

May 8, 1970

Page 7

# Ohio St: Clubs, tear gas, bayonets!

(STATE)

**AUTHOR'S NOTE**—The article on the Ohio State University strike and rebellion was compiled from eyewitness accounts, both by activists and non-participating observers, and from the author's personal knowledge of the OSU campus and some of its personnel. Few published accounts were used because of the unavailability of some Ohio newspapers and the unreliability of others. The article was written while the action was still in progress and before distance sorted out some of the conflicting reports. Allowing for the possibility of minor factual error and some missing details, I believe this report to be essentially accurate and objective, if hardly impartial. Names are omitted as much as possible, since student strikers are still facing reprisals from the campus administration.

## ALLEN ZAK

In three days of street fighting, the campus of Ohio State University at Columbus, Ohio, was transformed from a hotbed of student apathy into another festering wound in the disintegrating United States educational system.

Police clubs, tear gas, and National Guard bayonets accomplished what the small community of OSU activists had been unable to pull together in months of effort: a broad united front of students organized in defense of their rights and willing to put their bodies on the line against the military-industrial-political combination that controls the state university.

By Thursday night, April 30, two days of battles between police, troops and students resulted in hundreds of injuries, including about 50 police, more than 300 "buckeyes" in jail, and a campus dense with tear gas, uninhabitable in parts. Violence touched almost every part of the University and its environs, ranging from the campus proper to fraternity row. National guardsmen were still patrolling the campus over the weekend while political activists tried to figure ways of cementing a coalition of thousands of OSU students the campus administration had handed them.

The scope of student involvement during the closing days and nights of April was surprising not only to the campus administration and those who knew the campus well, but to leaders of the small radical movement on campus. "Quite frankly," said one student activist, "we underestimated our relevance on campus." (One result was the loss of political control of subsequent events on campus, but more of that later).

The giant, sprawling OSU campus, ranging miles around its perimeters with a current enrollment of about 44,000 students, has never harbored much of a radical movement. This is not to say that ferment has been unknown; until this year, the big issue was football.

In 1968, Ohio State won the Rose Bowl playoff, and Columbus paid for it. Mobs of students went on a drunken victory spree along High Street, main drag at the east side of campus, that resulted in one death, dozens of innocent bystand-

ers hospitalized, busses and automobiles overturned, and almost every plate glass window fronting High Street for two miles smashed.

On this occasion, policemen were very much in evidence, standing quietly by and smiling in their indulgence of student high jinks. Many of them had good-naturedly permitted students to paste "Go, Buckeyes—Number One!" bumper stickers on their cruisers.

The campus administration was silent on the subject, busy as they were at the time with the expulsion and prosecution of 37 Black students who had ill-advisedly taken over the campus administration building earlier that year, not realizing their action would pass virtually unnoticed by their fellow students. There were not enough Black students, not to mention concerned whites, to raise much dust, with a total of 1,200 Black enrollment out of 44,000 (incidentally one of the issues causing the occupation in the first place).

The number of student activists less than two years ago was about enough to fill Charbert's Restaurant, a popular hangout on High St. near the campus main entrance. In fact, they sometimes did. A fair estimate of "hard core" radicals (active between demonstrations) would appear to be (no fooling!) one Communist, one Trotskyist, a couple dozen each of Black Students and Students for a Democratic Society members, and a few miscellaneous politicals, including an occasional police agent. They seldom met, even less seldom agreed, and were as often at one another's throats as at the campus administration.

Campus radical demonstrations could draw several hundreds of students on a given issue, ranging to a few thousand on anti-Vietnam war activities. Faculty involvement was minimal. As difficult a problem as organizing around student issues had been, however, campus radicals had a

(please turn to page 9)

# Ohio State: 'ill - conceived tactics'

(from page 7)

considerable assist by the press of events, a growing unrest among many students over certain conditions at the university, and finally, by the campus administration itself in the form of incredibly ill-conceived tactics and overreaction by the police.

The pitched battles of April 29-30 were the culmination of a series of demonstrations around several grievances, among them the announced raising of student fees by \$200. On the 18th, 3,000 demonstrators marched to the state capitol in downtown Columbus to

demand lowering of fees.

Then, on April 20 and 21st, disturbances broke out in the student union over industrial recruiting. A few hundred students objected to the establishment of several corporate, military and government (including Federal Bureau of Investigation) recruiting tables in a "Recruiter Prospectus" proclaiming that the union building was for the use of students and not for the convenience of private firms or government agencies, who had facilities of their own.

Administration official John T. Mount, vice president for student affairs, ordered the demonstrators to disperse, citing the university "disruption rule," equivalent to a riot act, declaring that any assemblage, demonstration, speech, writing or personal disposition deemed "disruptive" by the administration can result in disciplinary action by the university, including expulsion and arrest.

The students did not immediately leave, so Mount called in the cops, who cleared the union building forcibly. Six students were arrested, and one of them, Steve Piatt, was maced. Piatt was denied medical attention in jail, where all were held on a \$700 bail set on request of the OSU administration(!).

The week of demonstrations closed out with a Friday, April 14 march through the campus, sponsored by the Afro-Am Society, Student Mobilization Committee, the Columbus Moratorium Committee, Third World Solidarity Comm., and others. The parade picked up a few thousand students as it traversed the oval (around which the main campus buildings are grouped) and wound its way through the Student Union Building. There, a brief scuffle ensued with "frat rats" and ROTC men, many of whom were to be found one week later fighting side by side with radicals against Columbus cops.

The students were demanding release of those arrested in the recruitment demonstration and added a list of thirty other demands, among them calling upon the administration to fire V.P. Mount, Charles Ellenwood, director of the student union, and Dean Charles Gambs, an ex-FBI man held responsible for some of the more offensive repressive measures adopted by the university.

On Monday and Tuesday, April 27 and 28, the administration agreed to meet with a student ad hoc committee to negotiate the demands. Items on the negotiating list included abolition of ROTC, an end to military research programs, no admittance on campus of Columbus or Ohio State police, disarming of the campus cops. In addition, the student negotiators carried demands for campus-provided day care centers for women students with children, extension courses for Black Studies, concentration on finding and enrolling more Black students, and an end to sexist hiring practices.

The administration agreed to negotiate in good faith and appointed James A. Robinson, provost and vice president for academic affairs, as its spokesman. Robinson, author of a 1968 book, *The Case for Lyndon Johnson*, and head of the Mershon Center for National Security Policy Studies, presented the administration "offer" to "open meaningful channels of communication."

While Robinson and the ad hoc committee were "communicating meaningfully," President Novice G. Fawcett publicly commended the "44,000 students who did not demonstrate." At that point, the committee broke off negotiations and started preparing for a student strike.

Tuesday night, a campus-wide strike call was debated by the Student Assembly, which finally

(please turn to page 23)

## OHIO STATE

(Continued from Page 9)

voted to support a "student moratorium" on classes.

The following noon, a mass rally was called on the oval in front of the administration building. The committee had got its stuff together, organizing a monitor system, complete with Citizen Band radio communications and a picketing plan. Students arriving were given picket signs, instructions, and assigned buildings. The committee had originally planned to picket a selected five or six buildings, but as numbers grew, the strike was extended to more buildings.

For its part, the administration packed hundreds of State Highway Patrol troopers into its building, awaiting developments. At about 3:30, word came to the student strikers that Columbus police were massing near campus, and a number of students went out to meet them.

At the front of the campus, students staged a sit-down before the gates to block police entry onto the oval. City cops moved in and arrested several sit-ins, using a great deal of force in collaring the students. Among those arrested was Ed Boston, Black spokesman for Afro-Am, taken into custody while using a bullhorn urging students to avoid confrontation with the police. Boston, one of the Black students expelled in the administration building takeover incident, was not enrolled this quarter, allowing the administration to later declare that a "large number" of non-students were involved in the disturbances.

At 5:00 p.m., strike leaders appeared before the increasingly infuriated students, trying to get them to go home and avoid clashes with the police. As cool-down attempts were in progress, highway patrol officers inside the administration building made a foray outside, grabbing a student seated peacefully on the building steps, yanking him inside the building. There was no holding

back the crowds now, and a mob surged forward to attack the administration building with rocks, bottles, and anything handy to sling at the windows.

Troopers and cops poured into the oval from all sides, and the students turned their attention to the invaders. The air quickly became acrid with the fumes of exploding tear gas grenades hurled at the students, which combatants picked up and threw back.

Fighting was general now, with police clubbing and gassing everything in sight, including a group of onlooking ROTC cadets. Hundreds of cops were now on campus, including the black-uniformed CPD "D Platoon," specially trained riot police armed with shotguns. Hit and run skirmishes developed around the oval and buildings, with the campus turning into a battlefield. Students were falling under the assaults of club-wielding cops and troopers, and some policemen were also stretched out, struck by well-aimed rocks.

Fighting surged out of the main gate of the university and up 15th Ave., fraternity row, with the cops hurling tear gas grenades in every direction. Some of the gas canisters went through the windows of fraternity and sorority houses, one of them starting a fire at the Beta house. The frat men suddenly became street people, fighting furiously against the rampaging police.

Barricades went up that night at 13th and High, an area similar to Berkeley's Telegraph Ave. A band of cops rammed the obstruction with their patrol car, demolishing both the barricades and their cruiser, while students applied finishing touches to the car with rocks.

While Columbus Mayor Sensenbrenner declared the university a riot area, Columbus police exhausted their entire supply of tear gas in dormitories, apartment houses, stores (mutually attacked by cops and students) and many private dwellings.

While new supplies of tear gas were rushed in from Cincinnati and outlying community police departments to replace the \$15,000 worth used up by Columbus cops, an emergency injunction was se-

cured against every organization and individual involved in the ad hoc strike committee, in effect holding them responsible for the warfare. Student radicals declared the injunction was illegal, as no hearing was held, nor were the injunctions served. Nevertheless, Boston was now held on \$3,250 bond, and the police started a search for others named.

Heavily armed police started breaking into homes and apartments near campus, dragging people indiscriminately into the gas-filled streets. Fighting continued all night with running fights and ambushes on the streets near campus.

Casualties, both students and cops, trickled into the University Hospital all night. Among the wounded were seven students, punctured with buckshot, although Columbus Chief of Police Joseph claimed his men did not use firearms. Before the night was over, hundreds of persons were injured, and hundreds more arrested.

By 11:30 p.m., police and state troopers could no longer contain the situation, and Ohio Governor James A. Rhodes called in the National Guard. As 1,200 (1,800, according to other published sources) marched on campus with bayonets fixed, the university administration, holing up at siege headquarters in the College of Agriculture, issued a statement that classes would be open, as usual.

The university's ag school, located more than a mile west of the main campus and separated from it by the Olentangy River, with access routes heavily guarded by troops and police, was considered a safe place to declare buildings closer to High Street open for education as usual. Many instructors attempted to hold their regularly scheduled classes Thursday morning, but were forced out by continuously drifting clouds of tear gas.

Although most of the fighting ended by Thursday morning, outbursts continued here and there. The preponderance of arms was against the students, however, and any hope of continuing the strike

lay with the faculty. No help was to come from that quarter.

National Guardsmen were a marked contrast to the Columbus police. With the exception of an occasional butt stroke to the midsection of a student, on the whole the troops were not brutal toward students. Characteristic tableau: a squad of Guardsmen lounging on the grass, dozing or kidding with student passers-by. A few feet away, a group of sheriff's deputies stand, sinister in their black uniforms and face shields, hefting their clubs and glaring at the same students joking with the troops.

Although most of the fighting ended by Thursday morning, outbursts continued here and there. The preponderance of arms was against the students, however, and any hope of continuing the strike lay with the faculty. No help was to come from that quarter.

Many of the Guards were students themselves; others were workers called away from their jobs to serve on riot duty. Indirectly, the National Guard provided a link between OSU students and the working class at that stage of the conflict. Thousands more of their comrades, at this writing, were on duty, patrolling the roads to "protect" truck operators against striking Teamster Union drivers in the hotly contested rank-and-file Teamster revolt.

By Friday morning, May 1, the fighting was over; most of the cops and Guardsmen were being withdrawn; the student strike was broken; and the university administration had regained control. This time, however, they sit on a time bomb of sullen students who have had a taste of law 'n order Buckeye style.

The student radical movement, after having gained a mass base in excess of its wildest dreams (or ability to handle), is now faced with a few problems and self-searching, apart from a draconian administration bent on revenge.

Among the unanswered questions is the role played by police or administration-inspired provocation. Two mysterious incidents point up the possibility that violence was encouraged or actually

provoked against the efforts of the ad hoc strike committee.

One was the puzzling arrest of the non-offending student on the steps of the administration building in full view of a crowd that touched off the initial onslaught. When a strike monitor tried to hold back the onrushing students, he was maced from someone in the crowd.

Another was the discovery by picket monitors that their radio communication frequency was jammed at the outset of fighting. One of the monitors, a Vietnam veteran radio expert, was positive that the wave length was being deliberately interfered with. If that were so, why would the police or campus administration hamstring the only dissident campus grouping whose known policy was to avoid conflict with the police?

The most crucial point, however, was within the movement itself. When the police first presented themselves, Black members of the radical coalition were adamant about avoiding conflict, on the grounds that there wasn't as yet a method of organizing the large number of students that might ultimately get involved and the movement would be thrown away on a premature confrontation. Also, they knew whose would be the first heads to roll when the administration gained the upper hand.

In this assessment they were joined by many of their white colleagues, but others felt the confrontation, although doomed, would radicalize the campus more quickly than any number of polemics.

Regardless of who was right in this debate (a debate in action, as it were), those elements among the white radical leadership who threw rocks were, in effect, repudiating Black leadership.

That these questions are on the agenda at all, however, is a breakthrough for the student radical movement at Ohio State. Formerly, the question was how to get people involved. Today, thanks to the Ohio State University administration and the Columbus police, their problem is how to organize thousands of involved persons into an effective fighting unit, able to wrest major concessions for students and eventually help topple the ruling class itself.