

FROM PROTEST TO RESISTANCE (1968)

Protest is when I say I don't like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don't like. Protest is when I say I refuse to go along with this any more. Resistance is when I make sure everybody else stops going along too. That was more or less what a black speaker from the Black Power movement said at the Vietnam Conference in February in Berlin.

The students are not rehearsing for a rebellion, they are engaging in resistance. Stones went flying through the air, the windows of the Springer-owned high rise in Berlin were broken, cars were burnt out, water cannons were brought in, a *Bild* editorial office was destroyed, tires were slashed, traffic brought to a standstill, construction trailers were overturned, police barricades were broken down—violence, physical violence was deployed. The delivery of Springer materials could not be stopped, though; traffic was disrupted for only hours at a time. The broken windows will be replaced by insurance companies; new trucks will be brought in for the ones that were burnt; the number of police water cannons will remain constant; and there will always be enough rubber truncheons. And so, what happened can happen again. Springer publishers will be able to carry on their hate campaign, and Klaus Schütz¹ will continue to encourage readers to “look those people in the face,” and imply they should attack them—which is what already happened on February 21—and finally, that they should shoot to kill.

The protests against the Easter attack on Rudi Dutschke marked the first time that people massively crossed the boundary between verbal protest and physical resistance.² Many people crossed this boundary, not just a few; over the course of days, not just one in many different places, not just in Berlin. They crossed it really and truly, not just symbolically. After June 2, people merely set Springer newspapers on fire. This time they tried to prevent their distribution. On June 2, people threw tomatoes and eggs; this time they threw stones. In February, there was an amusing film about the production of Molotov cocktails; this time there were real fires. The boundary between protest and resistance has been crossed, but not effectively. What has happened will happen again. Power relations have not changed. People engaged in resistance, but they did not take over positions of power. So was this nothing but mindless, escalating, terrorist, un-political, impotent violence?

Let's look at the facts. Those who hold positions of power and who condemn stone-throwing and arson but say nothing about the hate campaigns of Springer publishers, or the bombs in Vietnam, or the terror in Persia, or the torture in South Africa, those who could actually expropriate Springer but engage in a grand coalition instead, those who could disseminate the truth about *Bild* and *BZ* in the media but would rather spread half-truths about the students, are hypocritical proponents of nonviolence. They are applying two different measures. They want exactly what those of us who were in the streets—with or without stones in our pockets—do not want. They want politics as destiny, masses of disenfranchised people, a helpless passive opposition, democratic sandbox games, and when things get serious, they want a state of

emergency. Johnson, who declared Martin Luther King a national hero, and Kiesinger, who sent a telegram expressing his regrets for the attack on Rudi Dutschke, represent the violence that King and Dutschke oppose. They represent the violence of a system that has produced the likes of Springer as well as the Vietnam War, and they lack both the political and the moral legitimacy to object to the students' decision to resist.

Let's look at the facts. It has been documented that you cannot just shoot down people in the street. It has been documented that when intellectuals protest against the Springer publishers' massive campaigns to turn people into morons, these are serious initiatives that are not directed against the Holy Spirit or carried out for posterity just so that people can say they were always part of the opposition. It has been documented that common decency is a shackle that is easily broken if the shackled person is being beaten up or shot at. It has been documented that there are still people in this country who not only condemn terror and violence and secretly oppose such outrages and are willing to take risks and don't keep their mouths shut and are not intimidated, but are ready and able to engage in resistance—so that the others finally understand that things cannot go on this way. It has been shown that murder campaigns and actual murder disrupt civic peace and quiet and that the public will not tolerate this. That a human life is different in quality from the windowpanes of Springer publishers, or Springer trucks, or demonstrators' cars that were overturned and damaged in arbitrary acts by the police during the blockade of the Springer building in Berlin. There are people who have decided to not only name what is intolerable but to oppose it, and disarm Springer and its accomplices.

Now that it has become evident that methods other than demonstrations, Springer hearings, and protests can be implemented, methods different from those that failed because they could not prevent the attack on Rudi Dutschke; now that the shackles of common decency have been broken, we can and must discuss violence and counter-violence anew and from the very beginning. Counter-violence, as was practiced over Easter, does not easily garner support. It does not easily attract frightened liberals to the side of the APO (extra-parliamentary opposition). Counter-violence runs the risk of turning into violence, when police brutality sets the measure for action, when helpless rage takes over from sovereign reason, when the paramilitary interventions by the police provoke paramilitary reactions. The establishment, the “gentlemen at the top”—to use Rudi’s words—those in the parties, governments, and associations must be made to understand that there is only one way to permanently restore “peace and quiet,” and that is to expropriate Springer. The fun is over. Protest is when I say I don’t like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don’t like.

NOTES

1. Klaus Schütz (1926–) was mayor of West Berlin from October 19, 1967, to May 2, 1977.
2. On April 11, 1968 in West Berlin, Rudi Dutschke was shot and seriously injured by Josef Bachmann, who was close to radical right-wing groups. Immediately afterward the largest and most militant demonstrations ever by student and youth groups took place. In many places, efforts were made to prevent the distribution of Springer publications. The Vietnam Conference was held in February 1968 in Berlin. Numerous foreign delegations took part, and after a demonstration ban imposed by the Senate was lifted, over twelve thousand people participated in a demonstration at the end of the conference. A few days later, a counter-initiative was organized by the Berlin

Senate and the DGB (German Federation of Unions, or *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*). The Springer-Hearing was a public event planned—but later cancelled—by the SDS and other student organizations for February 1968 to inform people about the methods of the Springer Publishing House. During a preparatory meeting, a film on how to construct a Molotov cocktail by Holger Meins (1941–1974, a member of the first generation Red Army Faction) was shown.