

# Technocracy and Rebellion<sup>1</sup>

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May we not be justified in reaching the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some epochs of civilization—possibly the whole of mankind—have become “neurotic”?

Freud

The longing to be primitive is a disease of culture.  
Santayana

The period from 1964 to 1968 was one of the most remarkable in recent American history. Thirty-five years of American liberalism were tried and found wanting. Opposition movements were born first on the Left, then on the Right, which were strong enough to shake established political patterns. The spread of ill humor, intolerance, and personal cruelty spoiled the last traces of freshness and innocence in the American character. The temper of a nation changed.

These changes corresponded with the apotheosis of liberalism, its transformation from a vaguely populist movement at least apparently opposed to established power into a technocratic ideology of total social integration under the auspices of “scientific” expertise. The War on Poverty and the War on Vietnam were just two aspects of liberalism's final struggle to terminate the history of social conflict: in the first case by removing its causes at home and in the second by creating the pre-conditions for removing its causes abroad. Never was America stronger and more self-confident, and never was it engaged in a more hopelessly Utopian task. Yet at the time there was every reason for those in power to believe it would work. After all, the Roman Empire had lasted over half a millennium and the British Empire for several hundred years. But America, which for all its

strength “did not want an empire,” discovered it could not even *not* have an empire on its own terms! The failure in Vietnam became the prelude to the collapse of liberal technocracy in every sphere.

What went wrong with the Great Society? In 1966, Herbert Marcuse offered an explanation which had at least the virtue of demonstrating the significance of Vietnam for the technocratic project of pacifying human existence through total administration. This analysis, which attracted little attention at the time, gains credibility with each passing year, as the alienation and aggression which it accented become more and more visible and dominant tendencies of social life. Marcuse saw in advanced capitalist societies a “progressive transfer of power from the human individual to the technical or bureaucratic apparatus, from living to dead labour, from personal to remote control, from a machines or group of machines to a whole mechanized system.”<sup>2</sup> The reconstruction of society on the image of a single vast machine relieves the individuals of initiative and responsibility for their own lives. Personal life is now planned and orchestrated with the lives of others, from above, by the machine itself. The individuals “live in a society where they are... subjected to an apparatus which, comprising production, distribution, and consumption, material and intellectual, work and leisure, politics and fun, determines their daily existence, their needs and aspirations.” But the increased power of the society over the individual is not compensated by an increase in the power of the individual over the society. Labor is still “alienated,” that is, it is still production for an Other, an owner of capital, and not for the individual's own needs or those of his fellows. The private goals of

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<sup>2</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “The Individual in the Great Society,” in *Alternatives*, March-April 1966, p. 15. All subsequent quotes from Marcuse are also taken from this article.

the individual remain competitive and aggressive, as in classical capitalism. "The individuals must go on spending physical and mental energy in the struggle for existence, status, advantage. They must suffer, service, and enjoy the apparatus which imposes on them this necessity. The new slavery in the work world is not compensated by a new autonomy over the work world." What is the consequence of this reduction of the sphere of inner personal autonomy, this increase in social integration, in a context which excludes real harmonious unification of the individuals, and which requires of them continued competitive struggle?

To the extent that the society succeeds in providing the material wants of its members, the frustrations of this form of life will not be actualized as opposition to the society itself. Rather, the very consciousness of alienation within the society will tend to be repressed as "individuals identify themselves with their being-for-others, their image." The individual's loyalty to the society is purchased through his libidinal attachment to the goods and services he receives from the system. But then the aggressive energies generated by the system cannot be discharged in internal opposition and conflict as, for example, in traditional class struggle. "Under these circumstances, society calls for an Enemy against whom the aggressive energy can be released which cannot be channelled into the normal, daily struggle for existence. The individuals who are called upon to develop the Great Society live in a society which wages war or is prepared to wage war all over the world.... The Enemy is not one factor among others, not a contingency which the evaluation of the chances of the Great Society can ignore or to which it can refer to in passing. The Enemy is a determining factor at home and abroad, in business and education, in science and relaxation." Thus, the abolition of radical class conflict within advanced capitalism is not the abolition of the motives of or

the need for conflict. Rather, it causes the displacement of aggressivity onto nations and groups exterior to the now unified social system, groups outside the vast machine of gratifying social subordination and domination. This shift provides the basis in the individual for a renewed struggle by advanced capitalism against subject peoples and races, the basis for new forms of imperialist and racist ideology appropriate to the needs of the now transformed society.

Since 1966, it has become clear to what extent this structure is unstable and contradictory. At the purely practical level, the price of fighting the Enemy in Vietnam has been too high to permit the simultaneous integration of excluded groups at home. But ideologically, such groups tend to be seen as and to become surrogate Enemies themselves, and the will to integrate them recedes before the need for objects on which to discharge aggression. The political base of technocratic liberalism does not permit it to make this transition from imperialism to outright racism, and it falls before conservative political trends. Furthermore, the imperialist ideology, which diverts aggression and opposition from the system itself onto the Enemy, fails to function in the university. Student opposition arises, and shows the individuals the way to a discharge of aggression on its real source, the "system."

These developments force the society to reproduce its contradictions at a higher level, for now the Enemy has appeared within the system itself. Intra-societal struggle is again possible and necessary, although not on the basis of the class oppositions of competitive capitalism. But now that opposition has appeared within the system, the ideal of total social integration is shattered. The psychic interest of the struggle between the different groups in the society is

greater than that of peaceful coexistence between them. Divisive and fragmenting tendencies emerge and overwhelm the liberal vision. Technocratic liberalism had asked the individuals to realize themselves through their social roles, their cooperative activity, and their similarities. But as the aggressive tendencies of the society emerge and are reinforced by imperialist warfare, the individuals identify themselves more and more with the violence in themselves, which enables them to reconcile themselves with the system. It is no longer in the relations with his fellows, which are visibly mediated and controlled by the "system," that the individual becomes truly real for himself, but in the relation to the Enemy. The psychic foundations are laid for a new ideology of "individualism," understood as perpetual internecine strife among fellow Americans. The aggressivity of the individuals can now become a concrete desire for blood and enthusiasm in police brutality, political assassination, and social persecution. In opposition to this rise in right-wing fervour, more and more Americans discover that the way to release from responsibility for their social role and their society lies in the performing and suffering of political violence in radical political struggle. The stage is set for a decade of bloodshed and cruelty. All these trends are reflected in and propagated by the mass media. A study of the ideologies present in films and advertising in the late sixties contributes to an understanding of the contradictions of advanced capitalist society.

A certain type of French and Italian film became quite popular in the United States in the late sixties, particularly among the intelligentsia. Films like *La Dolce Vita* and *Fahrenheit 451* reflected oppositional tendencies in American society more successfully than the usual Hollywood product. These "social critical" films therefore gained larger and larger audiences as the domestic opposition itself

increased in numbers. Another contemporary type of film did not have to win popularity gradually. The spy mania, which began after John Kennedy named Ian Fleming among his favourite authors, quickly swept the country. The first James Bond film had millions of viewers, and a new film genre was born in an instant.

These two types of films seem to represent diametrically opposed social attitudes. The social critical films reject modern society with a vengeance and describe the death of traditional humanistic culture with nostalgic tenderness. The spy films, on the contrary, celebrate the pleasures of technological society and depict its triumph over malicious underdeveloped peoples and criminal conspiracies. In *Alphaville*, Jean-Luc Godard inverted the spy film to make a doubly ironic critical commentary on modern society. A comparison of this film with a model of the spy genre, such as *Dr. No*, brings out the salient features of both. *Alphaville* concerns the visit of a spy to a city controlled by a computer called Alpha 60. In *Alphaville*, "men have become the slaves of probability" and logic. The spy from the "outerlands" has come on behalf of "those who weep" to save *Alphaville* for human values such as love, which have been rooted out of the hearts and even the dictionaries of the city's citizens. Godard's hero eventually destroys the computer and escapes with the daughter of *Alphaville*'s chief scientist, Von Braun.

The contrast between this film, directed against computerized technocracy, and a film like *Dr. No* is deceptively obvious. James Bond represents Western society in its worst aspects, which Godard rejects in his film. The rational, collectivized society in *Dr. No* is not the West, but a group of evil orientals. Godard's hero takes no pleasure in the life of *Alphaville*, whose joys are summed

up for him in a vending machine which exchanges a thank-you note for a franc. Bond is a hedonist, and lets no opportunity for sexual, culinary and egoistic pleasure pass by unheeded. To all appearances, then, Godard's film is a radical humanistic critique of contemporary society, whereas *Dr. No* is a fully integrated expression of the decadence and imperialism of the same society. But no close examination of these films can confirm this conventional conclusion.

Lemmy Caution, the hero of *Alphaville*, represents human values which are lost or declining in the technological civilization of Russia and the West. His geographical significance is sufficiently established by his alias in *Alphaville*, "Ivan Johnson, correspondent for *Figaro-Pravda*." *Alphaville* itself is the Paris of the future; *Alphaville* was photographed in the most Americanized sections of Paris. That an old-time detective hero represents human values here, peculiar as it may seem, is indicated by the constant quotations of French poetry and philosophy that fall from Caution's lips. Paul Eluard's *Capital de la douleur*, Celine's *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, Pascal's famous epigram about the eternal silences of the infinite spaces, lines from Racine, and much else get into the act. For this film, Godard brought back Eddie Constantine to play Lemmy Caution one last time, years after the actor had played him in the last of the original series of Caution films. This sort of gesture is significant for Godard, who also hired the retired Fritz Lang to play a film director in *Contempt*, and there too used the older man to represent a dying humanism in conflict with society.

The paradoxical use of a caricature like Lemmy Caution to portray Western humanism is an essential part of Godard's design. He wants to show that we have been reduced by the progress of technocracy to such a state that the last heroic



type of the individualistic and humanistic tradition is the spy and the detective. As Caution says, "Journalism begins with the same letter as Justice." A deeper reason for the choice of Caution as hero is Godard's belief that "technological time" is the enemy of life and love. Only a man of action can break through the circle of time in which Alphaville lives, a circle which Alpha 60 describes in the following terms: "No one has lived in the past; no one will live in the future. The present is the form of all life. Time is like a circle which turns ceaselessly, the descending arc, the past; the rising arc, the future." In a society of total administration, the individual has no need of past and future, both of which are taken care of by the computer. Only a man of action can break the circle of time because only he can follow the advice of an unfortunate criminal of Alphaville, executed for weeping at his wife's funeral: "It suffices to go forward to live, forward towards all that one loves." It takes a Lemmy Caution to invalidate the apparent technological obsolescence of the past and the future.

Lemmy Caution's role is played in one form or another in a great many social critical films. In films of despair like *La Dolce Vita* and *The Red Desert*, the individualistic hero is doomed. In the former film, Steiner, the aristocrat who studies Bach and Sanskrit, gathers around himself artists and poets, and eventually commits suicide, assumes this role. In the latter film, a similar function is filled by a neurotic woman lost in the industrial wasteland of Ravenna. In Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451*, this role is given more optimistic treatment. There, the hero succeeds in escaping from a world based entirely on television to a region where a small fringe group conserves literary traditions.

In *Alphaville*, the hero establishes his humanity and gains his victory through love. This pattern, found also in many spy films, is given classic treatment here. The girl is brought over from the enemy by being retaught the words and actions of love long since abolished in Alphaville as illogical and functionless. The asceticism of this love scene is extraordinary: there is practically no physical contact but only a poetic interplay between the protagonists. In *Alphaville*, where sex has become entertainment, it is so divorced from love that no relation between the two can be established. Once obtained, the love of the heroine confirms the hero's humanity, to distinguish him from the cold, unlovable, and unloving computer. But Godard goes even further and offers us as well a sadistic Lemmy Caution, to sharpen the distinction between him and the benevolent computer, all of whose actions "serve the final good." In one scene, Caution purposely drives his car over an enemy agent's face. Godard is willing to grasp at any shred of evidence that human instincts, of whatever sort, still survive the reign of logic. It is precisely the computer which is the enemy because it is the pure embodiment of the repressive rationality of technological society.

It states that, "In the capitalist and the communist world, there is no evil desire to subjugate men by indoctrination or money but simply the natural desire to organize, to plan, to reduce the unforeseen." The result of this technocratic project of efficiency is Alphaville. There, the entire human world is the tool and slave of a mechanism which, unlike previous mechanisms, has the capacity to organize and control a total society including its population. Man in Alphaville, in Marshall McLuhan's phrase, has become the sex organ of machines. The threat of the machine is most terrifying at this level, where men model themselves after it as they are assimilated to its automatism.

This threat dominates the worlds of all the social critical films from *La Dolce Vita*, where it takes the form of mass culture, to *The Red Desert*, where the mere physical presence of factories and industry seems to demoralize and dehumanize men. But in spite of the critical presentation of the mechanical world in these films, it is portrayed as aesthetically beautiful. Perhaps the directors' obsessive fascination with the hated machine is partially overcome through this aesthetic transmutation, just as in the spy film a similar hatred is modified by the representation of the pleasures of technology. Particularly in *The Red Desert*, the director has created an irony between his aesthetic and his social attitude, combining beauty with terror.

Three tendencies in the portrayal of the masses dominate these films. In *Alphaville*, the people form a sort of fascist collectivity in which atomized and lobotomized individuals work and think together like robots. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the population forms a large friendly family, a tribe, in which conformity is the result of a child-like wish to belong. In *La Dolce Vita*, it is the swinging life, with its despair and its conformity in non-conformity, which provides the model. Thus, fascism, the American adolescent, and Madison Avenue provide the three basic images of technological collectivism for the social critical films.

Correlated with this horror of collectivism is a yearning for the simple country life of technological underdevelopment where, presumably, spirit is not submitted to mechanism. But the place in which this life is available is never clearly defined. After Lemmy Caution and his girlfriend escape *Alphaville* in their shiny Mustang, they will arrive at a completely unspecified destination. In *The Red Desert*, a beach where the rocks are like flesh and the water is pure and clean

serves this function; while in *La Dolce Vita*, the smile of a simple country girl at the end of the film bears the same message. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the land of the “book people,” a country retreat populated by refugees from the television society, each of whom has memorized his favourite book, offers the most fanciful interpretation of the remaining possibilities of freedom. The idyllic life in which the contradictions of society and human values would be avoided (no resolution is conceivable in these films) is presented as an unrealistic utopian hope and even, in *The Red Desert*, as a neurotic daydream.

The spy film exhibits a remarkably similar structure. James Bond is no literary humanist, but it is on the basis of him and his ilk that Godard created *Alphaville*, which pretends to reveal the essence of the spy as humanist hero. Bond may not quote Racine, but he establishes his non-mechanical humanity in other ways. He always begins a film well provisioned with technical devices and weapons; just as regularly he is stripped of these defences by his enemies, captured, and exposed to their weapons. Thus, he is forced to prove himself as a man. As a man, Bond's thoroughly human clumsiness, luck, and seductive powers somehow suffice to see him through to victory. His fumbling incompetence at disarming an atom bomb, his sheer physical strength, his ability to convert an enemy girl from the perversions of her life to heterosexual love, and his search for pleasure in a world gone mad all prove his humanity. Strength without machines and the test of love seem to be universal traits of the spy hero.

An important characteristic of the spy hero, absent except as caricature from the social critical films, is “untouchability.” No danger is too great for the spy; no attack on his life is ever successful. Under a laser beam or in a shark-filled pool,

under the guns of his opponents or in bed with a beautiful woman counterspy, the hero always survives triumphant and unruffled. Not only is he immune from death, but, even more importantly, he is immune from fear, injury, and everything which would cause him to lose his self-possession. The fact that no threat can challenge the integrity of his image indicates that his untouchability is something like a model response to the real threats present in the daily life of the audience.

*The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, which repudiates this pattern for the sake of "realism," ends up by merely confirming its importance. The hero chooses gratuitous death as a protest against reality. Thus, he is immune, but he surrenders his immunity at the last minute for the sake of human values sacrificed by a hateful world. *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* ignores the rules. Everyone knows that a good spy cannot have ideals or human attachments. Almost all spy films carefully avoid the excesses of personal commitment on which this film is based. The proper response of the hero to his world is always a carefully hedged bet, so heavily defended and defensive that he is never exposed to the danger of disillusionment or true love. He knows what to expect from life and never worries about ideals and politics. He is precisely not like the hero of *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, a normal mature adult. Instead, he is a super-adolescent possessing a highly developed brand of optimistic and hedonistic "cool." This is particularly obvious in the television series *I Spy*. Only in this way can the hero assert his humanity and individuality without assuming a tragic role.

Again, as in the social critical films, the enemy in the spy film is a highly collectivized and technologically sophisticated society, whether it is represented

by a criminal conspiracy or by a foreign nation. A very significant scene in *Goldfinger* points up the opposition of this new villainy and the old-fashioned criminality of the gangster. At one point in the film, *Goldfinger* invites a number of gangsters to his house for a payoff and then promptly proceeds to execute them with poison gas. No individual gangster heroics here: gas warfare greets the "Little Caesars" of the films of the thirties and forties.

The villain of the spy film always has at his disposal a full complement of obedient and mindless servants to operate his arsenal of advanced weapons. Sometimes his servants are old-fashioned thugs, as in *Arabesque*, but in *Dr. No* they form a huge ant-like community of conspirators, a more interesting and revealing image of the new organization of evil in the spy world. The incredible weapons and comforts of these enemies of civilization range from nuclear devices and helicopters on the one hand to yachts and pleasure gardens in the Bahamas on the other. The hero is always captured by his enemies, and, working practically unaided from within their society of evil, he conquers their advanced technology. Sometimes his own side, armed with its advanced weapons, comes to his aid as at the end of *Goldfinger*; but the basic work has to be done by a lone man in enemy territory. There is no unilateral rejection of technology here, but the superiority of man is asserted; and throughout most of the film, machines are indeed the enemy.

Certainly the strangest aspect of these films is their imperialism. Just as the social critical films idealize technological underdevelopment in the abstract, so the spy films vilify underdeveloped peoples concretely, in their use of Arabs, Chinese, etc. For the former type of film, underdevelopment represents

humanism and individualism, while the latter sees in it only a repressive technocracy. In most of the films inspired by James Bond, some underdeveloped country of non-caucasian race plays the role of manichean principle of evil. But the enemy never employs the guerilla tactics of the Viet Cong; instead, it usually possesses a highly disciplined army supplied with the most technically advanced weapons. Thus, the real relation between Western imperialism and the underdeveloped world is completely reversed, the former basing itself oft men and the latter on machines, the former on the principles of Mao and the latter on those of L.B.J.

This theme finds its most gratuitous and self-conscious expression in *Arabesque*, where the hero and his girlfriend save a good Arab prime minister from the clutches of a group of evil Arab conspirators. The "good guys" escape the conspirators at one point in the film and are pursued through a field by a combine, a thresher, and some other appalling pieces of agricultural equipment. Just as *Goldfinger* attempts to have Bond crushed in a car by a scrap metal machine (a picturesque image of the fate of the average American in a head-on freeway collision), so here the enemy catches the representatives of Western society in the situation of pedestrians in city traffic. But "our side" eventually gets to the other side of the field (street), where they find horses waiting to carry them away. The conspirators chase them with a tank and a helicopter; but, after outwitting and destroying their enemies, the heroes achieve the expected happy ending. What possible meaning can this absurd contre-sense have; how can the West be the nineteenth century to the East's twentieth?

Here the technocratic threat in the hero's and our own society is projected onto the underdeveloped world. The image of the helicopter and the guerilla in which this projection is expressed recurs in several films. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the hero is also chased by a helicopter, and in *La Dolce Vita* the triumph of technocracy over traditional civilization is symbolized in a grimly ironic scene by the transportation of a statue of Christ by a helicopter. But a distinction should be made between the immediate significance of the concept of "underdevelopment" for European and American audiences; The social critical films are deeply anti-American. Their political significance in Europe is qualified by this fact: they represent nostalgia for Europe's past, prior to the invasion of American technology. The force of this ideology is such that the French cartoon strip *Asterix* has become very popular by representing the victorious struggle of the ancient *gaulois* against the Roman Empire, glorifying the technological backwardness of primitive Gaul as opposed to the sophisticated Romans. In Europe, the opposition of the secondary powers to the great powers ("Ivan Johnson") dominates the viewer's perception of the social critical film. The same metaphors concretize themselves for Americans in the opposition of the advanced and underdeveloped world. However, even in Europe the signification is complicated by the growing Americanization of Europe itself. Hence, it can only appear as nostalgia for the past, as technological underdevelopment, as a refusal of the "machine" of advanced capitalist society.

An amusing confirmation of these tendencies is found in a spy movie, *You Only Live Twice*. This film, made at the time of the great economic difficulties which forced the devaluation of the pound and of British pride as well, reflects a "third force" concept absent from the other spy films. Here, James Bond takes a plunge



into the ranks of the secondary powers, which are now justified by their humanity against the quadruple menace of the dehumanized great powers: SPECTRE, China, Russia and America. The first two of these embody the principle of diabolical evil and the latter two the principle of blind mechanical automatism. This is the film in which Bond “dies,” to be resurrected later in another identity. Bond's sacrifice for “Little England” corresponds to the death of Great Britain itself and the nostalgia for its reappearance on the world scene. The executed Bond is reborn in the torpedo tube of a submarine, from which he is launched to shore for his final mission. The new Bond, Sean Connery with the fat cheeks and paunch of a middle-aged businessman, is not yet the perfect expression of England's post-imperial, overripe maturity. He must also ally himself with a secondary non-anglo-saxon power, Japan, to save the world from the madness and stupidity of the great powers. To seal this alliance, Bond's transformation must be total: he must become Japanese and marry a Japanese girl. Bond then learns the traditional Japanese art of stealth and violence, *ninji*, and goes to work for the Japanese secret service. In the final scenes, Bond, in his little helicopter, outmanoeuvres the huge helicopters of SPECTRE, which represent the overwhelming technology of the big powers. Bond is no longer the human victim of the machines of the enemy but now has his own “little” technology. This reproduces the precise position of Europe in world politics, not fighting on the ground like the Viet Cong but somewhere in the intermediary space, surviving and even occasionally winning by cleverness and manoeuvrability. Here, it is up to the secondary powers to prevent nuclear war between the great powers; with Bond's help, they succeed. De Gaulle might have admitted England to the

Common Market on the basis of this brilliant Gaullist analysis of the world situation.

A concluding comparison between the social critical film and the spy film reveals more similarities than differences. In both, the hero is a sort of guerilla warrior fighting an evil technocracy from within. In both, his humanity is established by individual action against the machine and through the conquest of love. In one, the technological world is presented as threatening and beautiful; in the other, as threatening and pleasurable. In both, underdevelopment assumes the qualities of one of the contradictory aspects of the society, either human values or technology. In both, the enemy possesses the helicopters and the hero is the guerilla. But the social functions of the two types of films are different. The social critical film exacerbates the conflict of human values and technological society, while the spy film attempts to resolve their conflict. This explains their different treatments of underdevelopment which, for reasons that must be analysed, serves a particularly important symbolic function for consciousness in advanced society.

As far as the audience is concerned, the essential point of these films is similar. Persecuted by the mechanical world, the viewers identify themselves as heroes in a guerilla war against technocracy. This manichean reaction to technology is no more rigidly confined to any special social group than is the appeal of the films. Although spy films are more generally popular, the intelligentsia despises them and prefers the social critical films; the whole range of Americans is entertained by one or the other. But certainly, American society cannot be a principle of evil to all of its members. Even though it may threaten

them, most people participate in its institutions and its pleasures. The system is both rejected and loved, feared and accepted. Why then do people identify unilaterally with only one of their complementary social roles?

*The Tenth Victim* cleverly exploits this dual character of the individual's relation to his society as both its victim and its support. This film depicts a world of the future in which warfare has been abolished by the creation of an organized, legal manhunt to the death open to all who want to join. The hunt 30 TELOS attracts the most aggressive and murderous people in the society and thus frees the civilized part of the population from supporting the wars these people would have caused had they had armies at their command. Each member of the hunt is alternately hunter and victim in relation to another member; those who survive ten rounds receive rewards and lifetime admiration. This is a far more realistic image of contemporary life than those reviewed above, since it shows the individual as both sadist and masochist, the enthusiastic participant and the stalked prey of his society.

*The Tenth Victim* is based on a prevalent attitude in advanced society which I will call "technological ambivalence." This attitude results from the tension in the individual between his freedom and his social role, a tension which comes to be reflected in the complementary relations of domination and subordination in which he is caught up. In one of his ambivalent moods, the individual feels that "his" society (and with it, the rewards he receives for his integration) is threatened by the freedom and alienation of others. He feels that student radicals, criminals, and communists threaten his security and that only a strengthening of the state and the police can save him. This mood is nearly universal in American society

and dominates right-wing politics; but many who consider themselves liberals fall suddenly under its sway when their interests are threatened. In another of his ambivalent moods, the individual, who is as integrated as his fellows, feels persecuted by the massive technical and bureaucratic structure of the society and by the conforming millions it commands. He feels that his freedom is lost in his role and that the state is invading every sphere of personal autonomy. From this mood anti-authoritarian campus movements draw their strength. It dominates American radicalism, but conservative attitudes may also be expressed in it as nostalgia for the old individualism of competitive capitalism.

Thus, the individual in advanced technological society plays the contradictory roles of integrated creator and sustainer of his society and alienated combatant against its conformism and technology. In the former role, he pilots the counter-insurgency helicopters that keep the others in check, and in the latter role he fights a rear-guard guerilla action for a more individualistic society. In the United States, these attitudes are not class attitudes but are shared by most people.

In the light of this analysis of technological ambivalence, the imperialism of the spy film can be understood in a new way. It can now be interpreted as an intra-societal symbolism fundamentally concerned with the relation of the individual to his own society and not with the relation of his country to other countries. Fighting a guerilla war against a technologically sophisticated underdeveloped world, the individual projects the most unpleasant aspects of his own society onto other societies while establishing himself as an "individual." The mechanical metaphors which embody the principle of evil in his own social life

can become the objects of opposition and struggle when ascribed to foreign countries, and the viewer can thus accept the beau role of humanist hero without having to consciously reject his society. The form and content of the spy film reflect the ambivalence of consciousness in advanced society, and its imperialism offers the viewer a way out of his confused situation through an illusory resolution of his inner conflicts. The social critical film does not fulfil these functions; instead, it romantically idealizes the individualism and alienation of the technologically ambivalent consciousness in opposition to advanced society itself. The social critical film is therefore straightforward in its exaltation of human values against mass society and its condemnation of that society.

However, the social critical films do not fully transcend technological ambivalence because they fail to indicate any real possibility of resistance to established reality. Thus, the *viewer* is left where he was initially. In his daily life he remains an active participant in the society he despises, still bound to its satisfactions and comforts and therefore to its routine. The individual remains in technological ambivalence and his critical consciousness remains in contradiction with his socially mediated needs. Nevertheless, the social critical film brings the individual closer to overcoming the contradictions of consciousness in advanced society, since it points in the direction of the real solution which it cannot actualize. The romantic image of cultured, humanistic, pre-technological society, though not concretized geographically (Vietnam or Cuba is precisely not the place to go) indicates nonetheless a historical and personal possibility which is real enough in advanced society: the absolute refusal to participate in that society. The metaphorical function of underdevelopment in the social critical film foreshadows the explanation of the fact that for the masses at a certain stage,

social criticism of their own society appears in the guise of unreasoning fear and hatred of the underdeveloped world. The social critical film enables us to understand that the internal threat to human values experienced by the average individual in advanced society is most decisively actualized in the form of an absurd external threat from the underdeveloped world. That people have projected the most frightening aspects of their society onto other societies is not surprising, but that the underdeveloped world, the least probable target for this projection, should be picked to represent technocracy seems strange indeed until the concrete significance of underdevelopment for advanced society is grasped. In identifying underdevelopment with the alienation of the individual in this society rather than projecting onto underdevelopment the causes of this alienation, the social critical film dramatizes this significance of underdevelopment for the average individual, as well as its real threat to the security of his existence and the real possibilities of personal liberation open to him.

There is a historical theory implicit in the social critical films which arrests and cancels their oppositional function: they all project the conformist tendencies of the fifties into the indefinite future. Mass society and technocracy are supposed to be progressively eradicating all traces of humanistic culture, individual autonomy, and political opposition. But then the film's protest, and the sympathetic viewer's, must be impotent and isolated and must remain at the level of attitude instead of achieving that of action. These films are elegies, not manifestos. Events, however, have not confirmed this theory. If it were correct, then neither the rise of the Left nor that of the Right would have been possible. Nor would we find that the largest audiences for both the spy films and the social

critical films is youth. The social critical films imply that the era of their possibility, of the possibility of critical consciousness, is a transitional one between traditional and mass society. But alienation does not seem to be on the verge of disappearing, and the so-called transitional period of the social critical films shows no sign of drawing to a close. Rather, the struggles of the old society reproduce themselves in the new society in new forms. The reassertion of individuality apparent in technological ambivalence, at least in a false ideological form, is closer to the spirit of the day than is the passive conformity of the fifties. Obviously, this sort of individuality is not "true" in a deeper sense, yet the desire for freedom and self-determination is present and increasingly manifests itself as authentic opposition. It is thus not on the way out but continues to assert itself, and, since it cannot be suppressed, it must be rationalized and co-opted by the society in ever more complex ways. The social critical films do not adequately depict the individual in mass society because they overlook his ambivalence in their false image of total integration.

Technological society therefore must contain an essential motive for the ambivalence of the individual quite apart from the traditional forms of class struggle, a motive which it is compelled to produce and reproduce. Thus, the period defined by the social critical films is not transition but the basic form of the new society, a form which will not be cast off with the mere passage of time and the loss of an immediate relationship to a given cultural heritage. But if the concept of mass society implicit in the social critical films is false, it is necessary to explain how this society can continually generate internal opposition. How does technocracy produce this tension between alienation and integration? How does

it maintain the drive toward individualism and humanism even in the midst of a regimented and dehumanized social life?

Every society seeks alternative means of social cohesion more efficient than force. In this search, some societies are notably more successful than others. During the period from the early forties to 1964, the United States progressed to become one of the most completely “pacified” societies in modern history. During the golden years of social unity in the late fifties and early sixties, most labour violence gave way to orderly picketing and peaceful compliance with court injunctions. Political riots disappeared, to be replaced by peaceful demonstrations. Even the victory and defeat of competing ideologies at the polls lost its bite as underlying consensus united the two parties. Needless to say, none of these changes, which provided a quieter and more secure existence for the majority of Americans, proved incompatible with the pursuit of international goals through warfare and the continued oppression and mistreatment of minorities. But in this period, even international violence was conceived as the necessary, if unfortunate, prelude to “peaceful change;” and the misery of the American poor was seen as an opportunity to create such change at home.

Where America succeeded in pacifying existence, this was possible because the will, the need, and the means to do so were all united. No past society had a more desperate need of alternatives to force to assure the proper functioning of its economic and political life; and no past society had so many rationally organized techniques of persuasion and manipulation designed to serve this need. Chief among these means of persuasion was mass communications. If the high productivity of the system was the basic condition of its success in



overcoming opposition, it was still necessary to propagate the appropriate ideologies of social and political conformity to rationalize the behaviour of individuals and to win their loyalty. The mass media is the most powerful and persuasive mechanism of education and miseducation, of information and propaganda, which has been invented in modern society. The influence of such traditional cultural and ideological forces as universities and political parties palls by comparison with television.

The success of advanced capitalism is contingent on the possibility of organizing individuals as a collectively predictable mass. Individual idiosyncrasies must not lead to major unexpected consequences. The system can tolerate a considerable degree of personal eccentricity on the part of small numbers of people so long as the vast majority do what they are supposed to. Where the standard of living is rising slowly and the great majority of the population has already escaped basic biological deprivation, it proves possible to accomplish this goal with minimal use of violent repression over a considerable period.

The techniques of persuasion are immensely successful for the paradoxical reason that they must be used *at every level* of economic and political life. The integration of the individual cannot be satisfactorily achieved simply by convincing him to hold certain political opinions. Policy decisions are made in the media about issues of utmost importance for the maintenance of the status quo. But such decisions can only produce propaganda; and what has happened in America, while it involves propaganda, goes much further. For the economic system to function, the individual's life and beliefs as a whole must be dominated even in relatively trivial matters. This imperative opens up another sphere of

persuasive effort, advertising, which when united with the increasing ability of the individuals to respond by purchasing the advertised goods, binds them more effectively to the society than could any merely political propaganda. Thus, the techniques of persuasion become an integral part of daily life, penetrating it much more deeply than any past form of propaganda in modern society.

The dramatic emergence of persuasion as an alternative to force is the response of advanced capitalism to a series of new problems of political and economic control. As the majority of the population gains a small margin of economic freedom and sufficient education to achieve a certain intellectual independence, the system struggles to co-opt these new potentialities for freedom and to organize them according to its needs. The increasing education and income of the population increases its potential freedom with respect to existing social and political organization. Furthermore, the society cannot survive without constantly reinforcing this tendency, since the advancing productive system demands more and more educated employees and capitalist prosperity is contingent on the masses' increasing purchasing power. But to the extent that the needs of the system do not coincide with those of individuals, the substitution of persuasion for force amounts only to a change in the form of oppression. In advanced capitalism, the ends which the individual must be persuaded to adopt are not the conscious actualization of his own rational interests and those of his fellows: the interests of capital itself supersede those of the individuals. Thus, the system cannot absorb new freedom without controlling and channelling it, often in directions contrary to the real interests of the individuals. Every freedom must submit to this necessity, in which progress in potential autonomy is always accompanied by a confiscation of its benefits in the interests of the given society.

Only effective persuasion can successfully rationalize the utilization of the new potentialities of the individuals in terms of the needs of the system as a whole. So long as the population is repressed by force, its inner faculties remain relatively free of reification and manipulation. The social repression of the individuals' real interests is a visible, purely objective phenomenon accompanied by hunger and police batons. But once society largely renounces the use of force in order to capture the inner life of the individuals for its ends, the objective contradiction of freedom and necessity in the society is reproduced in every individual consciousness. The very act of altering the will of the individuals through techniques of persuasion deprives them of the consciousness of external compulsion and creates new inner conflicts. The repression by persuasion of the individuals' real interests is not their abolition. What is forced from consciousness nevertheless makes its presence felt in social and psychological misery, aggressive behaviour, and psychic resistance to total identification of the self with social role and function. If the difference between freedom and necessity is temporarily obscured in this manner, their tension is nevertheless constantly present in consciousness and is manifested in mass culture. For most individuals, these tensions are temporarily resolved through the socially prevalent ideologies; but for others they rise to consciousness, and the individuals clearly and unequivocally identify the system as the source of their ills. The opposition of critical consciousness and induced needs then becomes painfully intense. These individuals may finally begin to free themselves from the reification of their own inner lives through political action.

I will call this system of social control by persuasion "socially necessary freedom," freedom necessary for the maintenance of the system, freedom which

submits willingly to this necessity. Socially necessary freedom is most frequently understood by the individual in terms of the correlation of freedom and responsibility. Here we have the explanation of those bewildering complaints of critics of the anti-war movement: "Of course you have the *right* to say what you believe, but you should not. You are using your freedom *irresponsibly*." For the most part, however, socially necessary freedom is not even understood with this degree of clarity and individuals perceive the limits on their freedom as the spontaneous product of their own desires. The immediate identity of the individual and his social role, of his needs and the available goods, is simply assumed; no conscious problem arises. However, the contradiction between the individual's real interests and the socially prevalent use of his potential freedom may still give rise to displaced and false ideological conflicts in consciousness, an example of which is technological ambivalence.

The relative success of the system should not blind us to the fact that this success is a difficult, precarious achievement. The very concept of persuasion refers implicitly to the real interests and freedom of its object. To succeed, persuasion must function as though it were simply bringing these interests to consciousness where they can be grasped and satisfied by the free will of the individual. Thus, far from abolishing the distinction between real and apparent interest and far from suppressing the consciousness of freedom, massive persuasion immensely exacerbates the consciousness of these concepts, even where it does the most to subvert them to ends contrary to those of the individual. As a result, never does the society make so many professions of individualism and social service as under the aegis of socially necessary freedom. Never are individuals more concerned about their individuality than here, where

it is most thoroughly invaded and manipulated by the society. This inherent ideological consequence of persuasion is ultimately a source of instability for the system. By constantly placing the individual before the question of his own freedom, it makes it progressively more difficult to obscure the contradictions of freedom and necessity in individual consciousness. The ideal state of affairs towards which the system tends is one in which freedom and its conditioning necessity fit together like convex and concave, but this ideal lies forever beyond its grasp. The individual does not respond passively to his oppression and cannot be made to do so in the given society. He must be created as an active agent if he is to fulfil his social role; although precisely to the extent that he is active, his activity must be subjected to order and direction. These two aspects of socially necessary freedom cannot be permanently reconciled.

Thus, American society must continue to be the scene of a struggle for and about freedom, even if many of its manifestations are confused and even fascistic. America can never settle permanently into the passive pattern of the anti-utopias of the social critical films: even its authoritarian consciousness is qualified by the hidden tensions among individual, social role, and society. Thus, socially necessary freedom is not a static social form. Continual tensions develop in the society and must be overcome by the available means of adjustment and co-optation. There is no advance guarantee of success. These tensions are endemic to the system insofar as it is based on persuasion rather than force and on the exploitation of freedom rather than violent coercion: the individual then always retains the formal possibility of refusal.

The possibility of the collapse of any given social conditioning is always present: the system has granted the individual all the conditions of freedom without its reality. It has granted him education, economic independence, and so on, but not the exercise of their prerogatives. Thus, the individual has a vocation for freedom which must be repressed not only by the society but by the individual himself insofar as he believes its real fulfilment would threaten his integration and consequent rewards. The society eases this tension by subjecting the individual to ideology and propaganda through which he obtains the sentiment of freedom while satisfying the society's needs. He believes he is living his vocation for freedom, but at any moment he may realize that it has been confiscated, that he has been fooled and tricked. Then the tension of freedom and necessity begins to rise to consciousness. The use value of the individual's freedom having been reduced to zero not by force but by the inducement and satisfaction of desires and the limitation of his perspectives, all that is required for the breakdown of his social conditioning is his self-conscious understanding of its mechanism. Yet this attempt will be countered by the society in new ways, of which the individual is again unconscious. The continual suppression of freedom through the very satisfaction of socially induced needs creates the ambivalent feelings described above and makes it very difficult for the individual to break the bonds which tie him to his role and, through it, to the society. The individual is never sure if he is free in his role, if he is realizing himself or mere social necessity. The half-conscious or conscious identification of the system, the "machine," as an alien force and the inability to free himself from its moral demands, goods, and services finally leads the individual to rationalize his situation in the most improbable ways.

It is important to note that while the perception of the conflict of real and socially induced needs must intervene if the individual is to understand the necessity to which he is subjected, this perception also serves as the transition toward an essentially anti-authoritarian attitude. Constant persuasion has made the individual see the mark of his freedom and the promise of happiness in the spontaneity of his own desires. Where he is unhappy he must be unfree, and where he is unfree he must be unhappy. Thus, technological ambivalence immediately translates dissatisfaction with society into a value placed on freedom *as such* in opposition to the persuasive apparatus, goods, and advantages which overwhelm him. This subordinate role of real interests, which serves as a means to the awareness of the need for freedom and is defined through its relation to freedom, has a decisive effect on the relation of the individual to society. Where he opposes the rationalization of his own freedom, it may be with only the vaguest conception of what he would do could he determine himself. Reacting against the system, the individual asserts his liberty, which is only gradually related concretely in the course of social development to a clear concept of real interest. For the most part, the system itself is able to assume this task, adjust to the new conditions of consciousness, and invent new strategies for the technocratic utilization of freedom and new means of submitting it to social control by offering the individual a new concept of his own real interest. But precisely this value on freedom as such pushes forward the ideological, and to a lesser extent the real historical, development and forces discovery of new types of persuasion and new products and policies through which the individual can again reconcile himself with the society.

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Since the thirties, the mass media have recorded the individual's attitude toward the society perhaps more faithfully than they know. Three main stages in the development of the present attitudes can be detected in the typical products of the media.

In the first phase the individuals yearn for success, yet they fear it. The difficult economic conditions of the thirties and forties make this yearning inevitable, but they also make success appear a remarkable and dangerous destiny. Robert Warshow has analysed the ambivalent attitudes resulting from this situation as they express themselves in the gangster film. "At bottom, the gangster is doomed because he is under the obligation to succeed, not because the means he employs are unlawful. In the deeper layers of the modern consciousness, *all* means are unlawful, every attempt to succeed is an act of aggression, is leaving one alone and guilty and defenceless among enemies: one is *punished* for success. This is our intolerable dilemma: that failure is a kind of death and success is evil and dangerous, is—ultimately—impossible. The effect of the gangster film is to embody this dilemma in the person of the gangster and resolve it by his death. The dilemma is resolved because it is *his* death, not ours. We are safe; for the moment, we can acquiesce in our failure, we can choose to ail."<sup>3</sup> The gangster film enables the individual to live through his desire for success and uniqueness in art while deriving the sound lesson that society forbids this desire to enter real life. He can return, temporarily reconciled, to a conformist existence.

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3 R. Warshow, **The Immediate Experience** (Anchor Books, Garden City, N. Y.), p. 88.



This same structure is repeated in the advertising of the thirties and forties, where possession of the advertised goods establishes the individual as unique, but only against his better judgment. "Hard sell" advertising is therefore the appropriate way to exploit the passivity and timidity of such consumers. Here, advertising follows the rule that he who yells loudest in a crowd is king. In this stage of its development, advertising abandons its original informative functions to compel consumption so far as words can do so. Such compulsion is needed to involve the timorous consumer with his tiny savings in the new mass consumer markets to which he is not accustomed. Thus, advertising bombards its audience with visual shocks, disgusting melodies, and rasping, insistent voices. The consumer is not offered the product and asked to buy it; he is pressured and bullied, often against his conscious will. This overkill approach to advertising leaves the individual fully aware that 'the freedom of his purse and his better judgment are being submitted to external necessity. But this external necessity would fail if it did not correspond at some level to the individual's repressed and inadmissible ambition to rise above his mediocrity and enter the world of dreams, success, and uniqueness. During this period, consumer goods appear as temptations to be resisted, and the hard sell allies itself with temptation to overcome the consumer's reason.

In the fifties, the increased comfort and security of conformist existence confers on it a positive value. The desire to rise above the crowd recedes before the glorification of the satisfactions of mediocrity. Perhaps the purest expression of this attitude is the television situation comedy. There, cloying, sentimental portrayal of the happy home life of Mr. Average becomes entertainment. Individuals identify themselves fully and joyfully with their roles. No Mom was

ever so sweet and pretty, no Dad so strong and understanding, etc. The work world scarcely appears: it is still a sphere of frustration and conflict. But the message of the situation comedy is that these mild inconveniences are surely worth it, in exchange for the joys of home. Thus, where frustration and conflict appear at all they are not tragic, but a source of gentle amusement. But this perfect reconciliation of the individual and society is a myth, and the soap opera gives it the lie. In this form, alienation in work is not funny; home life is not blissful; the planned leisure of the system does not fill an empty life. The individuals have achieved a sort of success in their conformist existence. (After the depression, holding a steady job and owning a home constitutes success.) But this success is not satisfying, and new tensions emerge as conformist pressures grow intolerable. The individual is now required to give allegiance to the increasingly impersonal and mechanical system which, after all, at least provides him with a decent income. Social deviance, opposition, or even the desire for a better life can now cost the individual what he has achieved. The unique individual is no longer merely unwise in relation to himself but has become threatening to others. His existence is an act of aggression which threatens the integration of others and which they must therefore repress and condemn. Now, everything different is evil. Individuals live in fear of communists and flying saucers. Unable to reject the source of their misery without losing its rewards, individuals model themselves on it to discharge the surplus aggression created by their frustrations. The individual's revenge takes the form of possession of and control over mechanical power: automotive horsepower, power mowers, power boats, etc. The mechanized individuals, of course, remain in conformity with social demands.

The advertising of the fifties also reflects these changes. The new "image ad" promotes group identification in the consumer, which incidentally commits him to purchase the advertised product. Confronted with the hard sell, the consumer experiences an external compulsion corresponding to an inner temptation. But now some consumers, particularly those with a better education and more money to spend, resent this imposition. They learn to defend the freedom of their purse against the crass bludgeoning of the hard sell and to reassert their liberty. The "soft sell" works better because it employs no compulsion but simply reflects the objective compulsions of the society. The problem this type of advertising faces is to discover the internalized limits on freedom which the individual already accepts and then to relate them to the product. Thus, where the consumer accepts the necessity to be "popular," advertising shows him how: buy Colgate. Obviously, the omnipresence of this sort of ads strengthens internalized limits on freedom while it plays upon them. Confronted with these ads, the individual does not experience external assault but is gently integrated into an image which dictates apparently spontaneous wishes to him. He is left with his subjective sense of freedom but at the same time he becomes controlled by predictable, profitable desires. The ambivalence of the consumer faced with the hard sell, an ambivalence composed of desire for the product and the desire to be free and rational, is resolved here. Since the individuals want to be similar, the image ad is relatively straightforward. It may show a group of happy and attractive young people to which any viewer would like to belong and need only point out some attribute of the individuals in the group, such as their toothy Colgate smiles, their Coca-Cola, or their clothes, to interest the consumer in the product.

But the triumph of technocracy creates the conditions for its collapse. Perhaps without the war in Vietnam, the "conformist fifties" might have lasted another decade, but eventually total regimentation would have been unable to contain the aggressivity it produced and conflict would have broken out. In any case, the war makes it possible for this aggressivity to discharge itself on the Vietnamese. Most people are prepared neither to refuse technocracy and its goods by becoming pure "underdeveloped" individualists like the hippies nor are they able to lose their individuality completely in the social "machine." The individuals are neither quixotic nor robots and must consequently compromise, however absurdly: they must see their own and their society's technocratic essence as humane and valid. The war in Vietnam makes this possible by enabling Americans to project onto other people and other nations the internal threat of technocracy, and to unleash on them the aggressivity generated in the individual by his own repression and subordination in the society.

The individual fears his own assertion of independent individuality. Even more, however, he fears the loss of himself in the social machine. The greatest danger to his uneasy compromise no longer comes from individualism, as in the days of the gangster film, but from the overwhelming drive toward conformity. Thus, it is conformity which must be projected onto others, while individualism will become the (mythic) characteristic of himself and his society. In this way the individual pushes the problems from himself and goes on in relative peace, without knowing that he must make a real decision between individualism and conformity. But from his own perplexed, uncourageous point of view, what better solution to the dilemma could there be than to take his individualistic, "underdeveloped" side, which threatens his integration, and to identify it with the

essence of technocracy? What better solution than to treat enemies in himself, conformity and regimentation, as a foreign nation and to defeat it with the perfect marriage of humanism and technocracy as represented by himself, his country, and James Bond? Thus, the individual becomes a guerilla warrior for his own society fighting a technologically sophisticated underdeveloped world. The personal danger of becoming too integrated into the society is resolved by portraying it as foreign and doomed, while the correlated danger of becoming too alienated is resolved by harnessing all individuality in the cause of technological society. Similarly, the historical danger that his own country might become a technocratic fascist state is successfully eliminated by the victory of the spy-hero over such fascism as represented in foreigners. The correlated historical danger that some underdeveloped country might actually realize the dream of the ambivalent individual, by creating a society in which the identity of the individual, social role, and collectivity is truly satisfying is resolved by portraying underdevelopment as already overdeveloped, technocratic, and evil.

Thus, the conflict between the individual and his society is resolved in the unthinkable of the given alternatives. But at this point consciousness is fixated in the posture of defence against the social Enemy: the individual can reconcile himself with his society only to the extent that it is at war with symbolic projections of his own secret, unconscious "subversive" tendencies. War becomes an urgent necessity for the individual because only through war can he insure his own ambivalent integration in the system without loss of self. Indeed, this integration may now even become visible as a compromise, a relatively uncomfortable servitude, because the individual is safely bound to the society not through his social role but through war. The individual is now free and in

harmony with his society *only* in this militaristic attitude. This psychic constellation makes both the spy film and real counter-insurgency warfare plausible and acceptable to millions of people.

A similar illusory resolution of inner conflicts takes place in domestic political life with the resurgence of right-wing politicians and ideologies. The domestic version of the spy film and the equivalent of the release of societal tensions and aggressivity in Vietnam is the right-wing leader, who is identified with American individualism by his propaganda and his most widely touted actions but who in fact maintains the welfare state and its rigid and repressive forms of social organization. Ronald Reagan's first term as governor of California provided a prophetic example of this style. The artful Governor was quite successful in convincing most of his constituency that he was struggling to reduce the size of the moloch state by attacking students and welfare "freebooters." The metaphoric symbols of "underdevelopment" were made to assume the burden of conformity and regimentation. But the state budget continued to rise; and the dismantling of the social and political structures which disturbed those who voted for Reagan has never been a real goal of his administration, which seems to come to terms quite successfully with the economic realities of monopoly capitalism.

Again, these changes are reflected in advertising. The image ads of the fifties become transparently repressive once the individuals decided to assert their individuality. As the whole repressive apparatus of the system becomes an object of consciously ambivalent sentiments, many people soon understand the processes by which they are submitted to necessity in the image. The yearning to join the group of attractive, happy young people begins to crumble before the

desire to be a free individual. Now the ambivalent individuals respond to advertising not just as integrated conformists fulfilling the rituals of group identification but also as alienated selves distinguishing themselves from the herd. But the desire to be unique is not experienced as an irrational temptation as it was in the forties. Rather, now it is precisely through his uniqueness that the individual demonstrates his rationality and freedom. But capitalizing on the desire for individuality presents serious problems. If the individuals all want to be different, there is no way to organize them through advertising. Indeed, the productive process itself as it is now set up could hardly anticipate their needs. The solution lies in discovering the specificity of the various types of differences between individuals which establish the new concepts of selfhood. Each type can then be made the basis of an image, but not by showing the similarities between individuals in each group: instead, the differences between groups must be emphasized or implied. Here, ads present as their image not the integrated but the alienated individual. The process begins with the "thinking man's filter" and brassieres for ladies who like modern art. Soon, there are cars the modesty of which signifies the conspicuous parsimony of their owners, and so on. Eventually, a point is reached at which the ad no longer even presents an image but strives to reflect the (ostensibly) superior taste of the individual by making fun of advertising itself. The self-consciousness of the consumer has reached the point at which the best advertising compliments him precisely in his freedom from the power of the advertising image and its conformist definitions of individuality. Thus, advertising achieves its appropriate form in the age of technological ambivalence, elevating self-contradiction into its central principle. In the image of non-conformity, the integration of alienation itself, advertising reaches a

paroxysm of absurdity. Consciousness of this contradiction is obscured by the individual's simplistic belief or disbelief in the image of the non-conformist. Now there is no escape: conformist and non-conformist alike, the lover of ads and their passionate foe, have both become advertising images. It is precisely in this form that advanced society reconciles freedom and economic necessity in consumption.

So far, the system has decisively failed to co-opt only two groups in America, blacks and students. With them, the techniques of persuasion meet a limit. To many, this limit appears to be a technical one to be overcome by research and innovation. However, the problem will not be so simply solved, for in these groups the will to be integrated is giving way to quite different needs and demands, and without this will to participate in the society no technique can succeed. Without entering into the specific reasons why blacks and students rebel, it can be shown that this rebellion is rooted in the objective nature of the system, that it is not a mere fad or a "problem" which new techniques could solve.

The analysis of technological ambivalence has already shown the possibility of the emergence of social critical *attitudes* in opposition to the established society. These attitudes, so long as they remain merely attitudes, lie within the horizon of technological ambivalence. But because they do not reconcile the individual with the society but increase the conflict between the two, they can become the starting point for radical opposition in practice as well as theory. Ideological analysis can thus show the possibility of passing from within technological ambivalence in one of its forms to radical politics.



This passage can only be made where the symbolic function of humanistic underdevelopment ceases to be a mere critical ideal or a Utopia, as in the social critical films, and becomes a real historical goal. Students and blacks were the first to take this step and were therefore also the first to draw the practical consequences of their own intellectual refusal of the illusory resolution of conflicts offered by the system. It then became possible to concretely oppose the new historical ideal to the existing society, validating the suspicion that there existed no possible resolution of the contradictions of socially necessary freedom. These groups begin by making new demands based on real needs which were incompatible with the society's repressive forms of social organization. In the struggle for these demands, the individuals finally transcend the boundaries of socially necessary freedom and confront forceful repression. The inner limit on freedom has finally become an objective external limit which can become the object of collective historical struggle. So long as gestures in this direction are prudent and modest, the possibility of partial co-optation remains; but the basic tendencies of both the society and the Left exclude this reformist solution.

As the conservative press and politicians slander these early forms of opposition, alienated individuals prefer to appropriate the role thrust upon them more and more explicitly. The Left begins to conform to the socially prevalent concept of the Enemy, the hated Other in whom all social evils are embodied, because only in this way can all links to the "machine" be broken and all responsibility for the wrongs of the society rejected. Where the society demands violence of its Enemy, a basically peaceful opposition movement turns to violence. Where the society demands drugs, it turns to drugs. Where the society demands communism and rigid discipline and conformity within the movement, even this

option is taken by some. The attempt of the society to isolate and destroy the opposition by constantly accusing it of acts it has *not yet* committed results only in encouraging it to commit these acts and in enhancing its prestige. The motives of opposition are present in everyone, but are repressed through the dominant ideology. So long as the Enemy is a foreign country, most people cannot join it. But now that opposition takes shape *within* the society itself, it becomes possible to assert unequivocal individuality against the system by becoming an Enemy. It is now clear that the Enemy exists within and that aggression seeking an object need not cross the seas to find it. Wherever technological ambivalence takes its critical form as rejection of technocracy in America, there now exists a concrete way of breaking off complicity with the society.

At this point, persuasion must give way to force in order to insure social conformity. The potential for large-scale opposition and social struggle reappears within the society, although not on the basis of traditional class struggle. It is still too early to understand fully the implications of this development for the Marxian concept of revolution. The fate of the new forms of opposition cannot be clearly foreseen. Their relation to proletarian revolution and class consciousness must be carefully studied, particularly in cases such as the May Revolution of France in 1968 in which the two types of opposition encountered each other in the same society. The above analyses do not pretend to solve these problems nor do they predict the form which a possible liberation of the society might take.

Today the large majority of the population believes in the racist and imperialist ideologies of technological ambivalence. But already the opposition has become sufficiently strong that its repression would be a major undertaking.

The return of the society to forceful repression on a vast scale seems partially underway. However, it offers no permanent solution for advanced capitalism. The purely authoritarian organization of such a society could only function to the extent that the large majority of individuals internalized the authoritarianism on which it was based. Total administration by force is not a meaningful concept in this context and is immediately transcended in its dialectical opposite, socially necessary freedom. Thus, even within the fascist variant of the present capitalist society, the contradictions described above would not be abolished. They would lie dormant, as the fear of death and imprisonment added negative sanctions to the positive ones already contained in the repressive productivity of the present society. However, their very presence would again generate intolerable aggressive energies, driving the system to seek civil war, racial genocide, or imperialist conquest. But the present world situation offers no satisfying battlefield, and civil war and genocide would certainly cripple and weaken America for the indefinite future, finally enabling the communist world to overtake capitalism in the race for supremacy.

On the other side, another attempt to co-opt new forms of opposition may be partially successful in splitting the radical vanguard from its constituencies. But it too will meet its limit in the original contradiction of socially necessary freedom. With each new stage in the process of co-optation in recent years, the society has become more and more unstable and the individual's ability to understand his condition has increased. With each new retreat before the opposition movements, they advance, for the contradiction here is not one which can be resolved even temporarily by material concessions, but one which constantly reproduces itself in every new situation created by the society. Only

reforms on the scale of the New Deal might produce another “breathing spell” of social peace like the “conformist fifties.” However, such a fundamental reorganization of the society seems unlikely in the foreseeable future.

There is, of course, no adequate way of predicting the future. The dominant tendencies are, however, clear for all to see. Continued and intensified polarization seems more likely than co-optative solutions. This reflects the overwhelming and increasing tension between the individual and the system in the period of their militaristic reconciliation. More and more, individuals react by passing to extreme positions of rebellion or fascism. The aggressive energies generated by the society demand release on all sides. There is every likelihood that they will find it.