

# Berkeley at WAR

Lee Davidson

1969

BERKELEY (LNS)—The University of California campus here became a battlefield Thursday, Feb. 20, as students fought back against repeated tear gas attacks by club-swinging pigs.

Some 3,000 strikers abandoned the usual tactics of picketing and running, to remobilize when the cops attacked. When the students counterattacked hurling rocks, bricks, bottles and cherry bombs—the police often retreated in terror.

As a result of the day's battle, the University reported 12 students injured, and the Alameda County Sheriffs Office reported 13 cops hurt, including Division Chief Tom Hutchins, who was struck on the shoulder by a rock. Fifteen students were arrested on Thursday, bringing the total number arrested to 133 in the month-old strike.

The strike, led by the campus Third World Liberation Front, which is demanding an autonomous Third World College, appeared to be faltering until a week ago, when two students and a newsman were the victims of brutal, unprovoked beatings by the police. On that day, 36 persons were arrested, including 17 informational pickets from the Teaching Assistants' Union (AFT).

On Tuesday, a blood-thirsty horde of pigs cornered black leader Jim Nabors, viciously beat him, and hauled him away to jail. Picket lines swelled to about 1000 and strikers began sporadically throwing rocks at police. That evening, the AFT voted 190 to 41 to strike, demanding the removal of police from campus, the resolution and implementation of TWLF demands, and union organizing rights on campus.

On Wednesday, in a front-page editorial entitled "The Horror," the "liberal" campus newspaper, *The Daily Californian*, said "We urge you to join the strike for the Third World demands and an end to police on campus. We urge you to support the right of peaceful picketing and the right to walk across campus and emerge alive. The reign of terror cannot longer be endured."

The University was increasingly crippled on Wednesday, when many non-academic employees honored the AFT picket line and significant numbers of students boycotted classes, especially in humanities courses. In some fields, as many as half the professors held classes off campus.

On the picket lines, after police were unsuccessful in an attempt to arrest the blacks, they started swinging their clubs wildly, and students retaliated with rocks and cherry bombs. Police countered with their first use of Mace on strikers.

Thus the stage was set for Thursday's battle, which many persons described as similar to last summer's confrontations in Chicago. The day started peacefully as a line of about 1200 strikers marched to University Hall and threw a scare into the Regents, who were meeting there under heavy guard. Twenty minutes later the strikers returned to campus and continued picketing in front of the administration building (Sproul Hall); students were in a quandary, seeing the masses of angry strikers, yet remembering Ronnie Reagan's "state of emergency" orders to keep the campus opened.

Then, at 3 p.m., a tear gas canister exploded next to some cops on the steps of Sproul Hall. Police claim a student threw it, but students and newsmen on the scene saw it like this: someone threw a flower at a cop who freaked and threw the canister before his cohorts could don their masks.

Anyway, police answered with a barrage of tear gas, and the three-hour campus guerrilla war began, involving about 300 students and 300 pigs. The police repeatedly bombarded strikers with tear gas canisters (many of which were immediately thrown back at the cops; the strikers backed off slightly, cleared their eyes, and quickly returned to pelt the cops with a barrage of rocks, bricks and cherry bombs.

Hundreds of strikers attacked the cops. No longer was the fear of being caught or beaten holding them back. The cops were picking up rocks and wildly throwing them back (one rock went through a Student Union window). Often the cops retreated in panic to the safe confines of the Sproul Hall basement.

At one point, the strikers spotted two police paddy wagons. They quickly overturned the first one, and when two pigs tried to rescue the other wagon, they were driven back into the basement of Sproul Hall.

The second wagon was then overturned and hundreds of onlookers cheered and raised their hands in the clenched-fist salute.

It was estimated that hundreds of tear gas canisters were used by police in a vain effort to rout the strikers. Proud and weary, the people left the battlefield about 6:00 p.m., understanding more vividly where their power lies.

# fifth Estate

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