

GALLEY

The undersigned have been associated with Berkeley in various capacities. Attached is a copy of a statement made by Thomas Parkinson, Professor of English at Berkeley at an extraordinary meeting of the Berkeley City Council, at which the Council voted 6-1 to request the Governor to end martial law and withdraw the occupation army from Berkeley. If you agree with the following statement please sign and return it to one of our mail boxes. We will then forward the statemnt with a list of signers to Governor Reagan, Chancellor Heyns, the Regents of the University of California and whomever seems appropriate.

Stanley Eskin
Joseph Juhasz
Joanna Kirkpatrick
Leonard Rowe

OUR STATEMENT

Invoking the fundamental ethical principle that the right to life precedes and supercedes the right to property, we the undersigned deplore the use of force and violence as a means to assert property rights in the case of the "People's Park" in Berkeley, California. The use of noxious gas sprayed from a helicopter against a defenseless crowd, the deployment of offensive tactics hitherto associated with military operations against declared enemies, are absolutely antithetical to the upholding of civil law and justice. We submit that there is no civil dispute which merits this form of governmental response.

Civil issues can, and should be settled in a civil way, and not be distorted into vehicles for the abuse of power. We ask that legal sanctions be administered to those who break laws, not that those powers and weapons of punishment be applied savagely and indiscriminately to the innocent, the bystander and the possibly guilty. The pursuit of a peaceful life is incompatible with this form of government.

STATEMENT BY THOMAS PARKINSON

On Tuesday, May 21, 1969, Berkeley, a city in the United States, a university town with many suburban dwellers as well as the faculty, staff, and students of the university, was attacked from the air by toxic gas from a helicopter. It was the first city within the continental limits of the United States to be assaulted by a helicopter flown by a member of the National Guard and under the orders of an elected official, the sheriff of the county. The gas was sprayed into an area where seven hundred people were confined by the National Guard in close formation. These people, these American citizens, had no means of escape from the gas that is used in Vietnam to flush suspected Viet Cong from tunnels and dug-outs and caves. This chemical weapon is not mild in its effects: It irritates the eyes, it can burn exposed areas of the skin, and it induces projectile vomiting and instant diarrhea.

Less than a week before, the citizens of this city were fired upon by police officers, using bird-shot and buck-shot, and perhaps .38 caliber revolvers, the standard side-arm of policemen. One man was killed; one man, perhaps two, suffered damage that has caused blindness that will be permanent. One of the blinded men was the assistant manager of a repertory theatre of the cinema. Many others, at least fifty and possibly a hundred, were wounded, some very seriously.

How could this happen? How could an American city be attacked from the air by an arm of its own government? How could the governing authorities sow such a whirlwind of gas as to cover an area of several square miles while using extraordinary military force to confine people so that they would have to suffer the effects of a dangerous and possibly mortal chemical? The gas spread through the campus and into the university hospital, forcing the physicians to order the evacuation of some bed patients and to place one man in an iron lung in order to save his life. It spread to a school yard where a group of eight year old children were playing at their recess, and several of those children were burned by it. It flooded the class-room buildings and forced students, staff, and faculty into the open where the gas was even worse, then back into the corridors of the building.

According to the Geneva Conventions, poison gas cannot be used in wars between states. According to the same conventions, shot-guns cannot be used in wars between states. Shot-guns and toxic gas were used by what are sometimes called "peace" officers against the citizens of this country. One black reporter told me that he had once written that such force would never be used against groups of white people, but he had forgotten that in the eyes of many public authorities a large segment of the population, including professors, students, and many young people, are white niggers. What is more, they know that these white niggers won't fire back.

So Berkeley has achieved another distinction--the first city in the continental United States attacked from the air; the first university to have its students fired on by police. One terrible irony in the entire rotten catastrophe is that by law the police of Berkeley are not permitted to fire upon any one unless he is armed and threatening the life of the policeman or some other citizen. But the police from communities outside Berkeley, who had been invited under a mutual aid pact to help control crowds in Berkeley, were not inhibited by any such niceties. They shot people in the back as they fled, unarmed, and a remarkable photograph in the San Francisco Chronicle shows clearly a policeman doing exactly that, shooting down an unarmed man who was some thirty feet away from him and running away from him.