

The truth about the tragedy on the Kent State campus five years ago is finally beginning to emerge for the first time, after a series of coverups condoned by ex-Governor James A. Rhodes of Ohio and continued by former United States Attorneys General John N. Mitchell and Richard G. Kleindienst.

The civil trial that is now in progress in the United States District Court in Cleveland, brought by the parents of the four dead students as well as by the nine wounded by Ohio National Guardsmen, came about only after ex-Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson, now Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, and a unanimous United States Supreme Court decided that the victims and their families could sue Ohio officials and National Guard officers for violating their civil rights.

A former captain in the Guard has admitted that he lied about finding a gun on the body of one of the murdered students and that he also concocted a story about another victim possessing brass knuckles. The purpose of these lies, he confessed, was to perpetuate the alibi that the troops had fired in self-defense. These fabrications—which influenced previous acquittals in Federal court and refusal to continue prosecution of the Guardsmen and their superiors—will necessarily have to be taken into account by the judge and jury.

The trial of National Guardsmen opens up old wounds—for the parents of the victims and for the nation. But it is essential that responsibility be fixed without further coverups; if so, justice can yet be served.