

# Political Repression in U.S.A.

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“One man of 74 said he opposed the war but declined to write or send a telegram for fear that ‘if they find out, they’ll take my social security away.’ A housewife said, ‘My son’s in college now and I want him to finish. If I send your telegram (opposing the war) to the President, I know he’ll be drafted.’

“One took the literature, expressing tentative sympathy for the anti-war cause. The other bought a telegram for dispatch to Mr. Nixon, after ascertaining that names of purchasers wouldn’t be made public.” (From a story on the Vietnam Moratorium in the small town of Cranvill, Ohio—*Wall Street Journal*, Fri., Oct. 24, 1969:)

“Lansing—A Michigan State University student was fired from his legislative job minutes after his boss saw him leading a peace march to the front steps of the State Capitol last Wednesday.” (*Detroit News*, Tues., Oct. 21, 1969.)

“(Dr. Stanford) Ascherman, 43, is the physician who is suing the San Francisco Medical Society and half a dozen hospitals who denied him staff privileges for \$6 million. He claims their action stemmed from his early, outspoken views in favor of Medicare.” (From a story in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Weds., Oct. 22, 1969.)

“They write from Charleston (S.C.) that the Negroes have become very insolent, in so much that the citizens are alarmed, and the militia keep a constant guard.” *New York Journal and Patriotic Record*, Oct., 1793—quoted in *White Over Black*, Winthrop D. Jordan.

Every society represses. That is, every society, or those who control it, define some ideas and forms of behavior as acceptable and others as dangerous, anti-social and unacceptably deviant.

The question is not whether some behavior by individuals, groups and classes will be repressed, but what behavior of which groups will be repressed by whom, and by what method.

The problem of repression is not only its presence in some cases, but its absence in others. For example, racist behavior by whites toward blacks in the U.S. is rarely repressed.

Whites who commit crimes, including murder and rape, against blacks are usually immune from repression—that is from having to suffer adverse consequences for their acts. Not to mention the hundreds of blacks who have been killed fighting racism in the U.S., there are many white people in this decade who have been killed -repressed for the “anti-social” behavior of being “nigger-lovers.”

There is no known instance of a white person being killed- repressed by other whites for being a “nigger-hater.”

Sirhan Sirhan and Ahmed Evans have both been sentenced to death for having committed the crime of murder. Their victims were white—they are not

James Earl Ray was sentenced to life imprisonment for killing Martin Luther King and Ronald August (self confessed killer of Aubrey Pollard in the Algiers Motel) was acquitted by an all white jury. They are both whites and their victims were not.

The list of such discrepancies is endless. The point is that not only does this society repress much action which is social and human; it also naturally fails to repress much behavior, including price-fixing, exploitation, murder, and war, which is anti-human and anti-social.

Indeed the struggle of the Movement might be described as a struggle to change the definition of what constitutes dangerous, anti-social, anti-human behavior and/or the struggle to acquire the capacity to enforce such decisions.

In a capitalist society, of course, it is always difficult—indeed impossible to repress material greed, acquisitiveness, and avarice because the system and its ideology require and institutionalize such behavior. There is, then, always a conflict between the people and the “law” which is imposed upon them.

Capitalism, necessarily individualistic and hence always anti-social, is always on the brink of anarchy.

Especially in times of social change and turmoil such as the present, law is always on the defensive, attempting to hold the system together for the powerful who own and seek to perpetuate their control. Their response as we have seen time after time is to pass essentially ex post facto laws every time the Movement increases its effectiveness.

The Stokely Carmichael anti-riot act under which the Chicago Conspiracy 8 is being tried is a classic example of such reactionary legislation. The same is true of anti-riot laws passed by every state following the ghetto insurrections of the mid-sixties, and the campus disorder laws and executive orders passed after the campus uprisings of the late sixties.

There have been disorders before which have produced repressive legislation; hence most such laws are superfluous. Their effect is in large part to reinforce the atmosphere of repression as much as to enforce its fact.

A second result of the passage of such legislation is that there are an enormous number of laws. (One of the simpler and more obvious reasons that lawlessness is increasing in the U.S. is that there have been accumulated over the years an incredible number of laws.)

It is clear that repression of political ideas and organization is usually in direct proportion to their success and popularity. Whenever we find a tactic which is successful, we can rest assured that they will pass a law against it.

Substantive as opposed to formal efforts to change anything will inevitably be “criminal”, whether before or after the fact. In other words, the weapons in the arsenal of control are not directed at the zany, the ridiculous and the unpopular for those ideas constitute no threat. The First Amendment serves—more or less—to protect unpopular ideas.

There is no Justice Department task force assigned to investigate possible violation of Federal law by the Prohibition Party, or Technocracy, as is the case with the Black Panther Party and SDS. Only the strength of the Movement and the people is sufficient to protect popular ideas which are unacceptable to those in power.

The maintenance of that anti-human power will become increasingly difficult as the disintegration of the old world order into the new intensifies. Every effort will be made to use the media to persuade the people that responsibility for the inevitable disorder, insecurity, and confusion rests not with the powerful but with the powerless.

The ruling class will always adopt the stance that somehow it is the Black Panther Party, SDS, Yippies, W.I.T.C.H., and other revolutionary groups which created the society; rather than the conditions of the society which created the Black Panther Party, SDS, the Yippies, and W.I.T.C.H.

For example, in the case of the Conspiracy, it is essential to the Democratic Party, the City officials in Chicago, and others who were embarrassed by the events at the 1968 convention that they find someone other than themselves to blame.

They have chosen the Conspiracy to divert blame from themselves. In one sense, the Conspiracy is charged for exactly the same reason that any person who is ever beaten by the police is always charged with assaulting a police officer.

As the killing of James Rector in Berkeley and innumerable Third World Revolutionaries and activists shows—the methodology of repression will continue to intensify. Desperation will set in. If there is anything valuable about the “American way of life,” the deepening crisis of the existing social order is such that the “American way of life” will have to be destroyed in order to preserve the Amerikan way of power.

The psychology of Vietnam, “We had to destroy the village in order to save it,” will increasingly dominate as the tactics of discouraging unacceptable action become more extreme.

Whether political or “ordinary,” death is the ultimate repression. Those considered the most dangerous are killed: systematically and haphazardly, spontaneously and with great calculation. Death and physical injury come

to individuals, peoples, organizations, and nations in proportion to the threat they present to the interests of the more powerful.

There are other forms, other adverse consequences which can be imposed. They range from confinement, and economic deprivation to social exclusion, ridicule and embarrassment.

Imprisonment of many kinds is a traditional method of isolating the unacceptable from others and more importantly—presumably “setting an example” that some acts are intolerable.

That is, of course, one of the issues in the Conspiracy case and any political trial. It is intended to show that one cannot struggle with any degree of success against the existing political order with impunity.

Deterrence is also the intention of acts of economic repression such as the loss of job, credit or other source of income. At this stage, there are many more people who are being sanctioned economically for their political ideas and action than are imprisoned, injured or killed.

This is largely an extension of the obvious fact that much behavior, political and otherwise, is controlled by economic circumstance. Political-ideological repression inevitably results from efforts to end economic and/or military repression as countless examples from Vietnam to Santa Domingo to Oakland, California attest.

Whatever the forms and methods, whether legalistic or extra-legal, violent or non-violent, economic, social, political, or military repression in the U.S. will increase. As in Wilmington, Delaware, where the national guard occupied the black community for 9 and a half months; or the daily occupation of ghettos by police licensed to kill Bobby Hutton, or Michael and John Soto; or in prisons which hold Bobby Seale and Martin Sostre and John Sinclair and the Panther 21; whether on campuses or ghettoes or communities, we must be prepared to resist.

But fighting repression is never an end in itself. Every revolutionary movement provokes a counter-revolutionary response. The concept of a struggle which neither sustains nor inflicts casualties is contradictory and absurd.

By fighting as the Conspiracy and others are doing, we defy and deflect the purpose of repression—intimidation. That is how we become irrepressible. And that is how we gain the capacity to control the truly dangerous, anti-human and anti-social forces which control this society.



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