1968

A Student Generation in Revolt

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The teenage youth in the suburbs was a new phenomenon. They had everything they needed, the world was wide open to them. Their parents had worked their nuts or their tits off to provide for them in a fashion unique in modern-day history. If that hadn't existed, there wouldn't have been people who could just get up in the morning and say, fuck it! – *John Sinclair, counter-culture leader, Detroit*

The economic boom which had begun in the 1950s and reached its peak in the first half of the 1960s changed the landscape for the post-war generation. A hitherto unforeseen prosperity which, if still unevenly distributed, was more widely spread than at any time in the twentieth century, was accompanied by near full employment, availability of consumer goods that previously had been confined to the well-to-do and, for the young, access to money. 'It was the time when many families, like mine, began to change their way of life,' recalled Pierre Bringuier, a middle-class student in Paris. 'They bought washing machines, a TV, and a new car, moved into larger, more comfortable apartments and went to the country for weekends. It became normal to give children pocket money. Holidays abroad in the summer instead of visiting grandparents in the countryside. There was a shift from a work to a consumerist ethic, among the young at least. And youth itself came to have a value instead of being a handicap.'

It was a time – to cite a few indices of the new prosperity – when the number of cars in the West European countries doubled in the decade up to 1960 and doubled again (and sometimes more) by 1970. In the United States, where the economic boom began earlier, new car sales had already doubled by 1955 in comparison to the pre-war figure. Television sales saw a spectacular increase. From seven thousand television sets in the U.S. in 1946 to fifty million by 1960; from 300,000 in Britain to ten and a half million between 1950 and 1960. Mass tourism became a new phenomenon – by 1961 four million Britons were holidaying abroad, and by 1965 eleven million Italians were taking holidays where a decade earlier relatively few had done so. But one of the most impressive areas of growth

was in education: in the U.S., the number of students at four-year colleges and universities had doubled by 1960 compared to pre-war; between 1960 and 1965, the number rose a further 70 per cent. The five and a half million students – 22 per cent of the country's youth of university age – easily outnumbered the nation's farmers by then. Between 1950 and 1964, France had trebled and West Germany had doubled their university student numbers; Britain and Italy showed smaller increases of 60 and 50 per cent respectively.

The reason, in part, for this massive increase was the post-war demographic boom. In Britain and France between 1946 and 1950 the birth rate increased by about 30 per cent compared to the last five pre-war years; in both these countries there were over 800,000 more teenagers in the population in 1963 than there had been ten years earlier. Although, largely as a result of the immediate post-war conditions, the 'baby boom' was delayed in West Germany and Italy until the mid-1950s, secondary educational reforms increased the number of teenagers staying on at school. In Italy, for example, their number nearly doubled in the decade to 1963. Staying longer at school prolonged adolescents' dependence at a time when (apart from Italy and West Germany) their social weight had increased. The gap between the two was to some extent filled by the creation of a youth market and culture. Although teenagers in Britain, to take one case, disposed of only some 5 per cent of total consumer spending per annum, that still totalled over £850 million in 1960; and with it they bought more than 40 per cent of record-players, nearly one-third of cosmetics and toiletries, 28 per cent of cinema admissions, and so on. Teenagers – even those still at school with only pocket money to spend – felt that their place in the world was being recognized in a new way.

'Suddenly there were whole shops catering for teenagers – clothes and record shops especially – and make-up and cosmetics designed just for young people,' recalled Elisabeth Tailor, who grew up in a London suburb. 'A lot of the people serving in the shops were young, too. As a teenager, it made you feel good, independent and at the same time part of a much wider group. At last we were being recognized; being a teenager wasn't something you had to be ashamed of any more.'

'Consumerism made possible new types of relationships and awoke people's fantasies and desires to break with old ways of life,' commented Laura Derossi who, as a sixteen-year-old in 1962, was at a private Italian school run by nuns. 'My first acts of rebellion were to go with a girl friend to an elegant Milan department store to buy cosmetics and dresses that

would make us look older so that we could get in to movies forbidden to people under eighteen. This gave me and my girl friend a special type of friendship, a *generational* union, in place of the traditional family-based friendships, like my mother's. We changed everything, inherited nothing.'

The social space that was opened by market forces was simultaneously reappropriated by teenagers, especially in Britain and the United States, through their creation of a new youth culture. Epitomized by the early Beatles, this culture, with its particular idiom of music and clothes, expressed a feeling of belonging to a specific age group with interests that both set it apart from its elders and created a common world for its members. In a class-dominated country like Britain, it carried with it two other important connotations: youth's creativity, and the emergence of working- and lower middle-class youth as the originators of a new culture.

'When the Beatles started to write their own songs things changed,' noted a British student, Mick Gold. 'Young people were beginning to take over the process. Until then, pop music was thought of as something created by middle-aged men in Tin Pan Alley or Denmark Street in London. Now we felt that something was moving socially, the old order changing in a significant way. And to some extent, young people seemed in control of these changes. We realized, of course, that the youth culture was based on a consumer marketing boom. But still there was a euphoric, utopian atmosphere, an idealistic mood which came across in the music. Music operated as a sort of grapevine, spreading ideas around about political and social values.'

Rock 'n roll – 'rebel music', as more than one high school student at the time expressed it – had since the late 1950s often spoken directly to teenagers' feelings. Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Bill Haley . . . 'I remember Chuck Berry's song "School Days", about what a drag it is to be in school, and he just articulated stuff that we felt – how the teachers were uptight and not letting you express yourself,' recalled David Gilbert of his school days in Brookline, an affluent Boston suburb. 'Rock 'n roll was exciting, sexual, alive. It made me feel involved with black people because I could identify with the music, made me more open to the civil rights movement, I think.'

'Rock music became a whole new way of being. It expressed a basic aspiration to live our own life in a way that accorded with things that gave us pleasure,' observed David Fernbach who, as a teenager, set up a rock band with his brother in Britain. But this 'basic aspiration' was countered by another consideration. Despite the economic boom, the old values of

hard work and a good education were usually seen by parents, who had gone through a world war and the Depression which had preceded it, as the main safeguards for their children's future security. Among the most marked by the hardships of the past, the West European lower middle and working classes were perhaps the most insistent on education as the way forward. 'Both my mother and father had had to work hard to avoid poverty and worse,' continued Fernbach, whose mother came from a London working-class background and whose father was a middle-class Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany. 'They wanted their children to get on in the world, not in terms of handing down large sums of money which they didn't have, but in educational terms. They were keen for me to study hard and get a good professional job. Throughout my teens, there was this conflict between what they wanted for me and doing my own thing here and now.'

There was nothing new about such generational conflict; what was new was that through the youth culture, and in particular the music, it was no longer lived in the silence of individual struggle as in the past but was communicated, across classes, nations and oceans to like-minded others. 'That was one reason why the music was so important,' observed Jeremy Brecher, an American SDSer. 'It was a way that people who were isolated in their areas culturally, who didn't have other people like them around, could be in a social milieu where there were a lot of other people like them. The feeling was similar to being involved in SDS. It was really exciting, had that sense of overcoming isolation.'

In fact, parents' concern about work and careers was very widely ignored: in societies of virtual full employment there were more jobs, full-time, part-time or casual, than ever before. 'We took for granted a sense of economic openings, what was then called "affluence",' recalled Todd Gitlin, of the American SDS. 'It was the cushion really for anything you might choose to do if you were a middle-class student.' 'A career? No, I wasn't interested,' remembered Rod Burgess, who came from a working-class background and 'dropped out' after getting his degree at the London School of Economics in 1966. 'We'd never known a recession. We thought at the time there were two options: either there was going to be continuous economic growth and it would be quite easy to live on the margins. Or, if there was a slump, there'd be a socialist revolution – in which case there was still no need to join the system. Part of the problem was that the Old Left never clearly explained to us that in a recession you get a swing to the right.'

Even in Britain, where a series of major financial crises followed the Labour electoral victory in 1964, the prospects of a recession still appeared remote to most people. Pop culture seemed dominant, 'Swinging London' – in a much publicized American journalist's phrase – effervesced; even the Establishment patronized the Beatles. The Rolling Stones, in consequence, came to be seen by many young people as a more authentic expression of their feelings. 'They were part of a high-definition rebellion which was breath-taking in its audacity at the time,' recalled David Widgery. 'The way they dressed, their long hair, their rather sophisticated take-on loutishness – and the way they got away with it on television – was fantastically bold. It had a real shock value.'

Part of the shock value was a potent male sexual aggressiveness – 'sexist, but at the same time expressing, as were other groups, changing views about sexuality which simply weren't being expressed anywhere else,' recalled David Triesman. It was the beginning of what came to be called the sexual 'revolution', which in turn was furthered by the advent of the contraceptive pill. In the Unites States, where the pill became fairly widely used by married women from 1965 on, many doctors would not prescribe it to unmarried women. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that a relatively high number of unmarried college women in larger cities where it was easier to find a sympathetic doctor did use the pill; and by the turn of the decade university health services dispensed it in the larger colleges. Something similar happened in Britain, where general practitioners and family planning clinics refused to prescribe the pill to unmarried women until 1969. 'There was no way we could get contraception until we went to university,' recalled Elisabeth Tailor. 'But in my first week at Kent in 1966, I remember we all went to the medical centre where they gave us the pill without any problem. They were desperate for us to finish our education without getting pregnant. At the same time, they were willing to treat us as adults. It was a real liberation to be in control of our own bodies!'

Continental students by and large were not as fortunate. With or without the pill, students' sexual attitudes often remained rather conventional in the first half of the decade; it was only the few who seemed willing to challenge them. The fact of taking a double room in a hotel during a left-wing Italian student conference made Laura Derossi and Luigi Bobbio, who were lovers, the butt of ribald jokes. 'We were the only man and woman to share a room – perhaps there were no other couples, I don't know,' recalled Bobbio. 'For us it was both pleasant and had a symbolic

value, was a way of affirming something. The others couldn't accept it. At dinner they even gave us a small present, neatly tied with a ribbon – a packet of condoms.'

At Heidelberg University in West Germany, Tilla Siegel felt isolated and without many friends. Through SDS acquaintances she came into contact with the student organization which she viewed with some suspicion as being 'too radical' for her; the men, moreover, looked 'scruffy, and didn't care about dressing properly', but she continued to go to SDS functions. At one of these, a carnival, she 'hooked up with the SDS man who looked the most clean-cut and straight. I didn't sleep with him that night, only after we had met a couple of times. At that time I still wanted to marry. He probably sensed that, so he left me after a couple of months. He always stressed his need for freedom and I naturally thought I had to accept it, although I didn't like it.' As a result of the brief relationship, however, she was considered a *de facto* member of SDS and remained in the organization where, as will be seen, she later came to an understanding of 'the relationship between my personal liberation and politics'.

A sexual relationship also led fifteen-year-old Lily Métreaux to politics when, in 1963 and without the faintest thought of marriage, she became the lover of a young film-maker in Paris. The daughter of an impoverished mother and an army officer who were divorced, she was a rebellious student in a convent school when she met him. 'He said he was going to introduce me to a famous director with whom he was working to get me a part because I was very beautiful. Then he took me to his bedroom. The first thing he asked me was what I thought of the class struggle. I'd never heard the expression! I'll never forget it – I wanted so badly to give the right answer so that he'd fall in love with me. "No," I said, "I don't believe in it." I saw I'd got it wrong! He was a Trotskyist. To cut a long story short, through him I entered a world which completely changed my life, the world of the left-wing bourgeoisie. I'd never come across so many middle-class people as I did then on the left – and it was wonderful, through them I discovered that working-class people, the poor like us, were good and the bourgeoisie was bad!'

Sex, rock music and drink could on occasion be used to express a deliberate rebellion against middle-class norms. 'As a sixteen-year-old, my parents forbade me to go out alone with a boy, to ride on the back of a motor scooter, to drink, to go to a club where the Rolling Stones played,' recalled Elisabeth Tailor in London. 'So one night I deliberately broke every one of their norms. I went on the back of my boyfriend's scooter to

the club, listened to the Stones and got drunk, and I fucked him in his house before going home. It wasn't just adolescent rebellion against being controlled, though that was part of it. There was something keener, fresher in the air. A sense that we were going to do things *our* way, and that there were a lot of us who rejected not just our individual parents but what their values represented socially.'

Apart from the youth culture, the impact of which was confined principally to Britain and the U.S., there were many other ways in which those who later became student activists began to develop a critical awareness of their societies: travel, the influence of school teachers and older family members, the patrimony of other cultures and literature, were among those most often recalled.

At the age of fourteen, and again two years later, Hilary Wainwright, a British student, accompanied her parents on holiday to Portugal. On the beach she met a radical Portuguese student. 'Through him I got an idea of the Salazar repression and also of an opposition growing up. Portugal seemed a mixture of incredible poverty – people barefoot and starving – and incredible wealth. A Third World peasant poverty and the riches of a Victorian ruling class. It made quite an impact on me, both in terms of oppression and of coming to see politics as concerning more than just Britain.'

Significantly, it was often through Third World examples that teachers attempted to make their high school pupils aware of social and economic oppression. As Angélique Pinto recalled in France, 'we had this teacher of Spanish who introduced us to the world of Latin American writers. Through them we discovered the poverty and oppression of the people there. It still brings tears to my eyes when I remember that teacher and what he helped to show us . . .' In other cases, the impact was more overtly radical. 'In my last year at school we had a devout Catholic philosophy teacher who was also a Marxist,' recalled Romano Madera in Italy. 'He taught us to read parts of *Capital* and told us about innovating tendencies within the Catholic church. But he also taught us much more than that. He taught us about life. He was married, had four children and was separated – he couldn't get divorced because it wasn't legalized until 1974. In short, a real life! The light had come to that damned school at last!'

Before she was even a teenager, Bernadette McAliskey was embued with radical Irish culture and was reciting it in a public talent competition in her Northern Irish home town. 'The Rebel' by Padraig Pearse, one of

the martyrs of the 1916 Easter rising in Dublin against British rule, was among her winning selections:

> I say to the master of my people,
> "Beware the risen people who will
> Take what you would not give!"

'That's how the poem ends. A very powerful piece. I grew up with Pearse's work. We weren't much affected here by any of the 1960s cultures – ours was a very poor community where things became fashionable only after the fashion had gone out everywhere else.'

Among the literary influences most often cited internationally in the first part of the 1960s were Sartre and Camus, Kerouac, the Beat writer, the early writings of Marx, and Frantz Fanon. The latter, a theorist of the Algerian revolution, emphasized in particular the psychological oppression of the colonized and the subjective elements of rebellion and violence needed to overthrow that oppression. 'His book *The Wretched of the Earth* represented a sector of the world that probably even existed in our country, one to which we might even belong,' recalled Derossi. 'The colonized internalize the colonialist's violence and must free himself internally. In all our struggles there were important elements of self-liberation.'

Marx's early writings, which were then becoming more widely available in translation, were another important source of inspiration for many students. Their concept of socialist freedom as consisting not only in the social reappropriation of the economy but in the individual's power of decision over his or her own life as well as that of society, contrasted sharply with the Stalinist vision of Communism, as Richard Kuper in Britain recalled. 'The utopianism of those writings, the belief that the world could be totally different – at a time when the world seemed totally unchangeable – was a tremendous inspiration to me.' He joined the small, far-left International Socialists (IS), a breakaway a decade earlier from the Trotskyist movement. 'Until I came across IS I had been put off Marxism because of its Soviet connotations. Now I found a liberation revolutionary Marxist group which condemned Russia utterly as having nothing to do with the socialist freedoms we were discovering in Marx's early writings.'

The search for a left-wing intellectual tradition was especially acute in West Germany where, a generation earlier, Nazism had crushed the left. The void was in part filled by the Frankfurt School of social and political philosophers who returned from exile after the war and whose influence

on the early SDS has already been seen; but there were other influential figures who, along with the Frankfurt School, began to have a widening impact among high school students in the first half of the decade. Ernst Bloch, the Marxist philosopher who left East Germany in the early 1960s, was one of these. Detlev Claussen met him at a discussion circle organized by a Protestant pastor. 'That was the best thing that ever happened there. I was about sixteen and I had just read one of Bloch's books with great difficulty. But then to be able to talk to him, to have him take you seriously, answer your questions – that's something that left a vivid impression on me for a long time.'

The new material prosperity itself helped to validate the challenge to the established order of another movement, the Situationist International, whose theories attracted numbers of future student activists in Western Europe. Founded in Paris in the late 1950s, the small Situationist group attacked from a revolutionary perspective every aspect of Western life and culture, including organized political parties. 'In the tradition of the Dada and Surrealist movements,' noted Dieter Kunzelmann, a West German Situationist, 'we were trying to achieve a radical rupture in the patterns of everyday life. We wanted to disrupt the clockwork mechanisms that regulate contemporary living by provoking people into thinking about the meaning of industrial society. Life, we maintained, must be the artistic product of the whole of society conceived in terms of human beings capable of communication and pleasure. For example, we had a vision of new cities with parks and labyrinths built to facilitate communication between people rather than to ensure that industrial production and traffic ran smoothly.'

This was only part of the vision, however; better known to most students was the relentless critique, elaborated by Guy Debord, the Situationists' main theoretician, of contemporary capitalism as 'the society of the spectacle'. As Donald Nicholson-Smith, a British member of the Paris group, explained, this crique saw capitalism as being based on 'the consumption of images as opposed to real things, that life had been reduced to a spectacle'. Claiming for itself a revolutionary heritage, the Situationist International maintained that the historical agent of change – the proleteriat – could no longer be considered the traditional working class but included almost everybody who was a wage or salary earner. While the main enemy remained capitalism in its latest form of 'the spectacle', Communist parties and trade unions which blocked off the revolutionary spontaneity of this new proletariat were to be excoriated. 'To

some extent', continued Nicholson-Smith, 'we embraced the idea that the young had a privileged position in the struggle against the system because they weren't lumbered with the heritage of the past. One of the Situationist programmatic statements or slogans was, "Our ideas are in everybody's head and one day they'll come out." Basically, the Situationist International forecast 1968.'

Arguing that everyone was 'hypnotized by work and by comfort', the Situationists believed that the only way to revolution was to transform daily life, not through theoretical debate, but by passionate acts of subversion. Anyone who spoke of revolution without reference to the conditions of daily life was 'talking with the voice of the dead'.

'The idea that the social revolution had to start from daily life, start from even the smallest unbearable aspect, like wearing a tie or make-up, came to me largely from the Situationists,' remembered Elsa Gili, a Turin University research student. 'Start to make relationships of a different order to the existing one. Start to take things back into our own hands, reappropriate what had been expropriated from us. This couldn't be done through the structures of political parties. The revolution must be a festival – the festival of the oppressed.'

In the United States, the first signs of the counter-culture, which would emerge with full force in the second half of the 1960s to displace the youth culture, in the U.S. and Britain particularly, were now becoming visible. In 1963, Timothy Leary and a co-worker were expelled from the staff of Harvard University for experimenting with LSD on students, and Leary established himself on an estate in Millbrook, New York, as the guru of a cult of acid religionists. At the end of the following year, Ken Kesey, California novelist and bohemian who had visited Leary, held the first of his famous acid tests in San Francisco; and in Los Angeles the first underground newspaper, the *Free Press*, appeared. Drugs, LSD especially, were to play a significant part in the counter-culture.

Times of widespread radicalization are often heralded by a deep cultural ferment, and 1968 was no exception. The new cultural movements played an important role in shaping a wider society of dissent within which student movements could evolve. But the former were only a part – and even then an unevenly distributed part – of the conditions of student radicalization. Nationally and internationally things were changing. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962, which had seemed on the verge of precipitating nuclear war, brought in its wake a positive gain: the first significant

easing of the Cold War (of which the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and the establishment of a 'Hot Line' between Moscow and Washington were examples) and, for student radicals, the consequent opening up of potential political space as the glacial deadlock began to thaw. Significantly, nuclear disarmament no longer remained thereafter as one of the major focuses of protest.

Internally, too, Western societies were changing. In the United States, President Kennedy's election in 1960 represented a definitive break with the generation of wartime leaders like Eisenhower, his predecessor, and seemed to some young people – partly in response to his calls to their idealism – to prefigure a new politics. In a lesser vein, something of the kind could be said of Harold Wilson in Britain. Both put an end to long-ruling conservative administrations; both in the end failed to live up to their promises. Kennedy's failure to take rapid and decisive measures in support of the civil rights movement, his backing of the disastrous invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, and his gamble with nuclear war with the Soviet Union over the Cuban missile crisis, disabused many even before his assassination in 1963 ended whatever hopes might have remained. Nonetheless, his successor, Lyndon Johnson, launched his Great Society program which saw millions of dollars poured into increases in social security, housing, new educational and training programs. As a result of the continuing civil rights campaign, legislation to end discrimination in registration and voting was finally approved.

The first half of the 1960s represented the height of post-war American liberalism; but it was also its watershed. The dividing line was plainly drawn in 1965 with Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War; but the roots of that division had been planted four years earlier by Kennedy's decision to increase America's military presence in South Vietnam. The second half of the 1960s was to be dominated by the consequences of that decision.

In Italy, also, there was hope of serious social and economic reform when a centre-left Christian Democratic-Socialist alliance came to power in 1962. These hopes were also rapidly dashed. 'I remember my father, who had always voted Socialist, expressing his disappointment after seeing "his" party in power,' recalled Elsa Gili in Turin. 'Almost none of the promised reforms were put into effect. The problems of the South, of the public health service, education, uncontrolled urban growth – nothing was really done. The centre-left preferred to increase public expenditure rather than really reduce privileges and make reforms. Combined with the

fact that the Italian economic boom began to slacken from 1963, hopes among the young that reform was possible declined from the mid-1960s, leading to the idea that little could be expected from the state.'

In France and West Germany, where the old guard, de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, remained in power, not even the hope of such reform attempts appeared. France was experiencing its first real industrial take-off – financed in large part by the repatriation of capital from the former colonies and, after 1962, from Algeria – in which the state played a central role. This modernization, which benefited big business at the expense of salary and wage-earners, made constant appeals to young people who were hailed as the country's future. Those who refused to see their future as 'organization men' – something which French Catholic and intellectual culture had never propitiated – did not readily respond. For a brief time, a youth culture – the first Paris pop concert with French singers in 1963 attracted 100,000 youth, ten times the expected number – brought to some future activists the sense of sharing a common experience; but they soon turned away from it. Many of them felt – and their feeling was reinforced after de Gaulle won a second seven-year term in 1965 – a sense of political and social inertia. 'That's one of the reasons we moved to the left,' recalled André Liber, a high school student in the mid 1960s. 'Gaullism spoke endlessly of things that were totally foreign to us: national independence, the importance of an independent nuclear strike force, the role of the constitution – things that interested absolutely no one of my generation. And so we began to develop a certain nostalgia for the Resistance, the Algerian War – times when things were more clear-cut.'

Although Adenauer, West Germany's Chancellor since 1949, finally stepped down in 1963, the Christian Democrats continued in their uninterrupted post-war tenure of power. The country's 'economic miracle' produced a standard of living that was one of the highest in Western Europe; and yet, as in France, there was a sense of social and political stasis among many young people which was reinforced by 1965 when it became clear that the Social Democratic opposition would join the Christian Democrats in power, leaving the country without an effective parliamentary opposition.

The fascist past continued to hang in unspoken tension over the young. Until 1963, when he was fifteen, Detlev Claussen, for example, was unable to broach the past with his father, who had been a lawyer for the German navy during the war and had spent a year in a re-education camp after the war. 'Our teacher in civics read to us without comment Mitscherlich's

book *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit* [an account of concentration camp medical experiments], and I came home very upset and talked about it. Without explanation, my father responded by talking about the Communists after 1945. He simply refused to deal with the Nazi past. The East is now, the past is the past, he was saying in effect. I never heard him voice any concern about the past. I took that very badly, something broke between us, and later it led to a split between the rest of the family and my brother and me.'

In neither West Germany nor Italy did the youth culture particularly affect university students; in the former probably because they were generally older than in other countries; in the latter because activists were influenced by a left-wing culture with its strong Resistance heritage and a certain moralism. In Germany it was not until the mid-1960s that protest songs about political issues and everyday life, influenced by the Bob Dylan of the early 1960s, became popular among teenagers, reflecting a radicalization that by then was taking place at other levels also. In Italy, student activists continued to wear suits, ties and short hair until well into the second half of the decade.

Despite differing conditions in each of the countries, there was by the mid-1960s a growing sense among a minority of students that hope of reform, of a new politics, was illusory. Economic growth seemed assured; but growth for what? Celebrating the new social possibilities that the boom years were supposed to bring with them, which was the essential function of the youth culture, no longer seemed sufficient even in those countries where it had flowered.

It was on this backcloth that the students movements of the second half of the decade began to develop. But the most immediately decisive factor of student radicalization was, not surprisingly, the student condition itself. The formidable growth in student numbers marked the end of the university as the training ground of a small and privileged elite and the beginning of the era of mass higher education. It brought with it increasing numbers of first-generation university students whose familial expectations had not conditioned them for the routines of what, in Western Europe at least, remained very largely an elite, often authoritarian and indeed sometimes archaic university. In the United States, on the other hand, it was not the backward but the modern aspects of higher education, where corporate capitalism's needs – 'the university is being called upon to merge its activities with industry as never before,' wrote Clark Kerr, president of the 'multiversity' of Berkeley – were fashioning what was

taught and how. Suspended in an undefined space between social origins and social destination, the 'free-floating' student intelligentsia found itself massed together for a number of years (minimally four in most countries for a first degree, although only three in Britain) in institutions where they were formally trained to develop a creative and critical intelligence in a narrowly defined discipline, but expected to question nothing else. Many of the new radicals were among the brightest, most dedicated students who demanded that higher education be more than this. The irrelevance to the problems they saw around them of much that was taught, the forms of teaching, the *in loco parentis* rules and regulations that treated them as non-adult, the over-crowded conditions, and ultimately the university's role in society became the focus of demands for radical change. The architectural students of Turin and Milan were the forerunners; but it was at Berkeley that the first mass explosion came in 1964.