

Fourteen Intellectuals Condemn the Dutschke Assassination Attempt (April 19, 1969)

Abstract

When a right-wing worker incited by the reactionary press shot student leader Rudi Dutschke on the street in front of his apartment, fourteen leftist intellectuals, led by the émigré sociologist Theodor Adorno, condemned the violence prompted by irresponsible journalism and called upon the democratic public to resist such actions.

Source

The Statement of the Fourteen

Public Statement on the Attempted Assassination of Rudi Dutschke and on the Media Policy of the Springer Corporation

Bloody violence has struck students for the second time within a year. As isolated as the background events to the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke might seem, they reveal the state of our society. Fear and an unwillingness to take the arguments of the student opposition seriously have created a climate in which the deliberate defamation of a minority must incite violence against it.

This climate has been systematically prepared by a press that presents itself as the protector of the constitution and professes to speak in the name of the order of the majority, but by this order means nothing other than its rule over sheep-like masses and the way to a new, authority-driven nationalism. The alliance of unscrupulous consumer journalism and resurgent nationalistic ideology, which for years has disparaged democratically engaged students and intellectuals as “a left-wing mob,” “a canker,” “long-haired academic loafers,” “rabble,” “intellectual adolescents,” “neurotics,” “complainers,” and “windbags,” threatens once again to destroy the self-image of Germans in a world of peaceful understanding, of advancing enlightenment and cooperation, also between different social systems. Back in early 1967, editorials in the Springer press had already demanded that the city of Berlin be liberated from the “matriculated mobilized mob.” For this reason, the declaration of the Springer press, which claimed it sought objective debate, must be contradicted in the strongest possible terms.

The undersigned therefore demand a public discussion about the Springer corporation, its political and economic assumptions, and its practice of journalistic manipulation. They declare their solidarity with the students, but at the same time ask them to refrain from violence in all actions and to remain aware of the appropriateness of the means. The undersigned call upon the democratic forces in our country, especially the universities and technical colleges, to devote greater attention to the problem of a democratic public sphere, and to help create a deeper awareness of the threat to our domestic situation.

Source: Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Paul Bahrtdt, Heinrich Böll, Peter Brückner, Ludwig von Friedeburg, Walter Jens, Eugen Kogon, Golo Mann, Alexander Mitscherlich, Hans Dieter Müller, Heinrich Popitz, Helge Pross, Helmut Ridder, Hans-Günther Zmarzlik, “Die Erklärung der Vierzehn,” *Die Zeit*, April 19, 1968; reprinted in Wolfgang Kraushaar, ed., *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung. Von der Flaschenpost zum Molotowcocktail 1946–1995*. Hamburg, 1998, Bd. 2, S.

363.

Translation: Allison Brown

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