

# **An Emergency Letter to My Brothers and Sisters in the Movement**

Jerry Rubin

February 13, 1969

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Dear friends,

From the Bay Area to New York, we are suffering the greatest depression in our history. People are taking bitterness in their coffee instead of sugar.

It's a common problem, not an individual one, and people don't talk to one another too much any more.

It is 1969 already, and 1965 seems almost like a childhood memory. Then we were the conquerors of the world. No one could stop us. We were going to end the war. We were going to wipe out racism. We were going to mobilize the poor. We were going to take over the universities.

Go back and read some of the early anti-war literature. Check out the original hippie-digger poetry and manifestoes: euphoria, overflowing optimism, and expectation of immediate success. Wow, I can still get high on it.

A lot has gone down since then. The war roars on, the San Francisco scene is gone, pot and acid are being challenged by speed and smack, Nixon has replaced Johnson, and white racism is stronger than ever.

America proved deaf, and our dreams proved innocent. Scores of our brothers have become inactive and cynical.

Still, our victories since 1965 have been enormous. We kicked LBJ's ass. We defeated the Democratic Party. Our history has been marked by a series of great battles: Berkeley, the Pentagon, Columbia, Chicago. We are stealing the youth of America right out of the kindergartens and elementary schools. We are the most exciting energy force in the nation.

It is just because we are striking so deep that, in every phase of the movement, arrests and trials and court appearances and jail have bottled up resources, sapped energy, and demoralized the spirit.

This has happened slowly—not the way many paranoids expected, the knock on the door, and concentration camps for thousands of us chase that shit out of your head. That's not The American Way.

The American Way is to pick one off here, one there, and try to scare the others into inaction.

So:

*Huey Newton is in prison  
Eldridge Cleaver is in exile*

America's courts are colonial courts, where White America punishes her black subjects. America's jails are black concentration camps. Every black man in jail is a political prisoner. In America we have Race and Class Justice, pure and simple.

And they have picked off the Panther Leadership and driven it into jail and exile without our burning the fucking country down in retaliation.

*Oakland Seven are accused of conspiracy*

Which means: organize a demonstration which effectively challenges authority and the courts arrest you for conspiracy and tie you up with lawyers and boring shit for years. Is that why so few people are into planning demonstrations any more in Berkeley?

After spending three months there in the fall, I was depressed to see the old Berkeley audaciousness gone. Shit, three years ago we were going to overthrow Washington from Telegraph Avenue. Result: broken dreams for hundreds and hundreds of people. "Politico" has virtually become a term of insult in Berkeley today.

Meanwhile, the cops are smiling.

*Tim Leary is up for 30 years and how many of our brothers are in court and jail for getting high?*

Smoking pot is a political act, and every smoker is an outlaw. The drug culture is a revolutionary threat to plasticwasp9-5america.

If you smoke quietly, you won't get bothered. If you smoke in public, or if you live in a commune, or get active politically, or show up somewhere in J. Edgar Freako's computer, you're likely to get busted for getting high.

Through the power of arrest, the cops have virtually silenced the drug evangelists and have destroyed communities like the Haight-Ashbury.

*Spock faces two years in the pen*

When America arrested the Baby Doctor for advising young men to follow their consciences, I was ecstatic: the next day I actually expected thousands of intellectuals and religious folk to stand on soapboxes and repeat Spock's words. Fuck. No one hardly said a word.

The intellectual community was paralyzed by fear. Is it any wonder now how German intellectuals were so easily silenced? Some of the Boston Five tried to beat the rap, reinterpreting their actions into meaninglessness. Where was that moral confrontation with authority that Paul Goodman once spoke about?

Sorry for the bitterness, but I saw the arrest of Spock as test case for the government. If they could arrest and convict Spock without much of a backlash, certainly they could exile Cleaver and jail Leary, and eventually get to me.

The government won the test. Now they are willing to try anything.

*Campus activists are expelled and arrested*

Participants in campus outbreaks are expelled or suspended from school, and arrested on assorted misdemeanors, if not on felony charges for conspiracy.

Students quickly forget the court cases left behind, and the euphoria of an outbreak turns sour in the hearts of those who go to court and jail alone.

When cops first come on campus, the liberals scream—but gradually the liberals get tired and go to sleep.

Cops and courts never sleep.

*War resisters are behind bars*

The anti-draft organizations are in shambles. Individuals are left alone to face 3-to-6 year sentences for refusing the draft. Thousands of men have been driven into exile in Canada and Sweden. The bravest men in the army are choosing to go to the stockade rather than eat military shit.

Stockades, federal prisons and courts are full of men who have defied the military, and who now must face the music. Unfortunately, there is no orchestra playing behind them.

*Add it up:*

Cops and courts have tried to put the national black leadership on ice, knocked the Berkeley white activist movement on its heels, over-run the campuses, wiped out many longhair communities, muted the intellectuals, and given, with impunity, fantastic punishment to draft and GI resisters.

This pattern goes a long way to explaining the malaise so many of us feel. America got where she is by jailing and killing blacks and other colored peoples. If America's own children—the brats of her white middle class—insist on acting like blacks, well, shit they will jail and kill us too.

Who the hell wants to "make it" in America any more? The hippie-yippie-SDS movement is a "white nigger" movement. The American economy no longer needs young whites and blacks. We are waste material. We fulfill our destiny in life by rejecting a system which rejects us.

Our search for adventure and heroism takes us outside America, to a life of self-creation and rebellion. In response, America is ready to destroy us....

I used to know all this in my head. Now I know it in my gut. In the past six months I've personally found out what it's like to live in a police state.

In 1964 and 1965 I was active in campus demonstrations at Berkeley, travel to Cuba, and anti-war actions like stopping troop trains. In those days America thought it could solve its problems with white demonstrators by quickly winning the Vietnam war.

But we had other ideas, and so did the Vietnamese. The anti-war movement became part of a massive youth movement, student demonstrations spread across the country, and in the summer of 1967 America's ghettos burned. The solution to rebellion at home became for LBJ a military one, and his administration turned the problem over to the FBI, CIA, the Red Squads, the cops and the courts.

I guess I began really asking for trouble when, after working as project director for the seige of the Pentagon, I helped organize the youth festival and demonstration in Chicago in opposition to the Democratic Convention.

The yippies were the most public, anarchic, and fearless conspiracy the world has ever seen.

It made LBJ very uptight to realize that an incredible youth-rock festival was going to be held in Chicago the same week he was scheduled to be renominated. LBJ knew that the one group in the country which had done the most to laugh at him and make him look silly was the hippies.

But LBJ dropped out. Bobby Kennedy looked like he was going to get the nomination and through his charisma put the yippies on the shelf. On June 5, Sirhan assassinated Kennedy, and yippie popped back, as unreal as ever.

On June 13 three New York narcotics detectives, carrying a mysterious search warrant, stormed into my Lower East Side apartment, angrily tore a Castro poster off the wall, and arrested me for alleged possession of three ounces of marijuana.

They spent 90 minutes in my apartment questioning me about yippie plans for Chicago and going through my personal papers and telephone book.

The search warrant claimed that on June 10 an informer was in my apartment with me and he saw dangerous drugs there. The only people in my apartment on that day were my closest friends. Narcotics police, who use corruption to get high, invented an informer to get a search warrant. Attorney Bill Kunstler is now attacking the warrant.

A Red Squad detective later told a New York *Post* reporter that this was the first blow against the yippies, whom he saw as agents of the Communist Chinese importing dope into the country to destroy American youth.

Virtually everyone under 30 in Manhattan smokes pot. The cops use marijuana busts as a handy club against blacks, longhairs, and political activists. If you are a longhair and a political activist, you got trouble. If you are a longhair, a political activist, and black, you got real trouble. (Hello, Eldridge, wherever you are.)

The marijuana charge against me is a felony punishable by 2-15 years in the state pen.

When I arrived in Chicago for the yippie festival, I found three shifts of plainclothes cops hounding me night and day. It was typical Chicago police harassment. Round the clock they tailed the half dozen people they thought were "leaders." They were there when we went to bed at night and they were there when we got up in the morning.

For me they cooked up a special treat. Daley sent an undercover cop, Robert Pierson, alias Bob Lavon, to infiltrate the yippies, act as agent provocateur, spy on me, and frame me on a serious felony rap.

At 10:30 p.m. Wednesday, August 28, while looking for a restaurant, I was kidnapped off a nearly empty downtown street by four Chicago plainclothes pigs. I was threatened with beating and death, slugged, bullied, and told:

"You guys ruined our city. You, you, Rubin are responsible. Do you like our city? We hope you do because we are going to put you in jail here for a long time."

By chance, Jack Mabley, a columnist for the conservative Chicago American, happened to be in the streets when I was picked up. This is how he described what happened:

"No blood flowed in one of the most ominous happenings. Jerry Rubin...was walking west on Washington.... A girl [Nancy] was with him....

"An unmarked car with four policemen skidded to a stop besides Rubin. Three men jumped out. 'Come on Jerry, we want you,' one called as they grabbed Rubin. The girl screamed, 'We haven't done anything! We were just walking.'

"I have heard Rubin speak, and he was obscene and revolting. In America a man may be arrested for obscenity or revolution. But Rubin was grabbed off the street and rushed to jail because of what he thinks.

“This is the way it is done in Prague. This is what happens to candidates who finish second in Vietnam. This is not the beginning of the police state, it IS the police state.”

I was then accused of a wild assortment of charges and bail was set at \$25,000, more than the usual bail for accused murderers.

Two months later, on October 29, the Cook County Grand Jury returned an Illinois State indictment against me on two counts of “solicitation to commit mob action,” a felony punishable on each count of 1-5 years in the state pen. Pierson’s bullshit provided the basis for each indictment.

Pierson lied by saying that I shouted through a bullhorn, “Kill the pigs,” thereby supposedly soliciting others to mob action the afternoon of Wednesday, August 28 in Grant Park. The incident is supposed to have taken place after cops attacked the crowd when the American flag was lowered, during the rally preceding the Mobilization march.

Anyone who was there during that time, including people with photographs or films, and especially people who saw me during that time, please contact my attorney: Frank Oliver, 30 North LaSalle, Chicago, Illinois 60602.

Whenever I come to Chicago for court appearances the press treats me like a yippie Richard Speck. The Judge has officially restricted my travel to Illinois. (Illinois?) The court system, of course, is under Daley’s thumb. It all adds up to a one-way ticket for me to five years in the Illinois state pen and revenge for Richard J. Daley.

Embarrassed by the national press and the Walker Report, Daley needs a scapegoat in the pen. I am not going to be anyone’s scapegoat.

America used to use HUAC to shut people up, but HUAC can silence only a movement that is afraid of itself. Pierson appeared before HUAC in October and said I told him that the yippies were planning to “assassinate Daley and all the other national politicians” and overthrow the government “within a year.” He sounded like he was on an acid trip.

The yippies love HUAC. For us it is a costume ball: a chance to project to the children of the world our secret fantasies, à la McLuhan. What a gas it was to see the headline: “HUAC BARS SANTA CLAUS.” HUAC is all bullshit; it has no power.

What is not bullshit is an official government document in which the Department of Justice admitted in December to a Virginia appeals court that it maintains “electronic surveillance” of me. The document, #12660, is signed by C. Vernon Spratley, Jr., US Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and it was sent to the US Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit.

It says: “the government is tendering herewith to this court a sealed exhibit containing transcripts of conversations in which appellant Rubin was a participant or at which he was present which were overheard by means of electronic surveillance.”

Electronic surveillance!

The government admits that it maintains either a phone tap or a house bug, or both, on my life. In other words, there is nothing that I can do in the privacy of my own home that does not go into some secret Big Brother tape recorder!

No need any more for suspicion—it’s admitted. And what can I do about it? Nothing.

The New York cops, using an illegal search warrant and phony drug charges; the Chicago cops, using an agent provocateur and spy; the Department of Justice, using bugging; and the Chicago courts, using frame-up felony charges, \$25,000 bail, and travel restrictions, have joined together in a criminal conspiracy to deprive me of my civil rights. That’s about all the shit they could throw at me in six months.

I’ve got to raise a lot of money to stay out of jail: for everything from lawyers’ fees to organizing a propaganda fight against Daley’s Neanderthal Republic. A Jerry Rubin Defense Committee is being organized. Please try to help. Make contributions to “Rubin Defense Committee” and mail to 5 St. Marks Place, Apt. 16, New York, New York 10003.

These are days when one asks himself the most basic questions about the movement: Is it real or transparent? Does it just concern issues, or is it a whole new life style? Could the government break it apart with concessions?

Are we creating a New Man, or are we a reflection ourselves of the bullshit we hate so much? Are we a new brotherhood, or are we just a tangle of organizations and competing egos? What will happen when we reach age 30 and 40?

I am not sure myself, and what I think often depends on how I feel when I wake up in the morning. And this is one of the differences between the black and white movements. For blacks the liberation movement is a struggle against physical and mental oppression. For whites, the movement is an existential choice.

One way to feel whether or not we have something real is to see how people relate to one another in trouble. In the past the movement has left the casualties of the last battle to their own individual fates as it moved on to the next dramatic action.

Many activists have even been forced to turn to their parents for help, rather than to the movement which is trying to overthrow their parents' institutions. How can we ask young kids to take risks in a movement which doesn't defend its own? My brother is 20 years old and his eyes often ask me that question.

The movement is more concerned with ideological debate, organizational games, and in-fighting than with creat-in a family. But our movement is only as strong as the friendships within it. Our only real strength is in our identification with one another.

That collective identification then becomes the greatest challenge to the cops and courts:

MESS WITH HIM AND YOU'VE GOT ME TO DEAL WITH TOO.

If 1968 was "The Year of the Heroic Guerrilla," then 1969 will be "The Year of the Courts." We must attack the myths surrounding the courts as ferociously as we have attacked the American myths of war, apple pie, your friendly neighborhood cop, and "free elections." Maybe Pigasus should become a judge.

Lenny Bruce put it right: "In the Halls of Justice, the only justice is in the halls." Courts come on as sacred as churches. Judges act like they just got off the last plane from heaven....

Martin Luther King saw civil disobedience and arrests as moral thrusts aimed at stirring the population and government to action. His death dramatized the death of innocence.

The police, district attorney, and judges use arrests freely: to get activists off the street, to tie us up in endless judicial and legal procedures, and to serve as a warning to others. Arrests become a form of punishment and detention.

For the cops, an arrest is almost as good as a conviction.

To challenge the courts is to attack American society at its roots. In campus rebellions, the most revolutionary demand, the demand that can never be granted by the administration, is the demand for amnesty. Attacking the society's mechanism for punishing her citizens is attacking the society's very basis for control and repression.

Americans like to believe that this is a country of "fair play." We ought to organize tours for the American people of their courts and jails.

An offensive against the courts and jails—including direct action and direct legal and financial aid to the victims of the system—would be the most immediate link that a white movement could possibly make with blacks and poor whites: the country's shit-on, the "criminal element."

As a beginning let's organize massive mobilizations for the spring, nationally coordinated and very theatrical, taking place near courts, jails and military stockades.

The demonstrations should demand immediate freedom for Huey P. Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, Rap Brown, all black prisoners, Timothy Leary, the Oakland Seven, all drug prisoners, all draft resisters, Benjamin Spock, Jeff Segal, Ben Morea, Martin Kenner, me, Fort Hood 43, Catonsville Nine and Milwaukee 14, and all white political prisoners, and amnesty for deserters and draft evaders.

Remember the legend of Spartacus. The Romans slaughtered all the slaves, but the moral example lives on.

When the Roman Army came to kill Spartacus, they faced a mass of thousands of slaves. They demanded that Spartacus step forward.

“*I am Spartacus!*” shouted one slave.

“No, *I am Spartacus!*” shouted another.

“No, *I am Spartacus!*”

“No, *I am Spartacus!*”

“No, *I am Spartacus!*”

With love,

Jerry Rubin

(with a little help from my friends, Nancy Kurshan, Martin Kenner, Arthur Naiman, Stew Albert, Gumbo, Jim Petras, David Stein, Sharon Krebs, Ken Pitchford, Robin Palmer.)



# Mitchell Goodman's reply

April 10, 1969 issue

*A Letter to Jerry Rubin (and Our Brothers and Sisters in the Movement)*

Dear Jerry:

I read your letter and I said to myself, You're a good guy, Jerry, you're in a tight spot, but don't let yourself go all grim and bitter. Stay loose, stay zany, defy the bastards. I like to remember you in those last long hours on the steps of the Pentagon, still warm and mobile, keeping it going long after Mailer had gone home to his goddam dinner party. Don't forget it.

The trouble is, now, in this letter, you talk too fast and too easy. Good, but not good enough. Not clear enough. Not honest enough. Not enough real sense of others, of solidarity. Too much like a speech, too busy making points.

For example, you say, "The movement is more concerned with ideological debate, organizational games, and in-fighting than with creating a family. But our movement is only as strong as the friendships within it. Our only real strength is in our identification with one another." Right. But a little earlier you were busy shitting on four of us who are your friends, and on thousands of others you don't know and apparently never bothered to find out about. (The movement is bigger and broader than you think it is.) I'm talking about the people who came out strong in support of us (Spock, Ferber, Coffin, and me) and in support of the draft resisters right from the start.

You say, "When America arrested the Baby Doctor...I was ecstatic: the next day I actually expected thousands of intellectuals and religious folk to stand on soapboxes and repeat Spock's words. Fuck. No one hardly said a word."

That's crap. And what bothers me is that I think you *know* it's crap—otherwise you wouldn't be coming on with that Huck Finn shuck: "No one hardly said a word."

The fact is: Thousands did exactly what you said they didn't do. Thousands of intellectuals and religious folk and others *moved* in support of us and the draft resisters—and they weren't just *talking*.

Maybe I'd better spell it out for you, since the movement papers did almost as lousy a job as the regular press in reporting it. There isn't room for all of it; what follows are some of the high points.

1) Within 48 hours of our indictment, 90 professional people in St. Louis sent a telegram to the Attorney General to tell him they had done and were doing exactly what we had done, that they would go on doing it, and expected to be indicted for it.

2) On January 14, 1968, at Town Hall in New York, almost 600 people came out of the audience and on to the platform to join Mike Ferber and me and three draft resisters in our "crime." They signed their names and addresses on the backs of envelopes printed with the message that they were hereby, face to face, aiding, abetting, and counselling these three guys to resist the draft. They put money ("aid") into those envelopes—thousands of dollars—and handed them to the resisters, in full view of the attendant FBI. They then signed a scroll bearing the same message. Among those hundreds of people were housewives, professors, clergy, New York City schoolteachers, Allen Ginsberg, Noam Chomsky, Grace Paley, Doug Doud, et al. One of the most moving acts of defiance most of us had ever seen. On February 4 in Town Hall it happened again—about 300 this time, with draft resisters from all over the country.

Again and again it happened: in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago.

3) On the day we were arraigned in Boston, the Resistance organized a "Service of Rededication" in the Arlington Street Church, one of the scenes of our crime. Again: 29 guys came up and handed their draft cards to five "intellectuals and religious folk" joined in a "conspiracy": Dave Dellinger, Phil

Berrigan, Dick Mumma (chaplain at Harvard), Rabbi Pollack (chaplain at M.I.T.), and Victor Jokel of the Arlington St. Church.

4) A few days later in New York, another “conspiracy” to aid and abet. This time Paul Goodman, Dwight Macdonald, Dave McReynolds, Muriel Rukeyser, Theodore Solotaroff and Father David Kirk got together in front of TV cameras and reporters, tore up the cards of two new resisters, and sent them with a letter to the Attorney General, saying, “Indict us.”

5) From January to June, statements of support for Spock and the rest of us were circulated. On these, 26,000 people signed to say that we were right, and that if we went to jail they would take our places.

But how is it, in the first place, that you don’t even mention The Resistance, only the “hippie-yippie-SDS-movement”? The Resistance was the spearhead, the cutting edge of the anti-war movement, the bravest guys in America. They’ve gone and are still going to jail for it, by the thousands. And they were a “family,” and in the prisons they remain so; they’re not “individuals...left alone,” nor are they forgotten.

What did they do? Frank Bardacke, one of the Oakland Seven, said it: “Although most of the Left admired the passion and eloquence of the Resistance leaders they disapproved of burning and turning in draft cards as an anti-draft tactic. They claimed that the Resistance was moving back to a position of apolitical moral witness and they demanded to know what was the political purpose of spending five years in jail.

“Never has the Left so thoroughly missed the point. The Resistance made Stop the Draft Week possible. Young men burning their draft cards on Sproul Hall steps changed the political mood of the campus. This example and that of the hundreds who turned in their draft cards gave the rest of us courage. Just as Stop the Draft Week was supposed to strengthen those who might say “no” to the draft, the Resistance strengthened the students who participated in Stop the Draft Week. They taught us that anti-draft work is serious, and that a man cannot work against the draft without taking risks. They risked five years in jail and therefore we were able to risk being beaten up or arrested.

“The men of the Resistance also taught us something about freedom... Once they had turned in their draft cards they could act as free men ready to accept the private consequences of their acts. These free men spoke to us in a way that the SDS rhetoric of the official leaders never had. Those draft cards that burned in front of the police lines on Tuesday and Friday made everything else possible.

Stop the Draft Week changed the movement....”

One trouble with the movement, Jerry, is that we often don’t listen and so don’t learn. And if we learn, we too quickly forget. The real threat to freedom lies in the American twin-disease of fear and obedience; the Resistance broke through that fear and obedience in a way no one else has done. The effect will be permanent. They “taught us something about freedom.”

And how is it that you don’t mention RESIST, which is made up of over 5000 of those same writers, professors, artists, professionals, and clergymen who you claim “hardly said a word.” They not only said it, they published and signed a document, the “Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority” that the government used as Exhibit A in convicting four of us, and that remains one of the most comprehensive and truly radical manifestoes to come out of the movement.

How come you never heard of it, Jerry? Or of the Resist Steering Committee, that goes right on “conspiring” to resist illegitimate authority, that aids and abets draft resistance groups, SDS, SNCC and other black organizations, and works with the Baltimore 9, the Milwaukee 14 and other resisters? Who are we? Noam Chomsky, Bill Davidon, Don Kalish, Paul Lauter, Louis Kampf, Grace Paley, Dick Ohmann, Frank Joyce, Bob Zevin, me, and ten or so others, most of them included in the Boston Five Indictment as “co-conspirators.” How come you don’t want to recognize the existence of these people? Because they don’t fit into your neat little story? Because you’ve been too busy waiting for the apocalypse?

One more thing. You say, again with that loose lip: “Some of the Boston Five tried to beat the rap, re-interpreting their actions into meaninglessness.” Crap. How would you know? Some rumor you

picked up? What you don't mention is that the rap was *conspiracy*—and no one has figured out how to beat that one. But we damn well tried (just as the Oakland 7 are trying) because *conspiracy* is the government's big trick bag, Jerry, and we'd better try to bust it. As for the rest, we said No to the government's charge that we were "inciting" guys to refuse the draft; you don't "incite" a man to go to jail. And we said Yes to "aiding, abetting and counselling," taking our stand squarely on the "Call to Resist." (You might try reading it, so you'll *know* what we said.) And the judge, when he sentenced us, called us "traitors."

After the sentencing, the four of us walked over to the Boston Common where the Resistance and Resist had organized a draft card turn-in. All four of us spoke there in support of that action—which is what we'd just gotten two years for doing. We'd done it before the trial, and we've done it since. Is that clear enough, Jerry?

Now what? There's a wail of despair in your letter that underrates the spirit in the movement. Sartre said it: "Life begins on the other side of despair." And that's what's happening as I write this, at Wisconsin, at Brandeis, at Chicago, at the University of Mass., in Montreal, at Duke, here at Berkeley. "The strongest single thrust of the movement continues at San Francisco State. (You were here in the fall: didn't you *see* it?) SDS is growing and moving, preparing (with the collaboration of RESIST, for a Week to Confront Militarism on Campus.

At the end of your letter you propose "massive mobilizations...near courts, jails and military stockades." But that's the same old game, Jerry: we've been killing ourselves with repetition. Listen, for example, to Roger Alvarado, coordinator of the Third World Liberation Front at San Francisco State:

"The value of the tactics has to do with the confrontation you're trying to enforce. If you're trying to enforce a confrontation with a building, you go into the building and you close it down. If you're trying to enforce a confrontation with a system, you've got to concern yourself with the operation of that system.

"When we were about to start the strike we analyzed what had gone on at different universities and we concluded that if we wanted to win the 15 demands we would have to be involved in a long struggle—continually harrassing and disrupting the school until they were forced to shut it down.

"In this country they go for a quick victory, which means that nothing pleases them more than when students take over a building where they can be isolated, arrested and the impetus of the movement destroyed. Our feeling was that we didn't want a mass confrontation with the cops; we didn't want to have people arrested in large numbers.

"One of the brothers calls it 'the war of the flea.' The system is the dog and we are the fleas. We take a little bite here and a little blood there, and keep on the move so that the dog can never get rid of us. Now the number of fleas is increasing, and if the magnitude becomes great enough we can make the dog get up and move."

He's right, Jerry, and you're wrong. This will not be what you call "The Year of the Courts." It will be "The Year of the Flea." And it will be, as Alvarado knows, "a long struggle"—the rest of our lives. (It took the anarchists of Catalonia a lifetime to build their community; but they *built* it.)

Things are tough, and they're going to get tougher. Let's really try to be a family, to build a community. Let's get clear about who we are and about what's happening. Let's talk slow and careful and clear. Let's not give way to panic and paranoia. And let's stop dumping on one another.

With love,

Mitch Goodman

Berkeley, California

# A reply to the reply by Jerry Rubin

Dear Mitch

Aw, fuck, Mitch. The government provocatively escalated its repression of the peace movement by arresting Spock. The peace movement did not escalate in response. It retreated, or stayed in the same spot.

I'm still zany. It's important to be at your zaniest when caught in the jaws of the enemy. I'm zanier than ever. How else could I write in my letter to the movement:

“When America arrested the Baby Doctor...I was ecstatic: the next day I actually expected thousands of intellectuals and religious folk to stand on soapboxes and repeat Spock's words ...”

The government was able to isolate and punish five of you—as an example to others—without anything more than statements and telegrams in response. Within hours Spock's arrest became an accepted part of American pluralism.

Your challenge to the government for a “moral confrontation” became just another court case and trial, buried in legalisms.

The United States treats blacks, Vietnamese, longhairs, and students as colonial subjects. The middle class receives the benefits of the empire and has permission to freely speak and write as long as its words are ineffective.

Spock tried to be effective. He called on middle-class adults to take the same risks as their children, the draft resisters and dodgers.

He dramatically challenged the government:

If you arrest young men who defy the draft, you must arrest us too.

This was power politics: It's harder for the government to arrest unrespectable draft resisters if they have to arrest respectable priests and professors at the same time.

When the government escalated by arresting Spock, the time was hot for a dramatic escalation by the middle class anti-war movement. Where were the people who promised to join Spock putting their bodies on the Machine, between Executioner and Victim?

They “supported” Spock the same way they “supported” draft resisters: with their hearts, but not with their bodies.

It may sound funny, but Spock's actions became effective only because the government found it necessary to indict him, rather than to ignore him. What was needed to climax the confrontation was at least hundreds of other middle-class people forcing the government to arrest them too.

I fantasized a scenario in which the signers of the “Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority” declared their names also to be Benjamin Spock, chained themselves to Spock at the trial, and disrupted the courthouse—forcing the trial to take place under heavy police guard.

I fantasized professors and ministers striking, bringing the war into the universities and churches.

I fantasized thousands of people not yet involved joining Spock's “conspiracy” in retaliation to the government's provocation.

Mitch, your letter disappointed me. You seemed above all else interested in clearing the conscience of the middle-class peace movement.

In my letter I wrote that the movement must become a family. A family is made up of brothers and sisters who totally identify with one another, who are one, who put themselves in the same situation.

Can a middle-class person be a brother of a poor black if he does not place himself in the same fighting relationship to cops, courts, and the power structure?

When poor blacks, longhairs, students and middle-class people join together in a family in which all share the same dangers, no repression will be able to defeat us and a beautiful human society will grow.

I am concerned that your letter did not mention the national war of genocide now being carried out by cops and courts against the Black Panther Party.

In every city Panthers have been framed on insane charges like conspiracy to commit murder, given unconstitutionally high bail, and beaten in jail. The leader of the party, Huey P. Newton, is serving fifteen years on an unproved charge of manslaughter and has been denied appeal bond. Eldridge Cleaver has been forced underground, his parole revoked before a single charge was proved in a court of law.

You said my letter was pessimistic. It wasn't. The basis for the letter was a call for people in the movement to defend one another and to join together in a collective offensive against the courts and jails which selectively attack some of us.

I live on faith and eternal optimism.

I am a dreamer, and when you dream a lot, you expect a lot. Mitch, double your dreams.

See you on the barricades!

We are all Spartacus!

love,

Jerry Rubin



Jerry Rubin  
An Emergency Letter to My Brothers and Sisters in the Movement  
February 13, 1969

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