

PEACE NEWS LETTER



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CIVIL DISORDERS The complete text of the report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders is not yet available (as this is written on March 4). However, the official summary contains some insights of particular interest to peace makers.

The basic cause for the disorders is the persistent racism of American society. "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal. . . . What white Americans have never fully understood -- but what the Negro can never forget -- is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions create it, white institutions maintain it and white society condones it."

In profiles of disorder in Newark and Detroit, it is apparent that much of the violence developed as a consequence of fear. National Guardsmen and Police were afraid. Sometimes they fired at "snipers" when in reality the shots heard were those of other guardsmen or police on neighboring streets, but out of sight.

The Police play a crucial role in our cities. "'Prior' incidents, which increased tensions and ultimately led to violence, were police action in almost half the cases; police actions were 'final' incidents before the outbreak of violence in 12 of the 24 surveyed disorders."

"The police are not merely a 'spark' factor. To some Negroes police have come to symbolize white power, white racism, and white repression. And the fact is that many police do reflect and express these white attitudes. The atmosphere of hostility and cynicism is reinforced by a widespread belief among Negroes in the existence of police brutality and in a 'double standard' of justice and protection -- one for Negroes and one for whites."

"The abrasive relationship between the police and the ghetto community has been a major -- and explosive -- source of grievance, tension and disorder. The blame must be shared by the total society."

Yet in the face of "an accumulation of unresolved grievances and by widespread dissatisfaction among Negroes," in many places "the principal official response has been to train and equip the police with more sophisticated weapons."

COMMUNITY
PEACE-KEEPING

Speaker at the 32nd Annual Birthday Party of the SPC
(Jan. 30) was Ross Flanagan, secretary of the Quaker
Project on Community Conflict.

"Peace-keeping is a job for the community and not just the police. We must be involved or otherwise we will have a police state." Flanagan continued, "I believe the police are one of the most critical institutions in American society today as to what happens to the country. I believe our police are unprepared to cope with social conflict and that an open attempt is being made by the right wing to seduce this group to their reactionary methods.

"If we don't open some important, cooperative efforts in the field of community peace-keeping, we'll find we have a domestic army full of recruits fresh back from the Vietnam War . . . Unless we can work with these men, who cannot handle social violence, we will have a militarized domestic army committed to keeping down social change."

Flanagan suggested that peace-makers can "help the rest of the community accommodate to the very real tensions and conflicts inevitably occurring in our time" by "debrutalizing the power institutions" and by insuring that "when conflict occurs it takes place in a climate where people can still talk and recognize each other's humanity."

The speaker urged his listeners to "organize into peace squads, undergo discipline," and thus, in a conflict situation, be able to contribute to the minimizing of human suffering.

-- Ramona B. Bowden
Syracuse Post Standard, 1/31/68

ALARMING
PORTENTS Informed observers tell us that the Army has been sending people around in plain clothes to the major cities. Among other things, these representatives have been seeking places to store arms, hold prisoners, station tanks and machine guns, and so on. Menus have been planned, maps made of subway, sewer, water, and electrical systems, routes chosen into urban slums, assembly points located for troops, and plans made for housing the troops. (N.Y. Times, 2/16/68)

Esquire (March 1968) carries a major article by Garry Wills entitled "The Second Civil War." It indicates the elaborate preparations being made by numerous police agencies, the National Guard, and the Army to cope with urban unrest. The new weapons and training all suggest that a basic response to unrest is, as the National Advisory Commission suggested, in terms of repression rather than in terms of eliminating the basic causes of the unrest.

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Writes Wills: "The danger is that white society cannot bear with patience the attritive ordeal (of confrontations between the urban minorities and white majorities) -- that private citizens will take arms; or that they will demand, of elected officials or of the police, that the confrontations be brought to an end. This possibility is a grim one. Just how grim, Richard Rovere told us last autumn: 'I can imagine the coming to power of an American deGaulle, or even of someone a lot more authoritarian than deGaulle. Much of the troublemaking in the months and years ahead will be the work of Negroes, and I can even imagine the imposition of a kind of American apartheid -- at least in the North, where Negroes are easily sealed off. If there should be the will to do it, it could be done quite "legally" and "constitutionally." There are enough smart lawyers around to figure out how.'"

DOMESTIC Col. Robert Rigg, writing in Army Magazine (Jan. 1968),
GUERRILLA sees possibilities of "organized urban insurrection"
WARFARE which would make sections of major American cities
"scenes of destruction approaching those of Stalingrad in World War II." To be sure, "military firepower would be a poor solution," but "political efforts might prove not much better." In order to keep our cities from becoming battlegrounds, we need to expand police and military intelligence and "traditional FBI methods."

"Furthermore, there will also be needed among the well established political-tactical-military informants those who can help guide troops and police through the maze of buildings, stair-wells, streets, alleyways, tunnels, and sewers that may be the key to tactical success . . .

"Such cement-and-brick 'jungles' can offer better security to snipers and city guerrillas than the Viet Cong enjoy in their jungles, elephant grass and marshes. This suggests protracted warfare of a very new kind of city guerrilla forces become well organized by dissident and determined leaders . . . "

Inasmuch as riots are a means by which people relieve their frustrations, "violence in the future may even be by whites protesting against poverty and their environment . . . " People in congested city slums "could fight guerrilla fashion for their own local aims. They might not be fighting the federal government, but merely the city or the state. As in Vietnam today, the fighters by night could be workers by day

"From a military standpoint, successful warfare against urban based guerrillas in American cities could be as difficult and prolonged as the fighting in Vietnam if the insurrection is well organized."

VICTIM AND AMERICA President Johnson has suggested that Vietnam veterans could very well be a source of new manpower for our city police forces. But, we recall, a cartoon in Saturday Review -- many weeks ago -- which showed two Black GI's in Vietnam, one said to the other, "These techniques will sure help us when we get back home!"

Reviewing In the Name of America (the newly published study of American violations of international law), Don Luce concludes as follows:

"In the Name of America makes many things clear. We are committing atrocities in Vietnam, and these are being reported daily in a wide selection of our news media. We are destroying the very people whom we are in Southeast Asia to 'save.' The war does have a dehumanizing effect on our own men. What was morally unacceptable only a few months ago is commonplace now; the morally unthinkable today will perhaps become the commonplace tomorrow"

The book "brings up questions of great legal and moral consequence both at home and abroad. Ethics cannot be determined by geography, and breaking domestic law in Milwaukee can only be consistently condemned if breaking international law in Ben Suc is similarly condemned. . . ."

ON THE
PROBLEM
OF FACE

The Noble Art of Losing Face
May one day save the human race
And turn into eternal merit
What weaker minds would call disgrace.

-- Heinrich Heine

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