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REVIEW ESSAY: THE TELLING OF KENT STATE*

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I stood on the Commons. I was watching the Guards and thinking they are telling us to leave, but this is our campus, we belong here and they don't. That is why I stayed mostly.

Barbara Knapp, a Kent State undergraduate at the Scranton Commission hearings.

On May 4, 1970, four days of student protest ended at Kent State University when 28 Ohio National Guardsmen fired their weapons at, over, and around a crowd made up largely of undergraduates who were protesting the presence of the Guard on campus. The immediate tragic result of this act was death for four students and wounding for nine others. All were undergraduates. The ramifications of this violence rapidly went beyond Kent State stimulating the first national student strike in the history of American higher education. In the months that followed a major effort was made to understand what had happened at Kent. Five hundred media news personnel were accredited to cover the Kent story. In addition to stories written for the media, ten books were written about the tragedy.

In contrast to most reviews in Social Problems, this one focuses on works that have been written by people who are not, with one exception, behavioral scientists. Therefore, it seems appropriate to begin with an overview of each book and to look at the manner in which the authors studied the Kent story.

STUDIES OF KENT

1) Shortly after the shootings, the Knight Newspaper chain (locally the Akron Beacon Journal) made a deci-

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sion to cover the Kent story in detail and quickly organized a team of eight reporters plus supporting personnel to do it. The result was a 30,000 word story (Kent State: The Search for Understanding) published on May 24, 1971, in all the Knight papers.\(^1\)

2) The Middle of the Country (Warren, 1970) is one of three books with student authors. It is a series of rapidly written essays, printed double spaced and with typographical errors. The strength of this little book is that it reflects, through brutal comments in two of the essays, the impact of the killings on students who were eyewitnesses to the shootings. However, there are many factual errors in the book; this volume should not be used as a factual source.

3) The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest was published in October, 1970. The Scranton Report (after its Chairman, William Scranton, former governor of Pennsylvania) was based on FBI investigations, Commission staff work, and hearings held at Kent State, Jackson State, and in Washington. The FBI report on Kent State ran to 8,000 pages and was based primarily on the work of agents who began to arrive on campus within 24 hours of the shootings reaching an estimated total of 100 agents at one point.\(^2\) The hearings lasted three days; and the Commission took testimony from administrators, faculty, students, Guardsmen, and townspople. Earlier there had been similar hearings at Jackson State College. The Kent report was published as a separate report to the main body of the Scranton Commission report.

4) Joe Eszterhas and Michele D. Roberts (1970), two Cleveland Plain Dealer reporters, published 13 Seconds: Confrontation at Kent State, based primarily on their own interviews, university documents, and the well known newspaper technique of rewriting other reporter's news stories as their own material. Its major strength is its treatment, through the use of quotes, of student attitudes about the events of May 1-4, 1970. Unfortunately, it was hurriedly written and consequently has many errors\(^3\) and reads like a 300 page newspaper story.

5) I. F. Stone (1970) wrote The Killings at Kent State: How Murder Went Unpunished, the first half of which was a reprint of pieces in his October, November, and December, 1970, newsletters. The November and December columns were based in part on two days of interviewing at Kent in the Fall of 1970. The second half of the book is a reprint of several Kent related documents, including the full text of the summary of the FBI report, which had not been published prior to Stone's book.

6) The Kent Affair (Casale & Paskoff, 1971) is a compendium of documents organized by two Kent State University English professors. It is particularly useful in that it gathers in one place many of the important political cartoons, news stories, and official documents dealing with Kent State. Further information is found in the footnotes.

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\(^1\) For a more detailed account of the way the Knight organization went about developing the special report see Reporting The Kent State Incidents (1971).

\(^2\) This figure is based on Senator Stephen Young's statement in Stone (1970:9). From personal experience and observations, I believe the figure is high. Nonetheless, there were many agents on the Kent campus.

\(^3\) For example, in the discussion of the sit-in that took place in November of 1968, Eszterhas and Roberts (1970:14) have 80 black students and 75 whites in the protest. However, the numbers became 200 and 150 respectively on page 56. The first figure is more accurate.
ther, it contains many of the letters reflecting the polarization that took place after the shootings.

7) James Michener's *Kent State: What Happened and Why* (1971) was first published in abridged form in the March and April, 1971, issues of *Reader's Digest* and released about two weeks before May 4, 1971, in a completed version. Michener lived in Kent from August to November, 1970, and interviewed most of the participants in the events. His research efforts were supported by a full-time staff from the *Digest* as well as some part-time consultants from local newspapers (Michener, 1971:556-559).

8) *Communications Crisis at Kent State* (Thompkins and Anderson, 1971) and *Violence at Kent State: The Students' Perspective* (Taylor, et al., 1971) were both written by faculty-graduate student teams. In addition, they are also alike in that they are the only studies presented in this review that have a social survey empirical base. Thompkins and Anderson's study, begun in late May, is based on personal interviews with a university sample of 225 students, 120 faculty members, 29 departmental chairmen, and 11 top administration officials, including the President of the University. In addition, they had a small sample of interviews with some city and county officials. Much of the interviewing was done by the authors themselves.

9) The second book by Stuart Taylor, a professor of psychology at Kent State, and three of his doctoral students (Richard Shuntich, Patrick McGovern, and Robert Genthner), is based on a sample of 7,000 Kent students. The data were collected through a mail questionnaire sent to all graduate and undergraduate students on May 28. By June 24, 7,000 questionnaires had been returned. The strength of Taylor's work is that it is based on data taken when there was very little interaction among the students. Secondly, it is based on survey data collected before any of the major studies, except the Knight special report, had been published.

10) The final book, *Kent State: An Appeal for Justice* (Davies, 1971), has not been published as yet, although it has received wide media coverage; and the written part was entered into the Congressional Record. Peter Davies, a New York City insurance broker, develops a theory, using photographic evidence, that certain members of the Guard conspired about ten minutes before the shooting to fire at students who had been harassing them from the parking lot where most of the slain and wounded were located. He wrote the report in order to demonstrate that there was enough evidence to justify calling Federal Grand Jury.4

**Dramatis Personae**

Future sociological studies of Kent may focus on many issues, the areas of collective behavior, student unrest, and organizational change probably among the more prominent. As one reads the various books on Kent State, four dimensions are consistently dealt with as these authors probe the drama. Without carrying the metaphor too far, the players in this tragedy are the students, the Guard, the administration and faculty, and the general public.

**The Students**

*How many students were on or near the Commons?* As would be expected this question was answered with a wide

variety of responses, ranging from the Scranton Report’s (1970:265) 2,000 to Eszterhas and Roberts (1970:150) 4,500. My feeling is that the Scranton Commission was closer to the truth, because Taylor, *et al.* (1971:102) indicate that 90 percent of all students in the sample reported that the crowd in the immediate vicinity of the Commons was less than 3,000.  

There was considerably more agreement as to the size of the active core of students gathered around the Victory Bell on the Commons chanting such slogans at the Guard as “Pigs Off Campus,” “Strike, Strike, Strike,” and “One, two, three, four, we don’t want your fucking war.” The Scranton Commission (1970:264) says the core was about 800 while Eszterhas and Roberts (1970:150) say it was about 1500. All the studies agreed that the majority of the crowd on surrounding hills and buildings was made up of student spectators whose sympathy lay clearly with their fellow students gathered around the Victory Bell. Again, I believe the Scranton Commission estimate about the core was essentially correct.  

*Why were the students on the Commons? Did they have a right to be there?* These questions generated much controversy and debate. On Monday the first view of troops most students had as they arrived at the Commons was of the Guard formed into a skirmish line with the major concentration in front of the burned ROTC building. Several students indicated that students felt they had a right to be on the Commons and that the Guard was saying symbolically that they did not have this right.  

The Scranton Report (1970:267) notes:  

Many students felt that the campus was their “turf.” Unclear about the authority vested in the Guard by the governor, or indifferent to it, some also felt that their constitutional right to free assembly was being infringed upon. As they saw it, they had been ordered to disperse at a time when no rocks had been thrown and no other violence had been committed. Many told interviewers later, “We weren’t doing anything.”  

Michener (1971:327) writes:  

At 11:00 in the morning of a bright, sunny day, students began collecting on the Commons as their 9:55-10:45 classes ended. They came casually at first, then in larger numbers when some of their 11:00-11:50 classes dismissed early because the confusion on campus made it too difficult to teach. Many students wandered by, as they always did to check on what might be happening. Another set of classes, 12:05-12:55, would soon convene, and it was traditional for students who were involved either in leaving one class or heading for another to use the Commons as their walkway. Without question, they had a right to be on the Commons. But were they entitled to be there on this day? A state of emergency had been declared by Mayor Satrom, presumably outlawing any unusual gatherings. Classes would meet, and that was about all. Yet testimony from students is overwhelming that they believed their campus to be operating as usual. On Friday a rally had been openly announced for Monday noon, and invitations to attend it had been circulated on succeeding days; in fact, announcements for this rally had been scrawled on certain blackboards and were seen by students when they reported for classes on Monday.  

Thus, both major studies of Kent came to the same conclusion that Monday’s rally was an anti-Guard rally and not an anti-war protest and more specifically a protest against the Guard’s takeover of the campus. Further sup-
port for this conclusion is found in Taylor, et al. (1971:101) in that 57 percent of all students in the sample said the rally's major purpose was to protest the Guard's presence on campus. It should be noted that anti-war feeling had not disappeared, since all studies agreed that this seemed to be the cause of the action on Friday and Saturday, May 1, 2. Rather, in the words of a student (Taylor, et al. 1971:56) discussing the rally, "Cambodia was a reason, but its importance had died somewhat in that getting the troops off campus had become a big major issue."

One of the explanations for the large gathering of students was that most did not know the rally had been prohibited. However, both Thompkins and Anderson (1971:43) and Taylor, et al. (1971:101) report that over half of the students said they knew that the rally had been prohibited; but knowledge of the prohibition of the rally probably did not do much good in preventing attendance, for 69 percent of students Taylor, et al. (1971:101) answered no to the question "Do you think peaceful assembly should have been prohibited on campus?"

One of the major failures of all the studies except Taylor, et al. (1971) was the fact that they did not explore why so many students did not go to the rally. If knowledge of a rally is a good base for predicting the size of the audience, then as many as 78 percent of Kent's 19,000 students (Taylor, et al. 1971:100) were in a position to decide to go or not to go. The Scranton Commission completely ignored this issue, and Michener looks only at the black students and their decisions not to attend the rally. Taylor, et al. consistently and to their credit distinguished between those students who attended the rally and those who did not. They found important differences, for example, in the political persuasion of attenders and non-attenders. They (1971:68) write:

While only two percent of the observers and one percent of the non-attenders considered themselves radical, 28% of the participants indicated that they were radical. This "self-description" appears to be quite accurate when one examines the participants' reactions to positions advocated by the "new left" movement. When asked, for example, if "the power of the President should be severely restricted and the power given to the people", 88% of the participants responded in an affirmative manner. Only 53% of the observers and 38% of the non-attenders expressed agreement with this position.

What was the influence of radical students? Several of the studies dealt extensively with this issue. Michener described in considerable detail the activities of the radical community at Kent in years prior to May 1-4. When he discovered they had little influence on the events of the four days, he concluded that while the radical leaders had no direct influence on the events, they had laid (Michener, 1971:409) "... the groundwork for the May disturbances and were long absent from the scene." The Scranton Commission, although it also looked at the history of protest and radicalism at Kent particularly at the hearings, do not show any evidence that specific radical leaders influenced the events of the four days. They note that the radical activists who had been released from jail two days prior to the May 1 anti-war demonstration in downtown Kent were in no way "... involved in planning or directing any of the events of the May 1-4 weekend" (Scranton, 1970:243).

Taylor, et al. (1971:119), offer one
account for confusion on this issue in their finding that 50 percent of their sample believed that radical students were very responsible for the Monday, May 4, incidents. In fact Kent's students believed that the radical students were more responsible than the National Guard enlisted men. I think this feeling expressed by students that radicals were responsible led Michener to the conclusion that radical students had laid "the groundwork" for disturbances. The Scranton Commission, with much better resources for investigating, reached a more balanced view of the radical influence. Unfortunately, the Scranton Commission report will, no doubt, not be as widely read as the Reader's Digest version of Michener's book, which stresses even more than the larger work the influence of the radical leaders.

The picture which emerges from these studies shows considerable agreement about the dynamics of the student protest at Kent State. Those students who did protest first directed their attention to the War and the Cambodian invasion. However, as the National Guard took over, a growing hostility toward the Guard by students is depicted. There is considerable controversy as to the place of radical student leadership in fostering this hostility; but there is no doubt in any of the minds of the authors that this hostility developed because the Guard had taken over what the students believed to be their "turf" both in terms of real estate and symbolic territory.7

The National Guard

Did the Guard use proper crowd control procedures? In general all the studies are critical of the crowd control procedures of the Guard on that Monday. The procedures the Guard used on that day, except for the firing, were those used from the time they arrived on Saturday until the shooting. The techniques included use of teargas and bayonets, patrolling in small groups with loaded weapons, and making no arrests.

The issue of whether the students and faculty knew that the Guard had loaded weapons when they were on duty has been widely debated. One position argues that all guns should be considered loaded, while another says that the Guard only loads in the possible presence of snipers and further directs only aimed at known snipers through the use of special sniper teams. The Scranton Commission (1970:263) states that every time the Guardsmen came on duty, "...their weapons (mostly M-1's) were locked and loaded." The majority of students and faculty did not know this (Michener, 1971:372; Thompkins and Anderson, 1971:43; Warren, 1970:48). Taylor, et al. (1971:109) make the point dramatically when they note that only 27 percent of the total sample stated they knew the Guard had loaded weapons. Further (Taylor, et al., 1971:109), less than one percent of the active participants in the rally felt the Guard would fire on them.

The Scranton Commission as well as Michener (1971:337) are critical of the Guard decision to march a small number of men a great distance through the crowd on Monday. The result of this action, the Commission concluded, (1970:288) was:

Guardsmen had been subjected to harassment to the question of whether the burning of the R.O.T.C. building was a planned attack or a spontaneous outpouring of hostility.
ment and assault, were hot and tired, and felt dangerously vulnerable by the time they returned to the top of Blanket Hill. When they confronted the students, it was only too easy for a single shot to trigger a general fusillade.

*Were the Guardsmen in danger when they fired?* The Scranton Commission (1970:289) concluded that while some Guardsmen were frightened, the shootings "... were unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable." Michener (1971:341) goes even further and suggests that a few Guardsmen who fired directly into the crowd did so because they were "... fed up with the riotous behavior of the students and in fear of their lives..." In discussing the context of the shootings, Michener (1971:371) writes:

After much negotiation, we were finally able to see the secret film. To have claimed, as some did, that the group of students hurrying up from the right constituted "a mortal danger" or "a howling mob bent on killing the Guard" required either extra-sensory perception or a new definition of words.

But that is not what is really relevant, for it answers only the question, "What would a rational person viewing this film in a quiet library, long after the event, conclude?" The larger question must be, "What would a hot, tired Guardsman think if he caught a glimpse of moving students coming at him on his blind right flank?" He could very reasonably think that he was about to be attacked by "a howling, vicious mob prepared to tear him apart."

Eszterhas and Roberts (1970:161-164) are very clear on this issue. Primarily through quotes, they show that with the exception the Guardsmen felt that they were being threatened but were not in danger of being killed. The one exception was the Commander of the National Guard who said, "I felt I could have been killed" (Eszterhas and Roberts, 1970:161).

Davies (1971) takes the most extreme position among all the books as he argues, primarily through the use of photographs, that not only did the Guard act to punish the students, but a few of the Guard conspired to do so about ten minutes before the shootings. Michener (1971:409) believes essentially the same thing, although he does not name specific Guardsmen as does Davies (1971:214-215).

*What was the effect of the continuing interaction between the Guard and the students?* The National Guard was ordered into Kent by the Governor of Ohio (the only person legally allowed to do so) at the request of City of Kent’s Mayor. They came on campus on Saturday evening without specific invitation from University officials, although a request was in the process of being prepared at the time. The justification for coming on campus without the official permission of the University was made by the Commanding General of the Guard who felt that since the burned ROTC building was on state property the Guard (Scranton Report, 1970:250) needed "... no specific invitation to enter the campus." Michener (1971:198) and Thompkins and Anderson (1971:25) accept this conclusion.

The Scranton Commission (1970:253) felt that the continuing interaction between the Guard and students operated as a stimulant for developing student resentment because their orders and many of their control activities (particularly gassing) interfered with legitimate student activities. The Commission (1970:259) notes that resentment on the part of Guardsmen was building as well, and by Sunday evening May 3 they "... seemed to be growing more impatient with student curses, stones and refusals to obey."
The picture of the Guard is one of ineptness beyond belief. The Guardsmen, as a result of their orders, continually subjected themselves to harassment from groups of angry and hostile students, who dished it out with relish. However, in general, the various studies reflect very little about the feelings and attitudes of the Guardsmen. We know how they behaved, but we know very little of the why. In fact, until the Davies report (1971:214-215) was published, the names of all the Guardsmen who fired were not even available to the general public.

The reason for this paucity of data is because the Guard was very secretive in contrast to the other actors in this drama. In discussing the Beacon Journal special, the ANPF Foundation Report (1971:18) comments:

...the National Guardsmen were the most difficult portion of the story to cover. Many of the Guardsmen feared possible prosecution and they did not want to talk. In general, Guard officers declined to supply names of enlisted men who were on Blanket Hill when the shooting occurred.

THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE FACULTY

Did President White and his staff adequately respond to the crisis? In general, most of the studies treated the University administration rather well. I think the reason for this is that the Guard so completely controlled the campus that there was very little White and his administration could have done to change the situation.

There was one issue that generated much controversy: whether White had ordered the noon rally on May 4 to be called off or whether the decision had been made by the National Guard commanding officers. At the Scranton Commission hearings General Canterbury said that White had indicated that the rally should not be held. Later, noted the Commission (1970:261), White responded to this testimony saying, "From past history, all know that my response would have been affirmative to a rally." Eszterhas and Roberts (1970:147-148) note the issue but, like the Scranton Commission, came to no conclusion. Michener, who, according to faculty gossip, developed a strong friendship with White, does not even place him at the meeting; although he knew about the controversy since he followed the events of the hearings rather carefully (Michener, 1971:520-524).

Thompkins and Anderson (1971:36) conclude that the university requested that the rally be broken up.

Our sources, however, seem to have cleared the confusion. The university advised against permitting the rally because to do so would be inconsistent with the leaflet which had been distributed the day before. It was argued that consistency from day to day on such matters was a "must." It was also argued that if such a reversal of the prohibitions were made, it would have to be announced "ahead of time by at least two hours." It was at least 11:00 a.m. when the matter was being discussed. Students were already assembling on the Commons.

However, they are quite irresponsible here, for they do not in any way identify their sources. Taylor, et al. (1971:121) conclude that most students felt White was not responsible for the incident on May 4.

How did the faculty involve itself in the events? Letters to the editor in newspapers suggested that radical faculty played an important part in stimulating students to dissent.

The Scranton Commission, as I noted, looked for agitators (both inside and outside) but could find no evidence that faculty played an agitator part. The Scranton Report (1971:278)
and Michener (1971:399-408) go into the activities of the faculty marshals in considerable detail. In particular, they examined how marshals persuaded students to abandon the sit-in to protest the killings which began on the Commons about 15 minutes after the killings.

Both Michener and the Scranton Commission discussed the activities of 23 faculty members who wrote a letter of protest on May 3. Michener (1971:295-296) writes:

The statement of the twenty-three concerned professors at the meeting held on Sunday afternoon would later come in for vigorous abuse by those who felt that the sentiments expressed therein were provocative and conducive to riot. Far from it. They were sentiments which had been expressed at various times on the floor of the United States Senate, in the editorial columns of great newspapers across the country, and in university senates everywhere; they were in the great tradition of free education, and if no one at Kent State had voiced them, the university would have been further derelict. There is, however, a question of timing, and it is possible to make a case against the publishing of these impeccable opinions at this particular and heated moment, except that we could find no one who had bothered to read them that day.

Taylor, et al. (1971) suggests that students felt faculty were not "very responsible" for the events of Monday, May 4. As was noted, 50 percent of Kent's students felt that the radical students were "very responsible" for the incidents. In contrast, Taylor et al. (1971:121) state that two percent of the students felt the faculty was "very responsible" for the incident.

Another dimension of faculty involvement is painted by Thompkins and Anderson (1971:45), who see the faculty as a rather uninformed group:

If anything, the faculty and chairmen were less well informed than the students. Only fifty-eight percent knew a rally was scheduled for noon (seventy-five percent for students). Only forty-four percent were aware that the rally has been prohibited (fifty-six percent for students). Thirty-seven percent (thirty-four percent for students) were aware that the Guard had live ammunition in their weapons.

Perhaps most significant is the fact that fifty-three percent of the faculty and chairmen said they would have behaved differently had they known the facts. Seventy-three of the seventy-nine who so responded said they would have used all of their influence—in the classroom and out—either to dissuade the students from confronting the Guard or to attempt to "cool" the situation.

In reference to the last sentence, it should be noted that several faculty members released their students from class to go to the rally (Michener, 1971:327).

The Public Response

How did the general public react to the shootings? The issue explored here is that aspect of the response to the killings that reflected the general polarization in the society in regard to the Kent incident. Casale and Paskoff (1971:91-115) provide many pages of public reactions to the events, including letters sent to President White and letters sent to editors of newspapers (both local and national). They (Casale & Paskoff, 1971:91) report that the letters to President White totaled 5,000 by the end of 1970.

Michener (1971:436-446) devotes considerable time to looking at letters from one paper, the local Kent Record-Courier. He (1971:445-446) concludes:

The most deplorable aspect of these letters was not the explosive outpouring of hatred (which could be forgiven as an autonomic response to phenomena not understood) nor the obvious obsession with property values as opposed to human life (which is often observed in American
This society is built on the assumption that properly informed citizens can themselves decide to shape their future. It is our responsibility as a newspaper to provide information that allows public judgment to function.

The fact that the Journal got this report out so rapidly and with relatively few serious errors set the tone for facts that govern the remainder of the studies.

In the weeks that followed the report, the Beacon Journal received considerable criticism. Heisey (1971:8) found that 68 percent of the letters the Beacon Journal published were critical of the Journal's special report.

Warren (1970:17-18) saw his book of essays as "... an effort to provide America with as representative a guide as possible to what actually happened during the period leading up to and culminating in the action of May 4;" and it was widely distributed throughout the nation (one still sees it in airports). However, it received little attention from the other authors, primarily because the Beacon Journal's study provided a much better fact base.

Eszterhas and Roberts (1970) never state their objectives, but it is clear that their effort was an attempt to get the facts in the journalistic sense of that statement. However, this book is a travesty on good journalism for two reasons. First, it had so many factual errors and was so poorly written that it was difficult to take the book seriously. Second, it went to the publishers before the Scranton hearings; consequently Eszterhas and Roberts ignored an important body of data which would have vastly improved their study.8

Casale and Paskoff's (1971) book is a useful compendium of documents. Its

8 The Scranton Commission was appointed after the Akron Beacon Journal (1970) Special Report and Warren (1970) had been published.
major weakness is that they take a questionable point-of-view about the analysis of the events represented by the documents, simply noting (1971: xii) the difficulty of establishing facts and conclusions and leaving these tasks to the readers. This is not acceptable for any of us who lived through the events of May 4 and following. If Kent professors are unwilling to provide guidelines and perspectives for analyses of the events, then we have abdicated our first responsibility as scholars to write about what we believe to be true.

The Scranton Commission's charge was to determine the causes of campus violence and to suggest steps for resolving grievances through peaceful means (Scranton Report 1970:533-534). President Nixon in his statement to the press (Scranton Report, 1970:535) indicated that the role of the Commission was, in part, to:

help us to avoid future incidents of the sort that occurred this past spring, the most appalling of which were the tragedies at Kent State University in Ohio and Jackson State in Mississippi.

Two writers were critical of the Commission report. Stone (1970:16) felt that the central charge of the Commission was to find out what happened at Kent State and Jackson State. The fact that the Commission issued the reports on these two schools separately, and after the main report, suggested to Stone that killing and wounding of students were not of central importance to the Commission.

Stone (1970:15) also makes an important point about the quality of the Scranton Report. He writes:

The danger in the Jackson and Kent State reports by the President's Commission on Campus Unrest lies in their very quality. If the Commission had whitewashed the killings, the findings would be angrily dismissed by blacks and students as more-of-the-same, but the hope would remain that a better investigation by better men might have produced better results. The destructive potential of the reports comes from the fact that they have honestly and thoroughly shown that the killings were unjustified and unnecessary. The established order mustered its best and they fulfilled their moral and political obligation. And yet there is not the slightest chance that anything will be done about it.

Michener felt that the general report of the Commission was an excellent essay. However, he (1971:524) felt the special report on Kent State was not so impressive because:

It was conceived in haste, inadequately researched, written under heavy duress so far as time and lack of staff were concerned, and barely finished before the expiring date of the Commission.

In regard to haste, there is a certain irony in that Michener wrote his own book (599 pages) in about six months.

While the Scranton Commission concluded that the shootings were "unnecessary, unwarranted and inexcusable," they did not communicate the deep sense of indignation found in other Presidential Reports. Nowhere in the evaluation of the Guard's actions do we find the passion of the Kerner Report's (1968:1) "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal" or the bluntness of the Walker Report's (1968) "police riot."

Michener's (1971) book received considerable interest in the Kent community because many felt his efforts would help ease the polarized town-gown conflict. Unfortunately, the opposite occurred when the Reader's Digest version appeared with its emphasis on the role of radical leaders in the protest. The full version of the book
was more favorably received, but the damage had already been done.

After the Reader's Digest came out, people began to say they had been misquoted or their point-of-view distorted. Two professors of speech at Kent undertook a study of Michener's methodology to explore the question of distortion. They (Moore and Heisey, 1971) found that his research procedures were somewhat careless. Further, his quoting was from memory, since he did not rely on any mechanical devices for recording interviews and only took a few notes during any given interview (Michener, 1971:558).

My own feeling is that his book is extremely well written and portrays the events of May 4, 1970, with such detail and accuracy that one can almost smell the teargas coming across the Commons. However, the book reflects the values of the Reader's Digest. As Wicker (1971:31) so pungently noted, Michener "is unable . . . to believe that there is anything wrong with the 'old life style' or that direct challenges to the authority behind it can ever be necessary or worthwhile." (That Michener was concerned about American higher education and Kent State University is without doubt.)

Thompkins and Anderson (1971) and Taylor, et al. were concerned, as Kent State professors and students, with developing a sound data base for analysis of the Kent incident. Both studies succeeded in this task, although any interpretation must be evaluated from the standpoint of surveys conducted after the shootings had taken place, hence, the possibilities of ex post facto justifications.

Both studies interpret their findings. Thompkins and Anderson perhaps even overinterpret. Taylor, et al. generally present a balanced interpretation of findings often letting the data (presented in percentages) stand alone.

Each of the studies reviewed here attempted to grapple with and understand an event that had enormous social and political implications for the society. That none succeeded should not be seen as a criticism of authors but rather as a challenge to sociology. The Kent States, Jackson States, and Orangeburg's and other domestic and foreign misuses of force by American society must be seen as crucial social problems which our discipline must come to understand and to solve.

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COMMUNICATIONS

MORE ON GOULDNER

To the Editor:

Despite Bennett Berger's (1970) hosannah for The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology, I must register a dissent. If Gouldner had provided his readers with an accurate intellectual history, he might have laid a secure historical foundation for his "reflexive sociology;" instead, he chose to distort the facts by fitting them into a simple-minded version of a Marxist-Leninist framework of imperialistic capitalism. To analyze each error would take more pages than his volume, so permit me to illustrate the distortions by focussing on two pivotal figures, Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955), the founders of Functional Anthropology.

Gouldner (and Berger following his lead) places this duo in the camp of imperial auxiliaries in that their "sympathetic functional analyses of primitive societies helped sanction British imperialism," etc. (Berger 1970:276). If we turn to what is known of the biographies of these men, we find a considerably different picture. Studying at Cambridge in the first years of this century, Radcliffe-Brown moved from the general study of moral and political science to "comparative sociology" under the influence of Prince Peter Kropotkin, the exiled Russian anarchist who had established his residence in England. Kropotkin was a vigorous critic of the Social Darwinism then popular in European intellectual circles; and so strong was his influence on the young scholar that the latter became known as "Anarchy Brown." But Kropotkin "pointed out to the young reformer (Brown) that it was necessary to study and understand society before trying to change it and that in order to understand such a complex society as Victorian England one should begin by making a systematic study of a faraway primitive community" (Srinivas 1958:xviii-xix).

Gouldner (1970:127) argues that "functionalism . . . arose following World War I" and attributes its rise to the post-war decline of British colonial power. However, the facts are that, following Kropotkin's advice, Radcliffe-Brown made a field trip to the Andaman Islands and conducted his research there during the period 1906-08. He then reported his findings in a Fellowship thesis, which he rewrote as The Andaman Islanders in 1914, although the book itself was not able to reach publication until after the war.

Gouldner (1970:132) criticizes functionalist anthropologists for educating colonial administrators, rather than native revolutionaries. Whether or not, or to what extent, anthropologists educated colonial administrators is problematic, to say the least, and a fit subject for research; anthropologists have a marked tendency to inflate the administrative significance and practical utility of their researches when in fact most field administrators have had but little use for