In January 1968, I married for the first time and moved into a flat in a student village attached to Oslo University, even though I was not a student myself. I just pretended to be one—I was really a writer, having written two works of prose, but my wife was certainly a student.

That Easter—it was actually Good Friday—I went to a party in a dormitory in the same student village where practically all the guests were left-wing students of various persuasions, from social democratic to the far left, many of whom were later to have careers as politicians or intellectuals. The atmosphere was agitated because the West German student leader Rudi Dutschke had just been shot.

Many at the party talked about going into town and demonstrating outside the West German embassy; others advised against this because too many had had too much to drink and were visibly under the influence on Good Friday. Perhaps because no agreement could be reached as to what was to be done, the agitated atmosphere subsided. Perhaps, too, because it was Good Friday and left-wing students felt it was provocation enough to be having a party, so even the most extreme of them felt it wisest to refrain from holding a political demonstration outside the West German embassy.

Emancipation instead of freedom

Then the spring of 1968 came, the Prague Spring, May 1968 in Paris. In June of that year, my first daughter was born. In July, I wrote a long essay about the exiled Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz, “The Necessity of Living Inauthentically,” concluding it as follows:

I have learned two very important things from reading Gombrowicz. 1) Instead of talking about freedom, I will talk about emancipation. 2) It is more important to be a good actor than a good human being. In addition, I have the satisfaction of knowing that this is a concept of freedom that those whom I have defined as my opponents are not pleased about my venerating. To talk about emancipation instead of freedom is something that suits a person
who, from within his inner depths, has realized that he is unfree.

The Paris revolt was put down—I cannot recall precisely when, but it was probably before I wrote those lines. On August 21, the Soviet troops moved into Czechoslovakia and occupied the country. I read about the French May of 1968 in the newspapers, but how much did that affect me? In May 1968, Czechoslovakia was more important to me than Paris, probably because no matter how radical I regarded myself as being, I was surrounded by and at the mercy of the language and field of vision of Western leaders.

Deep-seated hope
The Prague Spring and its vision of “socialism with a human face” seemed to offer hope and not merely to be an empty phrase, even for many a left-wing Norwegian. Indeed, it was a deep-seated hope. I’m not a “68er.” I was young, 27 years old, and a radical. But I had also just become a father for the first time and was very much aware of my responsibilities as a provider. I was poor, had a strong wish to make a living from writing, and therefore was a concerned provider. That was my 1968.

But I was basically more radical than most, though not exactly in the sense of belonging to a particular political party. That is why I was able to register the political awakening that was taking place towards the end of the 1960s. I noticed that something was in the process of changing, also in Norway. But it was not in 1968 that I noticed this—it was in 1967. As mentioned, I was a radical, shaped by protests against nuclear weapons, the Vietnam War, and other classic left-wing causes.

Concerned for the future of the world
Something happened during the summer of 1967, not to me but to others. When I returned to Oslo University—where I did not actually study but pretended to—in the early autumn, I met students who had begun to talk in a manner completely different from just a few months earlier. They talked about something different, too. They were worried about the future of the world. They talked about us and the others, and that we lived on the sunny side of the world. People who had previously not thought about political dilemmas now did so; young people who had not been interested in justice for the peoples of the world now showed concern.
Maybe they had been thinking about this for some time but had hesitated to discuss it. It was as if a whole generation of young people had been walking around engaging in their own private thoughts and had suddenly decided to talk—and all at the same time. It almost seemed as if they had talked on command—and under considerable pressure. Something had influenced them, something obvious, but to me it was unclear how this had happened. Had it happened at the university colloquia, or in the seminar rooms during the spring term of 1967? During breaks at the seminars, during the lectures?

**What is superficial has remained**

It must have. In the space of a brief instant it surfaced, before slowly dying down over a period of ten to fifteen years. What is most superficial of the surface is all that has remained. I still wear the same type of trousers as back then. I always have two pair, always the same brand: Levi’s. Everything else is gone. What I liked best, the reflectiveness of the youth, is gone. Our obvious disdain for advertising is gone.

What is left is rock music, which I have always found moving. Power rules, as it nearly always has, though now more proficiently and with more servants than ever before. I remember that it took more than ten years for me to realize that not all rich people are dim-witted—I truly had no respect for them. This is how one can be wrong.

**Founding of the Newspaper *Klassekampen***

In March 1968, Rudi Dutschke gave a lecture in Oslo before the Norwegian Student Association [Det Norske Studentersamfund], the oldest association of students in Norway. He spoke out against the military and cultural imperialism of the United States and advocated that students reorganize into a “revolution from below.”

In May 1968, the youth organization of the Socialist People’s Party (SUF) [Sosialistisk Undomsforbund] realigned itself ideologically, calling itself “Marxist-Leninist” for the first time. Then, in 1969, it separated from the party organization for good. Thereafter, the student organization oriented itself entirely towards the Marxist-Leninist tradition, appending (ml) to its name to emphasize this fact and distinguish itself from the party organization SUF.
The objections that prompted the SUF (ml) to split from the Socialist People’s Party concerned the party as such. It was said to be too old-fashioned, not sufficiently radical, and not in accord with the new ideas that were inspiring the youth organization. Further, the SUF (ml) also criticized the party’s policy towards Israel in relation to the Six-Day War and argued that Israel could no longer continue to exist “in its present form.”

Ensuing debates in the press and politics motivated the founding of the leftist newspaper Klassekampen [The Class Struggle] in 1969. The paper still exists today and is regarded as the main organ of the leftist movement.

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