

Strike at Columbia Architecture School Traced to Anger Over Exclusion from Planning

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

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For the last two weeks, a red and white banner has billowed from the front of Avery Hall. Its legend reads, "Avery on Strike," and it has style, appropriately, because Avery Hall houses the Columbia School of Architecture. Avery's strike has been virtually 100 per cent effective. It has involved the

The school's professional concerns include the physical relationships of the urban university and its environment. Most of the students have chosen the fields of architecture and planning out of a sense of social responsibility in troubled urban times.

According to students and faculty members, the university, however, has never paid much attention to the social, esthetic or symbolic aspects of architecture. Its institutional expansion has created continuing hostility in the Morningside neighborhood. Relocation problems have been complicated by racial problems with rising resentments in the Harlem community.

The news last week of the 10-block renewal plan from 125th to 135th Street for housing, industry and recreation, a plan being sponsored by Columbia and the city's Housing and Development Administration, is just the latest of a long series of building and planning issues on which the school and administration have differed.

Plagiarism Suggested

The original scheme for the site was developed and presented by Percival Goodman, a professor at the School of Architecture, a practicing architect, and a brother of the poet-philosopher Paul Goodman. It reappeared recently under the sponsorship of Percy Uris, a Columbia trustee since 1960 and New York real-estate developer, with a new format and a new set of architects.

Mr. Goodman's reaction was not mild. "It's the usual procedure," he said. "They swipe your stuff and then tell you to turn up your bottom so they can kick it."

In the last 10 years, building by building, additions to the campus have been criticized or picketed by students and by professionals.

In 1962, Allan Temko, an architecture critic and Columbia alumnus, attacked the shape and style of the multi-million-dollar building program begun by the university in 1957.

He scored Ferris Booth Hall, completed in 1959, as "dull and bureaucratic" with "skimpy and unimaginative detail." He called the 1961 Seeley W. Mudd School of Engineering a "disaster." Mr. Temko questioned the "influence" of Mr. Uris, "who has become successful as a commercial developer of urban real estate, but who no one could claim has ever erected a single structure of architectural distinction."

An appraisal school's administration and faculty as well as the students. Since a sit-in by architecture students was forcibly

cibly ended by the police on the morning of April 30, there have been "informal" meetings with teachers, and studies are being used, but no formal classes have been held in the building.

Although the academic term has been extended to May 29, probably not more than half a dozen of the 35 students in the fourth-year class will be graduated. Masters' degrees will be late.

A serious effort at "restructuring" the school—revising its aims, organization and curriculum—has been undertaken by a joint student-faculty committee with the cooperation of the dean of the school, Kenneth A. Smith, and the division heads, Charles Abrams, Romaldo Giurgola and Mario Salvadori. It will continue through the summer.

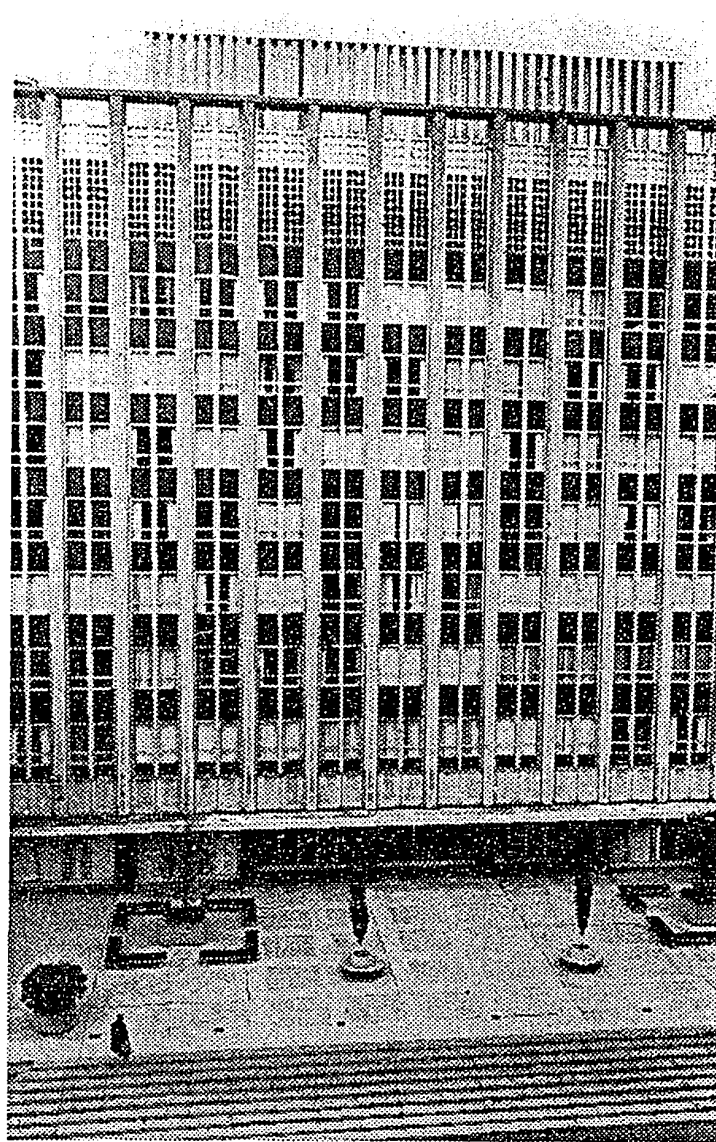
Unlike other professional schools, such as law or business, there has been no return to normal and the atmosphere is still supercharged.

Architecture was, in a sense, the spark that ignited the revolt. It has been central to the student rebellion. The university had a ready-made symbol for protest in the proposed gymnasium for Morningside Park.

The gym combined many of the issues of protest in a single package: the nature of the university's expansion planning, the control of those plans by the administration, and relationships between the university and the Harlem and Morningside communities.

Construction of the gym was the issue embraced by the striking Negro students who took over Hamilton Hall. To the administration, inclusion of community facilities made the gym an asset to Harlem. To the students, its design and concept were an abuse of public park land and of the Harlem community.

At the School of Architecture, the problems represented by the gym have been a subject of dissent for more than a decade.



The Uris Hall of the School of Business was built with funds provided by Percy Uris, a trustee of the university and New York real estate developer. Mr. Uris was involved with plans for the Morningside Park gymnasium.

Uris Hall of the School of Business, for which funds were given by Mr. Uris, was picketed by architecture students at ground-breaking ceremonies in 1962 and again when it opened in 1964.

Mr. Uris was unavailable for comment the last three days on the objections raised about his buildings and his role in the architectural planning of Columbia.

Shortly before the strike at Columbia, the architecture faculty adopted a resolution opposing construction of the controversial gym.

Until now, in spite of a full staff of teaching professionals of international reputation, the university's planning policy has bypassed the architecture school.

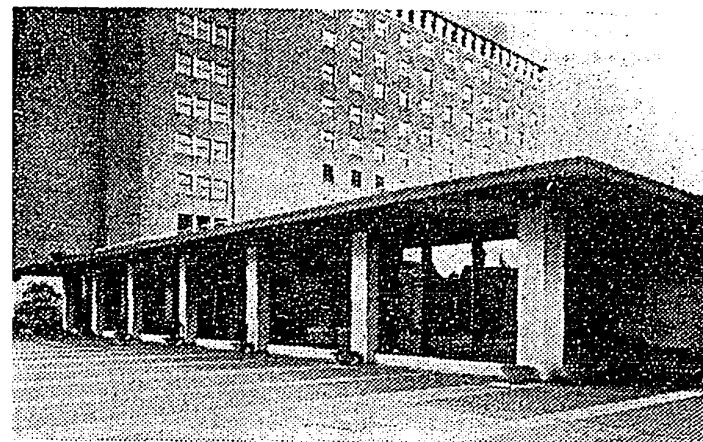
Except for the presence of the head of the architecture division on the administration's

Advisory Council on Architectural Planning, which deals with university expansion, the school's experts have been ignored.

"We were asked to approve plans already under way or buildings for which foundations were already being dug," says Professor Giurgola, head of the division of architecture and the current delegate to the advisory council.

Professor Abrams, a noted planning authority and head of the division of urban planning, says, "I'm the expert on campus planning for everyone but Columbia."

In view of the open discontent at the School of Architecture for the last decade, it was ironical, and to students and faculty members almost a kind of cruel justice, that an architectural symbol brought on the debacle.



Seeley W. Mudd School of Engineering at Columbia was termed a "disaster" by Allan Temko, architecture critic.

It was also ironical that the Avery sit-ins, along with those at Fayerweather Hall, suffered some of the worst violence on the night of the police action, or "bust," while the other three buildings that were occupied by students were emptied more peacefully.

The architecture students had been the only striking students to occupy their own building. Avery Hall contains one of the most important and valuable architecture libraries in the world, which the students locked and guarded. They had minimal connections with the politically oriented Students for a Democratic Society.

Group Called Mature

There are about 115 undergraduate and 125 graduate students enrolled in the School of Architecture. Many of the 80 to 100 students who participated actively in the sit-in, or the protest just outside, were in their late 20's and early 30's, representative of one of the most mature, sober groups in the university.

Although the gym is still a major issue, the striking architecture students see the rebellion as much bigger than the building. They consider it a revolt against bad planning and worse human relationships on and off campus, in educational as well as construction programs.

"You can't plan a campus in a city without viewing it as a community within a region," Professor Abrams points out. "Campus planning must be neighborhood planning. The university must involve itself with the problems of the community because it is involved in the community."

Dr. Warren F. Goodell, Columbia's vice president for administration since last July, whose duties include university planning, states that "restructuring" of the planning process is already under way.

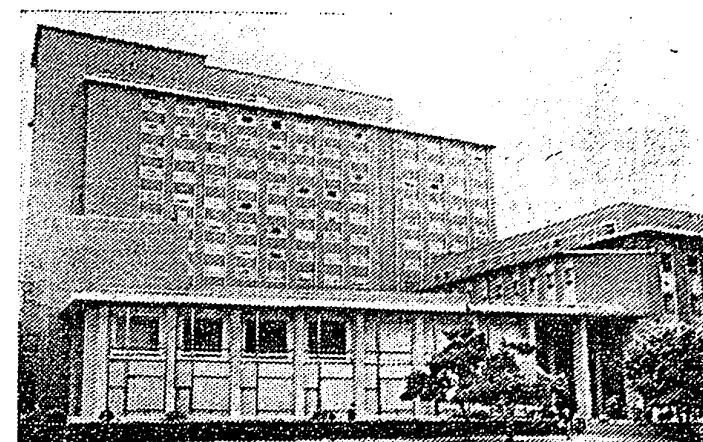
"The community must be heard," he says. "In the past I think we've been a little heavy-handed about relocation. We've got to study ways of combining academic and community uses."

"There has been no master plan. You can't do architectural planning without academic planning—this is another area in which we have been weak."

Now Bolstering Structure

"Because there was no strong internal planning structure to help, strong deans got things done on their own. We have a very unusual juxtaposition of architects."

"We are strengthening that structure now. We have appointed an assistant vice president for physical planning,



The New York Times (by John Orris) Ferris Booth Hall has been called "dull and bureaucratic" with "skimpy and unimaginative detail," by Mr. Temko.

Jack Telford, who did over-all planning for the University of Michigan and he will be here in July. I'm working for the employment of I. M. Pei for master planning.

"I believe very thoroughly in using the talent we have around us. We will have to have increasingly close understanding and conversations with the School of Architecture. There is no great agreement about architecture today, even within a faculty, but you don't have to come up with buildings that every one of them hates."

"Columbia has given us a negative education," the official position paper of the striking architecture students reads. "What we have learned from Columbia is how not to build and how not to plan."

A 'Design-In' Is Begun

A fourth-year student who will not be graduating, Eric Peterson, speaks of students serving as "counter-planners" for the underprivileged groups adjoining the university to interpret their needs in design terms for the city's renewal programs. There is strong emphasis on course involvement with "the real world."

Curriculum revision now under study is aimed at more flexible courses, more directly related to existence and chang-

ing urban conditions. The school has the authority to institute its own reforms.

A student "design-in" began last week to study the Columbia gym. One group is investigating the process and decision that led to the present controversial building, others are researching sites, requirements and community sentiment to develop alternate plans. Open student meetings are being held with community groups.

About 20 of the fourth-year students have asked to extend their thesis projects over the summer, and the faculty has offered to assist on a volunteer basis. Most are working on subjects related to Columbia and its environment. According to Professor Abrams, who has been giving a planning course in unofficial collaboration with an East Harlem group this year, the university has traditionally discouraged such projects.

"We don't want benevolent paternalism," Steven Foote, a second-year student, said. "We want self-determination."

"For these students right now there is the danger of being hung up, maybe for the rest of their lives," said Dean Smith. "For us it is like walking on a tightrope over Niagara Falls."