

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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Brave New World--Berlin and Munich

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53 Bonn
West Germany
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Mr. Richard H. Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
366 Madison Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10017

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Philosophers and sociologists, politicians and economists--everyone with A Name and several without--have offered their explanations of the phenomenon of youth rampant. Students have been romanticized as the haloed harbingers of a new democratic humanism (primarily by French and American writers), vilified as anarchists and enemies of democracy, or scathingly dismissed as the "political idiots" Lenin said would be temporarily useful in the latter stages of a Communist revolution.

In West Germany, public sympathy has been overwhelmingly against the students. In a nation where all beyond the student age look back with horror on the post-war years of hunger and rebuilding, where the average German citizen seems indeed satisfied with the lack-luster, "no experiments" and "play safe" policies of nineteen years with a Christian Democratic chancellor, the student outbursts are a nasty irritant. Like swarms of gnats at an elegant garden party, they attack the well-fed, well-dressed burghers and pose impudent questions about the economic miracle of which most Germans are so proud. "Is all this prosperity worth it?" they ask. "Aren't our universities turning out non-thinking technicians? Aren't we being manipulated by our capitalistic society? Isn't Germany apt to be the next Vietnam?"

The West German students have been seething about university reform and a political mandate for student government organizations since 1962, but neither public nor politicians paid any attention. "When the students have the feeling that they get no response, even though they talk and argue for six years, then one day they'll consider what measures to take against such an attitude," commented Munich University's student government president last year. "They'll start with demonstrations."

Protests against the war in Vietnam became a rallying point for intellectuals and students in 1966 and early 1967--in February this year the students rounded up such luminaries as novelists Gunter Grass and Heinrich Boell, composer Hans Werner Henze, Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch and playwright Peter Weiss to support their Vietnam Congress in Berlin, an event that attracted 15,000 students from 14 nations, among them Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

But the West German "revolution"--which definitely sparked the French student revolution (through Danny the Red) and gave impetus to student uprisings in virtually every European nation--can be dated from the shooting by a West Berlin policeman of Free University student Benno Ohnesorg on June 2, 1967, at a demonstration led by the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (League of Socialist German Students) against the Shah of Iran. With Ohnesorg "martyred" by the Establishment, students throughout the Federal Republic--no longer just the Berlin radicals--took to the streets, protesting for university reform, an end to the Vietnam war, and a changed society.

And the rest of Germany began to cry for Ruhe und Ordnung. Some went out of their way to pursue it. A few weeks before SDS ideologue Rudi Dutschke was thrown from his bicycle and shot three times in the chest and face by Hitler-fan and housepainter Josef Bachmann, about twenty Berliners followed a young man who looked like Dutschke through the streets of Berlin, planning to beat him up. In the first two months of 1968, Dutschke moved his American wife and young son, Che Hosea, from apartment to apartment--six times in all--to avoid smoke bombs at the door and stones through the apartment windows.

After Dutschke was shot, and students turned out 45,000 strong in twenty cities to halt the delivery of Axel Springer's newspapers, to burn and plunder his newspaper offices in Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt and Hamburg, an independent poll showed that eighty percent of the German population were AGAINST the German students' demonstrations, curiously just the same percentage of the French population that were FOR the Sorbonne students.

As Friedrich Mager and Ulrich Spinnarke wrote in their primer of the German student revolution, "Was Wollen Die Studenten?" (What Do the Students Want?):

The majority of the current opinions about the student protests and demonstrations this summer can be put into five sentences: 1) Don't take them seriously, they're young people. 2) Students should study, not demonstrate. 3) Anyone who is supported by his father or the Father State should not open his mouth too wide. 4) Only the university misfits have time to take to the streets. 5) Those involved are a small minority of political nuts and notorious rowdies.

The students contend that their "violence against things" was justified in the attacks on press czar Axel Springer. It was Springer's Bild newspaper, after all, that German-language cross between the New York Daily News and the National Inquirer that is read by 4.4 million Germans daily, which first labeled the Berlin students "politgammler" (political beatniks) and "langbehaarte Affen" (long-haired apes). Springer's Berlin newspapers, the Morgenpost and the Berliner Zeitung, "discovered" Rudi Dutschke, publicizing the 28-year-old sociology student as the Fuehrer of the student revolutionaries before the students themselves had given him their allegiance.

The Springer press chose well--Dutschke had the charisma, he was a spell-binder for the students, and the West German revolution now seems pale and wan since Bachmann's bullets put Rudi in a Berlin hospital, then a Swiss sanatorium to recover from a brain injury. In Berlin, there are still conflicting rumors about Rudi's condition. Even his closest SDS friends were not allowed to visit him in the Berlin hospital, and when he left the Swiss sanatorium last week his destination was unknown.

The SDS leadership, both in the national offices in Frankfurt and in the Berlin offices at 140 Kurfürstendamm, were already discussing how to play down Rudi's "personality cult" when the attempted assassination removed him from the limelight. But without his direction, the SDS--which is to say, the student revolution in general--is now involved in an internal tug-of-war, a Quo Vadis for the young revoluzzer. Since the Dutschke shooting and the aftermath of the Easter riots, the SDS leaders have expended all their energies in fighting the emergency laws, with meager success despite the gathering of 70,000 students, old communists and unionists in Bonn for the orderly Star March, the take-over of theaters for intermission discussions and student tirades, and the virtual halting of university education for three days in May before Parliament passed the measures.

Parliament's singular lack of concern for student demonstrations against the emergency laws merely reinforced the SDS theory that opposition within the parliamentary system is a futile exercise. "A democracy must be able to absorb and be changed by opposing factions, different ideas," said Hannes Heer, lanky, bespectacled head of the SDS at the University of Bonn. "There should be a slow transformation in a functioning democracy. It must be possible for new movements and strengths to be channeled toward the establishment of goals...but here it doesn't work that way, and we'll have to remain outside the parliamentary system until it does."

For the time being, then, the students have decided to get their own house in order. During the last weeks of the just-ended summer semester, the emphasis turned again to Hochschulreform (university reform) and the Kritische Universitäten formed during the last year in Berlin, Münster, Bochum, Bonn, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Munich. This newsletter will outline the major problems of the German university, the "critical university" working groups in Munich and Berlin, and describe the Berlin KU kindergarten where SDS students are trying to rear youngsters in an anti-authoritarian atmosphere, preparing them for a different version of the present Brave New World.

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The Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, where 24,000 students are enrolled, is what the Germans call a vacation university--comparable perhaps to the University of Miami or the University of Denver in the United States. It attracts a goodly number of goof-offs, students who come to ski in the Bavarian Alps during the winter semester, to swim in the nearby lakes during the summer. It attracts the professors who are just a few years short of retirement age, who settle down in a leisurely Lehrstuhl (professorial chair) and let the graduate students and assistants do the work.

There are two hundred and one full professors or Ordinarien in the seven faculties of the Munich university--theology, law, government (which includes sociology, economics, political science, and, curiously, forestry), medicine, veterinary science, philosophy (including history, psychology, education, all languages, art history, journalism), and natural sciences (encompassing mathematics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, pharmacology, botany, geography). Engineering and practical sciences are taught at the Munich Technische Hochschule, or technical college, which also has university status and at which about 9,000 students were enrolled last year.

"Culture," and therefore education, falls under state control in the Federal Republic and the problem of university reform is handled variously in the eleven individual states. The Federal Science Ministry says that the nation and states together spent almost \$1.1 billion for education in 1966 (figures for 1967 are not yet complete).

The average German citizen mistakenly believes that his taxes for federal and state scholarship programs support the majority of German students. Actually, less than 25 percent of the student population are on scholarship; the federal and state ministries together spend about \$450 million on scholarship funds. The remaining three fourths of the students are supported by their parents; about eight percent put themselves through college.

At its last meeting in Munich, the Verband Deutscher Studentenschaften, the association to which all German students belong, proposed that the university students be given a monthly living allowance by the government. Joachim Hauschild, a Munich University journalism student, insists that "if the 300,000 students in the Federal Republic were given \$100 monthly, that amounts to \$360 million per year, less than the government already pays."

Although the state controls the pursestrings, the German universities are autonomous, and they operate on a hierarchical system in which the professors rule completely. Administration is handled by the rector, Seine Magnifizenz, who is elected by the Dekanat, a body composed of Ordinariat elected from each faculty. The university even has its own disciplinary court, and can insist that students be tried for acts committed off the university property.

Theoretically, every German boy or girl who passes his Abitur, the examination at the end of Gymnasium, is eligible to enter the university. But since it costs the state more to educate a doctor or a physicist (in terms of laboratory and tools) than a student majoring in German or sociology, the numerus clausus rule is invoked and the number of potential physicians and physicists is kept down by stiff entry examinations. The number of students majoring in the social sciences and languages--those subjects that require books but few other tools--has risen accordingly. Although the median professor student ratio in West Germany is 1 : 60 (about 5,000 professors to 300,000 students), it is often way out of balance in the social science faculties. One student told me that there are close to 3,000 Germanistics students in Munich, under nine professors. UNESCO figures indicate that in the fifteen years from 1950 to 1965, West Germany's student population grew 2.8 times, but the figure of 300,000 still represents only four percent of those who could study.

Nearly a hundred different proposals for university reform are being discussed in the Federal Republic this summer, and virtually all contain the minimal reforms listed in the 1961 SDS paper on "Universities in the Democracy"--tri-parity for students, professors and assistants; abolition of the university court; a student voice in the appointment of new professorships; the eventual repeal of the numerus clausus and Zwangsexmatrikulation (the latter limits the number of semesters a student may study in certain subjects, such as medicine or law), administrative meetings open to all interested persons, and substitution of the mass lectures for seminar sessions of around thirty persons.

The university reformers cannot agree on whether the university should continue to be administered by a rector, elected for four to six years, or a president (who could ostensibly be an industrialist, a non-academic), on whether the university should be divided into departments (similar to the United States) or into Institutes. But the power of the Ordinariat will certainly be trimmed--in the SDS and VDS proposals, all professors would be of equal status, and the number of professors greatly increased. Some reform proposals would also make available student counselors who would suggest what courses should be pursued to reach the desired goal.

"Free research is a fine nineteenth century idea," explained Petra Staehle, honors student at the University of Munich who is in her eighth semester and third university (she studied at Freiburg and in England before coming to the Bavarian capital). "It probably worked when there were only eighty people in the university. That we're still operating under the old university structure is a typical German clash between the ideal and the reality. What does free research mean when you can't get the books, when five people are working on a paper on the same subject as you, and a sixth has already hidden all the books you need on Schiller behind the Egyptology section in the library? For those students who know from the first day where they're headed, the university works fine--they need no tutors, no one to advise them. But if you don't already have a complete knowledge of the field you're going into, or if you're shy and hesitate to ask questions, it's ghastly, you float around for years. They don't teach you how to learn and don't tell you what to learn."

The omnipotence of the Ordinariat, and the chilling awe in which they are held by their students, further hinders the democratic restructure of the German universities. As Petra observes: "The professors turn over all the work to their assistants. The assistants have to stay in the professor's good graces because he is the only one who can approve their Habilitation, their admission as a university lecturer. The professors are alone responsible for the students' examinations, yet the students rarely see them. In the large faculties, there may be hundreds of who want to take their exams, but they have to wait until one professor can handle them all." In Munich, reported Der Spiegel in a cover story on Germany's professors entitled "Gods or Expert-Idiots?", twenty medical degree candidates once waited seven hours in a hall outside the professor's door before he allowed them inside to begin their examinations.

Students also complain that the teaching material, the seminar subjects, are moldy and archaic, or worse, irrelevant. "Some are as specialized as 'the use of the article in Goethe's late period,'" said Petra. "But you have to have a certain number of seminar certificates before you can apply for your exams. The seminars are supposed to be for discussion, but with fifty to eighty people in a seminar, only three to five students talk. Most are scared to death of the professor. You can't tell the professor, 'I don't understand, please go over it again.' There's this awful silence when Herr Professor asks 'are there any questions?'"

To counteract such miserable learning and teaching procedures, the students set up their own "critical universities." The idea was modeled after the American and English anti-universities or counter-universities, but the German KU's, as anyone familiar with Germany would expect, are described as "more ideological."

Munich students established their KU this spring, several months after the Berlin movement began in June 1967 (just after the Ohnesorg shooting). Directed by the Aktionsgemeinschaft Demokratische Universität, the critical university has 450 members but draws on a basis group of 4,000 sympathetic students. The ADU is the liberal opposition to the university's conservative-controlled ASTA (Allgemeine Studenten Ausschuss), the legal student council.

The ADU set seven goals for the critical university: dismantling the authoritarian structure, evolving new teaching motivations, new didactic methods, studying the implications of society (to the university), the university in practice, interdisciplinary work, criticism of scientific methods. Among the 24 Arbeitskreise (working groups), the political justice and Germanistics have been the most active.

Rolf Pohle, 26, a slim, wiry law graduate who now is studying sociology, was the Munich ASTA president until the conservatives gained control last winter. Pohle's main interest now is the Rechtshilfe, a legal aid society supported by the critical university's political justice working group. "We're examining the ties between theory and practice, and uncovering roots of German law that the professors no longer know--how the laws against disturbing the peace evolved and how the statutes against unlawful entry are misused. When the students sit-in at the university, the police arrest them for unlawful entry, as if the university were the private domain of the rector. But by the university constitution, the building belongs to the students too--yet they have no rights. That's the sort of thing we're trying to change."

In an ADU publication about the Easter riots in Munich (during which a photographer and a student were killed by flying debris), hundreds of cases in which Munich police mishandled students are documented. Yet Pohle claims that too few students believe the Rechtshilfe can defend them against the Establishment.

"The main problem with our critical working groups is in tearing down the old authority structure," Pohle explained. "The students are used to following instructions, being led, instead of doing their own thinking."

The Germanistics working group, said Ulli Rees, a 21-year-old student of English and French, is working on a critical analysis of the Bild newspaper--"how the use of certain words undermines free discussion and perpetuates authoritarianism." Another working group of sociologists and political scientists is studying institutions used as "instruments for the stabilization of sexual tabus and their function as control agents" (such as the Springer magazine for young adults, Jasmin, or the writings of German pop-sexologist Oswald Kolle) and the one-dimensional society as represented by Mickey Mouse and G. W. F. Hegel.

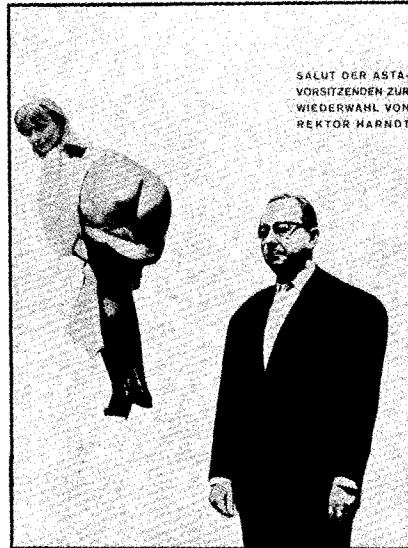
Reiner Jendis, SDS and ADU member, explains the guidelines for the critical working groups in an ADU booklet: "The meetings for political education must attempt to overcome the inbred consumer behavior of the students. Every discussion must be so organized that 1) the leader, in case such is needed to begin the discussion, will not direct continually and 'talk to death' those who are less informed, 2) all participants will be allowed to speak and if possible will be directly answered, to avoid a succession of non-related comments, and 3) wherever possible, the discussion will continue until every participant is satisfied he has had his say."

I attended one meeting of the Munich Arbeitskreis on university reform, but the discussion among ten students and assistants bogged democratically down in dreary detail.

What the Munich students are still discussing, to stifled yawns, the Berlin students have already accomplished in a controversial experiment at the Otto Suhr Institute, the political science institute at the Free University. Some weeks ago students, professors and assistants at the OSI drew up an experimental plan for democratic re-organization of the Institute, guaranteeing tri-parity, open administrative meetings, and an equal voice for the students in determining the curriculum and research projects. As Marianne Bock, 21, an American student of literature and sociology at the FU, said gleefully: "It's just as if the students at Harvard could decide how their money is going to be used--now the OSI can study programs that don't appeal to capitalist societies!"

Last week, for the second time, the FU Academic Senate (our friends, the Ordinariat) rejected the proposal, claiming students need have no voice in determining university research. The three professors who headed the Otto Suhr Institute resigned their Institute posts in protest. Infuriated, a group of seventy students (backed by 400 to 500 more in a sit-down strike outside) voted to occupy the university rector's office in retaliation; on the following day, a general assembly of students, professors and assistants voted to enforce the new statutes, with or without the senate approval, for the fall semester. That same day, Berlin's city council decided to investigate the conditions under which an institute may pursue its own administrative course. The political senate, in other words, has warned the FU Academic Senate that unless reform is allowed from within the university, reforms may be ordered from without.

As Harald Engensand, director of the political senate, told me dubiously: "The Academic Senate should allow an experiment, even if it has negative results--the question, of course, is whether the OSI statutes should be a model for university reform. Frankly, I don't think tri-parity is the answer, because the students bear no continuing responsibility or duty to science, and the professors do."



Sigrid Fronius, FU AStA president; her salute to the newly-elected FU Rector Dr. Ewald Harndt (from the FU magazine); Miss Fronius being taken by Berlin police from the occupied Rector's Office

Sigrid Fronius, 26, an attractive blonde SDS faithful who is AStA president at the Free University and who was one of the occupiers of the rector's office last week, would probably argue that the professorial concept of responsibility to science is wrong. Defending the FU against the charge that leftist students are turning it into a breeding ground for Marxist polemic, Fräulein Fronius bristled and told me: "The university should be able to show the society what's wrong and what's right. The university is that section of society which has the chance to know better. By our political involvement we're rejecting the political function of the university's being a tool for society in order to take seriously another political function--that of critic and participant."

Although professors and politicians complain that the FU has been for the past year a "place of terror--there's been no teaching and no research" (Engensand), Fräulein Fronius sees things differently. "We can't point to great strides forward, but the students are much changed. They don't have as much respect for the professors now, they enter into discussions with them and the professors have to work harder to satisfy the students. On the whole, the students have more voice in how the university is run--not yet on a legal basis, but at least some of the professors now ask us what subjects we would like to study in seminars."

"Although we may not have changed any laws, we've been able to prevent the extension of some; the Academic Senate couldn't extend Zwangsexmatrikulation beyond medicine and law. The professors are also offering more interesting topics for lectures now--political science students heard lectures on the relation between armaments and economy, and Mao Tse Tung, and the theory of imperialism."

The new OSI statutes, according to Peter Tautfest, the Kritikal Universität specialist for the AStA, are partially an outgrowth of the critical university's work. "The KU was a boo-man for the FU this past year. But we don't want the KU to work in the underground with guerilla tactics, as the London anti-university does. Our goal is to go into the university itself, as partisan hell-raisers, but on a rational basis. We don't want to preach the middle-class aesthetic, nor do we agree with the old Social Democratic and Communist slogan, 'Knowledge is Power.' The KU should offer concrete guidance to practice, a practice-oriented theory. The job of the KU is to fill holes in the university curriculum. The medical faculty, for example, offered no psychology at all. The KU set up a working group on psychosomatic medicine, so that the course would be available at the university, so that the medical students will become better doctors, so we could do research on why a man gets ulcers, why psychosomatics is needed in our society."

Marianne Bock, whose uncle, protestant theologian Helmut Gollwitzer, is one of the few FU profs admired by the SDS students, admitted that Berlin's critical university working groups face the same problems as their Munich colleagues. "Evolving new methods for work is not easy, and we talk for hours and hours about how to do it. The psychological and pedagogical roadblocks we run into because of our authoritarian upbringing are terrible."



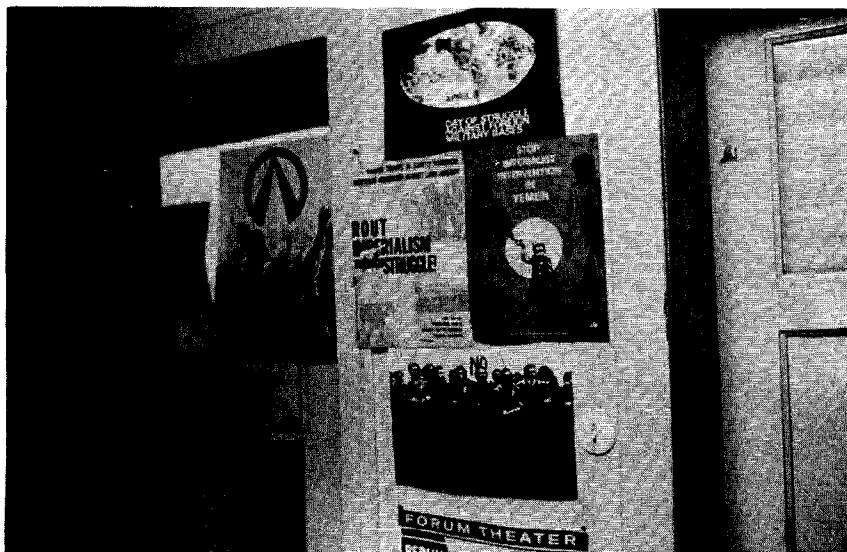
Free University AStA Headquarters, Exterior

Miss Bock suggests, however, that the German version of the critical university is "further along" than the American model she has seen at Berkeley. "In the United States they're more involved in personal emancipation and not political emancipation. Here when there's a discussion of sexuality, it relates to methods of control in society. The German KU is not hippieland, with ceramics and pop art and an emotional rebellion against society. Sure, the reactionaries are strong here--and at the moment the revolution seems to have died down--but this isn't something you drop, like drugs."

Despite earnest efforts to interest laborers and others outside the academic community in the KU, the Berlin students say attendance at the thirty seminars and work group sessions (which discuss topics ranging from university reform to West Berlin economics and politics to the theory and function of development aid politics) is spasmodic. "The regulars are those who are already interested, like the ones who go to church." But the SDS students claim a basis group of 5,000 among the 15,000 FU students and 2,000 among the Technische Universität's 12,000 students in Berlin.

Miss Bock said some students complain the KU is run "by an elite who discuss on a level where the others can't follow." A certain political attitude is assumed, she admitted--for instance, that American imperialism will create other Vietnam's in South America, or in Europe. "Some students agree on this only in theory. But the impetus for the KU is to tell our society that we eat so well because we're exploiting people in South America. Establishing critical universities is the intellectual's duty, to make people see that this is imperialism."

However one assesses the students' intellectual duty, they are working diligently at practicing the anti-authoritarianism they preach, even at the nursery school and kindergarten level. The KU kindergarten, the fruit of a KU class on anti-authoritarian child-rearing, has been operating since last fall in six separate sections of West Berlin where interested parents (most of them are FU students or artists who have ties to the academic community) rented shops that were standing empty, painted the walls with bright colors, and opened a collective playschool.



Free University ASTA Headquarters, Interior

"It's not just a place where you can get rid of the kids--the mothers work on a round-robin basis, which helps to prevent the children establishing ties that are overly strong to their parents, and thereby building the authoritarian principle. It's hard for the parents to be emancipated now, but by rearing their children in a free atmosphere, without authority, it should be easier for the children when they grow up."

Taking care of six to eight youngsters in such a studiously permissive atmosphere poses the expected problems, admitted Martin Bellerman, a political science student who is in charge of the KU kindergarten for AStA. "One time the kids filled a bucket with water and started splashing it all over the floor. The teacher didn't want to forbid the children's play, so she diverted the leader of the group to another game with a phonograph. That the group had a structure at all is bad, but in this case the mother used the group's structure to change the direction of play without saying that something was forbidden."

"Everything is allowed," continued Bellerman. "We experiment with O'Neill's Summerhill theories, but we want to avoid the isolationism he engenders, and we've read the Vera Schmidt studies of Moscow kindergartens. But there's no political line...when you say we're rearing them to accept no authority, that's probably the strongest political statement one can make."

In spring 1969, the various KU kindergartens will be incorporated into the FU kindergarten to be built on university property and operated by AStA following the KU anti-authoritarian principles. "We'll follow a feeding on demand schedule for the babies; we won't make a fetish out of cleanliness; and we'll let the children develop in their own milieu," said Bellerman optimistically. "Instead of forbidding and allowing, saying things are per se good or bad, black or white, the children will learn to make their own decisions. If a child says he wants to take apples from someone else's basket, he'll be told what the consequences will be--that the other child may hit him--but he'll be allowed to make up his own mind. And he'll be encouraged to form his own arguments, and to be aware of the arguments, the rights of others."

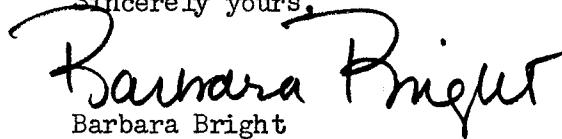
Kindergarten toys are collectively owned, the first step in breaking away from the capitalistic idea of private ownership, Bellerman explained. Self-achievement, not achievement on orders from above, will develop the children's initiative and ego. Recognition of sexuality, without sexual tabus such as punishment for masturbation, will eliminate some of the children's fears. The older children will be introduced to the outside world through social experience (visiting farms, the police station, the fire department), natural science, math and communications--"but following no authoritative program beyond awakening the interest and initiative of the children. We want children who can come to terms with reality but who are uninhibited."

And how will children so reared fit into the present society? Just fine, according to Bellerman, and maybe they'll even be able to change society. "The eight-year-olds of some parents in our group led a sit-down strike in front of the classroom in their grammar school because they wanted to get rid of their teacher. The school principal assigned them another, a better teacher."

The KU kindergarten, contends Bellerman, can be viewed as a first step toward building the new society. As Rudi Dutschke explained once to a German audience:

What should society do with us? I think the question is incorrectly posed. Let's put it this way: what's the use of riots, what shall we do with society? I was once asked, what else must we do to reassure you, to integrate you into society? And my answer was, Yes, it is our task to integrate society as quickly as possible, but in a way that will make society a learning society, that the elitarian relationship between university and society will be put aside and that society as a whole turns into a studying, creative mankind...This is certainly different from the past, when the blue-eyed boys of the bourgeoisie and the elitarian groups of society are beginning to do away with their elite conditions and the introverted mechanisms of elitarian attitude...(this) is a historic novelty in Germany, and we should take note...

Sincerely yours,


Barbara Bright

Received in New York July 22, 1968.