

ATROCITIES AT COLUMBIA

Man jumps on table. That's how I imagine the scene. Dig it: a man, a table, a leap; a leap bringing order out of chaos, establishing and defining justice.

Two weeks after the leap I received a telephone call from a colleague, a Stony Brook Professor. He had, so he said, "Just heard an unbelievable story." Professor Quentin Anderson had told him of the disruption of a tribunal at Columbia Law School on the 19th of November 1968. Professor Anderson suggested that I had been a major participant.

Was Quentin's assumption correct, the Stony Brook Professor wanted to know. "Yeah, sure," I said. Well, in that case I had better phone Professor Anderson immediately. If he couldn't be reached by phone I was told I should go directly to his home, and apologize.

I thought I understood where Professor Anderson was at. He had created an ideal world, a toy judicial system for the University and the disruption of the tribunal had smashed it. He wanted the fiction reestablished, he wanted the game to resume, and to do that, it was necessary for me to apologize. It was as if someone at a party had uttered a nasty word. Expressions on faces had frozen, men and women were caught in ludicrous poses, and the offender had only to say the pretty magic word to release the captives.

Professor Anderson told me that Columbia was not planning to bring criminal charges against me. He noted that I was "a gentleman and a scholar," a former student at the College ('63, Bob Kraft was a Class President that year) and that was an honorable man it was imperative that I send an apology to Ronnie Shiftan. That act, he concluded, would fulfill his "wildest and highest hopes."

I made no apology to Ronnie Shiftan, and I have not apologized to Quentin Anderson.

II

The disruption at Gus Reichbach's Tribunal (the Columbia Law School was trying him for his role in demonstrations last September) was important for me in a personal as well as in a public way. The night following the Tribunal I recalled a whole series of academic atrocities committed at Columbia: the University's totalitarian system stood revealed. Taken as a whole the incidents defined a University which was pervaded by the Cold War ideology, the liberal anti-communist ideology which has killed thought in most American universities.

A few examples of the intellectual repression I experienced from 1959 to 1963 when I was an undergraduate still remain clearly in mind. In 1963 two Professors, one from the Sociology, the other from the English Department, ran a seminar on Revolution in the 19th Century, with readings in literature, history, sociology. Candidates for the course had to be "investigated." After sparring about for a while the Sociology Professor asked me, "Do you know any Communists?" I was startled. I said that that was none of his business. The House Un-American Activities Committee asked people that question; it was a violation of Constitutional rights in

Till finally, so tired, so discouraged
You decide to stay there
Your knees kissing the dust
It hurts too much; it's not worth it
To get up another time

But it's then
When you yield to the lesser powers that drag you down
It's then that you MUST
Try to your last drop of blood
To stand alone

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COMMENT OF A FRUSTRATED POET

In ragged anger like the sea I rage
against foes perceived but yet un-
seen,

My fist upheld like roaring wind
sings
as keenly as knives against my face.

How is this fury that I should dare
to
fling as sand into eyes like iron?

I may like a trumpet make answer to
walls silent as steel, and pound
with bleeding fists against a door
thin as the paper of this page.
With none to answer, none to
beckon.

Do not care for my raging anger,
nor for
my bleeding hands. my trumpet is
made of
tin, and is not heard by unseen foes

But pray instead the gods may yet
unblind my eyes.

Jim Bobbitt

Congress, and on the 6th floor of Hamilton Hall as well. The Professor thought his question was perfectly reasonable; he laughed hysterically when I asked him if he was taking care of internal security at Columbia.

The Professor of English seemed a bit embarrassed by his colleague's crude approach. "We only want to know what your political beliefs are," he said, trying to be helpful. I would understand, of course, that for a seminar on Revolution that was a perfectly natural question to ask. "We don't want names of specific people," he added. About a week later I received a note saying that I had not been admitted to the literature-sociology seminar. At the time I was disappointed. Now, I feel that mine was fortunate escape.

After the disruption of the tribunal, I also remembered a lecture in 1962 in a course on 20th Century American History. It was about totalitarianism and the Professor began the class by taking a piece of chalk and drawing, as best he could, a circle and a straight line on the blackboard. The chalk squeaked--an oval and a wiggly line appeared. "Abstract art," one student quipped. A common but wrong view of politics, the Professor asserted, pointing to the wiggly line, was that left and right were at opposite ends of the political spectrum, that liberals were in the center. The truth, he continued, tapping with his stick and pointing to the oval, was that the left and the right started at opposite sides of the circle but slid the bottom and merged, while the liberals ascended to the top of the circle uncontaminated by the left and right. With these two lines, he offered his view of politics in the 1930's: as dialectical as the line of the American C.P. in 1962. It was abstract poli-

(con't on page 5)

Sometimes you feel like you were

THE STRUGGLE

So you struggle (in your innocence)

Sometimes you feel like you were
And born on your knees your feet
But the purpose of life is learn-
Still to stand you think perhaps
in a dream--or youth
that brought you down

So you struggle (in your innocence)

You And you fight
And at last you're on your feet
You fall
But then you get cut down
Still trusting, you think perhaps
it's inexperience--or youth
that brought you down

So you try again
You rise - so slowly-

And again
You fall

