Up Against the Wall: Transition of the Students for a Democratic Society from Youth Protest Movement to Violence

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The end of World War II changed the face of the world and American society in very profound ways. The United States grew from an isolationist country, economically downtrodden by the Great Depression, into a Superpower with far reaching political, military and economic means. Following the war, the United States enjoyed a period of growing affluence as the world began to rebuild itself from an earlier decade of devastating military conflict. Fear of communism weighed heavily on the cultural mind, often leading to the oppression of ideas and limits on freedom of speech. Soviet-style Communism also rose in stature in the world following World War II. The United States and Western Europe fought a war of ideas primarily through political means, which created armed conflict in isolated cases. Globally, the United States fought the Communist threat in limited military conflicts that often resulted in a high number of American military deaths and apprehension among the American public as to their necessity. The children of the World War II generation did not share the blind loyalty and faith in government of their parents. This led to student movements in the 1960s that challenged the conformity of the previous generation. It spilled into several arenas of thought that included the Civil Rights Movement to end racial injustice, anti-government speech and resistance to military involvement around the world. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was one of the largest youth organizations to arise out of the New Left Movement. Starting out as a simple protest organization, the SDS quickly developed into a militant group that found itself in trouble with not only various university administrations but also with the law.

SDS grew out of the New Left Movement, whose origins began in the early 1900s with the Russian Revolution as the Old Left Movement. The Socialist Party had been well ingrained in American society prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Although once the Bolsheviks arose as the victor, the Communist Party formed out of the far left wing of the Socialist Party in 1919.[1] Headquartered at Union Square in New York, the American Communist Party found life among American politics a rather difficult existence. Operating with sympathy and direction from the Soviet Union, the American Communist Party members were consistently harassed by the federal government as the threat of Communist take over became more of a focus.[2]

The Great Depression increased membership within the American Communist Party as many Americans grew disenchanted with the federal government's inability to ease their suffering. Labor unions, young student radicals, professors, artists, writers and professionals all became active members with the Party.[3]

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[1] Irwin Unger, *The Movement: A History of the American New Left, 1959-1972* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1974), 1-2.
[2] Ibid., 2.
[3] Ibid,. 6.

That all changed with the end of World War II in 1945. No longer was Joseph Stalin, the authoritarian brutal dictator of the Soviet Union, considered "Uncle Joe." As Stalin's crimes of genocide against his own people became public knowledge, the American Communist Movement was viewed with great suspicion in the West, particularly in the United States. Members of the American Communist Party came under ever increasing scrutiny and oppression by the government.[4]

Leading the government action was Senator Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin and the House Un-American Activities Committee where anyone accused of being a Communist or having Communist sympathies was persecuted. Intellectuals and artists who had once been supporters of Communism were forced to change their beliefs with the threat of prison time or being ostracized from society solely for their past support of the Communist Party. The intellectuals of the Old Left commenced changing their viewpoints on Communism and American foreign policy and began to agree with the federal government's decisions. Leftist intellectuals started lending their full support to the platform of the Democratic Party, which went largely unchallenged until conflicts in Indochina overheated into war, sparking a break in the Leftist Movement and the rise of the "New Left."[5]

C. Wright Mills, a leading sociologist during the 1950s and 1960s, had been a member of the Leftist Movement, now often termed as the "Old Left," wrote for such influential intellectual journals as the *Partisan Review, Politics*, and *Dissent*.[6] Mills worked and wrote among other influential Leftist New York Intellectuals such as Myer Schapiro, Irving Howe, and Irving Kristol. In his essay "Letter to the Left," he defined the differences between the "Right" and the "Left." "The *Right*, among other things, means what you are doing: celebrating society as it is, a [growing] concern. *Left* means . . . structural criticism and reportage and theories of society, which at some point or another are focused politically as demands and programs."[7] Mills's essay inspired many involved in the New Left Movement to take action against what they saw as problems in American society. However, Mills started to drift from the opinions of his fellow intellectuals on the issue of the Soviet Union and Communism. After a trip to the Soviet Union in 1957, Mills started to develop a sympathetic tone toward the Soviets and Communism which began showing up in his writings.[8]

It was also during this time that Mills had secured ties with the radical New Left that was arising during the late 1950s and 1960s. Mills had become a mentor to the movement, and his increasing sympathy toward Communism brought him into conflict with his fellow Old Left colleagues.[9] Mills was increasingly discouraged that his fellow intellectuals, who had once spoken out against consumerism and industrialism, were now celebrating conformity and affluence.[10] Mills saw the future of radicalism and Leftist intellectualism in young student

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[4] Richard H. Pells. *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*, 2d ed. (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 34-35.
[5] Ibid., 55-57.
[6] Maurice Isserman, *If I Had A Hammer . . .: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1987), 85.
[7] C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left," *New Left Review* 14 (September/October 1960): 20.
[8] Isserman, 85.
[9] Ibid., 116-117.
[10] Unger, 21.

radicals. In his "Letter to the New Left," Mills pointed to the work of students and youth organizations in the Soviet Union who were leading the protest movements showing their discontent with the Soviet governmental system. Mills called on the members of the New Left to ". . . study these new generations of intellectuals around the world as real live agencies of historic change. Forget Victorian Marxism, except when you need it; and read Lenin again (be careful) – Rosa Luxemburg, too."[11]

By calling on members of the New Left to read works other than that of Marx, he was hoping that students would adhere to the more radical influences of socialist thought. Mills wanted to see students in the United States become the leaders pushing for radical change in American society. It was the words of Mills in his "Letter to the New Left" that inspired many young Americans to seek out membership in radical students movements and also be what would create a divide among the SDS in the later years of the organization.[12]

The SDS had previously existed as the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), which was formed by the Intercollegiate Socialist Society in the early 1930s.[13] SLID was the first youth movement to organize students to participate in protesting political, military and social issues of the day. In 1934, SLID gained national attention when they organized a Student Anti-War Week along with the Communist National Student League (NSL), in which 25,000 students went on an hour long strike, refusing to attend classes. Due to the success of their Student Anti-War Week, SLID and the NSL organized another anti-war strike in the spring of 1934. This mass student protest against the threat of war in Europe drew 185,000 participants, leading the two organizations to feel that unity would only strengthen their cause.[14]

The two organizations merged in 1935 and changed their name to the American Student Union (ASU) and adopted Communism as their main political philosophy. They aligned themselves with the American Communist Party. As the conflict in Europe began to heat up, the ASU support began to drift away from the Communist Party to the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The ASU widely supported the New Deal programs instituted by Roosevelt, furthering their divide with the American Communist Party. When it was announced that Stalin had made a non-aggression pact with Germany's Adolf Hitler in 1939, the ASU became disillusioned with the Communists for aligning with the German Nazis. The non-aggression pact proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back and the ASU withdrew from the American Communist Party in 1939 and disbanded.[15]

It was not until the end of the Second World War that a national student organization reappeared. SLID was revived in 1945 at a conference for the anti-Communist League for Industrial Democracy (LID). Membership in the restored SLID demanded that no participant give his or her support to any perceived authoritarian regime or leader of any government other than the United States. SLID operated successfully under these guidelines, opening chapters on nine college campuses across the United States. At a conference for SLID in June of 1959, the organization changed their name to the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and continued

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[11] Mills, 23.
[12] Alan Adelson, *SDS* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 205-206.
[13] Martha W. Carithers, "A Social Movement Career: National SDS" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1982), 39.
[14] Ibid, 39.
[15] Ibid, 40.

their pledge of supporting the federal government of the United States.[16]

Tom Hayden, an SDS field representative at the time, suggested that the SDS meet to better organize if the SDS ever hoped to become a national movement. The SDS held a meeting between June 11-15, 1962 in Port Huron, Michigan to decide the fate of the organization, whose goals and membership had been waning in the years since its rebirth in June of 1959.[17] Hayden found that in 1962, "SDS was still mainly an idea nurtured in the minds of a few dozen activists."[18] Hayden had been actively involved in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and while jailed in Albany, New York for his involvement in a civil rights protest, conceived of the initiatives that he wanted SDS to consider at the Port Huron meeting. Hayden wanted members to focus on the "direction" SDS needed to take, the amount of involvement that each member was willing to commit to, and to what extent was each person "personally prepared to contribute."[19]

Approximately forty students attended the meeting in Port Huron.[20] While there was interest on the part of the participants to create a national organization, little progress was made. Hayden, with fellow active member Al Haber, set out to write what came to be the call to arms of the SDS and elevated them into national status.[21] Hayden and Haber wanted to express their desire to "awaken" the current generation of youth that would be potential members of the SDS. Haden and Haber set out to write the initial draft of what they called their "manifesto of hope."[22]

In a short time, Hayden and Haber produced the sixty-one page manuscript that came to be known as the *Port Huron Statement*.[23] This document expressed the concern that the members of the SDS were feeling about the world around them, opening with the statement: "We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit."[24] Three main issues were outlined; discontent over the nuclear arms race, constant fear of impending doom in the United States unleashed at the hands of the evil Soviet Union, and denial of equal rights and freedoms to African-Americans in a country that was founded on the notion that "all men are created equal."[25]

Hayden, Haber, and other members of the SDS believed that the United States had become sidetracked in their competition with the Soviet Union. They were concerned over the United States developing weapons and technology that only served to end human life rather than aid human suffering. While the middle and upper classes of the United States were celebrating in the affluence of the post-war period, many Americans were starving. "We witnessed, and continue to witness, other paradoxes. With nuclear energy whole cities can easily be powered,

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[16] Ibid., 40-41.
[17] Wini Breines, *Community Organization in the New Left: 1962-1968: The Great Refusal?* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 11.
[18] Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988), 73.
[19] Ibid., 73-74.
[20] Breines, 11.
[21] Adelson, 206.
[22] Hayden, 74.
[23] Adelson, 206.
[24] "Port Huron Statement," available from http://www.studentsforademocraticsociety.org/documents/port_huron.html, accessed 26 February 2006.
[25] Ibid.

yet the dominant nation-states seem more likely to unleash destruction greater than that incurred in all wars of human history."[26]

Issues of hypocrisies that the members of the SDS found in American democracy were also addressed in the *Port Huron Statement.* Finding that the ideals of American democracy were being challenged across the globe in independence movements in former Western European colonies, the emergence of totalitarian states in the place of colonial governments, and rising military conflicts in other countries were just a few of the examples. They found that democracy was challenged internally as well with the denial of rights to African-Americans.[27]

After identifying the wrongs they saw, Hayden and Haber began to outline what became the manifesto of the SDS. The SDS denied the conception that human beings can be controlled and operated as a machine. Raging against the doctrines of conformity and consumerism of the 1950s, the *Port Huron Statement* affirms that "[t]he goal of man and society should be human independence: a concern not with image of popularity but with finding a meaning in life that is personally authentic . . ."[28] Hayden and Haber believed that through social change, democracy would work better and would work for all the people of the United States.[29]

The *Port Huron Statement* ended with a call to university students to use their power as the means in which to enact change. Hayden and Haber used the examples of student activism that found re-birth at the end of the oppressive McCarthy era. Students across the United States had revived their civil disobedient fervor in the late 1950s and 1960s, protesting against racial discrimination, war, and impediments on individual rights that are guaranteed in a democratic society. The SDS found power among university students because whether they succeeded or failed they continued to protest against violations that they felt were occurring in the United States. Hayden and Haber celebrated this fact in the *Port Huron Statement* when they stated that, "[t]he significance . . . [was] in the fact that students [were] breaking the crust of apathy and overcoming the inner alienation that remain[ed] the defining characteristics of American college life."[30]

For Hayden and Haber university campuses across the United States provided the perfect training ground for youth activism because they believed that campuses were the grounds of intellectualism and provided youth with a more comfortable setting in which to express their views.[31] Hayden and Haber hoped that the *Port Huron Statement* would not only provoke those activist minded students, but also stir up activist sentiment among some of the less enlightened college-age youth.[32] The SDS found that average Americans had withdrawn themselves from issues of public life, no longer concerned with the major decisions and events of the day. Disillusioned and disheartened by the American apathy, the SDS believed that it was the students protesting and voicing their concerns that could lead and awaken American society.[33] The SDS

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[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Rebecca E. Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, The New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1999), 27.
[33] "Port Huron Statement."

hoped to convert university protest from radical youthful rantings into a forum for enacting democratic change. Hayden and Haber recognized that: "[The University's] educational function makes it indispensable and automatically makes it a crucial institution in the formation of social attitudes."[34]

The *Port Huron Statement* was not only a manifesto for a stronger SDS, but also represented the youth organization's desire to make a final split with the Old Left. The tensions between the Old Left and the New Left had been boiling for some time and the *Port Huron Statement* served as the final split between the two.[35] Hayden and Haber charge in the *Port Huron Statement* that ". . . the dreams of the older left were perverted by Stalinism and never recreated . . ."[36] By attacking the failures and inconsistencies that the SDS believed the Old Left was plagued by, the younger generation of the New Left hoped to have better luck on reforming the evils they saw within American society.[37]

Propelling the SDS into a national movement, the *Port Huron Statement* became a manifesto for student radicalism on all the major college campuses. Selling over one hundred thousand copies of the manifesto, national membership in the SDS soared.[38] Years later in his autobiography, Hayden expressed that he ". . . still [did not] know where this messianic sense, this belief in being right, this confidence that we could speak for a generation came from."[39] He also remarked that during this time period in American history, it was believed that if one loudly and publicly expressed one's views against society, that one would get a personal meeting with President John F. Kennedy.[40] Although no meeting occurred, the SDS was successful in expanding their movement across the nation within a relatively short time, becoming a contentious movement that consistently challenged and disrupted life on many of the American college campuses.

The SDS scheduled another convention for June 1963 to be held in Pine Hill, New York. With the *Port Huron Statement* drawing attention and membership to the SDS, the purpose of the 1963 Convention was to establish SDS programs. Before the convention Hayden circulated an essay titled "Outline of the Draft of the SDS Convention Document," in which he expressed that the *Port Huron Statement* only gave the SDS a broad reason for being. Hayden felt that what was then needed was a strategy for how the SDS would operate.[41]

Hayden also summarized what he saw as three fundamental areas where the SDS needed to get involved to enact change. The first area regarded the economy. Hayden was disillusioned with the level of unemployment in the United States during the 1960s, as well as the high rates of poverty. In the wake of the Bay of Pigs failure and American involvement in Vietnam, Hayden was angered by the United States's involvement in conflicts in the Third World, outlining this as the second problem facing American society in the early 1960s. Lastly, Hayden found that the

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Klatch, 28.
[36] "Port Huron Statement."
[37] Klatch, 28.
[38] Adelson, 206.
[39] Hayden, 74.
[40] Hayden, 74.
[41] Carithers, 99-100.

third problem was with the "emerging corporate establishment." [42]

Hayden also drew on his continual argument for the need for civil rights to be granted to African-Americans. He expressed the need for African-Americans to have political representation to help aid their cause.[43] Hayden, along with many SDS members, was enraged by the constant violent response by white Southerners to the Civil Rights Movement and the ignorance of American lawmakers to the overtly illegal actions of white Southerners in their oppressive tactics. Anger was also directed at the slow response of the federal government to giving African-Americans the rights as citizens of a free democracy.[44]

The 1963 Convention got underway on June 14 in Pine Hill. During the convention, Hayden stepped down as the President of SDS and Todd Gitlin, the leader of the Harvard chapter of the SDS, was chosen to take his place.[45] Gitlin had been inspired by the *Port Huron Statement*. Gitlin found that SDS members ". . . lived as if life mattered profoundly, . . . as if you could actually take life in your hands and live it deliberately, as if it were an artwork. They seemed to live as if life were all of a peace, love and commitment indivisible."[46] Gitlin became consumed with the ideals and initiatives of the SDS, which from the 1963 Convention became the pursuit of peace, civil rights and university reform movements. Coming into the 1963 Convention, Gitlin saw himself as inexperienced and inept, leaving with a sense of fulfillment having now become part of the "inner circle."[47]

The early to mid-1960s saw the SDS rise in national conciseness. Holding anti-war demonstrations across many of the nation's college campuses, the SDS rose in intellectual prominence. Espousing the ideas of C. Wright Mills, Albert Camus and Paul Goodman, the SDS set forth what came to be the main ideas of the New Left Movement in the 1960s. SDS protesters began addressing issues of power over the powerless, mainly in the context of civil rights and those living in poverty.[48] Encouraged by President Johnson's War on Poverty, SDS members began entering the urban ghettoes to organize the poor. Reaching out to both whites and African-Americans living in poverty, the SDS created the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) in 1963.[49]

SDS members found that the United States, and the world as a whole, was not interested in domestic issues in 1963 (or in many of the years after). Instead the world was focused on the war in Vietnam. Affluence was still celebrated and the divide between the haves and have nots continued to grow, culminating in what Hayden called a "missed opportunity."[50] Hayden believed that "[h]ad the nation been able to focus on its internal agenda, students might have triumphed as catalysts to channel the frustrations of poverty into constructive reform."[51] A fire was ignited across college campuses as many students were enraged at not only the escalation of

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[42] Ibid., 100.
[43] Ibid., 100.
[44] Breines, 11.
[45] Carithers, 101.
[46] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 106.
[47] Ibid., 106.
[48] Breines, 11.
[49] Hayden, 124-125.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

the Vietnam War, but the preoccupation with foreign over domestic issues. Many members of the SDS adopted more militant protests. Vietnam electrified a nation and resulted in violent protests across college campuses in the United States during the 1960s.[52]

Hayden; however, along with many of the true believers in the cause of the SDS, continued on their mission of eradicating poverty and discrimination in the United States. Between 1965-1966, Hayden and the SDS began a door-to-door campaign to find individuals willing to join the cause. Hayden identified the main problems in the urban slums as the charging of high rents, the intrusion of rats and roaches, the lack of garbage collection, and the lack of street lighting for safety. Hayden hoped that through outlining the main problems of ghetto living, that many Americans would feel encouraged to join the SDS cause.[53] Unfortunately, Hayden and many who followed his beliefs could not compete with the more militant factions arising in the SDS ranks.

Nothing would exhibit more the militant discontent of many of the members of the SDS like the rebellion that occurred in late April 1968 on the campus of Columbia University. Radical SDS members searched for any issue of contention with the university administration. The main issue that caused an eventual violent upheaval on the campus was over the university's acceptance of research contracts for the Department of Defense to support the war effort, a war that angered the majority of students on campus.[54] The Columbia SDS began calling for a take-over of universities across the country, sending alarms to the Columbia University administration. On April 22, 1968, a student and member of the Columbia SDS named Mark Rudd, wrote a letter to the university President Grayson Kirk, which was later published in the university newspaper, the *Columbia Daily Spectator*.[55]

Rudd was angered by a statement that Kirk made in a speech delivered in Charlottesville, Virginia on April 12, 1968. Kirk had stated that America's youth had been engaging in "inchoate nihilism" and were bent on total destruction. Kirk also stated that he saw the generational gap had grown wider than it ever had been, posing a real danger as the youth were bent on destruction.[56] Rudd charged that the generational gap had not widen, that instead there existed a conflict between the elder generation who were in control and the younger generation who were bent on enacting change. Rudd detailed not only his disgust for Kirk, but also those of Kirk's generation, who Rudd found promoted American involvement in the Vietnam War, supported the drafting of college age youth to fight in the war, continued to institute discriminatory policies, while living in their lofty mansions while others in the United States lived in poverty.[57] The Columbia campus often catered to wealthy students, but was located in the poor and destitute section of Harlem known as Morningside Heights, which served as a constant reminder to the students of the widening gap between the rich and the poor.[58] Rudd

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 143-144.
[54] Jerry L. Avron, et. al, *Up Against the Ivy Wall: A History of the Columbia Crisis* (New York: Antheneum, 1969), 23-24.
[55] Ibid., 24-27.
[56] Ibid., 25.
[57] Ibid., 25-26.
[58] "Siege on Morningside Heights," *Time Magazine*, 3 May 1968, 48.

ended his letter by stating: "You call for order and respect for authority; we call for justice, freedom and socialism. . . . It may sound nihilistic to you, since it is the opening shot in a war of liberation. I'll use the words of LeRoi Jones, whom I'm sure you don't like a whole lot: 'Up against the wall, motherfucker, this is a stick up.'"[59]

Kirk was not well liked by the radical members of Columbia's student body. Kirk was described by students as "... arbitrary, tyrannical, out of touch with the people of his domain. Not known by students, but disliked all the same."[60] Rudd's letter was not the first confrontation between him and Kirk either. Early in the month, Kirk organized a memorial service to honor the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Columbia campus. Many members of not only the Students for a Democratic Society but also student activists working for Civil Rights were in attendance. The students were particularly outraged by Kirk's presence at a service to honor King when the African American employees of the University were being paid considerably less than white employees of equal stature, combined with what the students felt of the University's "... expunge[ing of] non-whites from Morningside Heights."[61] The students also felt the University's support of weapons research for the Vietnam War was an antithesis to the memory of King. An outraged Rudd stood up in the middle of the services to speak out against the hypocrisies he felt the memorial service was representing. After making his speech, Rudd stormed out of the service taking many members of the student body with him.[62] The battle lines between Rudd and Kirk were firmly drawn and after the publication of Rudd's letter in the student newspaper it was only a matter of days before the campus erupted into a violent standoff between radical members of the student body and the University administration.

Rudd's statement of "Up Against the Wall" was used over and over during the rebellion that ensued the day after his letter reached Kirk on April 23, 1968. The members of the Columbia SDS organized a rally, held at noon on April 23. Meeting at the center of the campus, the students marched toward a construction site on campus where a new gym was under construction. The location and building of the new gym had been a disputed issue among the local residents due to the fact that is was being built in a public park in Harlem. Once the students reached the construction site, the rally began to turn violent as the students attempted to tear down a fence that blocked their ability to enter the gym. The local police force responded to the vandalism, arresting one African-American student who was participating in the rally. The remaining students marched on toward another building on campus, Hamilton Hall, which held the administrative offices. Dean Harry Coleman was taken hostage, with his release pending on the university consenting to the demands of the revolting students.[63]

The students issued a set of six demands to the university administration. Some of the demands involved the key issues highlighted in previous disputes between the Columbia SDS and the university administration. They wanted Columbia to end their contracts with the Department of Defense, be allowed to protest in any building and on any area of the campus that

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[59] Avron, 27.
[60] James Simon Kunen, *The Strawberry Statement -- Notes of a College Revolutionary* (New York: Random House, 1969), 15.
[61] Ibid, 14-15
[62] Ibid.
[63] Hayden, 273-274.

they wished, for the University to discontinue the building of a gym and, most importantly, they wanted all protesters involved in the current revolt to be absolved of any penalty for their actions.[64]

Under the leadership of Rudd, in the next eight days the Columbia SDS took over numerous buildings on the campus, including the Low Library which housed Kirk's office. Each building contained what Rudd called a "commune," in which the members of each occupied building formed as a sign of solidarity. While held up in these communes, the members inside would discuss their actions, the politics of the day, and what they would do next. Many felt as though they were exhibiting the actions of a "participatory democracy," what all members of the SDS had hoped to achieve for the nation.[65]

Hayden had been in New York at the time of the Columbia revolt, but was quickly notified of the SDS's actions. Hayden was emboldened by Rudd's actions and the rest of the Columbia SDS for acting upon the call from the *Port Huron Statement* for students to act as agents for the cause. At the same time; however, Hayden was angered by the fact that many of the students were questioning their actions, worrying more about whether or not they were hurting their academic career than with making the university administration consent to their demands. Hayden decided that he would drive to Columbia and aid the local chapter of the SDS in their rebellion.[66]

By the time that Hayden arrived on campus on April 30, Dean Coleman had been released by the students. The university administration began meeting to decide how to handle the ordeal. It was quickly decided that the university had no intention of relenting to the students's demands. That decision was subsequently relayed to the students. Hayden offered his help to Rudd and the other members of the Columbia SDS. Rudd allowed Hayden to join them, but reminded Hayden that he was in charge of the ongoing protest.[67] Hayden suspected the reaction from the students, but felt as though he could not pass up the opportunity to get involved, stating that he ". . . had spent enough time at Columbia to know that I couldn't walk away."[68]

Hayden quickly realized that he and Rudd were polar opposites. The divisions in the two leaders's approaches and philosophies represented the changes that were occurring in the SDS. Hayden represented the ambition and intellectual side of the SDS. Drawing on the examples from the Civil Rights Movement, Hayden envisioned a national organization that operated under the guises of non-violent protest in order to make their point to American society. Rudd on the other hand represented the militant revolutionary side of student activism which was taking hold of the SDS, alienating the founding members of the organization. Hayden notes that although he was only nine years older than Rudd they shared little in common, especially when it came to the methods the SDS should use.[69] Hayden points to: "While I had experienced the religious and

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[64] James Miller, *"Democracy is in the Streets:" From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 290.
[65] Ibid, 290-291.
[66] Hayden, 274.
[67] Ibid, 274-275.
[68] Ibid., 275.
[69] Ibid.

reformist South at his age, he had already visited revolutionary and socialist Cuba as part of an SDS contingent. While I had gone through an intense intellectual development in formulating *The Port Huron Statement*, he considered 'SDS intellectuals' impediments to action."[70]

The revolt remained relatively stable even under rumors that some of the African-American student protestors had weapons, which they planned to use when the police stormed the campus to break up the rebellion. That would change when the New York police force took over the campus in the early hours of the morning on April 30, using violence to suppress the protesting students. Dragged from the buildings they had occupied, the students were beaten, arrested and forced into "paddy wagons." Hayden walked out off the campus and into police custody of his own free will. As Hayden passed through the crowd he held up his hand, which he used his fingers to form a "V" for victory.[71] Students watching the actions of the police, which had the support of the university administration, followed Hayden's example and began holding up "V's" of their own. In total, seven hundred students were arrested for taking part in the Columbia rebellion. Many of those arrested suffered moderate to severe injuries at the hands of the police during their arrest. Strikes continued to ensue for another month across the Columbia campus in response to the demands that were voiced by the Columbia SDS.[72]

Many reporters, writers, and television crews were on hand for the brutal end to the Columbia rebellion. The nation watched as students were beaten and arrested.[73] An unnamed reporter for *Time* magazine found that much of the blame fell in the hands of Kirk, finding that his out-of-touch approach toward the student grievances led to the militant take-over of much of the Columbia campus. "Much of the blame falls on President Grayson Kirk," the author details, "whose aloof, often bumbling administration has proved unresponsive to grievances that have long been festering on campus."[74] Many supported the actions of the police, believing that the students had no right to lay siege to the Columbia campus and deserved the treatment they received at the hands of the police. On the other side of the spectrum, other Americans were outraged by the brutality of the police, finding that the students's rights had been grossly violated.[75]

Time magazine published an essay on May 3, 1968 in which the anonymous author stated that: "Seldom before have so many groups of students organized so militantly or seemed to try so hard to reorder their colleges, their countries or the world at large."[76] The author also detailed that many of the students involved in the SDS, and other protest youth organizations openly professed their belief in Marxism, finding that many are truly "naïve" as to what the socialist philosophy entails. The author also found that many of the students came from wealthy families who subscribed to liberal ideologies, and that these students flocked to universities, like Columbia, that have known militant activist organizations. "The many studies of student activists," states the author, "show that the great majority of them come from families that are

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[70] Ibid.
[71] Miller, 291-292.
[72] Hayden, 281-282.
[73] Miller, 292.
[74] "Siege on Morningside Heights," 48.
[75] Ibid.
[76] "Why Those Students Are Protesting," *Time Magazine*, 3 May 1968, 24.

prosperous, politically active and liberal."[77]

The events that occurred at Columbia University in 1968 were the beginning of the end for the SDS. Columbia proved to be the first of many militant, and often violent, protests that were led by radical members of the SDS in the years that followed.[78] Adopting Rudd's tactics, many SDS and youth protestors chanted "Up Against the Wall" through a bullhorn at practically all of their protests, reminding the nation of what happened at Columbia.[79] One of which was the violent protesting of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968, which ignited an angered backlash across the nation and aided in the downfall of the New Left Movement as a whole.[80]

The year 1968 also saw the election of President Richard Nixon, who took a fierce stance against the New Left. Nixon wanted to silence the New Left, which included the SDS, in order to achieve his policy of "peace with honor" in Vietnam. Nixon saw the militant protests against the Vietnam War and domestic issues as damaging the world image of the United States. Also, Nixon's Vietnamization policy including the demobilization of American forces in Vietnam, was one of the main demands of the New Left Movement.[81]

Another contributing factor to the decline of the SDS were the divisions that began to tear the organization apart in 1969. Much like the Civil Rights Movement which had provided so much inspiration to the SDS, militant members created conflict within the Movement resulting in a break and the creation of a violent faction called the Weathermen. Taking their movement off college campuses, the Weathermen began operating "underground." Adopting guerrilla tactics the members of the Weathermen started collecting weapons and building bombs, believing that violence would prove more effective in forcing the federal government to consent to their demands. Few Americans were able to separate the actions of the Weathermen from those of the SDS.[82]

An essay published in *Time* magazine on August 15, 1977, titled "An Elegy for the New Left," opened with a quote from a former member of the New Left, Philip Rahv: "Nothing can last in America more than ten years."[83] Rahv's statement expressed the cynicism that many of the former members of the New Left Movement felt at the end of the 1960s. Looking back on the great promise with which they began, many activists from the New Left and the SDS, were left with a sense of failure to achieve their hopes for the future. The author of the essay, Lance Marrow, pointedly remarked that: "The New Left operated in a cavalier – and ultimately fatal – ignorance of the past. It should have known, should have remembered, that the American left has always been its own worst enemy . . ."[84]

The Students for a Democratic Society began with promise and strength of a fresh new movement. Operating under the philosophy of non-violent protest, the ideas expressed in the far-

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[77] Ibid, 25.
[78] Unger, 148-149.
[79] "The Danger of Playing at Revolution," *Time Magazine*, 28 March 1969, 40.
[80] Unger, 148-149.
[81] Ibid, 149-150.
[82] Adelson, x-xi.
[83] Lance Morrow, "An Elegy for the New Left," *Time Magazine*, 15 August 1977, 67.
[84] Ibid.

reaching *Port Huron Statement* represented the hope of the next generation for a "participatory democracy." Professing intellectual idealism, the members of the SDS, and the New Left Movement as a whole, represented what seems to be the last of an activist generation. Today, college students seem to be more concerned with what grade one will receive rather than risking taking a controversial stance. Student activism in today's society is on the decline. Few students get involved and take a stand against the some of the contentious actions of the federal government. Although the legacy of the SDS is focused more on the violent and militant organization that it became, the promise it held during its formation in the early 1960s deserves proper recognition.