

# The sixties years of hope, days of rage by bantam books

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The media without the Vietnam War or the Vietnam war without the media would not have had this effect. It was only when the two were combined that the idealism of youth was mobilized against the military-industrial complex. Gitlin's sub-title, *Years of Hope, Days of Rage* accurately captures the spirit of the sixties. On the one hand, there was a sense that the New Left was revolutionizing American society, that truly epoch shaking and positive changes were occurring. On the other hand, there was the reality of the sixties: Demonstrations often turned into violence, burning of draft cards and flags was an inherently inflammatory action, and sex, drugs and rock and roll often overrode political debate and education.

Unfortunately, at times Gitlin as participant overrides Gitlin as academic and journalist. Occasionally this leads him into polemic and even sexist and racist comments. Gitlin carries particular wrath against the Weathermen. He describes Bernardine Dohrn, a former SDSer who was a leading Weathermen as "chorus-line-figured" and "object of many an SDS males erotic fantasy". (Gitlin, 1987, 385) Sexist comments such as these have no place in academic writing and one cannot help but wonder if many an SDS male erotic fantasy is actually Gitlin's fantasy.

Further, his criticism of the Weathermen is personalized when he writes that they dismissed him as a straight-man rube and suggests that they were "most alluring to women". (Gitlin, 1987, 386) This concern is further exacerbated by the fact that Gitlin is perhaps the ugliest American writer since Charles Bukowski. Frankly, his sexism and focus on sexuality are peculiar, to say the least.

None of this reduces the importance of this book. Gitlin was an integral

participant in the New Left and his insights into the events and the personalities merit consideration. However, this book is best seen as a biography of Gitlin's life during the sixties rather than as an academic history of the decade.