dialectical conflict, was permeated by new ideas.

Implicit in the notion of a cultural revolution is the premise that the preceding era of the late 1940s and early and middle 1950s was a time of conservative attitudes and values and rigid conventions. Thus, this article begins with voices from the 1950s that support this premise. Conservative, and indeed reactionary, ‘voices’ persisted throughout the 1960s; that they were, on the whole, submerged, if not washed away, by the progressive


Seidman, Imaginary Revolution, pp. 105-9, 114, 172, 180-5.
tides released by the cultural revolution is a tribute to its potency. Furthermore, much of the conflict and violence of the period was provoked by the agents of reaction, above all police forces, which in all societies acted as states within the state. 1

Next, the article moves to the voices of protest. The cultural revolution came about because of a unique convergence of structural circumstances (principally affluence, consumer-oriented technology, and the 1940s' baby boom, resulting in every Western society having a high proportion of young people, who, thanks to affluence, had unprecedented security and confidence) and ideological circumstances (on the one hand, Marxism melded with Freudianism to create a united front against all forms of 'repression'; on the other, a revulsion against McCarthyism and cold war conservatism and a revived faith in due process and democratic accountability). Certain international developments – the nuclear stalemate, events in Algeria, Central Africa and South America, and, above all, the Vietnam War – offered enough plausible evidence of the alleged evils of capitalism and imperialism to create and sustain a new and unique culture of protest. This article draws the crucial distinction between 'fruitful' protest and 'futile' protest: these are analytical, shorthand terms, and do not necessarily embody value judgements. The latter, overtly aiming at changing 'the system' (actually, given the complex way in which society had evolved, an impossibility) and sometimes extremely violent, is central to the Long Sixties as a closed period of great drama and excitement. The former, generally non-violent, and aiming at removing specific abuses, is central to the cultural revolution as a permanent transformation in relations between men and women, adults and children, blacks and whites, provinces and metropoles, in lifestyles, and in the abolition of the furtiveness and guilt that surrounded sex in the 1940s and 1950s. In practice, the two types of protest were closely interrelated; there being no golden ages, it was probably impossible to have one without the other. Societies in the 1960s were characterized by a tapestry of interweaving movements challenging existing authorities and conventions: movements, for instance, on behalf of the homeless, the aged, the environment, consumers, architectural reform, and such potent, but gentle, organizations as Amnesty International for political prisoners or Release for young drug offenders. In the protests on behalf of black civil rights, or black liberation, women's liberation and gay liberation, the rights of Basques or Northern Ireland Catholics, there were both fruitful and futile elements. If there was a 'counter-culture', it was deeply implicated in commercial, entrepreneurial society. Listening to the 'voices' of parents, lawyers, and scholars shows that, in many cases, adults,

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1 See Marwick, The Sixties, pp. 27-30.
The Long Sixties

far from being in conflict with the student generation, were highly supportive of it.

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The popular songs of the 1950s were highly conventional in the sentiments they expressed, particularly in extolling monogamy and marriage: the classic example, of course, is the ballad 'Love and marriage / Go together like a horse and carriage'. This, inevitably, was an American song; and while continental European popular music had vigorous national characteristics of its own, British popular music was entirely dominated by, or derivative of, American music. The unexpected emergence and triumph (for a time) of British popular culture (headed by the Beatles, Mary Quant, Sean Connery, and many others) – *les années anglaises*, in the words of a French journalist1 – gave a special colouring to one aspect of the Cultural Revolution.

Few people in the United States of April 1957 would have taken much exception to a speech made by the Hon. Ralph W. Gwinn of New York in the House of Representatives. As an expression of conservatism in the 1950s, this document is of double value in that it is actually a source within a source, the congressman quoting a letter that Robert B. Dresser, a lawyer from Providence, Rhode Island, had written the previous month to the president, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Gwinn began: 'Mr Speaker, there are some things which the president cannot legally do. Other things he ought not to do. However, both the President and the Congress have operated for so many years beyond the bounds of the Constitution that they have grown morally insensitive to that fact.' He then read out the Dresser letter:

Dear Mr President

... Some years ago, the late President Woodrow Wilson made the following statement, which has been often quoted: 'The history of Liberty is the history of the limitation of governmental power, not the increase of it.' For some years past, the Federal Government has been encroaching steadily upon the rights and powers of the states. It has built up a huge bureaucracy until today there are over 2,400,000 civilian employees on the Federal payroll in the executive branch ... The end result of all this if continued will be the substitution of some form of socialism for our American system of private enterprise and constitutional government.

Dresser continued in this vein throughout the 1960s, mainly through taking full-page advertisements in the *Providence Journal*, which seemed more and more reactionary as the political consensus shifted.2 Gwinn had

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1 See Marwick, 'Les "Années Anglaises"'.
2 Robert B. Dresser Papers, box 1, Hoover Archives on War, Peace and Revolution, Stanford Univer-
referred to Woodrow Wilson as almost a contemporary; it is impossible to imagine politicians in the 1960s doing so.

Middle America was still looking askance at Elvis Presley and his like, since he openly defied the stuffy conventions of the time. Prosperous middle-class Bill Van Dyke, resident in Los Angeles, wrote on 29 October 1957 to his parents in Memphis, enclosing a cutting from that day’s Los Angeles Mirror News: the paper spoke for respectable middle-class sentiment on the West Coast and the sentiment was obviously shared by the Van Dyke family:

Sexhibitionist Elvis Presley had come at last in person to a visibly palpitating, adolescent female Los Angeles to give all the little girls’ libidos the jolt of their lives. Six thousand kids, predominantly feminine by a ratio of 10 to 1, jammed the Pan Pacific Auditorium to the rafters last night. They screamed their lungs out without letup as Elvis shook, bumped, and did the grinds from one side of the stage to the other until he was a quivering heap on the floor 35 minutes later. With anyone else the police would have closed the show 10 minutes after it started. But not Elvis, our new national teen-age hero.1

In its issue of November 1958, the right-wing monthly magazine, American Mercury, told its readers what to think of what it pedantically spelt out as ‘Rock and Roll’, managing to associate that musical form with its own hatred of ‘the international welfare state’ and racial intermixing: ‘Evidence of the systematic lowering of literary, dramatic, artistic, and musical standards stare you in the face on all sides. It is obviously a major item in the brain-washing technique necessary to clinching the power of the international welfare state … That the sinister program of racial intermixture could advance so far without noticeably arousing the wrath of American parents will forever remain a mystery.’

To upper-class, conservative Republicans, the advent to the presidency of John F. Kennedy signalled the collapse of all standards. As Elizabeth Churchill Brown put it to a friend: ‘At least the communist tactics are recognizable. Here – the agony is the headlong collapse of everything – honor, decency, normal courtesy; the arrogance, the deceit.’ Commenting on what she sees as the loss of standards in government, she continues: ‘There is a ruthless cynicism about it that makes FDR look like a patriot.’ She refers to a Kennedy meeting as a ‘Moscow get-together’, and suggests that ‘the goal of all this is the total transfer of power to the UN and this … group of sophisticated Marxists.’ A letter of August 1963 goes as follows:

1 Van Dyke Papers, box 7, folder 192 [Mississippi Valley Collection, Memphis State University].
You asked about the race thing. It is unspeakable and more and more taking on its underlying purpose. Many of the negroes are waking up but it's the old story, they are getting results daily and you can't fight success. What is more clear each day, of course, is that the inner core doesn't want success. Signs of the times – the Washington thing may pass off without trouble [Martin Luther King's 1963 March on Washington]. At the request of the worried Negro leaders, the churches are moving in and white people (not just communists) will participate. Me – I'm getting out! ... What even the unthinking are beginning to notice is that the demands keep increasing. People agreed with many of the initial demands that now they are seeing results of appeasement ... One thing there is many maudes among the negroes – and they are not proud of the beatnik type of activity. I doubt very much if it is going to help politically. They [the Democrats] had most of the Negroes – but will lose masses of poor whites who can't help themselves.¹

Against the word 'maudes' there has been written in an explanation that Maude is 'our old fashioned negroe [sic] cook'. Here we have absolutely the voice of right-wing patricians, those who hanker after the old-fashioned, docile 'negroe'.

Reactionary 'voices', obviously, were not confined to the upper class. The American archives, particularly those at Cornell University, are rich in angry letters from alumni and parents outraged at the activities of student protesters, black and white, and at the reaction of liberal academics, these letters coming from all social classes. But first I want to tap into some 'voices' from France, as represented in the archetypal right-wing daily with a huge working-class readership, Le Parisien libéré. The writing, it is true, is being done by middle-class journalists, but they undoubtedly knew how to appeal to the prejudices of the readership, an impression amply confirmed in the letters column. The behaviour of mods and rockers at certain English seaside resorts over the Easter weekend of 1964 certainly attracted much attention in the British press, but Le Parisien libéré chose to adopt a quite fantastic line, using diagrams and drawings (it had no photographs; there, of course, being none of the horrific events it invented) to conjure up the actions of the young people as a military pincer movement against the harmless seaside towns: 'A thousand noisy “teddy boys” sacked the tiny town, terrorizing the London families who had come to spend the Easter weekend at the resort ... Pretty well everywhere in the world, we have youth stupefied by its own cynicism and violence, cut off from the rest of humanity that has difficulty in recognizing here its own children. Is the nuclear era one which is returning to primitive barbarity?'

The article made a particular point of referring to the way, it said, the

¹ Elizabeth Churchill Brown Papers, box 61, undated letters, clearly of 1961 and Aug 1963 respectively, Hoover Archives.
'young hooligans' were 'encouraged by the hysterical shouts of their little girlfriends' and incited by 'the girls, yelling more loudly than the boys'.1

Eight months earlier, the French middle-class press had had a golden opportunity to express its vicious hostility to the new youth culture. France's first open-air rock concert took place at La Nation in Paris over the night of 22-23 June 1963, attracting 100,000 participants (supervised by 2,000 police). 'There are laws,' said Paris Presse, 'police and courts. It's time to make use of them before the savages of the Place de la Nation turn the nation’s future upside down.' 'What difference', asked Figaro, 'is there between the twist ... and Hitler's speeches in the Reichstag, apart from the leaning towards music?'2 Such views were still being expressed at the end of the decade, but by then, as we shall see shortly, adult 'voices' supportive of the youth culture had become much stronger.

During the continuing Free Speech Movement turmoil at Berkeley in late 1964, comments by police officers who took great delight in roughhandling those they saw as pampered university students, were meticu-

lously noted down: 'We should do like they do in them foreign countries; beat 'em senseless first, then throw 'em in the bin'; 'They shouldna let them beatniks and kooks in here in the first place.'3 Four years later, on Wednesday, 28 August 1968, at the demonstration outside the Democratic Convention in Chicago, the police voice seemed to be reduced to one ter-

rifying word. As the officers lined up, and began jogging on the spot, they raised their arms and chanted 'Kill, kill, kill'. They very nearly did. They swung round and charged into the demonstrators in front of the Hilton Hotel. Heads were smashed, limbs were torn from sockets, people were trampled under foot: as a result of the tremendous pressure, the huge plate-glass window of the Hilton Haymarket Lounge shattered inwards; demonstrators and ordinary passers-by crashed through, many suffering horrific wounds from the shards of glass. The police poured in behind, clubbing indiscriminately.4 All of this was seen on American television. Then Middle America was encouraged to voice its opinion: a majority rejected the view that the police had used too much force.5 The brutality of the Chicago police was, by a slight margin, greater than that of the French police. The actions of the latter are partially explicable by the belief of Paris Police Prefect, Maurice Grimaud, that Paris was seriously menaced

1 Le Parisien libéré, 31 March 1964.
3 'Summary of the Sproul Hall Sit In and Arrests', typescript compiled from eyewitness accounts by student participants [Dec. 1964] [Berkeley, University of California at Berkeley], Bancroft Library, Malcolm Burnstein Papers, box 2, folder 26, BANC MSS 99/249C.
5 Ibid., pp. 283-4.
by revolution: 'there existed two powers in Paris, that of the left in their redoubts and that of the others in the rest of the city'; 'in the fire of action, we never doubted, my colleagues and I, the possibility of the insurgents taking power.'\(^1\)

Cornell University (compared, say, with Columbia in New York) had a particularly liberal administration: though somewhat pedantic, the president, James Perkins, was in many ways a model representative of measured judgement, having deliberately instituted a scheme to bring black students into this upper-class, Ivy League University. The events of spring 1969 provoked a treasure-trove of correspondence: a group of black students occupied the Student Union (Willard Straight Hall), then, learning over the phone that they were to be attacked by armed white students, themselves acquired rifles, before coming out peacefully with the rifles above their heads, all this being followed by a series of student teach-ins. One upper-class alumnus revealed the strong current of violence within reactionary opinion: 'Why were 100 students permitted for 36 hours to hold Willard Straight Hall? Civil authorities outside of Cornell should have been called to evict them after due notice to the insurrectionists. Of course it would have been a tragedy if persons had been killed in this effort, but the preservation of law and order often requires the sacrifice of lives and property.'\(^2\)

A very elderly alumnus announced that he intended to bring his revolver to the next alumni reunion (he was told he couldn't). Such people called for the dismissal of Perkins, and were able to exert considerable pressure through threatening to withdraw financial support and cancel legacies. Other writers had no such powers, but certainly very strong opinions. In one uneducated scrawl, we find the following: 'I would throw the niggers out of Cornell'; and, 'P.S. niggers have been Africa [sic] millions of years and created absolutely nothing; they are animals.'\(^3\) 'The apparent idealism of a working-class parent climaxes in a call for violent retribution:

I am writing to you as a parent that has entrusted two sons to Cornell. I encouraged their choice. I wanted for them the very best in higher education. I wanted them further prepared for adult life ... I hoped they would further ways to give of themselves in a worldly and honorable way for the betterment of all mankind. With the eldest son we have invested four years with Cornell ... And my other son, now completing his freshman year — is this not a tragic beginning, tragic in that he has put his faith and future in the hands of those that when faced with

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anarchy rather than stand tall as men, sink down and crawl away. My boys are good boys ... Both work at the University to help pay the way, both maintain a decent average, both have pride in their College as have I. Both now have shame as have I ... Now when there is armed insurrection the state militia should have been brought in, the grounds cleared of all students and personnel, and sufficient fire power set up, with an ultimatum to surrender to arrest and prosecution, that the building could be blasted to pieces if need be, rather than surrender to revolution.1

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When we think of the 1960s, we think of student protests, and the students we usually have in mind are French students on the Paris barricades in 1968, or perhaps white American students at Berkeley in 1964. Yet, historically, the most important single set of student protest was that of the Southern black colleges in 1960, comprising sit-ins, demonstrations, and a march of about four thousand students on the Louisiana capital, Baton Rouge.2 White students in the North were stirred into action. Here is the ‘voice’ of one of them from classy East Coast Amherst College:

My friends and myself felt that we, as students, should do something to demonstrate our sympathy and give our assistance to the Southern sit-ins ... Simultaneously, the student council, Christian Association, and the student newspaper proposed a march on Washington on Friday 15 in order to show our fellow students in the South that we supported their fight for human dignity ... The students who picketed were Christian, Jew, and atheist ... All had withstood the censure of a large segment of the student body and many had disobeyed their parents' wishes in coming.3

The blanket term for the left-wing protest movements, mainly staffed by students, was ‘The New Left’. In Europe, this was from the start a movement of Marxists disillusioned with the Soviet Union and the official Communist parties; in the United States, it began in 1961 as the relatively non-ideological Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which, however, became steadily more receptive to Marxist doctrine as the United States was increasingly perceived as the quintessence of capitalism and imperialism. Whites and blacks joined together in the brave and constructive civil rights work of the ‘Freedom Summer’ of 1964, and it was white students

1 Undated Letter, Perkins Papers, box 37, folder 12.
3 Statement by student leader encl. in letter by a student participant to Edward Meeman [Mississippi Valley Collection, Memphis State University], Meeman Papers, box 39, folder 1.
returning from this who initiated the ‘Free Speech’ demonstrations at Berkeley that autumn (to which I return in the next section). Then the anti-Vietnam War campaign became the all-encompassing cause in all the Western countries, while soon the call for civil rights became the demand for ‘Liberation’, for blacks, for women, for gays. The more strident ‘voices’ are familiar. Black writer, poet, and militant community organizer, Le Roi Jones, made this comment on the Newark, New Jersey, riots, which broke out on 13 July 1967, and in which, during the five days it lasted, twenty-three people were killed, 1,200 were injured, and 1,300 arrested: ‘We understand that this unrest was a retaliation against the forces of oppression, brutality, and legalized evil that exist within the city of Newark and that we citizens have the right to rebel against an oppressive, illiterate governmental structure that does not even represent our will. We will rule Newark or no one will! We will govern ourselves or no one will!’

That was the public voice of black separatism. Much more intriguing is this holograph letter from a black woman to Black Panther leader Huey Newton, beginning ‘Dear Brother Huey … ‘:

I am not a Marxist or even a revolutionist, I am just Sharon, trying to search my soul to find what way I may be of help to those who are risking their necks in these dangerous times to help black people ‘get it together’. I am not a crusader, just a concerned person. The bag that I am into now is very conservative because of my 3-year-old son. However, I was brought up black, and now that I have finally got my self unbrain-washed, I realize that if all I ever do is give lip service to my beliefs, I cannot stand as a person in front of my son. Right now I’m searching for information and knowledge. I’m going to register to vote and join some ‘concerned’ organization in my community … My heart aches to see how we are annihilating [sic] one another while the ‘master’ stands around laughing at us. This must stop. An organization like the Panthers is a beginning and I want to help get it to continue. I haven’t always approved of your tactics, but I know some things are unavoidable.

That is the voice of someone moving, in a measured way, towards support for the separationist Black Panther Party.

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It is noteworthy how aware leading proponents of women’s rights were of living through ‘revolutionary’ (in the sense in which I use the word rather

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than the Marxist sense) times. A mimeographed document of June 1968, expressing the 'voices' of women in a students' organization in the American South, drove home the argument that sex was an issue in exactly the same way that race was, and that separate action was as necessary for women as it was for blacks. The document conceded that female students were treated fairly equally and did not understand the real oppression of women that lay in the bearing of children and marriage:

Marriage, as we know it, is for women, as integration is for blacks. It is the atomization of a sex so as to render it politically powerless ... We are brainwashed by the media by sexy commercials and talk in the movement about screwing as often as possible; many of us have already been on the pill for longer than we can medically afford. And a good many of us, I would suspect, are desperately screwing some guy because we think we should and wonder what our friends would think if we didn't at all for a while ... in the life of each woman, the most immediate oppressor, however unwilling he may be in theory to play that role, is 'the man'.

The moderate National Organization for Women (NOW), founded by three hundred men and women meeting in Washington in October 1966, had declared its belief that 'the time has come for a new movement toward free equality for all women in America, and toward a truly equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the world-wide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders.'

Early gay activism on the West Coast sometimes linked gay liberation to the Vietnam War: a flyer of 15 October 1969 was headed 'No Vietnamese Ever Called Me a Queer'. Another flyer, headed 'Homosexuals for Peace', announced a march in San Francisco to be held on 15 November 1969: 'We will not help to perpetuate a society that oppresses us and discriminates against us, nor will we fight in its army. We will join the fight to end racism and exploitation of all minorities in every phase of every institution ... Not only is it QUEER that young men are sent halfway round the world to kill each other while they are imprisoned for loving each other, it is perverted and unnatural.'

A 'Fact Sheet' of January 1969 with, incidentally, an interesting early use of the term 'counter-culture', explained: 'The Gay Liberation Front is a nation-wide coalition of revolutionary homosexual organizations creating a radical Counter Culture within the homosexual lifestyles. Politically it's part of the radical "Movement" working to suppress and eliminate dis-

1 [Los Angeles, University of California at Los Angeles Library] Women's Liberation Collection, box 177, folder 1.
crimination and oppression against homosexuals in industry, the mass media, government, schools, and churches.¹

In May 1968, there had briefly appeared at the Sorbonne a 'Committee of Action of Revolutionary Pédérasts'. Gays had a powerful supporter in (the very actively heterosexual) Jean-Paul Sartre, and he joined with them in the launching in September 1970 of the first gay journal, Tout. This journal was aware of the US example; a second gay journal founded in January 1971, L'Idiot Liberté, however, nicely demonstrating that significant national differences existed within the common Cultural Revolution, refused to associate gay liberation with the 'American-British Counter Culture': 'In the United States, it makes sense to talk about pop: young people there have created as many bands as there are universities or communities; what is pop(ular) there is elitist here. In Italy the revolution is shaping up against pop (try talking to a Fiat worker about Jimi Hendrix). In Britain, pop is developing as a counter-revolutionary soporific (fall asleep to the sound of the Beatles).²

We misunderstand the Cultural Revolution if we concentrate solely on political protest and movements against racism and sexual discrimination: there were masses of other movements, on behalf of the homeless, for penal and educational reform, to protect consumers, to safeguard the environment, many sponsored by adults, and in particular, by white, middle-aged, middle-class women. As is well known, two great classics of the period were written by women, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961) by Jane Jacobs and The Silent Spring (1962) by Rachel Carson. It was a group of Memphis housewives who inaugurated the, eventually successful, campaign against the building of a freeway through midtown Memphis and beautiful Overton Park.³ Most impressive of all were the 'citizens' initiatives' in West Germany, in which women frequently played a leading part: these included the Rote Punkt Aktion in Hanover in 1969 (resisting local transport fare increases), Aktion Kinderspielplatz (calling for children's playgrounds) in Munich in 1972, and the housewives' boycott against high meat prices in Northrhine-Westphalia in 1973.⁴

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¹ Bancroft Library, Social Protest Collection, box 8, F21.
⁴ F. Karl, Die Bürgerinitiativen, soziale und politische Aspekte einer neuen sozialen Bewegung (Frankfurt am Main, 1981).
What was happening during the Cultural Revolution was rather more complex than the standard nostalgic accounts suggest. Was there really a 'Counter-Culture' and, if so, what was it? We have to start with the oft-invoked 'youth culture' of the late 1950s. This was essentially working-class teenage culture, with its own rituals and obsessions, and with anti-social gangs on its fringes; it was, in fact, more a semi-autonomous part of, rather than a challenge to, the convention-bound society of the time. By the mid-1960s, it had been absorbed into what was predominantly a middle-class student culture, partly creating, partly responding to, the multiplicity of experimental and innovative ideas and movements that were such an inescapable feature of the time. There had always been commercial links between 'youth' and established society, involving adult mediators and entrepreneurs; it now became fashionable to be young, or to pretend to be, to take part in the practices of 'youth culture'. Here is a young adult, a Cambridge don, who had just returned from a visit to the United States, reporting to his senior colleague there: 'for health and sanity these last months, I've been going to twist and shake clubs which have sprung up all over London. We have a new group who may be visiting America soon, and here are worshipped as I think no other entertainer ever has been (I mean that – it's fantastic!). Called The Beatles, 4 kids from Liverpool, rough, cheeky, swingy, very much war-time kids, and full of gutsy energy. I must say I fell for their stuff when I got back. I never thought to twist and shake – but I have and I do ... It is a relief to lose oneself in the hypnotic euphoria of the music.' Some older people were captivated as well: an over-forty was quoted as saying that 'the older folks like it because you move quite separately and therefore don't have to worry about your partner's feet. And the movements are so easy.'

So 'youth culture' merged into what the US scholar Theodore Roszak, in an article in The Nation of 25 March 1968, baptized as 'The Counter-Culture'. Like so many of the Marxist-inspired commentators of the time, he maintained that this 'Counter-Culture' would eventually take over from 'bourgeois culture'. Actually the 'Counter-Culture', in its most 'fruitful' aspects, rapidly permeated society. Its less fruitful, if not entirely 'futile', elements can best be grasped through consideration of two of its favourite slogans, 'Changing the World' and 'Having a Good Time'. Most young people (and many older ones) were able to persuade themselves that they could simultaneously do both; others that, in doing the latter, they were automatically accomplishing the former (and, given the austere, gloomy authoritarian world of the 1940s and 1950s, can one say that they were

totally wrong). The new sexual permissiveness and the sudden proliferation of drug-taking can to a large degree be explained by the hedonism explicit in ‘Having a Good Time’, inflected by a genuine desire to overthrow old taboos and create new freedoms. The spread of drug-taking (the most disastrous single legacy of the 1960s) was greatly accelerated by the absurd (and self-serving) dogma of the mind-expanding and enlightening qualities of psychedelic drugs. The extremist SDS leaders at Columbia University during the intense violence of 1968–9 were Mark Rudd and Dotson Rader. Rader’s contemporary account is a hymn to the priapic hedonism that so often went hand-in-hand with ‘revolutionary’ action; it contains an entertaining account of an unexpected encumbrance arising from the ‘revolutionary’ occupation of the women’s dormitory in Columbia’s sister college, Barnard – a permanent erection.1 A youth from a wealthy Georgia family (interviewed in 1967 by sociologist Lewis Yablonsky) who, having taken part in city riots, had now settled into the hippie group, The Rising Sun Tribe, in the East Village in New York City, replied to the question of whether there was more sex in the Tribe than there had been back at high school in Georgia: ‘I think there’s more at my school ... Back at school, sex is a taboo thing ... Nobody talks about it ... Up here it is open, it’s a thing, it’s a real part of life, and I think it’s beautiful. I enjoy it very much myself. Here, what happens is that the girls don’t play so many games. They play a few, but they don’t play so many. You just ask a girl and she’ll say yes or no.’2

Certain reminiscences fit the picture. Jim Haynes, the American who launched Europe’s first new-style paperback bookshop in Edinburgh in 1960, then played leading roles in setting up Edinburgh’s experimental theatre, The Traverse, and subsequently London’s Arts Lab, called the Sixties ‘the decade when everybody thought that they were changing the world, that we could change the world’.3 Another American participant in the ‘Counter-Culture’, James Henke, spoke of ‘a period when people valued personal freedom and social equality. It was a time when anything seemed possible. People thought they could change the world – and they did.’4

Barry Miles, British impresario and chronicler of the 1960s, defined the ethos of San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury hippie district as ‘like a coalescence of the free sexual revolution, the marijuana revolution, the drug revolution, political revolution, liberation movements of all kinds’,5 linking

5 Miles in Henke, *I Want to Take You Higher*, p. 33.
the hedonistic with the political. One of London’s most famous psychedelic clubs was UFO, about which co-founder John ‘Hoppy’ Hopkins wrote: ‘UFO was done from the heart with a purpose, which was to have a good time. We decided to run UFO all night, and it was a piece of all-night culture suddenly flashing into being that really made it popular. People would stay till it was light outside. You could stay out of your head all night.’

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Writing at the end of the 1970s about structuralism and post-structuralism, the French sociologist Michel Crozier referred to ‘a special French logical and even absolutist trend that tends to push the basic paradigm to its utmost limit’.2 The trend was not confined to France: a classic location for the sound of absolutist trends being pushed to their utmost limits was the international ‘Dialectics of Liberation’ conference held at the Roundhouse, London, between 15 and 30 July 1967. The main hosts were the Scottish ‘anti-psychiatrist’ R. D. Laing and his South African colleague, David Cooper. Principal guests were Herbert Marcuse, German-American professor from the Frankfurt School of Reformed Marxism, and author of such influential works as Eros and Civilization (1955) and One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (1964); Stokely Carmichael, twenty-five-year-old founder of ‘Black Power’; Lucien Goldmann, Romanian-born French Marxist intellectual; and various American leftist scholars. Many of the (mainly) youthful participants slept on the premises and took their seminars and discussion groups out into local pubs. In introducing the published proceedings, Cooper revealed the imperfect grasp of reality typical of the earnest devotees of the futile by pointing to the shining examples of ‘Cuba, already liberated, and Vietnam, inexorably on the way to liberation’. The conference, he declared, provided ‘an opportunity to think the thing [world problems] through together’, which was why, he continued, ‘the “principal speakers” mixed so freely and spontaneously with the audience.’3 What all were agreed on, declared John Gerassi, an American political scientist, was ‘that the enemy itself, the structure, the society in which we live and from which we suffer, has to be brought down. A re-structuring of society has to take place.’4 ‘Revolution’ was also the aim of another American scholar, Paul Good-

1 John ‘Hoppy’ Hopkins in ibid., p. 86.
3 D. Cooper, Dialectics of Liberation (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 10.
man, who saw no hope of the working class bringing this about, but put his faith in 'the international of the young'.

That encouragement to students to lead the 'revolution' was what Marcuse had seemed to be hinting at in One-Dimensional Man, though he never said it completely unambiguously. Marcuse's basic message was that 'we are faced with a novel situation in history, because today we have to be liberated from a relatively well-functioning, rich, powerful society.' Marx, he declared, was right: existing society must be replaced; as for Marcuse himself, he favoured 'socialism in its most Utopian sense'. That would entail 'the emergence of a new type of man, with a vital biological drive for liberation', 'the abolition of labour', and 'the total reconstruction of our cities and of our countryside ... the creation of internal and external space for privacy, individual autonomy, tranquillity, the elimination of togetherness, of pollution, of ugliness' – an interesting mix of the utterly impracticable (though to be found among the aims of most radical groups) and the highly attainable (and to be found in the aims of many of the moderate groups I have already mentioned). Marcuse believed even the wildest hopes might be realized, because (part of the fundamental fallacy at the heart of so much protest in the 1960s) 'the internal contradictions of the system are as grave as ever.' He is in favour of action, but not very clear about what sort of action. The 'intelligentsia', he says, has a 'preparatory function'; continuing education today is more than discussions, more than teaching and learning and writing. 'Unless and until it goes beyond the classroom, until and unless it goes beyond the college, the school, the university, it will remain powerless.' He praises 'the Hippies' for producing 'a new sensibility against efficient and insane reasonableness'.

The vagueness and caution persist in his response to his own question, 'What kind of political practice?': 'That depends entirely on the situation ... I will only remind you of the various possibilities of demonstrations, of finding out flexible modes of demonstration, which can cope with the use of institutionalized violence, of boycott, many other things – anything goes which is such that it indeed has a reasonable chance of strengthening the forces of the opposition. We can prepare for it as educators, as students. Again I say, our role is limited. We are no mass movement.'

Carmichael did not conceal his impatience with all the word spinning, calling for immediate physical action. 'What we're talking about round the

1 P. Goodman, 'Objective Values', in Cooper, Dialectics of Liberation, pp. 120-7.
3 H. Marcuse, Liberation from the Affluent Society', in Cooper, Dialectics of Liberation, p. 176.
4 Ibid., pp. 183-90.
5 Ibid., p. 191.
US today, and I believe around the Third World,’ he declared, ‘is the system of international white supremacy coupled with international capitalism.’1 Early in 1969, Tariq Ali, a wealthy Pakistani, Trotskyite, and former president of the Oxford Union, brought out a little book, New Revolutionaries: Left Opposition, which explained the nature and philosophy of this movement of which he was the leading figure; it also had as a frontispiece a diagram showing ‘how to make a Molotov Cocktail’. It was international in character, opening with the testimony of French revolutionary and anti-imperialist Régis Debray at his court martial in Bolivia, and including pieces by Eldridge Cleaver and Carmichael, president and prime minister respectively of the Black Panther Party; Fidel Castro; Pierre Frank, leader of the French Trotskyites ‘in the forefront of the May Revolution in France’; Inti Peredo, successor to Che Guevara as leader of the Bolivian guerrillas; and Fritz Teufel, leading member of the Marxist section of the West German Socialist Students’ Association. Ali was always to the fore in voicing the misapprehensions that capitalism was in crisis and that there had been near-revolution in France in May-June 1968: ‘It is now abundantly clear that the problems which arise from the functioning of modern or neo-capitalism cannot be solved within the framework of existing social structures … These societies will continue to be afflicted by the internal contradictions of the system; contradictions which will finally tear them apart.’2 That this stuff was believed by a hard core of irreconcilables explains a lot about the events of 1968: not ‘A Revolution That Failed’, or ‘A Revolution Betrayed’, but ‘A Revolution That Never Was, And Never Could Have Been’.

Some continued to keep the faith, notably a young English Marxist, Christopher Hitchens. In his centennial edition of Marx’s The Paris Commune 1871, Hitchens expressed the voice of dogmatic Marxism, blind to what was actually happening in the world during the last phase of the Cultural Revolution:

Today’s working class is strong, well-organized, confident, its ranks swollen by the increasing ‘industrialisation’ of all work and the subsequent unionization and absorption of very many skilled non-manual layers … As it slowly awakens from its post-war torpor, it can yet realize its potential as the mightiest social force in history, capable of remoulding society internationally on new principles and new priorities. Whether or not this comes about does not depend on vulgar theories of crisis, collapse, or inevitability, but on the capacity of socialist theory to relate to this new situation.3

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Hitchens expressed the need he saw to rescue ‘Marx from both deadening hagiography and ignorant defamation’, concluding that ‘the foregoing introduction is offered as an attempt to clarify the complexities of a part of Marx’s analysis and to relate them, as he would have done, to the world that daily presses down on our lives.’

Documents issued by ‘Student Power’ in Italy gave detailed guidance on how to carry out street warfare against the police, remarked that police violence must be regarded as an everyday occurrence, and declared that the student movement had reached a new stage, taking the initiative in the streets as the centre of destructive attacks on capitalism.1 Extreme radicals everywhere argued that by using violence themselves, they would provoke excessive reactions from the police, thus exposing the repressive nature of capitalist society (in fact, they merely exposed the oppressive nature of the police).

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The ‘voices’ of ‘measured judgement’ from those in authority in politics, the higher judiciary, and the media were to be heard in all Western countries, though most clearly in Great Britain, where the staggering changes in both the popular and elite arts would have been inconceivable without the understanding and tolerant encouragement of the film censor John Trevelyan and the director general of the BBC, Hugh Carleton Greene. When, in May 1967, Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones was arrested in a drug bust, and then in June sent to prison for the possession of four amphetamine tablets, this became a cause célèbre in the underground press and in pop art. But the true historical significance lies in what happened next. Immediately, William Rees-Mogg, editor of The Times, promulgated a classic exposition of ‘measured judgement’, an editorial headed ‘Who Breaks a Butterfly on a Wheel’: ‘If we are going to make any case a symbol of the conflict between the sound traditional values of Britain and the new hedonism, then we must be sure that the sound traditional values include those of tolerance and equity. It should be the particular quality of British justice to ensure that Mr Jagger is treated exactly the same as anyone else.’

The next day, the Sunday Express, which might have been expected to take up a more reactionary position, declared Jagger’s sentence to be ‘monstrously out of proportion to the offence he committed’. Eight days after The Times editorial, the attorney-general, Sir Elwyn Jones, questioned in parliament, replied: ‘Under the existing law, the Press is free to comment responsibly on the verdicts and sentences of criminal courts, even where

an appeal is pending. In my opinion, this freedom is a valuable safeguard and should not be curtailed.\footnote{1} Ruling on the appeal, on 31 July, Lord Chief Justice Parker quashed the sentence on Jagger’s fellow Rolling Stone, Keith Richards, while giving Jagger a conditional discharge. In press, parliament, and high court, measured judgement had prevailed.

The most appalling accident taking place during the Cultural Revolution, but not actually connected with it, happened in Belgium when, on 22 May 1967, a fire in a Brussels department store (to extreme radicals, a symbol of the hated ‘consumerism’) resulted in 253 deaths. It is not altogether surprising that when two Berlin radical hippies, Fritz Teufel and Rainer Lanhans, two days later issued the leaflet ‘When Will Berlin’s Department Stores Burn?’\footnote{2}, including the line, ‘Brussels has given us the only answer: “Burn, Warehouse, Burn!”’, they were arrested. But again it is the outcome (ten months later, admittedly) that is historically significant: in exquisitely measured tones, the judge declared the leaflet ‘a literary statement designed to shock’ and freed the two prisoners. Another West German judge ruled that the file belonging to SDS (the radical student socialist organization), seized by the police in January 1967, must be released. On Easter Sunday, 1968, the minister of justice, Gustav Heinemann, made his famous, and resonant, call for ‘tolerance in view of a better future’.\footnote{3} At the most intense period of Italy’s ‘hot autumn’ (1969) of extremist working-class action, the Christian Democrat minister of labour came up with a measured and conciliatory metaphor to express the gross inequality with which workers and busses were treated: ‘A system that waves the Italian flag for the workers and the Swiss flag for the industrialists is not a healthy one.’\footnote{4} With respect to the United States, one need perhaps do no more than quote the remark of SDS (American version) leader, Tom Hayden, that of the sixty-five radicals arrested on conspiracy charges, all were released ‘either before juries or appeals courts’.\footnote{4} Still more striking was the way in which, as early as 1970, the notorious segregationist, Senator Strom Thurmond, as revealed in his recently released records at Clemson University, yielded to the advice of his advisers that he move towards the posture of a racial moderate.\footnote{5}

Too little attention is still given to the way in which young people, at the age of eighteen, were given the vote in all of the Western countries in the early 1970s (in Britain in 1968). In the United States, the senate committee,
recommending that this reform should become the 26th Amendment to the Constitution, declared: ‘The Committee is convinced that the time has come to extend the vote to 18-year-olds in all elections; because they are mature enough in every way to exercise the franchise; they have earned the right to vote by bearing the responsibilities of citizenship; and because our society has much to gain by bringing the force of their idealism and concern and energy into the constructive mechanism of elected government.’

With ‘voices’ like that ringing in our ears, we must query any notion that there was a universal ‘generation gap’ in the Long Sixties. Without doubt radical students, and, most particularly, students who gloried in obscenity, antagonized adults. Many young people felt hostile to adults, including their own parents, particularly so in West Germany where the implication of parents in the Nazi regime was felt strongly; yet even there the latest research stresses the tolerance and understanding existing between the generations. And young people, too, could exercise ‘measured judgement’. Here is the ‘voice’ of a student at Cornell writing to the editor of the Alumni News about the sort of alumni and parents I quoted near the beginning of this article. It is particularly noteworthy for its sensitivity to the way in which the youth of the 1960s’ generation was facing a transformed world, and challenges of which the parent generation had been entirely oblivious:

Dear Sir,
I note with interest in the letters column of your July issue that there seems to be a direct relationship between the amount of time an alumni has been away from Cornell, and the degree of outrage expressed by him over the April crisis … These are men and women who attended college in the ‘Golden Days’ of Cornell when they buried their little heads in the sands of academia, sneaked booze into the football games, and joined fraternities and sororities that were openly discriminating and proud of it … While I disagree to a great extent with the issues the blacks were raising … I have nothing but contempt for the men and women who tried to second-guess the actions of Perkins and the rest of the administration. It is very dangerous to solve such situations with a pen, but quite a good deal harder to do so when faced with the possibility, even probability, that someone may be killed or maimed as a result of your decision … As I mentioned above, none of these writers had to face the social issues we are now facing. For instance, how many blacks attended Cornell [back in 1927]? … Cornell and the rest of the world are not the simple, straight-forward things they were decades ago. But, at least we are trying to cope with our world … today’s Cornellians are ten times as concerned with the outside world, and trying to influence it, than was [the older]

2 See Siegfried, ‘“Don’t Trust Anyone Older than 30?”.

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generation ... When people detract from the things today's college students are saying and doing, I can only turn and point the finger at our parents' generation. After all they were the ones who made us what they wanted us to be ... And to all of you who withhold your precious pennies from Cornell in her hour of need, a pox on you! May the refrains of the Alma Mater remind you of your loss, and the contempt she now holds you in.1

The overwhelming majority of protesting American students saw themselves as supporting, not revolution, but (apart from specific causes like civil rights and the anti-Vietnam war movement) their constitutional rights. This is most clearly seen in the letters which the Defense Committee, formed to defend students arrested during the Free Speech Movement (FSM) demonstration of December 1964, encouraged students to write to the judge in charge of the case. One female student wrote:

I participated in the sit-in demonstration in Sproul Hall on December 2 to protest certain university regulations which infringed my constitutional right to freedom of speech ... I felt that the University was responding to outside pressures in passing the regulations in question [prohibiting canvassing and proselytizing in a corner of the campus traditionally reserved for these very purposes] and that students could only protest their rights through exerting a counter pressure in the form of a sit-in ... Before arriving at the conviction that the students' demands were just, I listened to arguments on both sides carefully and read what responsible literature was available. I was well aware of the seriousness of the act of civil disobedience but felt that the nature of my grievance was of such importance that it justified and made obligatory my action ... I refused to co-operate with the police officer who arrested me as I felt obliged to remain in the building until I had accomplished my aims.2

A policy statement of 7 January 1965 expresses the 'voice' of lawyers and parents: 'The Parents' Committee for Defense of Berkeley Students wholeheartedly supports those who were arrested as a result of the December 2nd sit-in at Sproul Hall, because we recognize their high moral purpose in peacefully asking to maintain and defend constitutionally guaranteed rights and principles ... We believe the students acted in the best tradition of American democracy.3

The actions of the police led many formerly law-respecting parents to swing totally against them. One mother gave vent to her anxiety and anger over what had happened to her daughter:

3 Parents' Committee for Defense of Berkeley Students, ibid., box 1.
The Berkeley police told me an out-and-out lie when I called and was told there were no students being held there, that they were all either in Oakland or Santa Rita. No more than half an hour later, my daughter called to tell me she was there and had been there for the past six hours! From the time of her call at 5.30 p.m. to 1.00 a.m., because of my previous trust in the police, and because of my agitated state of mind, I did not realize until later that there had been the first lie, I swallowed what I was told at each step until I realized I was actually being victimized by the very people I had spent my life teaching my children to trust and respect!1

There were, of course, academics with deep Marxist convictions who sometimes acted as leaders of student protest movements, but it is the ‘voices’ of the tolerant, understanding, but not ideologically committed figures that are most interesting, and that played the largest part in the permeation process. In 1965, a year in which Cornell was troubled by violent anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, a member of the Faculty Committee on Student Affairs produced a remarkably perceptive and sympathetic account of ‘The Student Generation of the 1960s’, which included the following points:

They have been exposed to an apparent ‘freedom’ in literature and the mass media that still seems strange to some of my generation ... Overly secure and affluent, they often had severe problems of knowing who they are, what they want, and where they are heading. Sometimes it is not clear whether their ‘rebellion’ is a demand for a greater freedom or for clearer guidance and a more challenging set of moral and intellectual examples ... they will not pleasantly accept arbitrary authority ... Some of them see no sense in some traditional social rules and practices.2

The true range of relationships between the generations comes out most strikingly in the magnificent archive collections at Cornell University, including inter alia the unique Challenge to Governance Project Records, 1969-70, which was actually assembled at the height of the troubles in 1969, the Letters to the Editor of Alumni News, and the Papers of James Perkins, University President, who was forced out of office in the summer of 1969, against the wishes of many students and colleagues; he was, in fact, succeeded by a close associate who basically continued his liberal policies. One female student wrote to Perkins as follows:

I went back to my home town last weekend to try to explain to my family and friends (some of whom are alumni) that I completely agreed with and supported the actions of the administration and faculty. I have never been so disappointed or

1 Letter, 16 Dec. 1964, Burnstein Papers, box 1.
2 Doc., 26 April 1965, Perkins Papers, box 1, folder 1.
shocked by the views of the people I considered to be reasonable, or who at least
could take a set of facts set before them and realize that other people have definite
fears and expectations that they have never been faced with and therefore, don’t
think about … I find it so hard to fathom the fact that so-called ‘good’ citizens
would have had us bring in riot police who would bash a few heads and ‘put them
back in their places’.

The letter begins by remarking on how proud many of the students are of
Perkins and ends with the words ‘Thank you again’. Then there is a post-
script, referring to the mass teach-ins held in Barton Hall: ‘I never felt as
close to you as I did Wednesday afternoon at Barton when you came on
the stage and talked to us sincerely and trustfully pledging to work with us
to improve our university and society.’

There, of course, we have an example of disaffection between family and
student, but also of the student’s positive attempt to communicate and,
obviously, of a good relationship between student and university presi-
dent. The overwhelming evidence of the correspondence between students
and their families is of sound relationships. One student (there are no
names or precise dates on the copies of a series of short letters), while
fundamentally opposed to the black and SDS activists, was clearly con-
cerned to explain to his parents exactly what was going on. The letters are
addressed to ‘Dear Family’. The second one dated ‘Wednesday night’
reads: ‘So many parents were really upset this past week about Cornell’s
happenings. I appreciate you in that (1) You didn’t say “don’t get in-
volved”’. (2) You weren’t that upset. Ah – rational people! The news media
was really a disadvantage to Cornell, publicizing the sensationalism,
showing only pictures of the blacks with their guns.’

In a later one, he writes: ‘Liberalism is THE thing now & anyone who
isn’t radical is looked upon as ignorant.’ He remarks that this, and the Bar-
ton episode, ‘makes me sick’. Yet, he continues, ‘I am glad I participated in
the Barton Hall thing’: you ‘learn things’. He ‘participated as distinct from
just observing’, and the actions of ‘the moderates made it easier for the
faculty to change its mind.’ In his last letter, he confesses to his family that
‘perhaps some good will come out of it all.’

In France, one of the most striking examples of rapprochement between
the generations is that discussed in a pioneering article by Michael Seid-
man, where, using ministerial, departmental, police, and university
archives, he demonstrates the acceptance by both the authorities and
parents, during the years prior to the events of 1968, of sexual freedoms in

2 Undated letters, Challenge to Governance Project Records, 1969-70 [Cornell University Library],
box 12.
student residences. In Italy, everything I have been saying about understanding parents, tolerant authorities, and, of course, the inevitable reactionaries, is concentrated into the Zanzara incident of mid-February to 1 April 1966, in Milan. La Zanzara (Mosquito) was the school magazine at the Liceo Parini. The February issue contained responses by female pupils to a questionnaire – devised by the 17-year-old editor, Marco de Poli, and two 17-year-old colleagues, Marco Sassano and Claudia Beltramo Ceppia – about their sexual attitudes and practices. Copies had not been vetted by the liberal headmaster, Daniele Matalia, nor deposited with the police, as, technically, was required by law. All would probably have been well if the Catholic organization, ‘Student Youth’, had not brought the matter to the attention of parents, the press, and the police. Fourteen parents immediately phoned to threaten withdrawal of their children, but they were completely eclipsed by the 140 who sent in telegrams supporting the three students and their headmaster. Nevertheless, on 16 March, on the initiative of the right-wing chief procurator, Oscar Lanzi, the three students were brought before the procurator substitute, Pasquale Carcasio. Amazingly, he tried to force them to undergo intimate medical examinations. There were immediate protests, the press headlining ‘lo spogliarello in Procura’ (the striptease in the procurator’s office). Important moderate figures, including the Italian president, Giuseppe Saragat (1964–71), were now enlisted on the side of the students, but Lanzi insisted on bringing the three students, their headmaster, and the printer, a woman called Aurelia Terzaaghi, to trial on 31 March; the principal charge against them, ‘offending the moral sentiments of children and adolescents and thus inciting them to corruption’, dated back to Fascist days. The presiding judge was the traditionalist aristocrat, Luigi Bianchi d’Espinosa. The chief defence advocate was a famous lawyer, Professor Giacomo Delitala, who made the key point, with regard to the revolution in human relationships now in full flood, that there cannot be one morality for adults and another for children. The trial lasted a second day, until 1 April. Then Bianchi delivered a judgement that can be put alongside the Rees-Mogg editorial on the Jagger case: ‘The tribunal has instructed me to say that it has recognized that your survey did not contain anything that was notably criminal. The task of the penal law stops at that point ... Over this whole process an exaggerated fuss has been made.’

There are further insights in the typescript diary of schoolteacher Anna

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Avallone. Avallone’s son, Sergio, was coming to the end of his secondary schooling in 1967. She notes in her diary that she is bitterly upset by his insistence that teachers are authoritarian, is worried by his participation in the student protest movement, and finds his friends ungracious and ill-mannered. The entry of 26 June mentions Sergio’s girlfriend, Giulia: she was very happy with Giulia, save that she is also in the student movement, and ‘a new thing’, she calls herself ‘a feminist’. Avallone starts wondering if ‘our way of thinking truly is too retrograde with respect to theirs; we think we can do good, make others happy by imposing our way of being happy; and thus, through too much love, we take from them their joy of living, remove their illusions, block their spontaneous activities, and spoil their dreams.’ For the Italian August holiday, mother, son, and girlfriend are together in the mountains. There is much talk of the late pope, John XXIII, revealing that all are united in a kind of fundamental Catholicism. In October, Sergio goes to Turin University. He gets lodgings with friends which she has to pay for. She is surprised to find that they are not as humble as she had expected, given all the talk about class equality and contempt for the bourgeoisie. Sergio takes part in an occupation and is arrested as one of the student leaders, but released next day. He continues to come to visit her on Saturdays and Sundays, but there seems to be nothing to say between them, ‘still less when we discuss the inhibitions and disinhibitions of sex’. But this warm and profoundly honest document continues: ‘I have to recognize that these kids are good; they will do anything for each other, they defend each other, they help each other.’ On 9 August 1968, she records what she calls ‘confused thoughts’: ‘free love and sex have become the important topics of the day, self-fulfilment psychologically and physically, denial of any regulation and religion.’ The first entry for the New Year (7 January 1969) reads in part:

I am completely estranged from the student discussions, but I have listened attentively to the ‘voices’ and the problems that are now at the basis of their life, and I have tried to understand; I must confess that I have understood that many of their ideas are concerned with group things that others, even if they should have taken a lead, have not tried to put into practice. Much more than political interventions and useless circulars, they need to be helped and encouraged. That our past and present respectability irritates them is now very clear, and responding to their demonstrations with violence is counter-productive and could produce very regrettable reactions.

But the entry for 13 January records that she has received a letter from Sergio that is so painful that she is not able to transcribe it into the diary, though she quotes the gist (starting in third-person mode): ‘She is so bourgeois; she is an insurmountable obstacle to their idea of a new life.
They are in different worlds: they want permanent revolution, continuous struggle, total absence of sexual inhibitions, suppression of all useless taboos. Yet, in the same entry, Anna states that she is beginning to move towards Sergio's ideas. There is a full statement for 31 March: 'I have faith in Sergio and I gratefully appreciated Giulia's feminist ideas, because I began work when, in the family, a woman who was not housewifely was thought badly of.' Earlier, she had been slightly scandalized on realizing that Sergio and Giulia were sleeping together. However, on 24 August, the young couple are married, Giulia wearing a mini-skirt. This voicing of a mother's anger at her son and then her reconciliation, with a developing understanding of both him and his girlfriend, gives a unique insight into the deeper developments taking place beneath the surface of sloganizing and fighting.

If we must query the notion of any widespread 'generation gap', we must also query any notion of widespread support for 'revolution'. Some young workers in France and Italy were prepared to co-operate with students in protests and demonstrations but, on the whole, older trade unionists preferred to stand a aloof. Italian-published writings of the 1960s are saturated in Marxism, the titles of numberless books and pamphlets ending in the phrase 'e la lotta di classe' ('and the class struggle'). Here is the actual 'voice' of an Italian metal-worker:

In effect, in 1968, the Student Movement was born, but it was a phenomenon limited to the big cities, where there were universities, or to other lesser centres where groups of secondary school pupils were active. Nearest to us the liveliest centre was Charvari, where there was a grammar school and teacher-training colleges. As far as those of us in the workshops and other factories of the region were concerned, this frantic movement of confrontation didn't interest us in the slightest. In practice, we paid no attention to this, even if, in certain circumstances, groups of students came to seek support at the factory gates. We in fact continued to show a certain lack of interest towards them, considering their problems and their demands completely foreign to ours.2

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'Voices' of confrontation and challenge are undoubtedly characteristic of the Cultural Revolution. In volume of 'sound', they perhaps eclipse the 'voices' of tolerance and compromise. If I have seemed to favour the 'voices' of 'measured judgement', that is because, in the end, permeation was a more important long-term force than confrontation, and 'measured judgement' played a crucial part in ensuring the triumph of permeation.

2 F. Poggioli, 'Una vita in tute blu (Memorie di un metalmeccanico)', Archivio Diaristico.
Arthur Marwick

What dozens upon dozens of letters demonstrate is that, whatever else there may be, there is no gaping generational difference between parents and their activist student offspring, a central theme in this article. I have also drawn attention to the importance of middle-class women, leaders, for example, in the movement that stopped the infilling of San Francisco Bay and brought an end to the destructive freeway building within San Francisco itself. Admiration for such activists was not widely expressed; but that they did not go entirely unremarked is made clear in another letter to Huey Newton. In remarking on the refusal of a jury to agree on a guilty verdict against some Black Panthers, a black woman expresses the view that this was probably not due to the one black woman on the jury, but to one of the white ones:

Behind this overlooked, middle-aged or elderly, middle-class woman, is the heritage of New England – with its Town Meeting, where issues of national and community significance were discussed; its condemnation of slavery ... I think the men of this heritage have fallen by the wayside – they are, like most American males and many females, too – mainly concerned with maintaining what they have as part of the status quo. But not so this indomitable, fair-minded type of woman.¹

It is the rational, tolerant, sympathetic ‘voices’ that, in the end, contributed so much to the cultural transformations of the Long Sixties.

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