

The Frankfurt School and the Global Uprising of 1968: A New Kind of Revolution?

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Frankfurt School

German Marxist philosophers who believed neither the US nor USSR constituted free societies.

They are often called “cultural Marxists” or “Hegelian Marxists.”

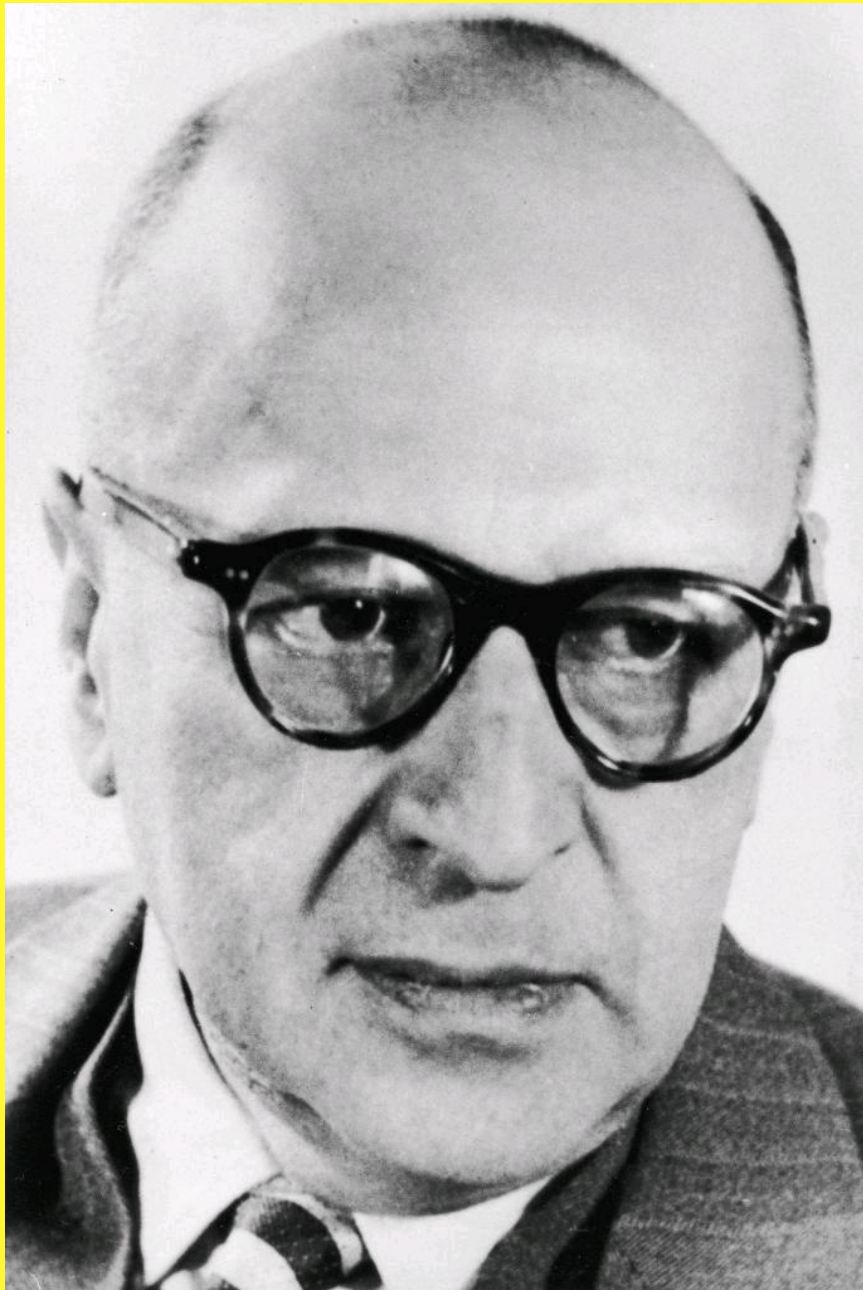
“Critical Theory” is another term used to refer to them.

A Response to Defeats

- With the failure of the revolution in Western Europe (in the advanced capitalist countries where Marx had anticipated it) and the rise of fascism in Germany, the Frankfurt School sought to return to philosophy to comprehend the changing reality of Europe
- They did not believe that Leninist revolutions in the Third World (from Russia to China to Vietnam) constituted the “leap into freedom”

Theodor Adorno was a seminal social philosopher and a leading member of the first generation of Critical Theory. Greatly admired for his deep thinking and sentences containing self-contradictory formulations, he is best known for his book, *Negative Dialectics*. Marcuse once remarked that if there is anything to be found in the work of the Frankfurt School, then it will be found in Adorno's work.

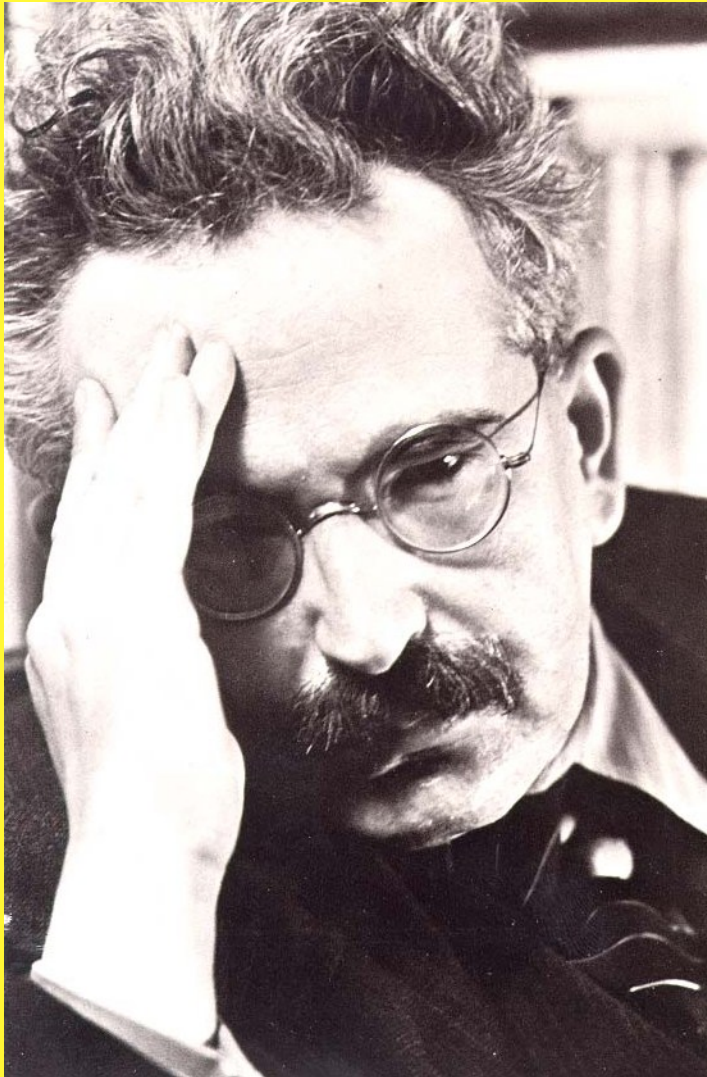




Max Horkheimer

After leaving Germany during the Nazi time, Horkheimer returned after 1945 to anchor the Frankfurt School. He is best known for a co-authored with Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, an insightful critical of rationality.

Walter Benjamin

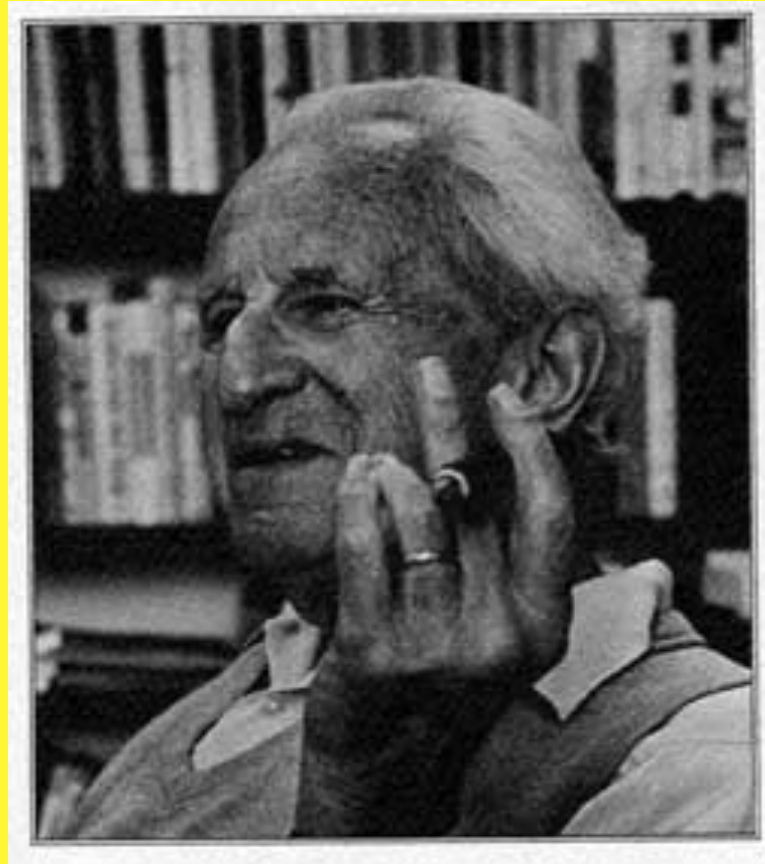


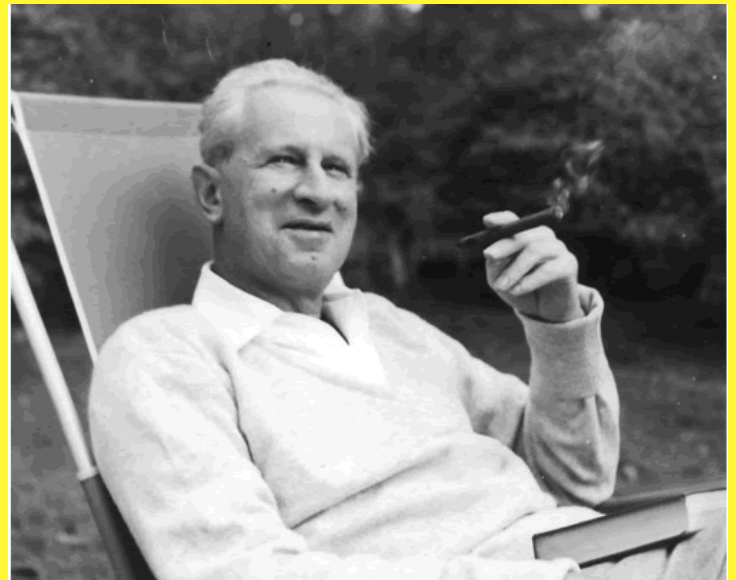
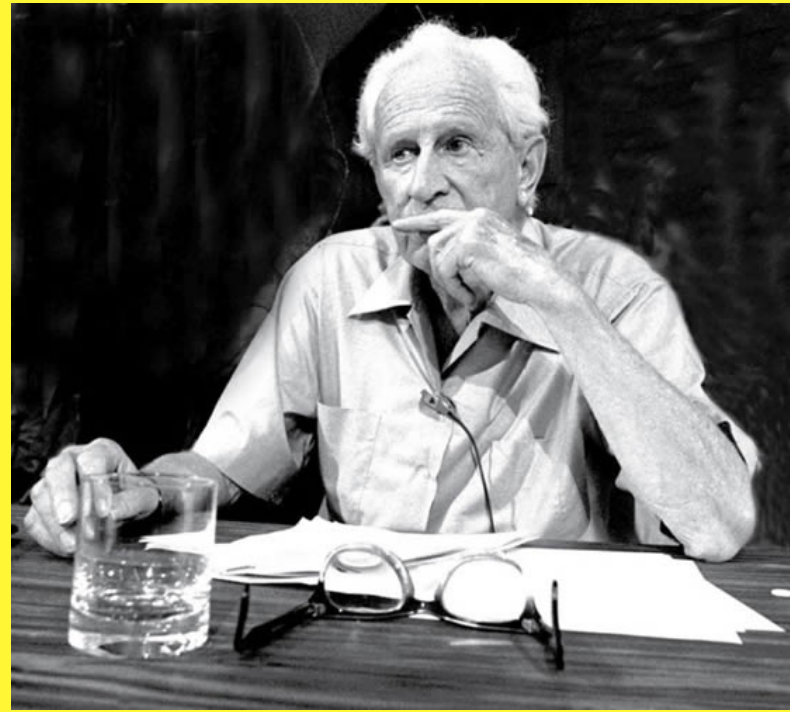
Thinking he was about to be captured by Nazi agents, Benjamin tragically committed suicide in 1940. He is known for his essays, especially “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

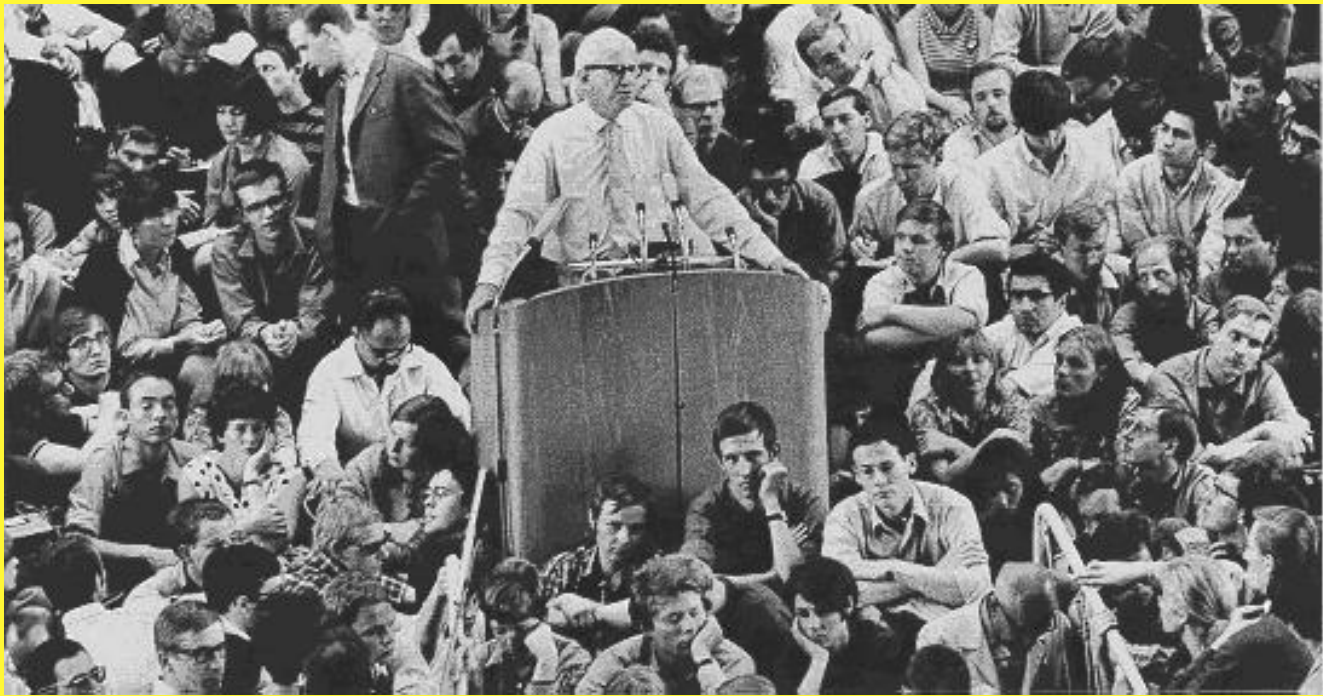
Jürgen Habermas is considered part of the “loyal Left” in Germany and the principal member of the second generation of the Frankfurt School. One of his concerns is with “communicative competence” and the preconditions of genuine democracy. His model of human beings is overly rationalistic; he considers the unconscious as “inner foreign territory.”



Herbert Marcuse







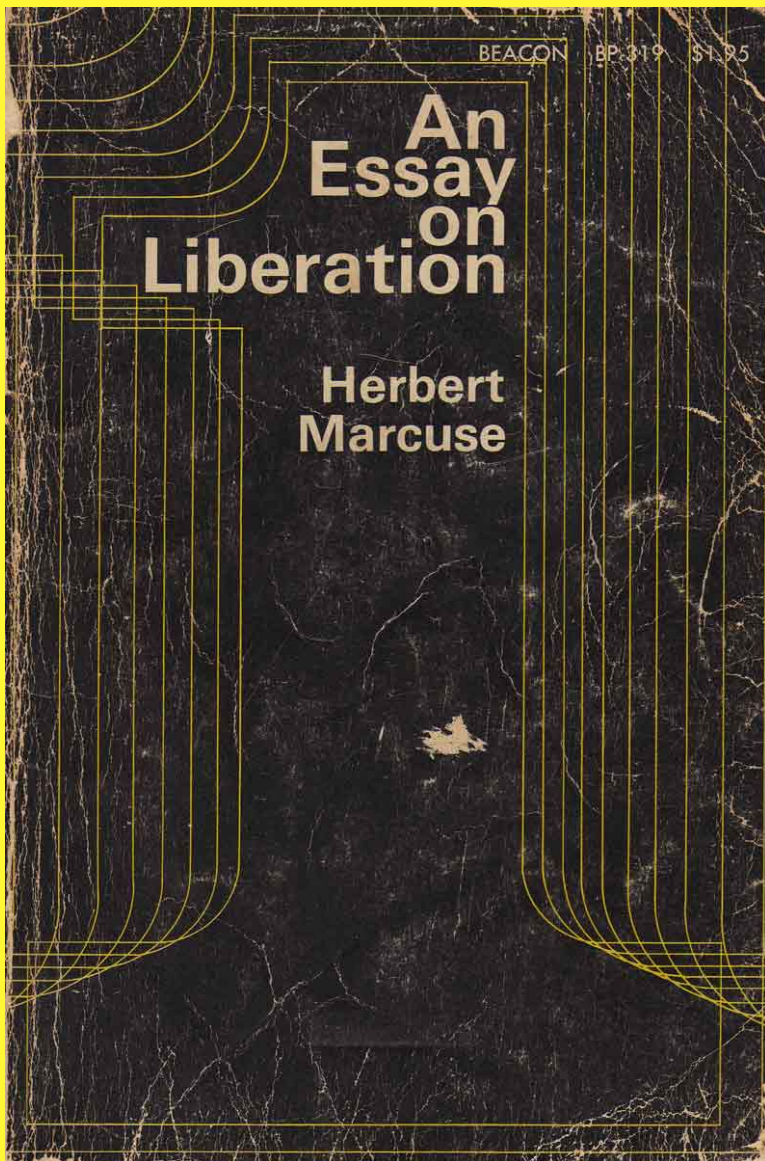
Marcuse's critiques of capitalist society (especially his 1955 synthesis of Marx and Freud, *Eros and Civilization*, and his 1964 book *One-Dimensional Man*) resonated with the concerns of the leftist student movement in the 1960s. Herbert soon became known as "the father of the new left" (a term he disliked and rejected). He died on July 29, 1979, after suffering a stroke during a visit to Germany.

Marcuse in Frankfurt

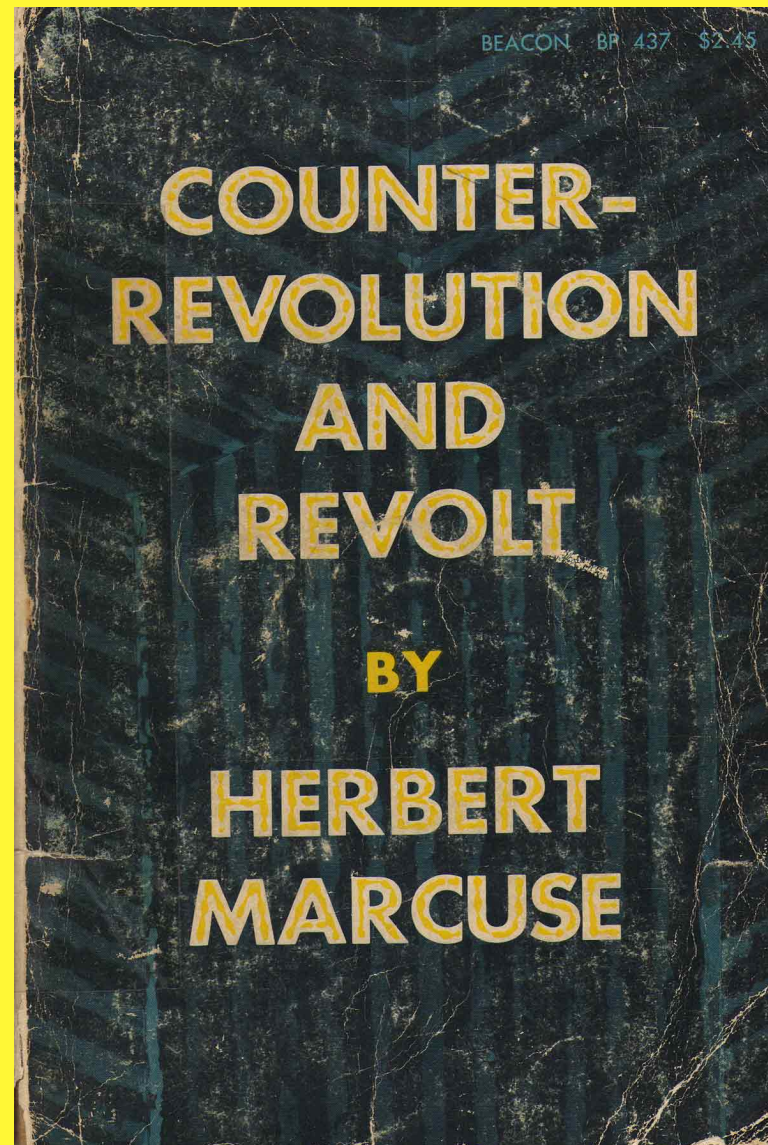


Soyez réalistes,
demandez l'impossible

Be realistic, demand
the impossible.



1969



1972

Essay on Liberation

x

Preface

misery beyond all national frontiers and spheres of interest, for the attainment of peace. In one word: they have taken the idea of revolution out of the continuum of repression and placed it into its authentic dimension: that of liberation.

The young militants know or sense that what is at stake is simply their life, the life of human beings which has become a plaything in the hands of politicians and managers and generals. The rebels want to take it out of these hands and make it worth living; they realize that this is still possible today, and that the attainment of this goal necessitates a struggle which can no longer be contained by the rules and regulations of a pseudo-democracy in a Free Orwellian World. To them I dedicate this essay.

An Essay on Liberation

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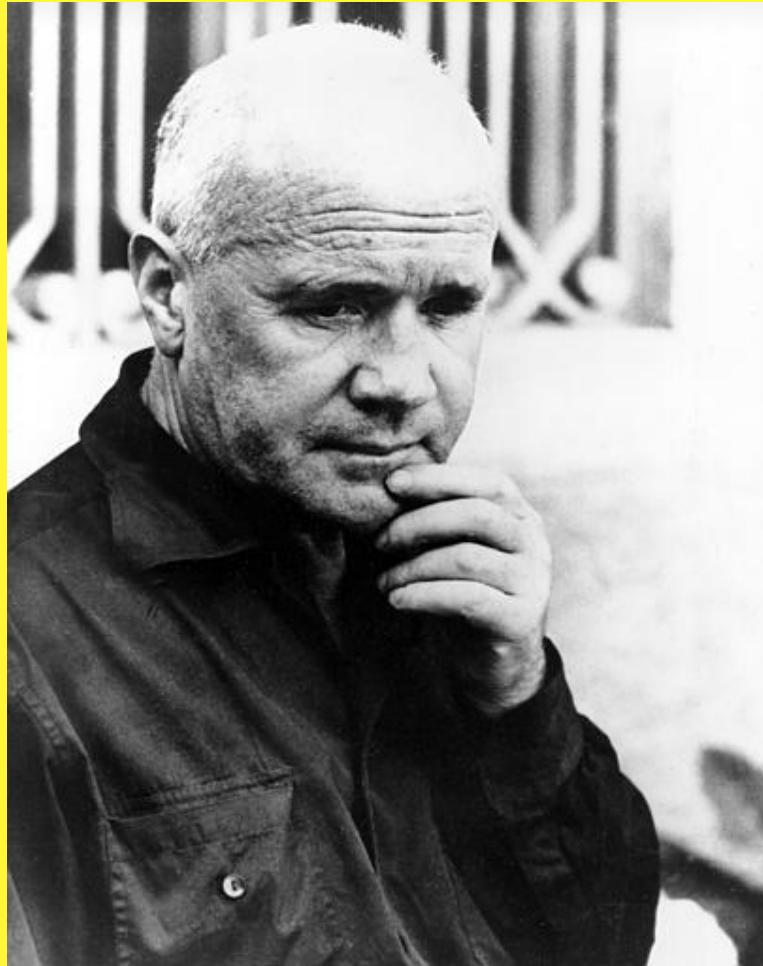
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Counterrevolution and Revolt

Three of Marcuse's Concepts

- Psychic Thermidor
- Repressive Desublimation
- Repressive Tolerance

Other intellectual figures associated with the movements of 1968 include:



Jean Genet

On achète ton bonheur.

Vole-le.

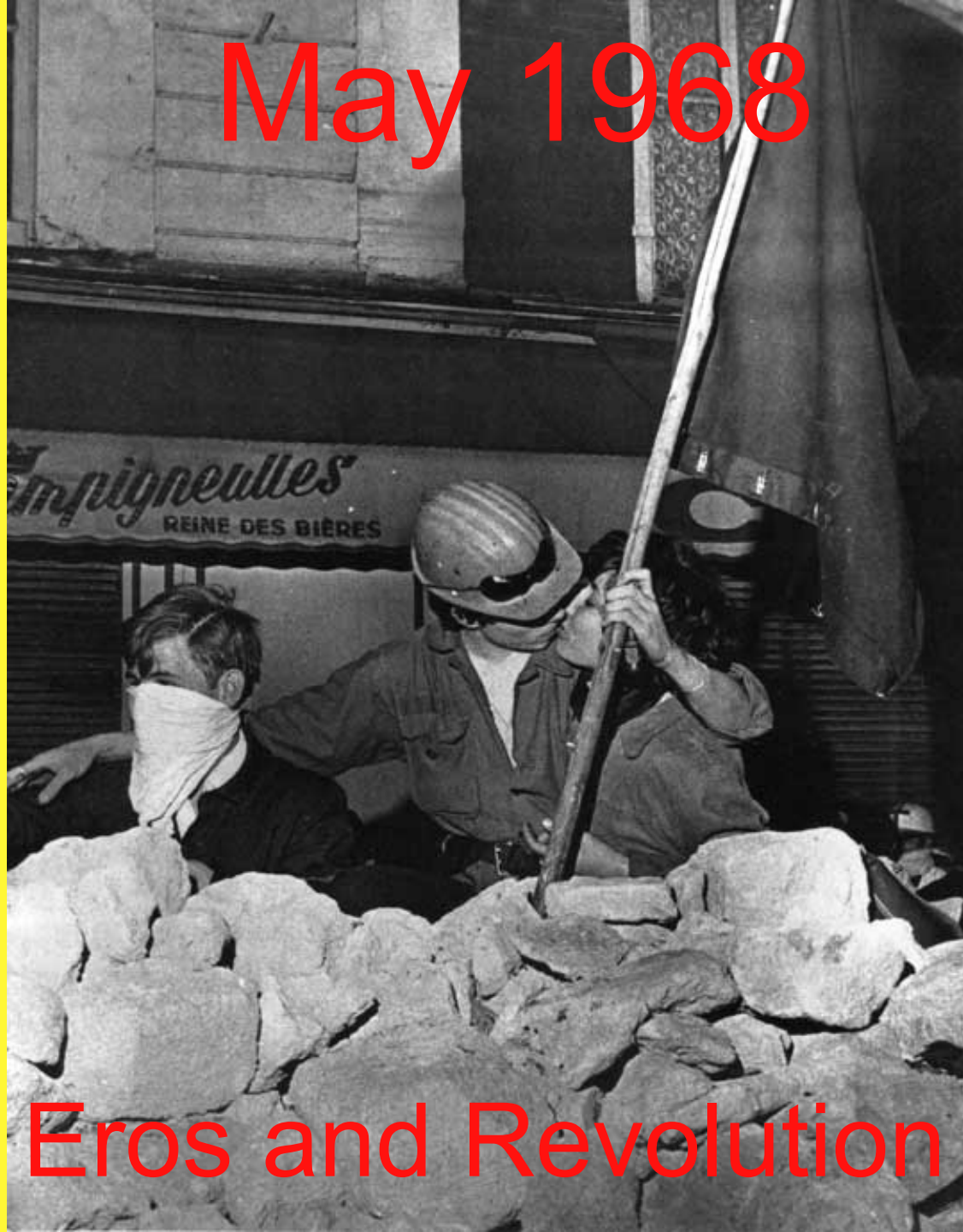
Your happiness is being bought.

Steal it.



Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir

May 1968



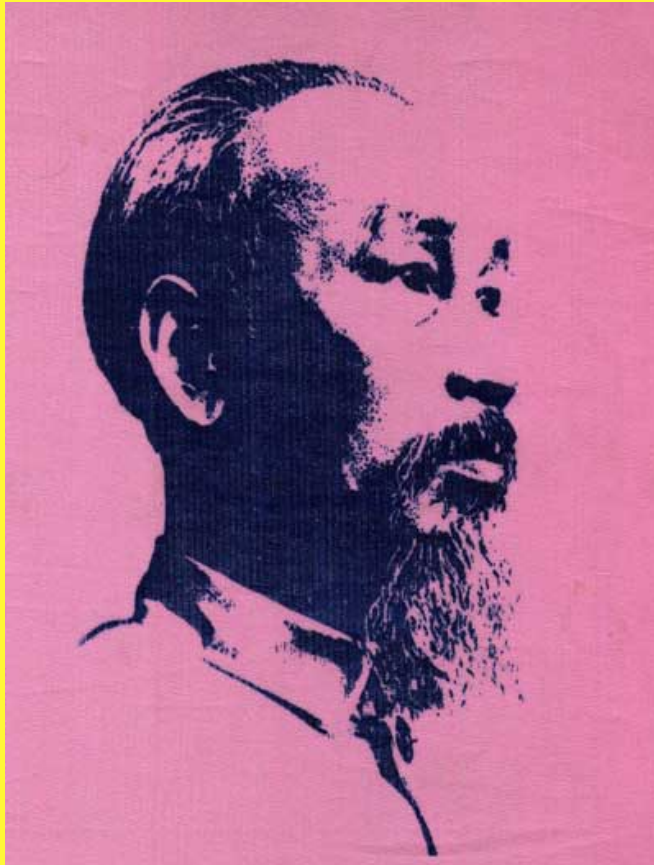
Eros and Revolution

1968: World Historical Events

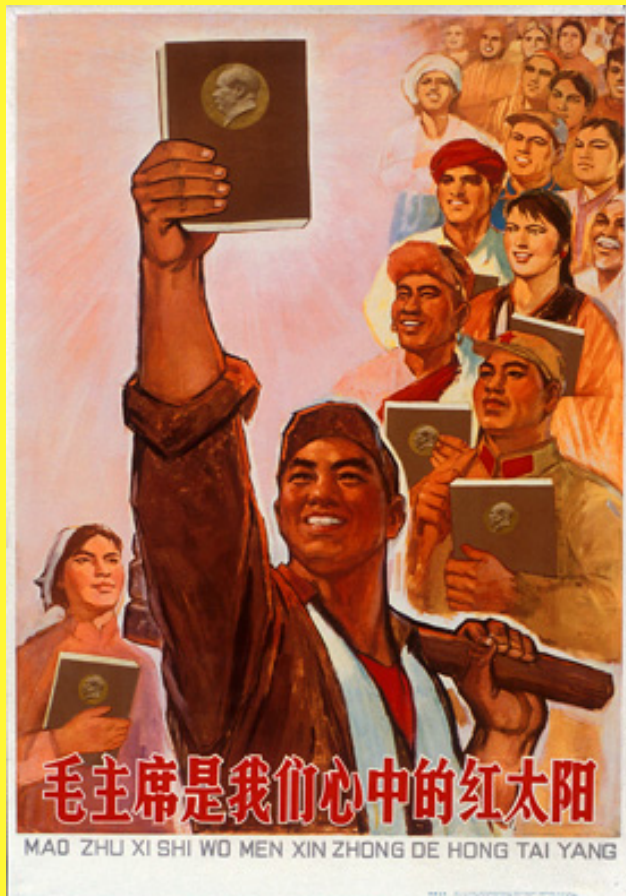
- Tet Offensive in Vietnam
- Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- May events in France
- Democratic National Convention riots
- Soviet invasion of Prague, Czechoslovakia
- Hundreds killed before Olympics in Mexico

International Connections

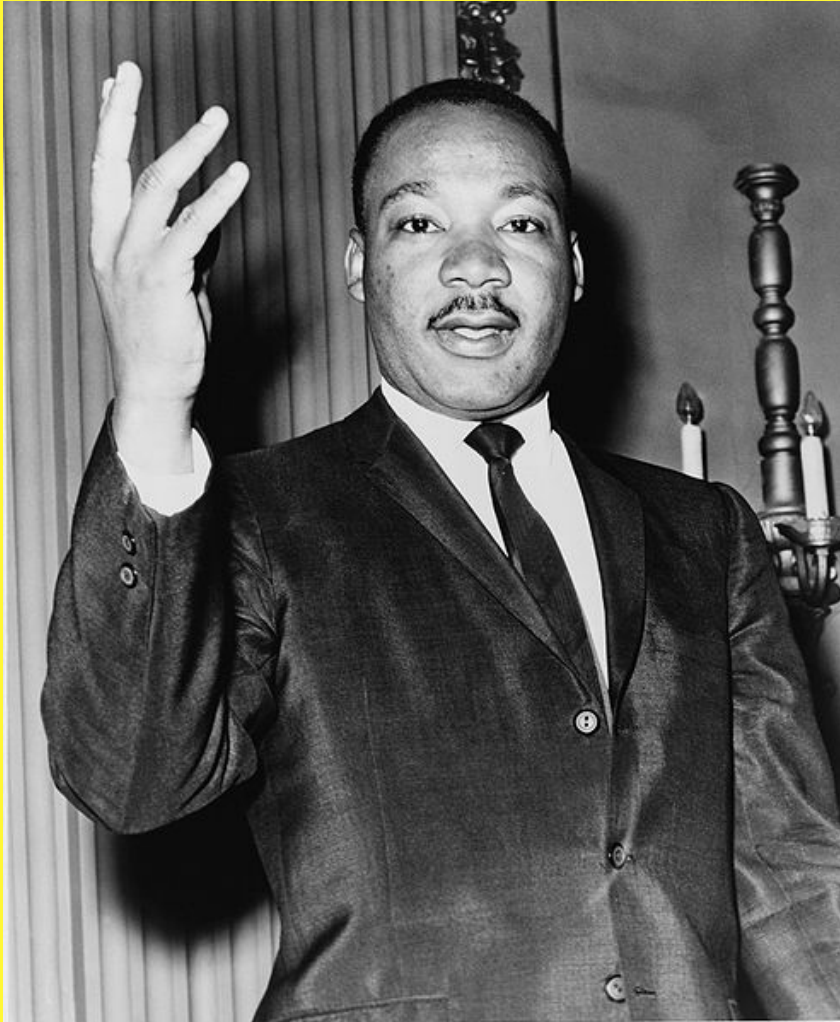
France's movement was inspired by international leaders including Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse-tung



Chinese Cultural Revolution



Martin Luther King, Jr.

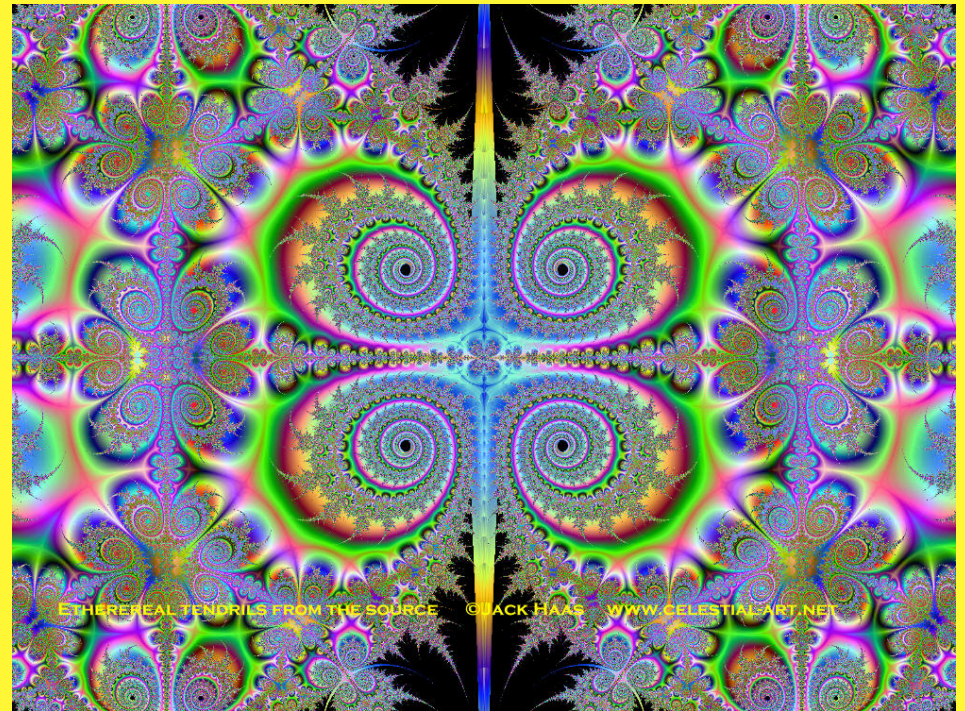


Killed April 4, 1968

Like Marcuse's *eros*,
King talked of *agape*.

Both are Greek
words for love.

Youth Counterculture



The Crowd at
Woodstock
1969



Russian Invasion of Czechoslovakia, August 20, 1968



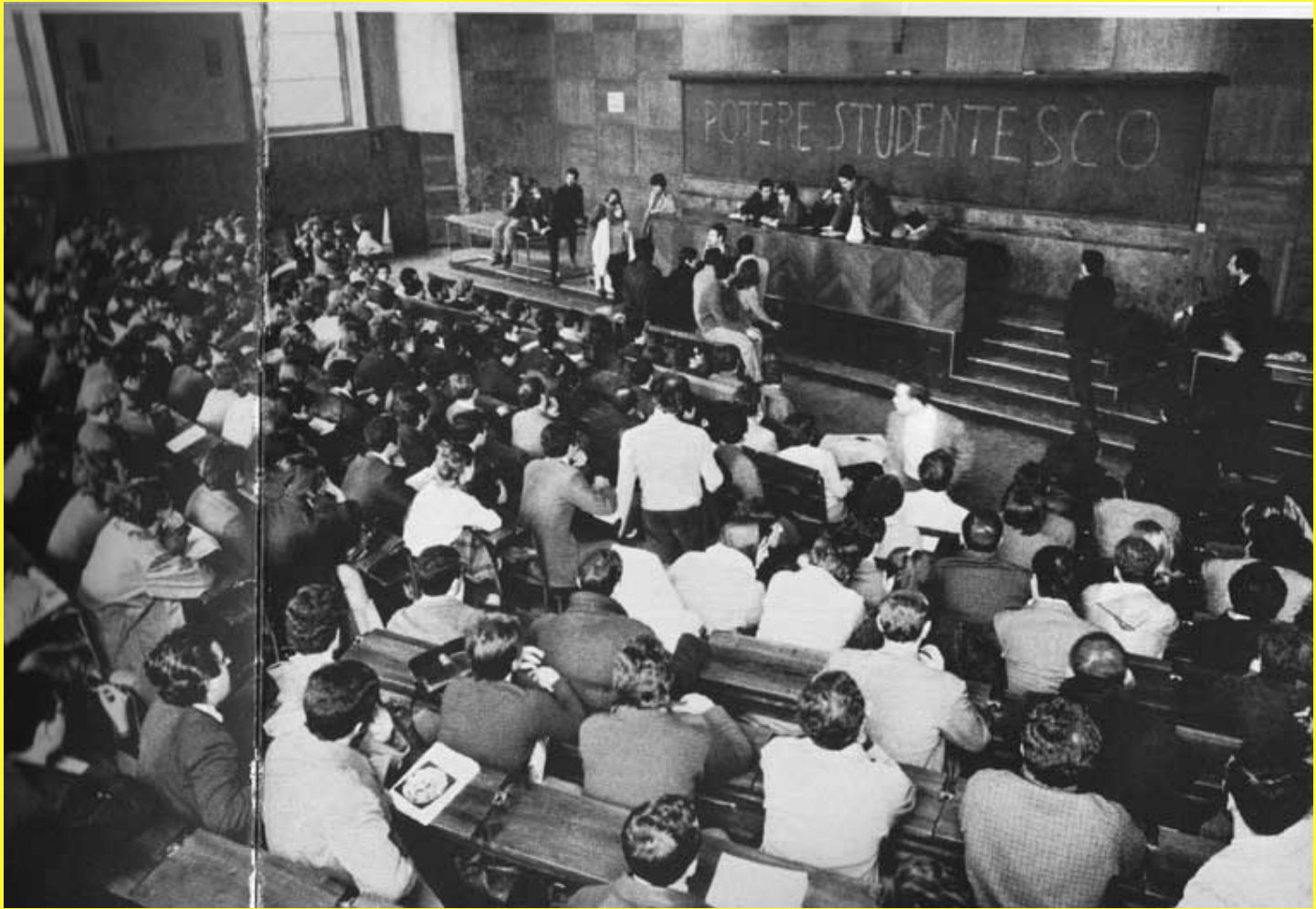
Russian Invasion of Czechoslovakia, August 20, 1968



Mexico City Massacre

October 2, 1968





Student Power in Italy

A New Kind of Revolution?

- Questions of power in everyday life
- Power won by past revolutions
- Goal: decentralization of power (not its seizure); international solidarity; self-management

Global Synchronicity

- In May 1968, there were significant demonstrations of solidarity with French students and workers in Mexico City, Berlin, Tokyo, Buenos Aires, Berkeley, and Belgrade
- Students and workers in Spain and Uruguay attempted general strikes of their own
- Massive student strikes in Italy forced the prime minister and his cabinet to resign
- Germany's experienced its worst political crisis since World War 2
- A student strike at the University of Dakar, Senegal led to a general strike of workers

Global New Left' s Key Characteristics

1. Opposition to racial, political and patriarchal domination as well as to economic exploitation.

“All Power to the People” NOT “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”
women' s liberation autonomy minority leadership

2. Concept of freedom as not only freedom from material deprivation but also freedom to create new human beings.

Che' s “new socialist human” MLK' s “new Negro”

3. The extension of the democratic process and expansion of the rights of the individual, not their constraint.

participatory democracy rotation of leadership positions self-management

4. Enlarged base of revolution.

new working class lumpenproletariat women minorities

5. Emphasis on direct action.

bottom-up eros effect don' t wait