

“Now is the Time of the Furnaces, And Only Light Should be Seen”

Flyers

By: Kent State Students for a Democratic Society

Date: April 1969

Source: Kent State Students for a Democratic Society. “Now is the Time of the Furnaces, And Only Light Should be Seen.” Michigan State Special Collections, Students for Democratic Society ARVF.

About the Organization: The Kent State Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was part of the larger SDS, a radical student movement across the United States. Mark Rudd, the president of the Columbia University SDS, visited the Kent State University campus in 1968. Soon after Rudd’s visit, the chapter joined with other militant groups on campus to stage protests. Kent State’s SDS became more violent than many chapters due to the affiliation with leaders who later became part of the Weathermen. ■

Introduction

Students for a Democratic Society reorganized in 1962 when leaders met in Port Huron, Michigan. They developed the Port Huron Statement, which provided a manifesto for chapters across the country. Kent State University, located in northeast Ohio, was a large regional college. Irwin Unger writes that Kent State “was no more implicated in capitalist misdeeds of Vietnam than five hundred other college campuses.” Still, the student radicals at KSU became more militant than on many campuses across the county. In 1968, members of SDS joined African American militants on campus to protest campus recruitment by the Oakland, California police department. Students took over the placement office for five hours. Following the confrontation with campus police, SDS encouraged student radicals through pamphlets and speeches.

After the protest, six participants were arrested, including four students who were later suspended. On April 20, 1969, SDS held a rally to present four demands to the campus administration. They implored the Uni-

versity to abolish ROTC, the law enforcement school, and the crime lab, and to end the grant called Project Themis for the Liquid Crystals Institute. SDS leaders capitalized on the campus administration’s fears about further violence.

In June of 1969 Kent State University SDS was one of many groups investigated by the United States House of Representatives. The transcript of the investigation includes photographs of the leaders and documents that detail protests and demands. SDS was banned from campus in 1969, but there were enough student radicals to continue the protests. President Nixon announcement on April 30, 1970 that he was sending troops into Cambodia, led to four days of student riots on the campus and the deaths of four students.

Significance

The organization and mobilization of student radicals on campuses across the country led to more violent confrontations with police as the Vietnam War dragged on. Student groups at Kent State had already clashed with campus police on several occasions and were experienced in taking over buildings and leading marches against the war and related efforts. The leaders of the radical movement pitted the “ruling class” against the oppressed students. They particularly targeted the treatment of blacks as a way to enrage protestors. In the pamphlets and flyers the writers invoked the memory of Jose Marti, a nineteenth century Cuban freedom fighter. Marti fought for individual rights and freedoms, just as the SDS leaders proposed that they were doing.

The protests that involved ending ROTC on campus continued in the spring of 1970, beginning on May 1 with a demonstration. The next day one thousand people gathered at the Army ROTC barracks and set them on fire. The National Guard was called in and the campus cleared. On Sunday evening demonstrators gathered again at the Victory Bell and then later at East Main and Lincoln. Both times the crowds were cleared with tear gas and the Ohio Riot Act was read. On Monday, May 4, 1970, two thousand people gathered on the commons at Kent State. A riot broke out and National Guardsmen fired shots. Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, William Schroeder, and Sandra Scheuer were killed. Nine other students were wounded. The disorder that had begun in 1968 ended with an injunction to close the campus. Classes did not resume until summer. The events at Kent State University shocked the nation and caused ongoing questions about what happened that day. This was an outrageous act that resulted in investigations over the next year. Memories of May 4 continue each year. The victims and actions are remembered not only on the campus at Kent State University, but across the country.

NOW IS THE TIME OF THE FURNACES . . .

AND THE LIGHT WILL BE SEEN!

MARCH *** 7 PM. Sunday, April 20

Assemble in front of the Union

RALLY *** After March in front of the Administration Bldg.
Attended by three Mothers of the Kent 6

SUPPORT THE FOUR DEMANDS:

1. Abolish R.C.T.C.
2. Abolish the Law Enforcement School.
3. Abolish the Crime Lab.
4. Abolish the Project Themis grant to the Liquid Crystals Institute.



Dig it : It's because of these demands that the Kent 6 are sitting in the jug. The political repression brought down on them cannot be separate from the non-negotiable demands. It's through rationalizations to political repression that the thugs who run this country and Kent State hope to fool the people.

BE THERE.

KENT sds

Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win !

Primary Source

Now is the Time of the Furnaces . . . And the Light Will be Seen: Flyer

SYNOPSIS: An SDS flyer announces a march and rally to be held on April 20, 1969. Although the group was later banned from campus, members of the group continued to gather and protest. COURTESY OF MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS.

Primary Source

"Now is the Time of the Furnaces, And Only Light Should be Seen"

SYNOPSIS: Students rallied to protest the ROTC and other military activities on campus at Kent State University. They also gathered to support the students and other protestors who had been arrested as a result of their demands. SDS members viewed the campus administration's actions as political repression which they also saw throughout the country.

Introduction

Before SDS offensive began last week, Kent State University reflected only one side of the worldwide war against U.S. imperialism: Ruling class exploitation and oppression. We watched ROTC guys training to give tactical leadership to the genocide of the Vietnamese; we heard smart liberal professors training smart liberal students to be the administrators of the white occupation army in the black colony (police); we sat forever in boring classrooms geared to the needs of a future employer.

Then we witnessed the entrance to the war in the anti-imperialist, anti-racist assault, and the University's repressive reaction; SDS tussling with KSU police after the doors to the administration building were closed to us; constant discussion and conflict among students about the SDS demands and action; arrests, suspensions, and court injunctions barring SDS and 5 SDS members from campus; tactical police on campus; growing resentment against the imperialism, racism, and repression of KSU.

The Board of Trustees and the administration are scared. First, they are scared of SDS. They know that we are willing to act on our demands. Secondly, *they are scared of you*. They know that students see ROTC, for example, as exploitative to the Vietnamese people and to ROTC guys themselves. They know that students can see the justice of our demands.

However, they need to keep large numbers of people from acting. So they say the reason for their repressive reaction is that SDS broke certain university rules seemingly divorced from the anti-racists, anti-imperialist content of our demands. Through repression against a few they hope to scare many. By devising rationalizations to political repression they hope to fool the people.

But all they can accomplish is proving once again that their liberalism is a facade. The people can only grow in strength and determination.

Support the Four Demands

1. Abolish ROTC

Today, reliance upon colleges and universities for officers is greater than ever. For example, the 1968 graduating classes contained over 11,000 newly commissioned officers, who, as they enter the ranks of the active army, will fill 85% of the required annual input needed to provide the junior leaders for today's troop units. The armed forces simply cannot function without an officer corps largely of college graduates.

—U.S. Army Instructor's Group, ROTC, Harvard University

We have learned from our experience in anti-war struggles over the past 5 years that if we want to aid the Vietnamese people, we must be able to strike a real blow against the American military. The junior leaders of that military are trained on American university campuses—as members of the Reserve Officer Training Corps.

We are opposed to ROTC for 3 reasons:

1. It provides the leadership for an army engaged in imperialist aggression against popular movements at home and abroad. The caretakers of imperialism must be stopped.
2. ROTC is a privilege—available only to those segments of the working class who can go to college. Particularly, ideologically it strengthens the view that ordinary working people in America are unworthy to guide the nation's destiny. (In the NLF soldiers elect their officers.) " . . . Who is prepared to trust their sons—let alone the nations's destiny—to the leadership of high school boys and college drop-outs?"—U. S. Army Instructors' Group.
3. But when you get down to it, that privilege is really a delusion, and ROTC people are themselves oppressed. ROTC can only be seen as an alternative to an even worse reality—the draft; and still, second lieutenants are being killed at an incredibly high rate in Vietnam. Just as many college kids are being channelled into managerial slots in civilian life (teachers, social workers, etc.)—and turning off to those slots with great rapidity—so ROTC is the army's middle man, serving the generals and fucking the privates.

One of the major arguments people will undoubtedly pursue for maintaining ROTC is the "basic civil liberties" of the students to join any organization they choose. This is a real and serious distortion of the is-



A student hurls a tear gas canister back towards National Guardsmen at Kent State University during a May 4, 1970, antiwar demonstration that turned violent. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

sue. We are talking about what ROTC does—not its right to “free speech.” Any society, set of laws or morality takes it upon itself to prohibit certain actions. This society prohibits people from joining many groups—the Mafia, for example. Any yet it is this same society that “allows” other people to join in the oppression, exploitation and murder of people in the Third World. The only “right” that ROTC and the Army have is the right to conquest. And that is no right at all.

Put in another way it becomes a simple question of taking sides. To support ROTC’s right to exist or people’s right to join it is to deny the Vietnamese right to rebel—and in so doing to deny the oppression that they face daily. “It is the right of conquest, not freedom of speech; what ROTC does, not what individual officers say, which will be suppressed by driving ROTC off the campus.”

(For more, see Alan Gilbert’s “ROTC—SDS Challenges the Liberal Position, *New Left Notes*, Feb. 5, 1969).

2. End Project Themis Grant to the Liquid Crystals Institute

There are only two institutes in the U. S. developed solely to study liquid crystals—Kent State has

one of them. This year the Liquid Crystals Institute received a research grant from Project Themis to develop “liquid crystal detectors.” (*Army Research and Development Magazine*—July/August 1968 issue). In the last year Project Themis has funded 43 new counter-insurgency research programs in 24 states. “The Project’s objective is twofold—to create new centers of scientific excellence responsive to Department of Defense solutions to problems in the future; and to achieve a wider geographical distribution of Defense research funds, giving preference to institutions that receive little or no D.O.D. support of science.”

Kent State is part of Project Themis’ spidery web of institutions which are currently developing sophisticated weaponry to be used against people’s struggles for their freedom. Liquid crystals are extremely sensitive to heat, and are used in devices to detect campfires in jungle areas and in some cases to detect body heat at long range. (The “sniffer” is currently used in Vietnam and a similar device was used in Bolivia to find and kill Che Guevara. The tremendous importance of “liquid crystal detectors” can be seen by the fact that in every country in Latin America, Southeast Asia and many in

Witness Statements Related to the ROTC Building Arson [excerpts]

August 6, 1970

Eugene L. Jewell, Chief
State Arson Bureau
31 N. Grant Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Sir:

On May 2, 1970 between 8:00 and 9:00 P.M. at the Kent State University campus, Kent, Portage County, Ohio members of a large crowd attacked the R.O.T.C. Building and burned it. The following is a summary of witnesses' statements concerning the events that took place prior, during, and after the burning.

Nicholaus M. Haskakis
Home: 103 Second Ave.
Yorkville, Ohio
Kent: 309 Jackson Hall

Statement taken by Det. Thomas Kelley, Kent State University Police Department.

At about 8:20 P.M. on Saturday, May 2, 1970, he left his dorm with a camera to take pictures of the campus demonstration. While in the area of the R.O.T.C. Building he saw some students throwing rocks at the building and he saw one person take an American flag out and start to burn it. It seemed like the most appropriate act to capture on film so he took a picture of it. He was then attacked by members of the crowd and forced to give up his film. . . .

Louis Szari
3185 W. 117 St.
Cleveland, Ohio 252-5371

Statement taken by Investigators Brininger and McLaughlin, State Arson Bureau

Szari stated that he heard there was going to be a rally on the Commons. After visiting the Commons he left and got a white arm band and returned to the Commons as a student deputy. He followed the group over to Tri-Towers, down to the parking lot where they were doing damage in general. Then on to the practice football field where they regrouped and headed back to the Commons. He witnessed people pick up stones and putting them in their pockets. He witnessed people throwing stones through the windows of the R.O.T.C. Building. He witnessed two individuals, one wearing a white t-shirt with a red fist on the front and back, go behind some cars, light a Molotov cocktail and throw it at the building. It did not do any damage to the building, however. He saw two men, one he can positively identify, take a white rag and go to a motorcycle that was parked nearby, dip the rag in the gasoline tank and then both ran to the building, light the rag and throw it in. They both ran back into the crowd. He followed one of the individuals, the one he identified as Peter Bliek. . . .

Roger Berry
3595 St. Rt. 95
Ravenna, Ohio 297-1201

He is employed as a food service manager at the Student Union at K.S.U.

Statement taken by Investigator Brininger, State Arson Bureau

Saturday evening, May 2, 1970, he was at work in the Student Union and noticed a group was forming on the Commons. Then the group left and went up the hill between Johnson and Taylor Halls. The group returned 15 or 20 minutes later and came to the R.O.T.C. Building. He observed different individuals throwing stones and fuses at the building. He saw an individual attempt to throw a trash can through a window and there were others breaking windows with sticks. He observed a group jump the firemen and take the fire hose. He also observed them chopping the hose up. He could not identify any of these people because it was dark. . . .

William Robert Maxwell
4543 Stow Rd.
Stow, Ohio 688-7980

Statement taken by Sgt. Sumrok, Ohio State Patrol and reinterviewed by Brininger, Ohio State Arson Bureau

Friday night, May 1, 1970, Maxwell witnessed a large group of people walking south on North Water Street in the city of Kent shouting and breaking windows. The City Riot Squad then moved the crowd eastward back to the Main entrance of the campus. The police stopped and the crowd began shouting at them.

Saturday night, May 2, 1970, Maxwell stated he arrived on campus at approximately 7:50 P.M., he caught up with the crowd of approximately 1500 on the practice football field. Members of the crowd were armed with rocks and clubs. The crowd moved to the Commons and then on to the R.O.T.C. Building. The leaders yelled at the crowd to throw rocks at the building. He saw Jerry Rupe throw one of the first rocks, then another of the leaders, a fellow with blonde hair, charged the building with clubs and rocks. By this time many people were throwing rocks. The blonde-haired leader spotted a person with a camera. The man with the camera was then attacked by the crowd. He witnessed Jerry Rupe beat and kick the photographer along with two or three others. The blonde-haired leader along with an individual later identified as Larry A. Shub plus two or three others charged the building and started a fire inside the east window. After the Kent City Fire Department arrived, he witnessed the leaders and others attack the firemen and take their hose. He identified Jerry Rupe as one of these individuals and also the blonde haired leader whom he could not identify from photographs. After the police arrived, he followed the crowd across the Commons to the archery shed. Part of the crowd tore down the fence around the area while the leaders broke into and set fire to the shed. The group then headed towards President White's house and went on to State Route 59 headed west towards town. Before reaching town the group was met by the National Guard and pushed back to the campus.

SOURCE: Kent State University. Available online at <http://www.library.kent.edu/exhibits/4may95/box107/107f24pl.html>; website home page: <http://www.library.kent.edu> (accessed March 24, 2003).

Africa, guerilla warfare is being waged by people's movements struggling against U.S. imperialism. That struggle will continue on Kent's campus—the development of Liquid Crystals for Project Themis must be stopped.

3. Abolish the Law Enforcement School

4. Abolish the Northeast Ohio Crime Lab

The members of the ruling class are the only real criminals in this society. Corporate financiers reap tremendous profits at the expense of the poverty-stricken unemployed, the tax-ridden worker, and the mortgaged “middle-class.” The ruling class should be jailed not the people.

Law enforcement defends the American status quo, and therefore protects the interests of the ruling class. Black people, the most oppressed, witness overt police violence daily.

Blacks are colonized. They are oppressed not only as part of the working class but as a people. Huey Newton, jailed Minister of Defense for the Black Panther Party, describes the role of police as an occupying military force in the black colony. He says, “The pig can't be in the colony to protect our property, because we own no property.” Pig violence in the black colony does not result only from the sadism of individual policemen. Just as in Vietnam military violence in the black colony is intended to protect the business interests of ruling class imperialism.

The Law Enforcement School and the Northeast Ohio Crime Lab serve two different functions in protecting ruling class imperialism and racism against the black colony. The *Law Enforcement School* trains students for police careers. It was the Law Enforcement School which invited the racist Oakland pigs to recruit at Kent this past fall. The Northeast Ohio Crimes Lab serves all of the police forces in northeast Ohio with identification and lab processing techniques. So doing they play an important role in evidence gathering procedures.

We can't emphasize enough that the major task of the whole police network in this society—to protect the interests of the ruling class particularly at the expense of black people—must be fought.

THE NEED FOR THE AMERICAN RULING CLASS TO MAKE PROFIT AND TO PROTECT ITS PROFIT-MAKING VENTURES CAN ONLY BE MET THROUGH IMPERIALISM AND RACISM. THESE NEEDS ARE IN IRRECONCILABLE CONFLICT WITH THE PEOPLE'S NEED FOR HUMAN FREEDOM.

**THE SDS DEMANDS ARE NON-NEGOTIABLE
BECAUSE THE FREEDOM AND SELF-DETERMINATION
OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLE IS NON-NEGOTIABLE.**

DARE TO STRUGGLE—DARE TO WIN!

Further Resources

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“Kent State One Year Later: on the Long Road Back.” *U.S. News & World Report* 70, no. 24, June 14, 1970, 17–20.

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May Fourth Task Force. Available online at <http://dept.kent.edu/may4/index.html>; website home page: <http://dept.kent.edu> (accessed May 28, 2003).

AUDIO AND VISUAL MEDIA

Kent State: The Day the War Came Home. Directed by Chris Triffo. Falls Church, VA.: Landmark Media, Inc., 2001. Videocassette.

The Legacy of Kent State. Produced by CBS News. New York: History Channel, 1996. Videocassette.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Nonfiction work

By: Paulo Freire

Date: 1970

Source: Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1992, 57–64.

About the Author: Paulo Freire (1921–1997), born in Brazil, was an educator who developed literacy programs throughout the world. His work concentrated on freedom and democracy for all people. Following his exile from Brazil in 1964, he worked in Chile. Later he taught at Harvard University in the Center for Studies in Education and Development. ■