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

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, condemn the recourse to violence that was promoted by irresponsible journalism and call upon the democratic public to resist such actions.

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 a lack of willingness to take the arguments of the student opposition seriously have created a climate in which the deliberate defamation of a minority incites acts of violence against them.

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 order it means nothing other than its rule over sheep-like masses and the way to a new, authority-driven nationalism. The alliance of unscrupulous mass-consumption journalism and revived nationalistic ideology, which for years has disparaged students and intellectuals active on behalf of democracy 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 publishing house, claiming 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 in all actions to abstain from violence 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, and to help create a profound 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" ["The Statement of the Fourteen"], *Die Zeit*, April 19, 1968; reprinted in Wolfgang Kraushaar, ed., *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung. Von der Flaschenpost zum Molotowcocktail 1946-1995* [*The Frankfurt School and the Student Movement. From the Message in the Bottle to the Molotov Cocktail 1946-1995*]. Hamburg, 1998, vol. 2, p. 363.

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