BILDERBERG MEETINGS

The Hague, January 3, 1969.
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Telegrams BILDERMEETINGS

Mr. Murphy

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Strictly Personal
Strictly Confidential

Dear Sir,

Professor Dr. Ralf Dahrendorf has been kind enough to permit the circulation of the enclosed first draft of his working paper on "Sources of conflict in Western Societies". This draft will be presented for discussion at the next meeting of the Steering Committee on January 17, 1969.

Yours sincerely,

(A. Beukers)
secretary

PROFESSOR DR. RALF DAHRENDORF, PH. D.

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22nd December, 1968

Notes on: Sources of Conflict in Western Societies

1. In the mid-1950s, an interpretation of Western societies gained wide recognition, according to which most of the problems of these societies had been solved. After "the end of ideology", class war can be transformed into a "democratic class struggle" of virtually interchangeable parties in a "pluralist society" in which participation is more or less general. If there is any group left at all which feels alienated, it is that of intellectuals. Even some of the outstanding sociologists, such as Raymond Aron, Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, contributed to this happy notion. Perhaps the Milan meeting of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1955 (for which cf. Lipset's Political Man, pp.404sqq.) illustrates best the mood of those years.

But when the (now) Association for Cultural Freedom held its meetings on a similar theme in Princeton in 1968, the mood had changed very considerably. Even though some of the participants were still there - Daniel Bell, Arthur Schlesinger, for example -, the new catchwords sounded rather less pacific. "Black Power" and "student unrest", Vietnam and Biafra as domestic problems of developed countries, old and new strains in the industrial, or indeed "post- industrial societies" dominated discussions. Nobody could possibly have summarized these discussions in terms of an "end of ideology".

One question is, what happened? But there are others: What was wrong in the self-interpretation of the 1950s? (And, as part of the question:

What were the foreign policy consequences of the assumption of a
convergence of /social development in all countries ~~both apart the same~~ independent of their
~~convict~~ And above all: What is ~the~ substance and source of the new strains
apparent all over the Western world which by some - including myself -
are regarded as threatening democracy?

The first
2. ~Source and substance ~~number one~~ should not have been surprising
to social scientists. "The fact that the fundamental political pro-
blems of the industrial revolution have been solved" (Lipset) has
turned out to be a myth rather than a fact. Citizenship as under-
stood in the past, even if coupled with extensive welfare state mea-
sures, has only scratched deep-seated authoritarian elements in many
institutions of Western societies. (Authoritarian I call those
aspects of the exercise of authority which are strictly unnecessary,
and which in fact prevent citizens from exercising their rights.)
Possibly remnants of a past period of history, these authoritarian
elements in the relation between groups, regions, races, in family,
school and university, in enterprises, armies, organizations have
nevertheless turned out to be one of the major issues of contempo-
rary politics. They have revived a "law and order"-school of poli-
tical thought and action which to my mind represents the first of
three dangerous certainties in contemporary politics.

3. The other two certainties refer to the future rather than the
past. The transformation of Western societies into by tendency modern
societies has required ~the~ numerous measures of rationalization and
bureaucratization. Even Max Weber saw that this is a development
in which new restrictions of liberty are inherent. But there are
those who regard such restrictions as merely technical flaws in an
otherwise necessary and useful development. There is the vision of

a "post-industrial society" (Bell), a "technetronic age" (Brzezinski),
a world in which Marx's dream of organizing the "realm of necessity"
rationally in order to liberate man for the "realm of freedom" has
come true. This view is to a large extent based on extrapolation;
the imagination of the "Committee on the Year 2000" runs along tra-
ditional lines. It is a sophisticated view - but it is also a view
which represents a certainty, and a dangerous one at that. Max Weber's
argument about the "Gehäuse der Hörigkeit" ~~has not been reduced yet~~ be applied to this year 2000?
Above all, there is little sense of the entirely different, of a new
sense of protest in these extrapolations: What - symbolically speak-
ing - if people no longer want an economic growth of 4 per cent. per
annum?

4. For this is the third certainty in contemporary political debate:
the return of anarchy as a political force. Many volumes have been
written about student unrest; more perhaps, than the phenomenon war-
rants. But there is in student unrest a potential of conflict which
extends beyond the groups involved today, i.e. the desire to have
hic et nunc the promised land, the fulfillment of a world in which
"the problem of production has been solved". Here, the rhetoric of
a pseudo-marxist critique of "late capitalism" mixes with that of
Marcuse's eudaemonia, and, curiously, with a paradoxical blend of
flower power and violence - all this guided by the utopia of a
society in which all power of men over men has been abolished.

5. The three certainties - traditional authoritarianism, the techno-
cratic illusion, and the anarchist utopia - are clearly extreme po-
sitions; but in modified forms, and in coalitions between any two
of them, they determine the political mood of Western societies

today. What this means, is apparent if we look at these certainties
in terms of the outmoded liberalism of the pluralist interpretation
of society in the 1950s. Clearly, this is the very position which
is in conflict with all three political forces, and which is hard
pushed in so far as gaining ground is concerned. The absence of a
liberal political theory for the present; our lack of imagination
with respect to traditional democratic institutions, at times simply
a remarkable lack of nerve on the part of those who can, and want to
live with uncertainty, are some of the reasons for this development.
But we need therapy even more than diagnosis, if we do not want to
move further into a new age of primitive, violent, and ideological
politics.