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Within the political movements, feelings of dispiritedness and anger began to unravel the umbrella that linked new left and antiwar groups. SDS, whose Port Huron Statement had helped begin the movement in the early sixties, saw groups break off and split apart. One segment, the Weathermen, advocated armed insurrection and violence as the only way American society could be changed. Drawing some of their inspiration from the Panthers, the Weathermen's influence grew much larger than their small numbers would suggest. They seemed to embody mounting disbelief in the possibility that American society would ever be changed voluntarily or democratically.

By 1969 most of the optimism that had characterized the early years of the sixties and had erupted periodically in 1968 had receded. Some could still find solace in events such as the gathering at Woodstock in the summer of 1969 (see chapter 9) or by scaling back their ambitions and joining rural communes in order to achieve a more measured personal salvation (see chapter 5). But for a great many, what remained were feelings of disillusion, hopelessness, and anger.

CAMPUS EXPLOSIONS

In 1968 and 1969 a wave of campus demonstrations erupted. Across the country and around the world students sought to take power into their own hands in order to address the injustices they felt existed on campus, in their communities, and in their countries.

TWO, THREE, MANY COLUMBIAS

Tom Hayden

In the spring of 1968 Columbia University became the stage for a major confrontation between students and the college administration. The issues focused on the university's military-related research, and thus Vietnam, and on Columbia's racial policy vis-à-vis black students and the adjacent community of Harlem. Students demonstrated, occupied buildings, and eventually went on strike. The administration called in police to clear the protesters, many of whom were injured and arrested. Like Berkeley in 1964, Columbia became the center of national media attention.

Tom Hayden, active in the new left since the early 1960s, wrote the following statement about the demonstrations at Columbia University. He suggests

why this was more radical than previous student strikes and calls for more actions following the Columbia model.

The goal written on the university walls was "Create two, three, many Columbias"; it meant expand the strike so that the U.S. must either change or send its troops to occupy American campuses.

At this point the goal seems realistic; an explosive mix is present on dozens of campuses where demands for attention to student views are being disregarded by university administrators.

The American student movement has continued to swell for nearly a decade: during the semi-peace of the early '60s as well as during Vietnam; during the token liberalism of John Kennedy as well as during the bankrupt racism of Lyndon Johnson. Students have responded most directly to the black movement of the '60s: from Mississippi Summer to the Free Speech Movement; from "Black Power" to "Student Power"; from the seizure of Howard University to the seizure of Hamilton Hall. As the racial crisis deepens so will the campus crisis. But the student protest is not just an offshoot of the black protest—it is based on authentic opposition to the middle-class world of manipulation, channeling and careerism. The students are in opposition to the fundamental institutions of society.

The students' protest constantly escalates by building on its achievements and legends. The issues being considered by seventeen-year-old freshmen at Columbia University would not have been within the imagination of most "veteran" student activists five years ago.

Columbia opened a new tactical stage in the resistance movement which began last fall: from the overnight occupation of buildings to permanent occupation; from mill-ins to the creation of revolutionary committees; from symbolic civil disobedience to barricaded resistance. Not only are these tactics already being duplicated on other campuses, but they are sure to be surpassed by even more militant tactics. In the future it is conceivable that students will threaten destruction of buildings as a last deterrent to police attacks. Many of the tactics learned can also be applied in smaller hit-and-run operations between strikes: raids on the offices of professors doing weapons research could win substantial support among students while making the university more blatantly repressive.

In the buildings occupied at Columbia, the students created what they called a "new society" or "liberated area" or "commune," a society in which decent values would be lived out even though university officials might cut short the communes through use of police. The students had fun, they sang and danced and wisecracked, but there was continual tension. There was no question of their constant awareness of the seriousness of their acts. Though there were a few violent arguments about tactics, the discourse was more in the form of endless meetings convened to explore the outside political situation,

defense tactics, maintenance and morale problems within the group. Debate and then determining what leaders should do were alternatives to the rem and authoritarian decision-making of Columbia's trustees.

The Columbia strike represented more than a new tactical movement however. There was a political message as well. The striking students were holding onto a narrow conception of students as a privileged class asking inclusion in the university as it now exists. This kind of demand could easily be met by administrators by opening minor opportunities for "student rights" while cracking down on campus radicals. The Columbia students were instead taking an internationalist and revolutionary view of themselves in opposition to the imperialism of the very institutions in which they have been groomed and educated. They did not even want to be included in the decision-making circles of the military-industrial complex that runs Columbia: *they want to include only if their inclusion is a step toward transforming the university.* They want new and independent university standing against the mainstream of American society, or they want no university at all. They are, in Fidel Castro's words, "guerrillas in the field of culture."

How many other schools can be considered ripe for such confrontation? The question is hard to answer, but it is clear that the demands of black students for cultural recognition rather than paternalistic tolerance, and radical white students' awareness of the sinister paramilitary activities carried on secret by the faculty on many campuses, are hardly confined to Columbia. Columbia's problem is the American problem in miniature—the inability to provide answers to widespread social needs and the use of the military to protect the authorities against the people. This process can only lead to greater unity in the movement.

Support from outside the university communities can be counted on many large cities. A crisis is foreseeable that would be too massive for police to handle. It can happen; whether or not it will be necessary is a question which only time will answer. What is certain is that we are moving toward power—the power to stop the machine if it cannot be made to serve humane ends.

American educators are fond of telling their students that barricades are part of the romantic past, that social change today can only come about through the processes of negotiation. But the students at Columbia discovered that barricades are only the beginning of what they call "bringing the war home."

COLUMBIA LIBERATED

Columbia Strike Coordinating Committee

The following is a statement of the issues, demands, and events of the 1968 Columbia strike.