

[March 1979]

The purpose of this essay is to analyze the jargon used by today's college student. For this analysis I have decided to select a specific group of college students, namely the Rhode Island College Student Movement which is a Leftist organization on this campus. This group of radicals is quite adept at utilizing words and phrases that are historically Marxian in their origin and can be found in any copy of The Communist Manifesto. The same words Marx used to describe his struggle between the classes, these college students today use to describe any struggle, and this is termed jargon. I shall begin this analysis by quoting an excerpt from a publication of the Rhode Island Student Movement:

The Purpose of the Rhode Island Student Movement is to wage mass democratic anti-Imperialist struggle in the college and elsewhere against all forms of bourgeois ideology and practice., in particular to combat the rise of fascism for which bourgeois cultural and intellectual despots are presently preparing public opinion.

At this stage, the student's role is to fight against the decadent ideology and "culture" and other forms of U.S. Imperialism which lay the basis for fascism. Only by following the correct ideological, political and organizational line put forward by the advanced proletariat can students move their struggles stepwise to a higher stage.

The above quotation is cluttered with jargon and the writers use it as a skillful weapon in swaying that malleable mind of the unaware, unconvicted college student with words and phrases that are either beyond definition in scope or have quite a singular meaning that probably is unknown by the majority of students, both involved and uninvolved in Leftist political thought. That meaning begs for an explanation. As was previously stated, the excerpt quite heavily uses Marxian terminology that was previously reserved for Communist verbal attacks on the United States. These words have been taken out of their original context and made applicable to today, and in this instance, to this college, by depicting the struggle of the college student in this institution as one which must overthrow "bourgeois ideology."

There are an enormous number of unusual word usages in this quotation. "Bourgeois ideology", for example, is the New Left way of condemning the middle class and its values. "Bourgeois cultural and intellectual despots" probably refers to many of the college professors and instructors on this campus. I assume the "advanced proletariat" to be the members of the New Left and the Rhode Island College Student Movement, the writers of this extremely dogmatic piece of jargonistic prose. Never have I seen these words used in such a context. Never before were the ever present demands voiced by college students penned using such blatant Communist lingo. For example I cite the phrase, "democratic anti-imperialistic struggle in the college and elsewhere"; since when has a college

student's struggle for voice presented itself as a "democratic anti-imperialist struggle?" Never before was there the appearance of an "advanced proletariat" on a college campus. In my mind, a proletariat was always a term designating a member of the working class. Rhode Island college has no students who adequately fit this description.

Periphrastic construction is extremely evident in this bit of handiwork. It appears that the student or students who composed this diatribe had to rely on every socialistic term available in order to make its main point. It attempts to bog the mind down with impressive looking and weighty sounding words and phrases; but when one scrutinizes the words for meaning one realizes they are, for the most part, pure gibberish. The quotation simply calls for the student to join the Rhode Island ~~for~~ Student Movement and help fight against middle class exploitation of student rights. The utilization of jargon makes this quotation sound much more impressive than it truly is. Circumlocution is a rhetorical device used by many students in this New Left movement. When confronted with a question or challenge involving their basic ideology, these revolutionary minds merely talk around your question and never really say anything. They ~~spew~~ spew forth impressive sounding gibberish and close their minds to the challenge with which they are confronted.

Jargon is a reflective measure of the age in which we live. In this case, the jargon is typical of the shift to the revolutionary fervor prevalent in our colleges today. Many, not all, college students are no longer content with college as being solely a source of social or educational enlightenment. For many students, like the student mobilization groups, college is an excellent place to begin the ground work for the "revolution." Membership in fraternities and sororities is no longer viewed as "the thing" in college life. Membership in a protest group has, in many instances, emerged as central. Collegiate dissenters have no need for something as "bourgeois" as a fraternity or sorority; and even many non-protestors no longer feel the social need on campus to join such long established institutions. Many of the external needs of today's college student have thus shifted; therefore the jargon must also shift.

As I have previously stated, jargon today reflects the emotional fervor of our many dissenting college revolutionaries. However, even these students ~~are~~ not actively engaged in college protest movements find themselves referring in conversation to "the revolution," or U.S. "imperialist activities in Viet Nam" or "Fascism and its implications" or "freedom and what it means today." Today, youth is angry at America, so it is seen in their embracement of words and phrases that depict that anger.