


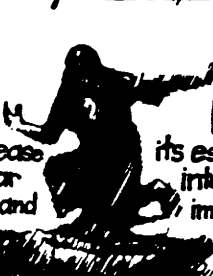
# REMEMBERING KENT AND JACKSON STATE

BY GEORGE KATSIAFICAS

**B**EGINNING IN 1987 with the BBC's "Twenty Years Ago Today," the media have regularly celebrated twenty-year retrospectives of the 1960s. Most prominently covered have been anniversaries of marches in Selma and Montgomery and strikes at Harvard and Columbia. If my reading of the current generation of college activists is accurate, they react to these media events with a mixture of interest and disgust: interest in movements whose largely hidden history continues to intrigue and animate, but disgust with a society living off its past.

Those of us who lived through the 1960s will remember the 1980s as a time when we could finally publicly discuss our joys and fears, our dreams and experiences, without being drawn into the emotionally charged atmosphere of divided families and a polarized nation, a climate of intense hostility and division which remained with us for most of the 1970s but is today forgotten. Thousands of people participated in a rally and conference for the 20th anniversary of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, an event which directly affected the emergence of the more recent anti-apartheid struggle there. Reunions of SDS, the Panthers, SNCC, Berkeley's Third World Strike and Cambridge's Juche have helped reorient those of us who experienced the collapse of the New Left. But despite the long winter of vilification and silence which 1960s activists endured, I want no part of the disproportionate coverage afforded the 20th anniversary of strikes at elite schools like Columbia and Harvard. The media's attention to "alternative" reunions at Ivy League Universities reinforces the power of money; it makes good copy for the society page. Their inattention to murder at Kent and Jackson State Universities—or, at best, the portrayal of some sense of equality between the significance of a strike at Harvard and murder at State schools—carries the message that we are nowhere equal, not even in the history of movements for equality. We remember the lives of the dead Kennedys (and of King, whose inclusion in this list of celebrity martyrs shows little more than that the American elite does not want itself to be regarded as racist), but how many of us know the names James Earl Green and Philip Gibbs (shot dead at Jackson State) or Allison Krause, Jeff Miller, Sandra Scheyer, and William Schroeder (the dead at Kent State)? How many of us have ever heard of George Winne, a student at the

## WE DEMAND:

- 1 That the United States government end its systematic oppression of political dissidents and release all political prisoners such as Bobby Seale and other members of the Black Panther Party. 
  - 2 That the United States government cease the Vietnam War that it unilaterally and its escalation of into Cambodia and Laos; immediately withdraw all forces from Southeast Asia. 
  - 3 That the universities end their complicity with the United States war machine by the immediate end to defense research, ROTC, counterintelligence research, and all other such programs.
- # STRIKE!

University of California, San Diego, who died of self-immolation on May 11, 1970 to protest the war?

There is more than a lesson of the ethics of social class here (i.e., that the elite makes saints of their dead while the movement often cannot remember theirs). There is a need to uncover the people's history of the 1960s, not simply as a means of recovering our movement, of comprehending our past as a way of reshaping our future, but also as a way of knowing ourselves. How many inner-city gang members

and crack dealers know anything substantive about the Black Panther Party? How many of us have even considered the possibility that the violence in our cities today is the price we pay for the frustration of the popular impetus represented by the Panthers? How many 18-year-olds who failed to vote in the last election, teenagers who regard the existing political system as an alien being, would feel differently if they knew it was murder on the campuses 20 years ago, a morbid version of *Easy Rider* in real life, which won them the right to vote?

Mainstream coverage of the 20th anniversary of Kent and Jackson State (if the latter is even mentioned) will most likely include the killings without any national political context. Although we might be afforded a glimpse of the National Guard whirling around Blanket Hill with their guns firing at Kent State, it is highly unlikely that we will see the Mississippi Highway Patrol's assault on Alexander Hall, a women's dormitory struck by nearly 400 bullets and pieces of buckshot. Already media coverage of these events, as so often happened 20 years ago, only includes the shootings at Kent State. And even if both Kent and Jackson are remembered, by isolating the murders from the movement, the media will cut out the historical context, leaving viewers with another fragment of isolated information but no real sense of the whole scene.

**Looking Back:  
Twenty Years Ago**

**T**WO OF the less remembered facts about the 1960s are that the U.S. government invaded Vietnam and suppressed a revolutionary movement at home. Although historians often fail to mention these critical aspects of our past, no one who understands the 1960s fails to note a critical transformation of this country, a time when the American dream was seen as a nightmare. As the war against Vietnam intensified and protests against it multiplied, the violence we manufactured and exported came

back at us. After the ruthless suppression of inner-city uprisings in 1967, even the egalitarian vision of Martin Luther King turned into the need to fight, in his words, the "worldwide system of colonialism" and "to restructure the whole of American society." The children of the Summer of Love, harbingers of the Age of Aquarius, were transformed into a militant movement against racism and genocidal war.

Twenty years ago, in May 1970, Richard Nixon escalated the war by invading Cambodia, and the National Guard, long experienced in occupying the ghettos, was unleashed on the nation's campuses to control the ensuing protests. The subsequent Kent and Jackson State killings precipitated the largest strike in the history of the United States, a national uprising of millions of people on the nation's campuses which paralyzed the system of higher education, traumatized the country and indicated the beginning of the end for another American president. Across the country, more than 35,000 National Guard were called out in 16 states to bloodily suppress the protests. From Kent and Jackson to Buffalo and Albuquerque, more than 100 people were killed or wounded in the ensuing violence. Among the casualties were four dead and ten wounded at Kent State on May 4th; two killed and twelve wounded at Jackson State on May 14th; eleven students bayoneted at the University of New Mexico; twenty shotgun wounds at the University of Ohio, and twelve in Buffalo. In Augusta, Georgia, six African-Americans were killed and twenty wounded when a riot broke out after a prisoner had been beaten to death.

The acute phase of the crisis which finally resulted in Nixon's ouster lasted for five months, and before calm was restored, this nation was irrevocably changed. Historians may have neglected these events and the media may never have covered them, but this country endured a crisis of a depth and intensity to which only the Civil War can compare. Although our understanding of the 1960s has been recently enriched by the publication of a wide range of memoirs and analyses, the events of mid-1970 are more

**THE STREET WALL JOURNAL.**

**ZAPI**  **DIX IT!**

**TOWARD A  
GENERAL STRIKE**

**Remember  
KENT &  
JACKSON**

**On to May 5**

Moratorium on  
business as usual

**STUDENT  
MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE**

**RALLY  
BOSTON COMMONS**

**COMMEMORATE**

**KENT  
& AUGUSTA  
JACKSON**

**STRIKE - MARCH**

**MAY 5**

**OUT NOW**

**IMMEDIATE &  
UNCONDITIONAL  
WITHDRAWAL**

**S.M.C. 6511090**

often omitted or buried in a mass of details than afforded their proper place as the high point of the American New Left.

For five months, from May to September, a chain reaction of repression and resistance shattered the nation's social tranquility and momentarily sparked insurgent social movements to dedicate themselves to creating a new social order. While *Business Week* warned about the danger of a revolution, every new social movement in the country intensified its activities and reached a climactic peak. Whether observed in the campus strike or NOW's call for a general strike of women, the eruption of Vietnam veterans or the first Gay Pride Week, the Chicano Moratorium or the Panthers' Revolutionary Peoples' Constitutional Convention, 1970 marked the apex of the American New Left.

While it was the high point of the movement in the U.S., the crisis of 1970 was not simply a North American phenomenon nor is the history of mid-1970 merely a national affair. It was the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese people which was the prime mover of events in this period, a resistance which galvanized a global reaction to the horror of a genocidal war. Even in southern Vietnam after the invasion of Cambodia, anti-war protests became so massive that the government ordered all schools closed, and President Thieu publicly vowed to "beat to death" peace demonstrators. Police bloodily cleared anti-war Buddhist nuns and monks from the Vietnam national pagoda, killing 5 persons and wounding 53. In scores of cities around the world, militant protestors demonstrated against the escalation of the war. Some burned American flags while others went beyond the level of symbols. In Venezuela, two students were killed during the third day of massive protests against the invasion of Cambodia. In Calcutta, the American university center was ransacked, and in Hamburg, Amerika-Haus was occupied and renamed "The House of the Four Dead at Kent." In Britain, protestors painted swastikas and dumped pigs' heads in American businesses. The simultaneous eruption of a global movement compelled policymakers to change plans at the same time as it forged international unity among people who recognized in each other the humanity denied them by the existing world system.

For a moment, the world was changed. In contrast to prevailing norms and values, the millions of people who were involved in the nationwide strike in the U.S. acted according to principles of international solidarity and self-management, not patriotic chauvinism, international domination, hierarchy, and conformity. The strikers demanded immediate U.S. withdrawal from Indochina, an end to the repression of the Black Panther Party, and an end to university complicity with the Pentagon (ROTC, war research, etc.). The universal nature of these demands—the fact that they were not for more financial aid or smaller classes—was one indication that students, staff, and faculty were not confined in their goals to the problems of one part of society (the academic community) but were consciously identifying with those at the bottom of the world's social and economic hierarchy.

The essential meaning of the strike was the international solidarity of Vietnamese and American and the unity of black and white. The strike's active negation of the oppres-

sor/oppresed duality demonstrated a motivation to move beyond the established system not only in the universal political content of the student's demands, but in the form of the strike as well. It was a new kind of strike in that the strikers not only attempted to stop ROTC and war research but also tried to create dual power based on a new set of ethics and values. In California, for example, the strike took the form of keeping the universities open after Governor Ronald Reagan ordered them all closed. In Berkeley's Greek Theater, 17,000 people roared their approval to "reconstitute" the university as "a center for organizing against the war in Southeast Asia."

After the killings of May 1970, the polarization of our society reached a breaking point. Not only did a qualitatively different relationship exist between millions of Americans and their government, but American concepts of fair play and support for the underdog vanished as construction workers attacked anti-war demonstrations and thousands rallied in defense of Lt. William Calley (convicted in the murder of over 150 women and children at My Lai). In the aftermath of the slaughter at Kent, James Michener reported on an interview of a mother with three sons at the university: "Anyone who appears on the streets of a city like Kent with long hair, dirty clothes or barefooted deserves to be shot...It would have been better if the guard had shot the whole lot of them that morning." The violence of the Nixon administration became a threat to a broad cross-section of the population who had not previously perceived themselves to be targets of their own government. Nixon's secret "enemies list" (which eventually found its way into the pages of the mass media) included Hollywood celebrities, university faculty, hospitalized Vietnam veterans, business executives, GIs, and even university trustees, and Congresspeople. Once the anti-war movement had won over the vast majority of students and Nixon had targeted white Americans, it was a small step into the Watergate Hotel.

When Nixon was re-elected by a landslide in 1972, many assumed that the end of liberty in the United States was fast approaching, but as we all know, he was gently ushered out of the White House, and by serving as our national boogeyman, the one responsible for the country's turmoil, he helped bring us "back together." A people's history, of course, recalls these events quite differently: the national student strike of May 1970, by mobilizing previously apathetic strata of the population, split the ruling class and preserved democracy in the U.S. by burying once and for all the crude anti-Communism which had infected our society in the 1950's, a disease which reached its most feverish expression in the war on Indochina and the covert war against domestic dissent.

Although the popular movement of 1970 reached historic proportions, its organizations were in no position to assume a hegemonic role in reconstructing America after Nixon. The crisis precipitated by the invasion of Cambodia occurred at a time when the organizations of the New Left had already proven themselves to be incapable of even dealing with the stark combination of police attacks and internal divisions which beset them. By the beginning of 1970, SDS and SNCC, organizations whose members played an important role in the awakening of the student

movement, were all but dead. Every member of the central committee of the Panthers was either dead, in prison, or in exile. Bobby Seale was on trial for murder in New Haven, a charge carrying the death penalty, and although it was a Panther mobilization of thousands of people in defense of Seale that sent out the initial call for the strike, the Panthers had already assumed a defensive posture. Mobe, the umbrella coalition which had called together the anti-war march of 500,000 people in Washington DC in November 1969, closed down operations less than a month before the Cambodian invasion under the assumption that the war was winding down. Already 150,000 troops were scheduled to come home, and peace was the word on every politician's lips. In light of this confusion, no wonder there was such widespread shock when the Cambodian invasion was announced.

One of the most significant aspects of the campus strike was the capacity of students for leaderless actions and self-organization. Less than an hour after Nixon's televised speech announcing the invasion of Cambodia, the protests began. During the first 6 days after the invasion of Cambodia, there was an average of 20 new campuses going on strike every day, and in the days after the slaughter at Kent State on May 4, 100 more colleges joined each day. By mid-May, as this "eros effect" swept the nation, more than 500 colleges and universities were on strike, and by the end of the month, at least one-third of the nation's 2,827 institutions of higher education were on strike. More than 80 percent of all universities and colleges in the United States experienced protests, and about half of the country's eight million students and 350,000 faculty actively participated in the strike. In numerical terms, this was the largest strike in U.S. history.

It was not simply the scale but also the intensity of the protests which was new to the student movement in the United States. In the first week of May, 30 ROTC buildings were burned or bombed. At the University of Wisconsin in Madison alone, there were over 27 firebombings, and across the country there were more incidents of arson and bombing than in any single month in which government records have been kept. A \$6 million computer, owned by the Atomic Energy Commission and used by New York University, was captured by a racially mixed group of 60 students and held for \$100,000 ransom. The protesters demanded the money be used for bail for a jailed member of the Black Panther Party in New York. After 24 hours of futile negotiations, the protesters left gasoline bombs to destroy the computer, but the quick action of faculty successfully defused the explosives. At Fresno State College in California, a firebomb destroyed a million dollar computer center.

Students spontaneously generated new tactical approaches for confrontations designed to stop "business as usual." Across the country they blocked highways, expressways, railroad tracks, and city streets. Blockading traffic might be seen as an extension of the sit-in, a tactic originally used by striking workers in the 1930s. The students of 1970, however, were not content to simply occupy their universities but contested the operation of the entire society by fighting for control of public space. On May 1, and again on May 3 and 14, thousands of students at the


University of Maryland in College Park closed down Highway 1 and battled police and National Guardsmen who tried to open the road. On May 5, nearly 7,000 protestors from the University of Washington in Seattle blocked both the north and southbound lanes of Interstate 5 for over an hour, during which time they moved along the stopped cars to talk with motorists about the war and the strike. The next day the freeway was blocked again, but this time the police moved in and drove the protesters away.

At the University of California in Santa Barbara, a noon anti-war rally of 5,000 people took over the university center, where nearly 2,000 people formed affinity groups and moved onto Highway 101, which they blockaded for over an hour. One hundred feet of the main road leading into the campus was treated with lard, an action which also succeeded in stopping traffic. At Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, 2,000 demonstrators blocked downtown traffic and railroad tracks after the buses they had ordered to travel to a demonstration in the nation's capital were unexpectedly canceled by the school's administration. A running battle with police and National Guard ensued, and scores of students were injured and over 200 arrested. One thousand people from the University of Cincinnati staged a 90-minute sit-in in the midst of downtown traffic and were dispersed only after 145 were arrested. A contingent of 2,000 people marched from Columbia University onto the northbound lanes of the Henry Hudson Parkway, and at two campuses of the State University of New York (Stony Brook and Albany), at Mankato State College in Minnesota, and at St. John's in Philadelphia, hundreds of stu-

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# THE ANTIWAR UNIVERSITY



## STRIKE!



**GIs United  
Against the War.  
Ft. Jackson.**

**Fighting men.**



dents marched off campus to block traffic. At John Carroll University in Ohio, more than 300 anti-war demonstrators succeeded in bringing traffic to a halt for more than an hour and a half. In Austin, over 8,000 people battled Texas Rangers who were called in to move the demonstrators out of the state capitol.

Despite thousands of arrests, concerted efforts by university administrators to contain the revolt, and hard-hat attacks on peace demonstrators in New York and St. Louis, the movement spread. On May 16, *Business Week* warned: "This is a dangerous situation. It threatens the whole economic and social structure of the nation." The chain reaction of events touched off by the invasion of Cambodia had indeed triggered responses throughout the nation. On less than a week's notice, there was a demonstration of over 100,000 people in Washington DC. After the killings at Jackson State, a strike broke out in New York City which closed all public schools. Militant gays seized the microphones at the national meetings of the American Psychiatric Association and condemned the war, and in the process, they also denounced doctors as "the pigs who make it possible for the cops to beat homosexuals." One hundred art galleries and museums closed down, and 500 artists staged a sit-in at the Metropolitan when it refused to join the protests. Even a few Nobel Prize winning scientists, college presidents, and corporate executives jumped on the anti-war band wagon. Although some activists hoped that the workers would join the strike, creating a May 1968 type of revolutionary situation, the country was too divided.

Although the media had widely portrayed the hard-hats who beat up peaceniks as representing the "silent majority," many workers supported the campus strike. In Detroit and Chicago, a planned three-minute work stoppage on May 15, called in memory of Walter Reuther (who died in a plane crash on May 10), turned into a daylong anti-war wildcat: 2,000 workers walked off the job at one plant alone (Ford Assembly in Chicago's Southside), and in all, 30,000 workers struck at 20 plants. As a gesture of solidarity, longshoremens in Oregon and Teamsters in Ohio refused to cross

student informational picket lines. Ten Chicago union leaders supported the local student strikes, and in many counties across the country, central labor councils voiced opposition to the invasion of Cambodia. On May 8, representatives of 5,000 faculty from 23 California campuses formed the United Professors of California, overwhelmingly voted to "condemn Nixon's escalation" and called for the remainder of the academic year to be devoted to bringing the war to an end. A day earlier in Denver, a convention of AFSCME unanimously passed a resolution calling for immediate withdrawal from Indochina "consistent with the safety of U.S. troops." Union representatives of the Teamsters, United Auto Workers of California, and the AFL-CIO Amalgamated Clothing Workers signed resolutions calling for "Peace Now." On May 11, 800 of the 4,000 university employees at MIT voted to strike for the demands of the students, as did workers at Berkeley, Harvard, Columbia, and other universities.

In Washington DC, government workers began to question national policy. On June 1, 1970, *U.S. News* reported that "Federal workers, supposedly nonpolitical, are beginning to badger office holders, elected and appointed, on the course of national policy." At least one organization, the Federal Employees for a Democratic Society, modeled itself on SDS and grew out of anti-war protests by government workers. Already by the summer of 1969, they had claimed a membership of hundreds within most bureaus of the federal government, and in 1970, Joseph Califano, Jr., credited them with the capability to "operate as a shadow government."

Within the military, the strike found even more support than among workers. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, at least 500 GIs deserted every day of the week during May 1970. Some went over to the side of the "enemy." The *London Express* reported that U.S. intelligence estimated as many as 60 soldiers a week, the majority of them black, were crossing over to the National Liberation Front of southern Vietnam. The *Express* also reported a top-secret campaign to capture or kill these defectors, a variant of

Operation Phoenix aimed at stopping GIs from using their knowledge of U.S. operations to cut in on short-wave transmissions to misdirect artillery fire and lead helicopters into ambush. After the deaths at Kent State, entire companies refused to cross over into Cambodia. Their black armbands symbolized their solidarity with the striking students, and their actions were true to their convictions. Combat refusal became so commonplace that separate companies were set up for men who refused to engage the "enemy."

For the first time, Vietnam veterans who were patients in VA hospitals got involved in the peace movement in large numbers during May 1970. Members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War helped to lead many student strikes, and membership in that organization jumped about 50 percent to 2,000 by the summer of 1970. Two years later there were 2,500 members on active duty in Vietnam alone. On Armed Forces Day, May 16, 1970, there were marches, rallies, and political rock festivals at 22 different bases in the country with the participation of at least 43 different GI anti-war groups. The demonstrations at five of these military installations (Fort McClellan, Alabama; Charleston Naval Base, South Carolina; Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Benning, Georgia; and Fort Riley, Kansas) marked the first time that anti-war actions had taken place there. One thousand people marched through the streets of Killeen near Fort Hood shouting: "U.S. out of Southeast Asia now!

Free Bobby Seale and all political prisoners! Avenge the dead of Kent State, Jackson State, and Augusta!"

The military high command was so threatened by the wave of troop uprisings that regularly scheduled Armed Forces Day events were canceled at 28 other bases. At Fort Ord, south of San Francisco, most GIs were assigned to their barracks, riot control, or to digging a trench between the edge of the base and Route 1, a barrier against planned demonstrations later reinforced by miles of concertina wire. At Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California, all Marines were restricted to the base, and for the first time, platoons assigned to riot control had orders to shoot to kill in case of disturbances on the base. At Fort Dix, New Jersey, GIs were restricted to base, and the 3,000 demonstrators who attempted to march on the base were gassed.

Only a few days after the invasion, the first concession was made: Nixon agreed to limit the troops to 35 kilometers within Cambodia and to end the "incursion" after two months. (As he put it, this was "not an invasion.") On May 29, Black Panther leader Huey Newton's conviction was overturned by the California Court of Appeals, and on August 5, he was released from prison. Although there was elation and jubilation, by the time Huey was back on the streets, college graduations had long since marked the end of the strike, and a "higher level" of struggle had been joined by the many activists who went underground. Conditioned by our instant coffee culture, they regarded the



PANTHER'S RALLY—LAURE, IMPACT VISUALS

popular uprising as a failure since the war continued. It mattered little to them that the strike had compelled Nixon to pull the troops out of Cambodia, that Congress had rescinded the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, that 18-year-olds suddenly had gotten the vote and that Huey was free. Nor were advocates of an armed vanguard impressed with polls showing that within the nation's universities, more than one million people considered themselves revolutionaries. (The number reported in January 1971 by the *New York Times* was three times that many.)

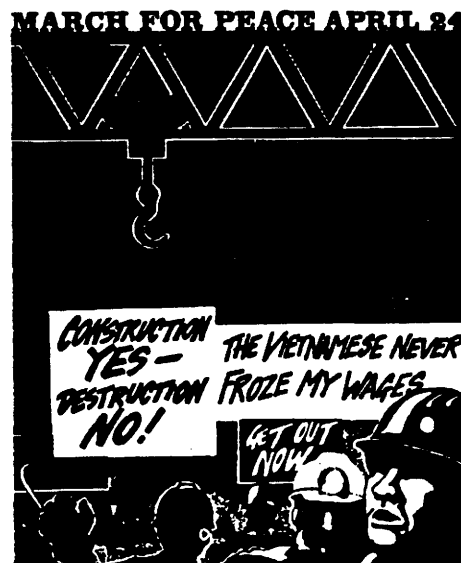
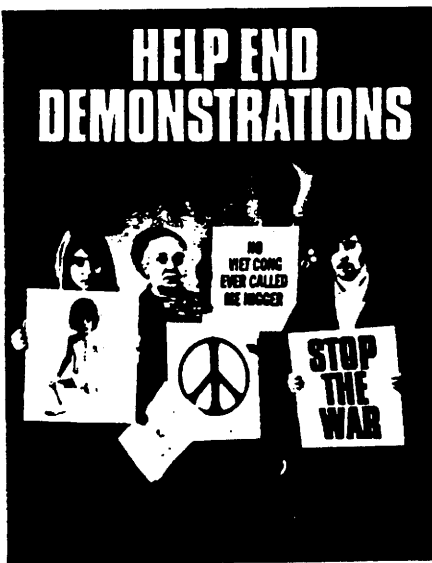
Apparently, those near the center of the system's power had a more realistic appraisal of the popular movement's impact. On September 26, the blue-ribbon Scranton Commission, appointed by Nixon to investigate the campus revolt, assessed the situation: "We fear new violence and growing enmity...If this trend continues, if this crisis of understanding endures, the very survival of the nation will be threatened." Over a year after May 1970, the Carnegie Commission reported: "To say that the campuses have been relatively quiet since May 1970 is not to say that they have been pacified...The signal for any new large-scale confrontation...will most likely be a deliberate government policy decision—to invade North Vietnam, or to use tactical nuclear weapons..." In other words, Nixon and Kissinger's military and political options were restricted by their fear of a repetition of the strike, an insight into the power of popular movements not shared by the Weatherpeople, who began the new wave of military attacks on June 9, 1970 by bombing police headquarters in New York City. Two months later, the Army Math Research Center in Madison was gutted (and a graduate student accidentally killed) by a massive explosion detonated in retaliation for that institution's research and development of an infrared device which had been used by the CIA to locate and murder Che Guevara in Bolivia. On August 7, 1970, Jonathan Jackson stood up in a Marin County courtroom with an assault rifle in hand. He freed three prisoners, and they took a judge and

district attorney hostage, hoping to exchange their prisoners for his brother, George Jackson, a leading member of the Panthers who was imprisoned for life for his alleged role in a \$70 robbery. A barrage of gunfire directed against their escape van left only Ruchell Magee alive. By September, half of the FBI's most wanted list were radicals, including Angela Davis who was indicted for owning the gun used in the Marin Courthouse raid.

During the summer, some chose to commit "revolutionary suicide," while others celebrated the energy of a new international culture. The flags of the United States, Canada, and the National Liberation Front flew above a summer rock concert attended by 250,000 people on the border between the United States and Canada. On August 6, hundreds of "long-haired undesirables" took over Tom Sawyer's Island at Disneyland and battled with police to stay there, causing a ban on hippies for several years. In Berkeley and Madison, as in many other youth ghettos, street fighting broke out more often than street parties, but there were no fatalities. The police were deadly serious in Lawrence, Kansas, however, where two teenagers were shot to death in July as the turmoil continued unabated.

Despite the repression mounted against the movement and the armed response of some, the popular movement, particularly among women and Chicanos, continued to find space for expression and action. As radical feminists consolidated their hegemony within the women's movement, women occupied buildings and set up women's centers, and they fought the police for control of their newly won territory. In New York, the offices of the *Ladies Home Journal* had been occupied by women whose demands included an entire issue devoted to feminism and an end to the portrayal of women as mindless commodities.

Within this climate, the National Organization of Women (NOW) embarked on its most ambitious campaign: a general strike of women scheduled for August 26, 1970 (the 50th anniversary of women's right to vote). The prepara-



LARGE CONTINGENT ARRIVED AT 10:30 A.M., SUNDELL PARK, GREAT AND STURGEON STREETS  
 MARCH TO BALLY 12:30 P.M., PING PONG, GARDNER GATE PARK  
 SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING: LARRY CLARK, VICTOR WIRTH AND LARRY DAVIS, LARRY CLARK, JERRY  
 CLARK, PAUL DAVIS, DONALD WIRTH, LARRY CLARK, VICTOR WIRTH, THE BROTHERS, THE PIONEERS - Photo 1970-10



tions for the strike included a new symbol for feminism—the clenched fist inside the biological sign for women. As the date for the strike approached, women staged “tot-ins” to dramatize the need for daycare centers, and Betty Friedan, president of NOW, promised “an instant revolution against sexual oppression.” On August 26, over 10,000 women marched down Fifth Avenue in New York, and smaller demonstrations occurred in cities and towns across the country. The next day, a lobbying campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment began on Capitol Hill.

Three days later, on August 29, 1970, the police viciously attacked the Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles. Over 20,000 people had peacefully gathered at the first major Mexican American demonstration against the war. The festive mood was suddenly shattered by police clubs and gunfire. When the smoke finally cleared, three Mexican Americans lay dead, hundreds were injured, and over 200 had been arrested.

The movement’s apex came in September when the Panthers convened the Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention. Called together to write a new constitution which the movement would then implement, over 10,000 people converged on Philadelphia despite police and FBI terror against the local Panthers prior to the scheduled gathering. As an indication of how much existing social antagonisms were transcended, one of the most spirited and well received groups was from the newly emergent gay liberation movement. The workshops drafted outlines to comprise an “Internationalist Constitution,” not a national one. Its preface declared an international Bill of Rights and promised reparations to the people of the world.

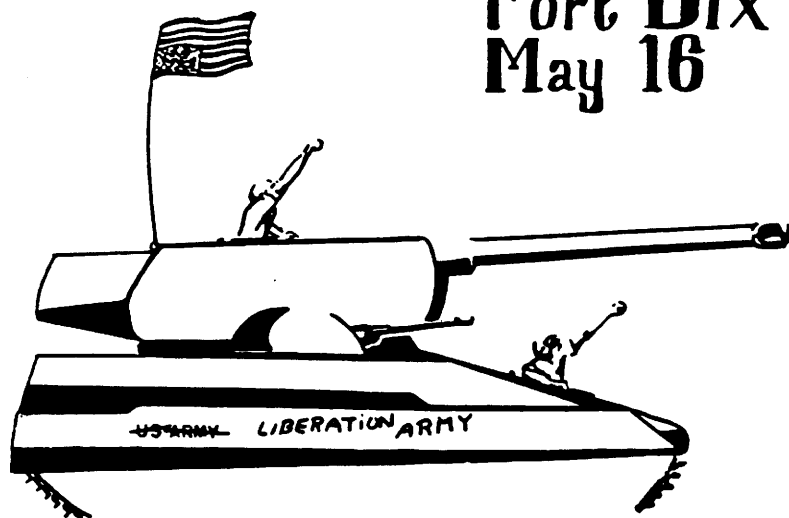
Although the September convention roared its approval of the program, the gathering two months later in Washington DC failed miserably, largely because of the Panthers’ decision that the new Constitution was a mistake. The change in the Party’s orientation “back to the black community” and the emergence of electoral politics as the defining tactic of the Panthers proved to be the beginning of a bitter and bloody internal feud which tore the organization—and the movement—apart.

## Looking Ahead

THOSE OF us who were active in 1970 have a very different memory of the New Left than do movement activists from the early and mid-1960s. With the murders at Kent State and Jackson State, we participated in an upsurge of millions of people which profoundly affected us. Our political expectations are to participate again in moments of unleashed popular energies aimed at fundamentally transforming our society as part of a generalized international movement. Our aim is not to duplicate the 1960s but to surpass them.

It is, of course, sheer folly to discuss a revolution in the U.S. today. The integrative power of a system which “delivers the goods” to a large majority of its citizens and maintains a military superiority to the rest of the world is

# Fort Dix May 16



far stronger than the fickle forces which could today be mustered by an anti-systemic movement. But when such a discussion is again germane to the social situation, it would be wise to consider both the sudden emergence of unexpectedly popular movements, ones which arise spontaneously in relation to global dynamics as occurred in May 1970, and their limits: the strike of 1970 was bounded by its academic environment just as the African American urban uprising of 1967-8 was confined to the ghettos. Neither group alone, nor possibly even both together, has the power to transform the whole society. While the question of revolution may have been posed in 1970, a majority was not behind it and there was no socially legitimate leadership capable of providing a new direction to the country.

Historically speaking, there are relatively few times when the existence of the entire system is at stake. But they are occurring more frequently today than at any other time in history. As the world system has been more centralized and as the connections between its various members have become more intense, the seemingly spontaneous and massive enlargement of widely organized and sustained dissent, has become a prominent part of the political landscape, leading to the ouster of Marcos and Duvalier and sweeping through Eastern Europe in a chain of revolts which has profoundly changed the world. Moments in which whole societies are more or less transformed overnight present a new opportunity for radical social change. By remembering Kent and Jackson State as more than the places where six young Americans gave their lives for freedom; as signals for an uprising the likes of which this country has rarely experienced, an uprising which helped extend democracy and freedom, we pay homage to our dead in a time-honored American tradition. Z

*George Katsiaficas is the author of The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968 (South End Press), the only national history of the crisis of May 1970.*