

Call It Sleep

Call it Sleep – A Situationist Film transcript

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Contents

“The Spectacle”	3
“Bolshevism”	5
“The Cadre”	6
“The New Revolt”	8

“Call It Sleep” is a global, strategic evaluation of the social forces which comprise the Society of the Spectacle. It is conceived and executed from the point of view that if individuals are to gain control over the use of their lives, the world of hierarchical power must be destroyed.

Call It Sleep is comprised of 4 parts:

1. *Spectacle*
2. *Bolshevism*
3. *The Cadre*
4. *The New Revolt*

Together these factors shape the social conflict which now engulfs the planet in the twilight of the reign of power.

“The Spectacle”

Life in the modern world is life in the society of the spectacle. Its primary forms, the state and the commodity, dominate the world citizens everywhere. The spectacle is ever present. Its strength comes from its existence everywhere and at all times.

It will exist as a totality or not at all. The spectacle is not a philosophical concept. It is a practical reality, the practice of the commodity. The spectacle contains the complete catalog of human domination, it creates new forms of exploitation, and it includes earlier, more brutal forms of power into its arsenal of weapons.

The spectacle exists independent of particular rulers and particular nations. Yet it never stops serving the interests of power. Because power does not care how it rules as long as it continues to rule. The spectacle rules by ideas as well as by armies. It creates spectators who are no longer ignorant or passive in the classic sense, but rather who are overwhelmed and dominated by false ideas about their lives. The spectators have created a world from false notions through their own activity. Through the efforts of spectators, ideology is materialized.

The Spectator is forced to live in a perpetually schizoid state. At one moment he's encouraged to be master of a private realm which he furnishes with personally selected occupations, commodities, and ideologies. In the spectacle, this is known as daily life. At the next moment, he is thrust into the role of a passive witness to an unending series of global mishaps. In the spectacle, this is known as being part of history. The hope of the spectacle and its rulers is that the spectator will continue to see his daily life as a refuge from and a compensation for his inability to participate in the making of history. The more autonomous history becomes, the richer the rewards offered to the obedient spectator.

The spectacle is democratic. It makes its wealth, the wealth of commodities, available to bourgeois and worker alike. Everyone breathes the same air, has the same credit card, drives the same cars, takes the same drugs, sees the same movies, reads the same pop thinkers, falls in love with the same faces. Everyone everywhere is encouraged to have the same thirst for the qualitative, the same passion for novelty and innovation. In this way, all the world is being brought gradually to the same point. The world citizens are presented with a dream of happiness, which has never existed and cannot exist, as long as the Society of the spectacle exists.

In the spectacle, there is no such thing as unproductive labor. All work is productive, because as long as people are doing it, they produce the spectacle and can't produce anything else. The Society of the spectacle pretends to dream of a world without work. Because as long as there are workers, there is the possibility of revolution. To postpone disaster, the spectacle has disguised itself as the consumer society.

The Society of the spectacle realizes abstract communication, the commodity speaks, human beings listen. But the spectacle is not simply comprised of a series of images. The illusory nature of the spectacle is that it lives in the flesh of men and women, adopting all the guises of human communication.

The spectacle is the grand totality, it says, 'that which is good exists and that which exists is good'.

Even as a spectacle increasingly manifests the toxic basis of its own existence, it continues to create new conditions, which further insult and assault the spectator. The spectacle is forced to speak of the sorry state of affairs, which it attributes to various marginal factors. For example, criminals, unforeseeable environmental mishaps, the occasional incompetent official, assorted lunatic dictators, and not surprisingly, the spectacle has learned to exploit its own decomposition.

The spectacle terrorizes whole populations with images of impending Cataclysm, which it maintains, will only be prevented by greater adherence to power. In all of this, the spectator's approval is essential. Today, we find him busily acclimatizing himself to the horror he finds all around him. Like slaves have always done, the Spectator finds ways to rationalize his punishment. He discovers commodities which insulate him from his own misery, even as they poison him, worldviews which justify totalitarianism, even as they stupefy him, occupations which glorify sacrifice, even as they mutilate his mind and body. The more the spectator acquiesces, the more abuse power heaps on him. New horrors like the neutron bomb are created, which destroy only selected spectators — not the spectacle. Pointing the way toward the ultimate, though unrealizable dream of power, a world in which capital reproduces itself without the need for alienated labor. Maybe the spectators should be grateful for the following banality of power to which he owes his existence. The master must have his slaves in order to be a master. Otherwise, he could simply destroy them all outright.

The spectacle is the direct heir of philosophy. It seeks to rationalize all life, to render it controllable by power. In this struggle, bureaucracy is the pragmatic organizational arm and science, its intellectual front. The unification of these two aspects is achieved in the newest and last science, the science of information of pure control.

Everyone is called on to model his life after the patterns of organization and consumption, employed by power. Everyone is encouraged to play the role of bureaucrats and scientists in his own home, and to view his life as a series of processes and procedures, which exist independently from the good sense of men and women. In this way, everyone comes to idea to find his future with the future of power.

The Spectacle exists in two forms, two methods of domination. There is a diffuse spectacle for the modern nations and the concentrated spectacle of the more backward regions. These two approaches frequently are in conflict on a political level. And these conflicts are real, In the sense they reflect profound contradictions inherent to the society. But on a higher level, the two branches of the spectacle are perfectly compatible. Each is assigned a task in the global organization of hierarchical power. The diffuse spectacle of the modern countries is the favored mode of development. It is the model of manageable descent of abundance and therefore of leisure.

The concentrated spectacle is a showroom of utility, where ideology has totally transformed social relations in the image of power. Here the central social product, an obvious organizing principle of daily life, is the maintenance of the state. The spectacle can't imagine a world which is not spectacular, it thinks of itself as existing now and forever. Yet, it is reminded continuously of its mortality by real and imagined social threats. The spectacle translates challenges through its power into challenges to the species as a whole. The spectacle presents its own end as the end of the world; nuclear war, ecological catastrophe and galactic upheaval all are evoked with increasing frequency. Especially now, as a threat of radical social transformation created by an intelligent opposition, become a concrete possibility.

“Bolshevism”

Bolshevism is the dominant notion of what it means to rebel against authority. Every notion about revolution inherited from Bolshevism is false.

There are not revolutionary states.

Alienation is not quantifiable.

The collectivity is not superior to the individual.

Terrorism is counterrevolutionary.

Revolution is not the creation of a vanguard

The founding father of modern cinema was a Bolshevik. The style and language of modern cinema was invented by a man who devoted himself to the celebration of Bolshevism. It is on the level of appearance that Bolshevism has achieved its greatest successes, because fundamentally, Bolshevism's revolution is image, as myth, as a spectacle to be created by a few and observed by the masses. Bolshevism did not begin with the Bolsheviks, revolutionaries created it when they concluded that the workers by themselves could not destroy capitalism, without leaders and without concentrated centers of class consciousness. The first international was a first party of consciousness and it's program, model for all Bolshevik programs to come. Marx put forward openly reformist ideas, because he believed they would draw the masses to his party, where they would eventually learn the whole truth. Modern day Bolshevism is a logical outcome of this mediated view of revolution. political consciousness is no longer a means to an end, it becomes an end in itself. There is no difference between Bolshevism and all other brands with spectacular opposition. One can only empathize with individuals motivated by a sincere desire for reform who join ecology groups, consumer organizations, and alternative political parties. In any of these groups, these individuals are directed by a firmly entrenched leadership through a maze of politically motivated compromises to an end that is sadly predictable. The indefinite postponement of profound social transformation, the enrichment of the careers of a few bureaucrats and the permanent disillusionment of a number of intelligent individuals.

As a revolutionary strategy, Bolshevism is a failure. The signs are everywhere. The Democratic workers states are a sham. There is no democracy. There are only workers in the state. Open warfare among state capitalist Nations has destroyed the myth of a single correct ideology. Yet the influence of Bolshevism has never been more profound. As a growing social crisis renders liberalism and all other traditional bourgeois ideologies irrelevant, liberal thinkers turn to Bolshevism, appropriating some of the milder elements of its program. Gradually, Bolshevism and liberalism merge. This leftist humanism has become the ideology of a whole social stratum,

raised on the spectacle of revolt; that is 'the cadre'. The cadre is a reformist of daily life. He takes up Bolshevism's apparently anti-social attitude and values, but without the militant posture. Like the Bolshevik the cadre is paranoid about authority, anti-imperialist, and easily outraged. But unlike the militant who is willing to sacrifice himself for the party, the cadre does everything with an eye toward the preservation of his social position.

In the modern countries, the current wave of terrorism is primarily the consequence for the proletariat refusal to be organized by the Bolsheviks. Ignored or rejected in the factories, and in the streets, the Bolsheviks have turned to propaganda by the deed, in a last-ditch attempt to attract attention to their cause. In the heart of the modern spectacle, the Baader-Meinhof group mistaking their own desperation for the desperation of the proletariat, tried to create the conditions for revolution single handedly, boldly attacking the state. The state rose to the challenge. The state offered the people a choice between a well-ordered affluent bourgeois democracy or chaos. Given the two miserable possibilities, Germans chose to do nothing. That is, they chose the state.

For their part, the Baader-Meinhof was bound to lose on two fronts. Once they initiated a battle of ever escalating military force, the state was the inevitable Victor. Nor could they hope to inspire the proletariat, because they were attempting to combat the alienation with alienated means. Terrorism, no matter who undertakes it, is always counter revolutionary. It depends upon a secret hierarchy, which reproduces classic military organization with a strict division of labor, bizarre code of behavior, and the use of intimidation.

There is nothing secret about revolution.

One of the main strengths of an authentic radical movement is everything it does and says, can be done and said by everyone, because its goals and its methods are truly democratic.

Many people find a critique of Bolshevism boring. Unfortunately, even one's uninteresting enemies can still be powerful.

As traditional mandatory forms of social organization like the family, the corporation, and the state lose their power over the individual, more modern voluntary forms of control appear. Today in the West, updated forms of the Bolshevik Party, like "the collective", "the affinity group", and the commune spread all the basic principles of Bolshevism, while appearing to dispense with rigidity and sterility of the traditional political groups. The individual learns how to give himself up for the glorification of an abstraction. He learns how to reconcile himself to a collectively produced mediocrity. And most important he learns that this society permits and even encourages his attempts to restructure social life, as long as they alter nothing fundamental to the maintenance of the spectacle.

A critique of Bolshevism is political only insofar as it is a critique of politics, of separate power, of representation. The way to win politics is not to ignore it, but to suppress it. Though it no longer represents a viable strategy, Bolshevism will remain formidable, as long as it can maintain its monopoly on the interpretation of revolution.

Revolutionary Theory is the enemy of all revolutionary ideology and knows it.

"The Cadre"

If one tried to sum up what modern societies thought of itself over the last decade, one could say at least this: That the social forces that would seem to be polarized clearly a few years before,

have undergone and developments so complex that one can no longer easily recognize and label individuals according to the relationship to power. And that this development has created a sense of confusion and restlessness in the society as a whole.

Here ideology stops and history begins.

The intermediary stratum in the traditional class structure was the petty bourgeoisie who, representing a primitive social system based on local autonomy, long for the simplicity of an earlier period, but always sided with power in the end. The transitional figure in the post-World War Two universe of the modern spectacle is a cadre. the cadre is the answer to the question “Where have all the radicals gone?” The cadre is the institutionalization of the two sided and contradictory nature of the spectacle, which simultaneously sings its own praise and smelling its own stench, reports it. The cadre is not the managerial class, nor the white-collar worker, nor the hip professional. The cadre is anyone willing to perform his or her role in exchange for the miserable compensations which modernity confers. The cadre is the center of the fabled post war revolution in the world of commodity. It is for him that the latest cultural innovations are created. He lives in the new architecture, goes to the modern cinema, pursues the current dream of liberated sexuality. He is a person who acts out eulogy to the commodity society and believes them, who writes pseudo critiques of the commodity society and believes them. Who finds the world unlivable and still manages to flourish in it. The cadre must appear to be in the vanguard of his epic, he must be in favor of everything progressive, everything radical, everything that purports to be new and innovative and stylish. He is the modern consumer who hates what he must consume because he knows all of its inadequacies and yet who continues to search for the perfect commodity, the one which contains no imperfections. He believes that his educated refusal of inadequate commodities placed him above the obedient consumer, who believes what he is told. The cadre simultaneously wants to enjoy the security of submission and the thrill of refusal.

A tortured cadre — A confused cadre

The goal of the spectacle is to make each individual it's accomplice by the whole of his life and aspirations. The spectacle is made to be lived by its spectators. The cadre is well suited to the fantastic vision of a world where there is no visible interference in the lives of individuals. The cadre sees himself as an exemplary individual who can live without police, because he police's himself. He never tires of broadcasting that fact of the world he finds barbaric. The cadre believes in reform, reform of every aspect of daily life piece by piece. He leads the movement to remodel the spectacle. He reforms his consciousness with drugs and therapy. He reforms the workplace by participating in the decision-making processes of large businesses, by creating collectives and cooperatives, by establishing alternative trade unions. He reforms consumption by ferreting out dirty commodities, the nasty processes, the unsafe regulations. The cadre believes in reform most of all, because for all this talk about revolution, he is terrified of having to give up the security of this world where he enjoys certain ordinary privileges, for a world where he could become anything, a villain, a hero, or simply a mediocre man.

The cadre wants the impossible dream of the spectacle, to consume without working. If he admits that he works, it is only to add that he is doing something that he likes to do, which makes him different from everybody else.

The habits and interest to the cadre are gradually becoming the habits and interests of workers and consumers as a whole. The cadre appears everywhere, exhorting us to forget what we do all week in order to better enjoy the weekend, or to search for possibilities for intelligent activity

within the confines of the spectacle. One measure of the success of the cadre is a role model is a growing sentiment of workers in general, to think of themselves as better off than others. Everyone else is unhappy. Westerners think that Eastern Europeans are really miserable. Northern Italians feel sorry for the peasants of the South. Factory workers can understand the strikes in the coal mines, alcoholics pity heroin addicts.

The intellectual is a cadre who is most proud that he works. He wants his work to be visible. The Intellectual wants the world to know that his activity, the production of ideology, is work, just like making cars. In fact, the intellectual goes one step further. If many workers play down what they do 40 hours a week, the intellectual steps forward as a representative of the proletariat. The more the silence surrounds the worker in his alienation, the more the intellectual feels obliged to provide meaningful social commentaries. The intellectual is a spectator who can't bear to simply stand and watch the spectacle with his hands in his pocket, he has to write something down. It must be obvious from all this that the existence of the cadre could never have been discovered by leftism, or by other brands of modernist ideology, because the leftist and the modernists are cadres themselves.

Instead, he manufactures special vocabularies and new sciences to explain his impotence posing 100 times as many questions as he answers. The bourgeoisie know that they will get nothing practical from this modern day eunuch, but they also know they are not capable of solving the complex problems which overwhelm them. So they continue to subsidize the intellectual, who if he does nothing else, demonstrates the rewards of thought without consequence.

The thrill of refusal.

The security of submission.

The cadre's world is beyond reform.

At the same time that the spectacle encourages the ordinary worker to emulate the cadre, he, the worker, is also reminded to the differences between himself and the cadre. The ordinary worker is the body of humanity, the cadre of the mind, the ordinary worker is crude, physical, immediate. The cadre is calculating, refined and reflective. After the separations of race, sex and nationality are minimized. The distinction between the ordinary worker and the cadre will be the last to be transformed. The existence of this difference represents the appearance of progress. For with this difference, it is still possible to suggest that the daily life of the 19th century, as represented by the ordinary worker, is qualitatively different from the daily life of the 20th century, as represented by the cadre.

“The New Revolt”

In South Africa and Italy, from home Hong Kong and Mexico City, a new generation of rebels grows up, schooled in modern forms of alienation. These radicals know little of the lethargy and resignation of post-World War two movements. This group is part of a generation for whom rebellion has been a way of life from the earliest years, who have never known a normal existence. They do not think of revolt as a political or economic decision, but rather as a necessary and unavoidable response to the constraints imposed upon them by power. Because they have no other choice, they have begun to invent new forms of contestation, appropriate to the demands of total war against the spectacle. The traditional forms of organization and weapons of combat are known by power and they are vulnerable to the arms the state possesses.

The new revolt is as likely to appear in a totalitarian regime like South Africa or China, where the state has suppressed all organized opposition, as it is likely to appear in a modern nation like Italy, where the marketplace is flooded with models of false consciousness. This universality is difficult to comprehend for those who see the world in traditional terms, determined solely by levels of material development. Just as the society the spectacle is the first truly global system of domination, the new rebels comprise parts of the First Worldwide opposition, based on a single all encompassing, radical project.

The Soweto revolt In 1976, took everyone by surprise. The revolt began with an issue that startled the state precisely because it was modern. The Soweto High school students rejected the state's attempt to colonize a daily communication with the Boer language. And in so doing, the students cut through all liberal rubbish about the underdevelopment of south African blacks. The children in Soweto, as they became known, immediately demonstrated their maturity. They attacked with equal vigor, the institutions of the state, the so called progressive forces, which sought to represent them. They refused to show respect for private property. They did not allow leaders to control their actions. They refused to participate in a dialogue with power. They set no goals for themselves other than their total emancipation.

The definition and communication of the new struggles are at the very heart of modern class conflict. The active refusal of powers attempts at categorization and the reinvention of a language of revolt, which is necessarily incomprehensible to the state, ensure an increasingly clear polarization between pro and anti-spectacle forces. Nothing befuddles and angers power more than a refusal to acknowledge its authority.

The New revolt excludes almost no one. Of course, some are hopeless cases. For instance, it is not possible to show the rulers the extent of their delirium, but it is necessary to take into account the bitterness of certain servants of power, who are imprisoned in roles that are stultifying and humiliating. However, indulgence has its limits. If despite everything, these people persist in putting a guilty conscience and their bitterness in the service of power, by creating the conditioning mechanism to colonize their own lives, and if they choose power because power has already chosen them, then too bad.

These ideas are in everyone's head

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