

Chicago 1968

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Background

Yippies

The whole thing started at the end of last year, when some “kids with hair” founded the Youth International Party (which made them YIPpies), decided to run a pig for the presidency of the United States of America, and began to prepare a Festival of Life as a response to the Democratic Party’s Convention of Death in Chicago.

The Yippie candidate was nominated in February, 1968. Yippie militants Jerry Rubin and Ed Sanders presented Pigasus to the nominating convention as “the next President of the United States.” (*Chicago Seed*, Vol. 2, No. 11)

According to Rubin, “The Republican Party has nominated a pig for President and a pig for Vice-President.”

“The Democratic Party will most likely nominate a pig for President and a pig for Vice-President.

“And so the Yippies will nominate a pig for President.

“Don’t be fooled by the pigs of the Republican and Democratic Parties.

“Be fooled by the pig of the Yippie party!

“Our campaign slogan is clean and simple: Why take half a hog when you can get the whole hog? The Democratic and Republican Parties have been offering us inarticulate pigs for years. The Yippie party is nominating an articulate, dynamic, sincere and honest pig, the whole hog.”

Rubin made it clear that the Yippie candidate would not subvert the basic tenets of the Great Society; on the contrary, “If elected, Pig will run the country along the same principles that have always guided our government’s existence: garbage. Smelly, bloody, ugly garbage. Pig will intervene in the internal affairs of other countries. Pig will drop napalm on Vietnamese children. Pig will clean up the streets of America. Pig will waste money while many starve. Pig will continue to make a stupid mess of things.” (*The Ramparts Wall Poster*, August 24, 1968)

The Pig’s platform, to continue to run the country on the principles of garbage (in which the pig is an expert), was his only campaign slogan because “our pig will make no false promises like the other candidates. If elected, there will be American boys going overseas to kill innocent people and fight heroic revolutionaries; there will be demonstrations and chaos; and finally revolution as the American people rise up and overthrow all the pig politicians from office.” (*Ibid.*) 3

The most important difference between the Yippie candidate and the candidates of the other parties was his age: “Pig is six months old. This is a reversal of the generation gap. We believe that the younger you are, the more power and responsibility you should have. We want to retire all the menopausal 50 and 60 year old pig politicians. Make way for a six month old pig!” (*Ibid.*)

According to the *Chicago Seed*, “From the beginning, there have been two basic camps on what the Festival of Life is supposed to be. Movement rhetoric aside, these are the political and apolitical stances, with the basic division being geographical. Generally, the New York feeling is that Yippie is a golden opportunity to shit all over the Old Men, while the Chicago ethos, specifically that of the Free City Survival Committee, is that a Festival reflecting the ‘new culture’ and that ‘alternate life style’ can be carried off despite the choice of Convention Week as the time

for fun and frolic.”

When it appeared for a moment that the Democratic Convention might take place elsewhere, a Chicago Yippie wrote, “Many people ostensibly involved in the Festival are ready to follow the Convention wherever it may go. This is rather different than working along the parameters of an alternate society. If the Demagogic National puke is your thing, O.K. But don’t pretend that your trip is Flower City.” (*The Chicago Seed*, Vol. 2, No. 11)

The site of the “Convention of Death” was not changed. Instead, the Mayor of Chicago organized a welcoming committee for the Yippies, composed of the Chicago police, the National Guard and Federal troops, all known for their hospitality. The Chicago Yippies tried to call the Festival of Life off. “The word is out...Chicago may host a Festival of Blood.” (Rat, Convention Issue) But it was too late. The idea was too good, and it had spread too far: “On to Chicago. Hippies, Yippies, Freaks and Heads will all flock to the Youth International Party in Chicago, despite rumors of violence. The week long ‘Yip In’ will be full of music (by top rock groups) and fun.” (Fifth Estate, Aug. 15-Sept. 4, 1968)

NATIONAL MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE

The National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, commonly referred to as “Mobe,” is a coalition of numerous anti-war organizations. For several weeks prior to convention time a staff of thirty organized such things as housing for out-of-town protesters, a legal defense committee, first-aid volunteers, publication of newspapers and brochures describing events. During the week of August 22 to 29, the three-room office in the Loop was crowded with people: some checking on the activities of the day; some trying to trace a friend who hadn’t been heard of since the cops attacked a group they were with; others trying to find out if a friend had succeeded in getting bail money.

In an article, “Democracy is in the Streets,” which appeared in the convention issue of the Rat, Tom Hayden, one of the Mobilization coordinators, gave some of the reasons dissenters from the “Great Society” would come to Chicago: “We are coming to Chicago to vomit on the ‘politics of joy,’ to expose the secret decisions, upset the night club orgies, and face the Democratic Party with its illegitimacy and criminality. American conventions and elections are designed to renew the participation of our people in the ‘democratic political process.’ But in 1968 the game is up. Many of us will not be good Germans under the new Nazis. At the very moment they seek to renew complicity in their system and confidence in their authority, we will be saying NO from the streets.

“The first and most obvious reason for our convention protest is to re-assert militant massive opposition to the Vietnam war and those most directly responsible for its perpetuation. Johnson and other candidates think 1964 can be repeated. The Paris ‘peace talks’ are only a cover for a new escalation of the war. The U.S. is trying to end the anti-war movement rather than its policy in Vietnam. With his March 31 speech Johnson attempted to remove the war from domestic politics until after the elections. In the meantime, the number of bombing sorties flown over Vietnam, the tons of bombs dropped, the number of American troops and the equipping of our puppet allies has been on the increase. The U.S. is concentrating its military resources over the strategic and narrow panhandle of North Vietnam while turning the South into a wasteland. Nearly one fourth of the South Vietnamese people are uprooted and homeless refugees in ‘camps.’ Bubonic plague and other epidemics are spreading as a result of widespread spoliation of the countryside. Chemicals destroy trees and rice and water; napalm and phosphorous bombs set fire to whole villages. The U.S. is using genocidal methods, threatening the very existence of Vietnam as a nation, in a desperate attempt to force the Vietnamese to compromise their dignity and independence. So long as the U.S. can win endurance from the American people, these genocidal policies can be applied. At the convention where political deception reaches its carnival climax, we must shatter Johnson’s design by taking to the streets again.

“The second reason we should be in Chicago is to break the summer silence of white Americans on the issue of racist persecution. We are demanding self-determination for oppressed minorities, withdrawal of the entire colonial apparatus which manipulates the ghetto, immediate allocation of billions of dollars to community movements to meet their needs. We have no illusions about the

fundamental racism of the Democratic party, and we come with full knowledge that the Party will throw only token promises to black people while continuing their oppression. We should come to serve notice that Democratic party 'liberalism' no longer will attract whites concerned with real social justice and change. This liberalism is bankrupt; its public programs create new forms of domination; its structures are supported by police power rather than popular consent. In addition to rejecting the Democratic formulas for 'new frontiers' and 'great societies,' we should come to demonstrate that the government will not succeed in isolating black militants from white supporters, that we will create new fronts of struggle, that the government will have to repress white people if it continues to apply such tactics to black leaders and people. Tens of thousands of white people will show the failure of the government to unite the majority around racist calls for law and order, and the futility of any government plan to conduct itself as a policeman everywhere.

"We should go to Chicago to insist that institutions like the Democratic Party are resisting the profound pressures for change in this country. The Democrats are not 'the party of the people' but a self-perpetuating machine...

"We should march on Chicago not to enter and change a party such as this. That would be like hippies seeking to abolish money by taking jobs in banks. We are marching as a way of reasserting the claims of people against their political rulers."

In a less grim tone, he goes on to say: "Chicago will be a beautiful opportunity for a vast convening of the many local movements across the country. Around campfires on the beach at night, in parks and auditoriums as well, people will renew their contacts, discuss experiences, feel their unity and numbers, and confront together the chicanery of the politicians and the sadism of the police. The movement is regularly in need of such opportunities to relate and grow together." (Rat, Convention Issue, p. 4)

The issues over which the National Mobilization called for the Chicago actions are: (1) immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam; (2) an end to police brutality; (3) liberation and self-determination for black people; (4) an end to poverty and exploitation.

PARTICIPANTS AND MOVEMENT CENTERS

The Festival of Life was to be a meeting-place for groups with different constituencies, different political perspectives, different experiences. Some of the groups established “movement centers”—places for gatherings and discussions; some participated in the events but did not maintain centers; some distributed their ideas among the participants, through journals and leaflets.

Some groups, notably the War Resisters League, the Socialist Workers Party, opposed participation in the Chicago Festival because, they said, “any peace demonstration at the convention is bound to be interpreted as a pro-McCarthy effort despite all attempts to keep it issue-oriented.” In addition, the Universities Committee (originator of the teach-in) argued that “in the potentially explosive atmosphere of Chicago, the proposed demonstration could well mis-carry into wide-scale violence far more compatible with ultra-revolutionary notions than with the current thinking of most of the peace movement.” (WIN, Sept. 1, 1968)

The New University Conference, an organization of professors and graduate students, announced that its national office would “not be an official sponsor of activities of the Mobilization... and will not be chiefly oriented to the organization of actions.” The NUC office, however, did organize a movement center, literature tables, and a teach-in. (NUC, August Newsletter)

Although the Black Panther Party was not a sponsor of the Mobilization and did not have a “movement center,” individual Panthers participated in the events. “Free Huey” was prominent on buttons, posters and in shouts, and Huey Newton’s ideas were known by numerous demonstrators and were learned by others from literature which was circulated during Festival Week: “This society is definitely a decadent one and we realize it. Black people are realizing it more and more. We cannot gain our freedom under the present system: the system that is carrying out its plans of institutionalized racism...

“The revolution has always been in the hands of the young. The young always inherit the revolution. The young population is growing at a very rapid rate and they are very displeased with the authorities. They want control. I doubt that under the present system any kind of program can be launched that will be able to buy off all these young people.” (Huey Newton in *The Movement*, August, 1968)

Draft resisters maintained movement centers, participated in demonstrations and rallies, and communicated with other participants: “As a result of your disappointments and frustrations with the electoral politics approach of achieving social change, you may realize that other approaches are needed. Voting once every four years in the circus that is called ‘elections’ is an incredibly slow, and often stagnant way of trying to solve problems that demand immediate solutions.” (“An Open Letter to Supporters of McCarthy from The Resistance”)

Women Mobilized for Change maintained a discussion center at the Chicago Y.W.C.A., and called for “a reconstruction of institutions to eliminate ingrained paternalism, colonialism, and racism,...a new attitude toward society based on love of life, not destruction; citizens who care about people more than property, justice more than order, reality more than hypocrisy...

“Because: America is guilty of the crime and violence of racism,... poverty... militarism.” (WMC, “Coalition of Conscience Dialogues”)

The Industrial Workers of the World, who have an office in Chicago, passed out a leaflet which said: “We resist being used against each other in the same shop or industry. In this world market we should not let ourselves, even across oceans, be used to undermine each other’s wage demands. Neither should we let national governments use us to bomb each other’s homes or to slaughter each other’s children.” (IWW, “This War is NOT for Workers”)

A new Philadelphia group, the Radical Organizing Committee, opened a Movement Center, and announced its “program of local organizing and mass action designed to expose the overpowering influence of militarism in American life.” ROC’s leaflet opposes the draft, proposes immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the U.S. from Vietnam, and supports the Black Liberation Movement and struggles for national liberation. (“The roc is hatching”)

The National Office of Students for a Democratic Society planned no specific actions for its members and did not call “for a mobilization of SDS folks in Chicago. We want only those people who have the time and see themselves as organizers. Chicago will not be a fun place during the Convention and only organizers are needed...” (New Left Notes, Aug. 5)

This decision of the National Interim Committee of SDS resulted from the conviction that “the political situation was too confusing to convey a clear political message. In the face of estimates of possibly 100,000 McCarthy supporters coming to Chicago, many people would think that the new left, while maintaining a tactical separation, was actually in Chicago pushing for McCarthy.” (Eric Mann, Guardian, Aug. 3)

The national group planned mainly to reach McCarthy supporters, hoping to present the SDS position and to argue that McCarthy is not an answer to the social problems of this country.

During Convention week the National Office of SDS distributed several publications. Some of them served as an introduction to the organization; one was an interview with Huey Newton; the four issues of Handwriting on the Wall—a poster-size sheet in which participants reported Chicago events—were an attempt to circumvent the distortions of reporting in the mass media. It was urged that this last publication be fastened to trees and buildings throughout the city in order to reach many readers.

Handwriting was, in fact, seen in many parts of Chicago; in the second issue, advice was given on techniques of posting: “When you go out to post the paper, don’t go at night. If you knew the city, or under less militarized conditions, it might be easier or safer to hang paper then; here, given the instructions under which the cops are operating, it could be suicidal. You could be ‘mistaken for a looter’ and shot. And it could go harder on you without bystanders around if you’re caught.”

The SDS National Office also called for members in other cities to “organize support demonstrations with their loyal constituencies—especially if Daley’s Pigs start rioting in the streets of Chicago.” (New Left Notes, Aug. 5)

A Leaflet by the University of Chicago SDS addressed itself to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, which took place on the eve of the Chicago convention. “We denounce unconditionally the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, and we demand of our government the immediate withdrawal of all American forces from Vietnam.” (“Russian Tanks in Prague, American Tanks in Saigon,” U. of C. SDS)

The National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam organized a demonstration against the Illinois Institute of Technology Research Institute, a “Major research organization ...

approximately \$14 million of its annual \$30 million in contracts comes from the Defense Dept. ... main areas of research are metallurgy and chemical and biological warfare (CBW)... IITRI is a major contractor in aerobiology, the airborne dissemination of CBW agents... IITRI maintains 'Law Enforcement Science and Technology Center' doing urban counterinsurgency research for Justice Dept... IIT is a lily-white University in an all-black community." The MOB leaflet said, "We demand stop of gas warfare against the black people in U.S. and against the Vietnamese people." ("Demonstration Monday, Aug. 26")

"A Mathematicians' March Against War and Racism" was announced. "Bring Logic and Humanity (yourself) to the 1968 Democratic Convention!" ("Join the Bourbaki Brigade")

Ramparts published an enormous daily sheet. The *Ramparts Wall Poster* was a subversive sheet. First Of all it was free. And it printed demonstrators' versions of what was happening in Chicago, as well as schedules of movement events and addresses of movement centers.

INTIMIDATION AND MILITARY PREPARATIONS

Movement people were not the only ones who expected increased police and military activity. Two weeks before the convention, McCarthy made urgent requests for his supporters to stay away from Chicago. Thus, only a small percentage of the expected thousands of young McCarthy workers and admirers actually were present in Chicago.

Daley began his intimidation campaign early. Last spring, he gained national notoriety with his “shoot to kill” order following the ghetto rebellions. At the end of April, Daley’s police brutally beat and gassed peaceful anti-war demonstrators. “Jack Mabley of the Chicago American wrote July 25 that Chicago has established the reputation of being ‘an uptight city, with tough police.’ This has achieved a ‘sobering effect’ on potential peace demonstrators ‘who are willing to risk a slight bump on the head or a twisted arm or a night in the cooler in New York or San Francisco but not a skull fracture in Chicago.’ The bully openly states the purpose: to develop a ‘strong movement...to warn young hippies and yippies away from Chicago.’” (Rat, Convention Issue, p. 2)

For the occasion, the International Amphitheater had its front designed to look like the White House, but cyclone fencing and barbed wire surrounded it. A 60-square-block area around the Amphitheater was sealed off by security guards. Only residents and people with credentials were permitted to enter. Businesses along one of the streets in this “sanitized” region were requested to close down.

The 33rd Brigade of the National Guard (5,500 men) were scheduled to drill in five Chicago armories; military machinery came too; the 11,000-man Chicago Police Force worked twelve-hour shifts during the convention. The delegates’ route to the Amphitheater was prescribed and protected; cops guarded every overpass. The most important persons weren’t even allowed to travel by ground transport. They were flown in helicopters from the bastion-hotel to the bastion-convention hall.

Large numbers of blue-helmeted cops were seen in all parts of the city, nearly always in pairs or groups. Plainclothesmen were equally visible (it’s not only a uniform which identifies a cop), suspiciously eyeing everyone under 30. The uniformed greeted the un-uniformed in coffee shops and on street corners. The State was ready for its convention.

Events

YIPPIE LIVE-IN

Since the Yippies hold that the parks are free and belong to the people, they intended to take up residence in Lincoln Park. They mapped out a section of the Park and intended to transform it into "an alternative community...based on humanitarian cooperation and equality...which allows and promotes the creativity present in all people and especially our youth." (Yippie leaflet)

The urban plan for the alternative community included a free store, the Yippie Pentagon, Grub Town, Music Area, Free Theater, a Church of the Free Spirit by a pond, a communications center and a hospital, a Hog Farm, a Free Beach and an outhouse.

However, the parks do not belong to the people. On Friday, August 23 seven Yippies and their presidential candidate were arrested. The candidate was a 200-pound pig. "It is thought that the arrest will dampen the Pig's chances. Nevertheless, other heads of state—Lenin, Castro, Kenyatta, DeValera among them—held office after serving time in prison." (*Ramparts*, Aug. 24) The following night, around 10:30 p.m., masses of cops arrived at Lincoln Park prepared to enforce the 11 o'clock curfew. "Teams of plainclothes cops in nervous survival groups of six to eight circulated on the fringe of the crowd...Suddenly a police van moved into the crowd, and the pigs busted one Yippie... But the pigs weren't prepared for what happened next: the crowd split, only to re-form on...the main drag of Old Town...The streets of Old Town belonged to us Saturday night, and it wasn't just rhetoric." (SDS, Handwriting on the Wall, No. 2)

The Yippies' urban plans were disrupted. They could not sleep in the park. On Sunday they gave a demonstration of their techniques of self-defense, including snake-dancing and karate. They tried to respond to the police incursions on their free territory.

Allen Ginsberg wrote: "Help! All the Yippies wanted to sleep together safely under the sky and have a good time talking about God Politics." Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman wrote: "We are a revolutionary new community and we must protect our community. Chicago is a police state and we must protect ourselves. The cops want to turn our parks into graveyards. But we, not they, will decide when the battle begins.

"The cops have said they will beat and arrest us if we try to sleep in the parks which belong to the people. We are not going into their jails and we aren't going to shed our blood. We're too important for that. We've got too much work to do.

"If the cops try to kick us out of the park we have sleeping places. We're not going to make it that easy for them to get us. We'll sleep where we can, because we've got a lot to do when we're awake. Leave the park in small groups and do what is necessary—make them pay for kicking us out of the park but let's win!"

Paul Krassner said, "Sleeping in Lincoln Park after 11 p.m. isn't as important as living our revolution there the rest of the day (the park opens at 6 a.m.). Mass arrests in response to civil disobedience would not outrage an American public which for so long has allowed money that could feed starving Mississippi children dead to be spent burning Vietnamese children alive." (Sunday Announcements)

The following day the *Ramparts Wall Poster* carried the headline: "COPS CHASED AND CLUBBED YIPPIES LATE LAST NIGHT AT LINCOLN PARK." Before the attack, Abbie Hoffman had announced, "The Yippies are going to put on a display of police brutality at 11 o'clock tonight." According to the *Ramparts* article, "By 9 p.m. Lincoln Park looked like a gypsy campsite, with a fire in nearly every wastebasket. People grooved on African drumming. Others began to watch a squad of ten cops who appeared to want to defend the toilets. They backed themselves up against the toilet wall for no discernible reason, and let themselves get surrounded by demonstrators. Moving out suddenly they tried to disperse the crowd, cracking a few backs and shoulders with clubs.

"There was no amnesty for the press. Newsmen looked no different from demonstrators in the darkness. Many press people wore helmets. A Newsweek reporter took one of the worst beatings of the night." (*Ramparts*, Aug. 26)

The cops escalated their assault on the Yippies two nights later. According to the *Ramparts Wall Poster*, "The Chicago police department moved a thousand demonstrators from passive resistance to active riot last night (Tuesday night) by forcing them out of Lincoln Park with a heavy barrage of tear gas." The demonstrators, led by a group of 200 clergymen from the Northside Cooperative Ministry, had vowed to stay in the park all evening, and to passively sit-in to make their point...Several hundred police massed at the eastern end of the park near the drive. They moved westward behind a heavy barrage of tear gas shot from guns. This was supplemented by a truck that moved against the crowd, laying down a thick cloud of gas.

"As the crowd retreated it began hurling rocks and bottles at the advancing policemen. 'Pigs,' 'Fascist Pigs,' many in the crowd screamed. One bottle hit a policeman directly on the helmet. Pushed out into the street, the demonstrators became furious. Youths who had been singing hymns and songs of peace in the park, turned and stoned the first passing police car they spotted.

"Six police cars had windows broken by stones or bottles. One cop charged out of his car in pursuit of a demonstrator. He chased him into a narrow alley. When the first policeman failed to emerge after 15 seconds, his partner entered the alley with a drawn gun...A barricade was built at Wells and North Streets. The barricade was constructed out of wastebaskets which were then set afire. A police car was forced to a halt in front of the barricade. When it stopped, a rock was thrown through its front window. The policeman emerged with a drawn gun. A medic with a bullhorn urged him from the sidelines. 'Don't draw your gun.'

"This seemed to calm the enraged policeman and he put his gun back in his holster and drove away.

"Several blocks down Wells Street, near Scott, two police cars chased a group of black youths across a schoolyard. When the policemen stepped from their cars, the youths continued running. Two patrolmen cocked their pistols as people screamed from an apartment house, 'Don't shoot him. Don't shoot him.'" (*Ramparts*, Aug 28)

DEMONSTRATIONS, RALLIES, MARCHES

Most of the demonstrations and rallies that unfolded in Chicago during convention week had been planned by the National Mobilization Committee, the Yippies or other groups. Only a few of the major events were organized on the spot by the participants themselves, although in the context of the pre-planned events, there was a good deal of self-organization in response to the repressive acts of the state.

The National Mobilization Committee called for an anti-war demonstration in front of the hotels housing major convention delegations on Sunday, August 25th. The leaflet announcing the event insisted, "We will not be denied our right to dissent!" This demonstration took place without incidents. Demonstrators were kept on sidewalks by "marshals" who had practiced in Chicago parks before convention week, and the demonstration ended up in Grant Park across from the Conrad Hilton Hotel, where demonstrators marched in a large circle chanting slogans like: "What do we want?" "Peace!" "When?" "Now!"

That night, Tom Hayden, one of the coordinators of the National Mobilization, was arrested twice, "once as he sat under a tree in Lincoln Park, once as he was entering the Conrad Hilton Hotel with some friends. The police have told him, bluntly, that they will kill him. The harassment and bullying of Hayden sums up Chicago's whole effort to wipe out dissent." (*Ramparts*, Aug. 27)

In response to Hayden's arrest, the following day the first unplanned march took place. People marched from the various movement centers and from Lincoln Park to the police station where Hayden was held. They chanted, "Free Hayden! Free Huey!" Young people at the head of the march carried black flags, red flags, and flags of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front. They shouted, "What do you want?" This time the answer was, "Revolution!" "When?" "Now!"

These demonstrators marched from the police station to a hill in Grant Park on top of which is a statue of a Civil War general on a horse. "The truly heroic act of the day came when [a] guy from Alabama climbed the statue of the old general." (Handwriting on the Wall, #3) The guy from Alabama planted an NLF flag on top of the statue. This act revealed the political character of the police. The cops reacted immediately. Six club-swinging police charged up the hill to remove the Liberation Front symbol from the statue. The cops sent most of the demonstrators to the flat ground around the hill, but were unable to climb the horse. "The guy from Alabama" lost the flag, but sat on the horse and made the victory symbol with his arms. The crowd cheered.

About 40 cops marched up the hill in triangle formation to "liberate" their statue, while other cops tried to ride up the steep hill on motorcycles. They brought down "the guy from Alabama," arrested him, beat him and fractured his arm.

On Tuesday, August 27, two planned events took place. The Peace and Freedom Party announced a rally in Lincoln Park. Several speakers pointed out that now white dissidents are experiencing forms of repression which have been directed toward the black community for hundreds of years. The themes of the rally were "Free Huey Newton" and "All Power to the People; Black Power to Black People!"

In the evening, an un-birthday party for Lyndon Johnson was held at the Chicago Coliseum. Rock groups shared the stage with singers and writers Phil Ochs, Abbey Hoffman, Dick Gregory, Jean Genet, Allen Ginsberg, Paul Krassner, Dave Dellinger, William Burroughs. After the un-birthday party, in the early hours of the morning, the Coliseum crowd moved north toward Grant Park while Yippies moved south from Lincoln Park. As approximately 3,000 demonstrators moved toward Grant Park, the National Guard was called out for the first time, "to defend the Conrad Hilton Hotel." In Grant Park, across from the Hilton, demonstrators were addressed by convention delegates who came down from the hotel.

For Wednesday, August 28th, the National Mobilization had planned an afternoon rally in Grant Park which was to be followed by a march on the Amphitheater, meeting-place of the Democratic convention. At the entrances to the park, policemen gave out leaflets to people walking toward the rally site. The police leaflet said, "You are permitted to conduct this assembly and rally and will be protected," and it warned, "Any attempts to conduct or participate in a parade or march will subject each and every participant to arrest."

The political character of "Law and Order" was once again revealed. When some members of the audience lowered the American flag to half mast, police charged on the audience, swinging clubs and beating and arresting people. After rescuing the flag, the cops permitted the rally to continue.

When the rally ended, thousands of people formed into rows preparing to march to the Amphitheater. At this point, the people who had been "permitted to conduct this assembly and rally" learned that they could not leave the rally site. The bridges which led across to the street were "protected" by the National Guard. Organizers of the rally left the procession sitting in the park while they tried to negotiate with city officials.

A large group of cops (20 or 30) in civilian clothes walked from the beginning to the end of the line of demonstrators, laughing, pointing and shouting the names of some of the demonstrators. They were giving each other a "Who's Who in the Peace Movement."

Abandoned by their "organizers," the demonstrators began to organize themselves. The sun was setting and many feared being attacked far from the street, isolated in the park, after dark. An open forum developed around one of the loudspeakers. The subject was, "what do we do now?" Most speakers felt that the worst thing to do was to continue sitting in the park waiting for the "negotiators" to return. People stopped waiting for the organizers. They decided to get out of the trap and to regroup in front of the Hilton.

As they tried to leave the park, the demonstrators confronted their "protectors": "The police and National Guardsmen were armed with clubs, chemical spray, grenade launchers, tear-gas canisters, bayonet-tipped rifles, and even submachine guns... Police by the hundreds rushed at demonstrators, chasing them from one area to another, clubbing those they could reach, spraying disabling gas at others." (*Chicago Daily News*, Aug. 29)

When about a thousand demonstrators reached the area across from the Hilton, they shouted, "To the streets! The streets belong to the people!" and they marched down Michigan Avenue in possession of the street for several blocks. They were attacked blitzkrieg fashion by busloads of club-swinging cops. Demonstrators were pushed against walls, and herded into stores. Arbitrary random arrests were made and others were chased in all directions. Numerous cops had removed their identification badges.

When demonstrators regrouped in front of and across from the Hilton, "squads of policemen charged right and left into the crowd, breaking it up. Demonstrators were thrown to the ground

and beaten, sometimes by several policemen at once, and dragged to waiting vans and thrown in. As television lights glared and the crowd chanted 'The Whole World's Watching,' the police paused to regroup, then charged again. Nightsticks thrashed. Several hundred people were caught in a police rush, thrown against the front of the Hilton and knocked through two plate-glass windows. Onlookers joined the protesters in booing the police. Rolls of toilet paper, bars of soap, and water glasses were thrown at the police from hotel windows, along with a number of rocks, bottles and cherry bombs." (*New York Times*, Aug. 30)

At the Democratic convention, delegate from Connecticut Arthur Miller spoke of the "aged bitterness on the platform" which was accompanied by a "hatred for the young," and at 3 a.m. that morning "some 600 convention delegates, alternates and campaign aides of Senator Eugene J. McCarthy marched down Michigan Ave. with lighted candles... to protest Chicago police brutality. Leaders of the 3 a.m. march said they were also protesting the adoption by the Democratic National Convention of 'a warmongering platform.'" (*Chicago Daily News*, Aug. 29)

Thousands of angry people assembled in Grant Park the following afternoon for an unscheduled rally and forum. Tom Hayden, released from jail, said, "It may well be that the era of organized, peaceful and orderly demonstrations is coming to an end and that other methods will be needed.

"We are now beginning to fight because we must, because it has been imposed on us—we are beginning to fight for our own survival. And if we can survive in Chicago we can survive anywhere."

Mike Klonsky of the National Office of SDS warned that now that new left youth had splashed across national television and the world press, politicians, liberals and other good people would try to co-opt them. However, when he said, "We've been fighting for years; you just came last night," he was booed. And when he said "If you join us it will be on our terms," the protests were so loud that the rest of his speech couldn't be heard. His listeners, who had just un-joined bureaucratic structures by coming to the park, had not come to join Klonsky's national office.

The speaker who followed Klonsky in fact made the attempt at co-option against which Klonsky had warned. Endicott Peabody, a former governor of Massachusetts, said, "Just because McCarthy didn't succeed doesn't mean you should abandon the political process. We want you to be the mayors of our cities, we want you to control the police and the National Guardsmen. Whatever you do, stay in the political process!" He was roundly booed. People shouted, "Down with cops and soldiers! We don't want to be mayors! Go back to Boston! Up against the wall!" Dick Gregory, who chaired the forum, commented, "We'll let anyone speak up here, but we don't guarantee people will listen."

Mobilization coordinator Rennie Davis, his head bandaged from the previous day's clubbing, took the microphone and said, "We don't want people to tell us now how we must support Hubert Humphrey because he is a little better than Nixon. Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon both represent all that is old, all that is ugly, all that is bigoted, all that is repressive in America today. They must be pushed into the sea.

"Don't vote for Humphrey, don't vote for Nixon. Join us in the streets of America. We are going out now all over the country to build a National Liberation Front for America. The slogan of our front will be 'There can be no peace in the United States until there is peace in Vietnam.'"

Another speaker urged the young people to go back to their cities and create one, two, many Chicagos.

During this assembly “hundreds of steel-helmeted Illinois national guardsmen armed with M-1 rifles and carrying tear-gas spray guns on their backs stood elbow to elbow three rows deep along Michigan Avenue in front of Grant Park.” (*New York Times*, Aug. 30)

The head of the Wisconsin Democratic delegation began leading a march toward the Amphitheater as a “gesture of political freedom.” According to the *Chicago Daily News*, “the ranks at first numbered about 300, mainly Wisconsin delegates and families, some clergymen, a few nuns and men in business suits...Eventually about 2,000 persons stretched out for four blocks. Police followed in unmarked cars—and at 16th Street, a cordon of cops was waiting, brandishing nightsticks. They were backed up by National Guardsmen.” (*Chicago Daily News*, Aug. 30) The marchers turned around and returned to Grant Park.

In the park, Dick Gregory announced that he was going to walk to his home in south Chicago and invited people in the park to accompany him. Gregory explained that cops could not legally stop him from walking home, nor could they legally stop his guests. About 30 convention delegates joined Gregory at the head of the walk and a four-block-long line of guests followed them. They were stopped at 18th Street by 1500 National Guardsmen.

Gregory and the delegates were arrested, and when the angered crowd pushed forward a Guard officer gave the order, “Use your rifle butts and push this crowd back.” Injured, frightened demonstrators moved back through the crowd shouting, “It’s horrible!” People behind the front lines shouted, “Hold your ground!” The demonstrators sat down and immediately gas grenades exploded in their midst. Numerous people were injured and the demonstrators retreated. Two more volleys of gas drove them back to Grant Park. A few demonstrators threw rocks and bottles at the troops. A helicopter with spotlights lit up the retreating demonstrators.

In the park the demonstrators were contained by “2,000 guardsmen and dozens of military vehicles.” (*Chicago Daily News*, Aug. 30) They were once again attacked by gas, and military jeeps with large barbed wire grills faced them from the street. Expecting to be attacked, they sat down and sang. Phil Ochs sang for the group and dedicated one song to the soldiers surrounding the park: “I Ain’t Marchin’ Anymore.”

BUS DRIVERS' STRIKE

A wildcat strike by Chicago bus drivers coincided with the Democratic convention and the Festival of Life. The Concerned Transit Workers, an opposition caucus in Local 241 of the Amalgamated Transit Workers, met in a church on August 24 to prepare for the strike which was to begin at midnight. "The issue at stake is black representation and control of the Union. Black membership is 80% of the drivers, but the union leadership is white." (Peace & Freedom Movement Center Leaflet) All bus drivers pay union dues, but black drivers are not represented, nor are their interests protected by the union. In the Newsletter passed out that night, the CTW said, "Unions were inaugurated to give the working man a voice in determining his own destiny, but that era of unionism has long since been replaced by the tyrannical unions of today. The voice of the membership has been overruled time and time again. The membership's voice has been replaced by the officer's voice."

The Newsletter also pointed out that, "The news media has intentionally misled the public and many white drivers by constantly referring to the Concerned Transit Workers as a 'Racist Organization.' Their obvious purpose was to set the white transit workers against the black transit workers."

The strike was almost completely effective in south Chicago, but many white drivers continued to serve the predominantly white areas of Chicago. An injunction was issued against the strike, but drivers continued to picket the depots. The Peace & Freedom Party as well as the National Mobilization Committee announced their support of the striking drivers. Many Movement people joined picket lines in white neighborhoods.

Analysis

When the Yippies took up residence in their “alternative community” in Lincoln Park, when they proclaimed a Festival of Life and nominated a pig for the presidency of the United States, they unveiled the repressive character of American society and exposed the obfuscating role of elections and the “political process.”

The police attack on the Yippies was not an exceptional act. This was not an irrational and unnecessary unleashing of violence by the megalomaniac mayor, nor a sudden and accidental outburst of sadism on the part of the Chicago police.

First of all, the Yippies were not attacked for sleeping in the park. People who spend nights in parks of American cities do not normally get gassed and beaten.

The Yippies were not attacked for their action, but for the exemplary character of their action. By living in the park, by organizing their own social activities, the Yippies acted out (and thus tested) two principles: 1) that people are free, 2) that the parks belong to the people. They didn’t say these things but did them. If people are free, they can do what they choose, and not what authority, social convention or economic position permit (so long as they don’t limit other people’s freedom, which the Yippies clearly didn’t do in a park which is normally empty at night). If the parks belong to the people, then the people, and not external bosses, leaders or representatives, control what happens in them. If the corporate-military ruling class permitted the communication of this example, they would let an acid run through the American corporate-military system: if the parks belong to the people, then why not the streets, the neighborhoods, the universities, the factories, the cities?

Secondly, when several Yippies and their pig were arrested, it was not because either the Yippies or their pig constituted a physical threat to the American system, but because they were a symbolic threat. In other words, the repressive machinery was unleashed to save America from symbols.

The attack and defense of symbols was illustrated several times during convention week by the Chicago police. On one occasion thirty to forty cops attacked a boy who was planting a Vietnamese National Liberation Front flag on a statue. On another occasion they attacked the audience of a police-sanctioned assembly when the American flag was lowered.

The Yippie mock candidate was arrested because, together with the Festival of Life, he exposed the mockery of elections. The example of creativity, life and self-organization in the park was a vivid contrast to the passivity and servility of the “political process.” The “live-in” illustrated that control over one’s own social activities has nothing to do with being externally controlled, and that voting for a candidate is not a substitute for running one’s own life. Consequently, voting for one pig is as good as voting for another, since in any case this cannot lead to what the Yippies were already doing in the park: living, creating, controlling their own social activities.

People are not free.

The Yippies exposed the repressive structures which keep people from being free, and they exposed the propaganda which equates servility with freedom. When the Yippies tried to run their own social activities, they were gassed, beaten and jailed, like black people who try to run their own communities, like students who try to run their universities, like workers would be if they tried to run their’ factories.

What the Yippies exposed is the fact that in a hierarchic society, everyone is “free” to stay in his place.

By making love and music in the park, by sleeping and eating free, the Yippies were doing what the productive forces of an industrially developed society allow them to do, and what the

social system does not allow them to do. Thus they exposed the system's structures of economic repression.

By organizing their own activities without orders or permission, without compromise or negotiation, the Yippies ceased to recognize the legitimacy of the state. Since the Yippies did not ask for permission to act, but simply acted, the state could not talk to them, and was forced to intervene with its only remaining resort: physical violence. The Yippies did not annihilate the power of the state; they exposed the system's structures of political and military repression.

The parks do not belong to the people, any more than the rivers and lakes, the food, the houses, the streets and vehicles, the factories and mines, the universities and research centers. By acting as if they did, the Yippies acted out an alternative fantasy, an illusion which is different from the official illusions: illusions which distinguish ownership (something that's written) from control (something that's done), illusions which distinguish private ownership (which means control by a small group of people) from public ownership (which means control by the same small group of people).

The Yippies' alternative fantasy is not an act of expropriation; it is an exemplary action. Their illusion cannot become a reality, just as students cannot really take over their universities, workers their factories, black people their communities, all people their communities, so long as state power can stop them, so long as police and military exist.

The shock with which the American press, television and middle class reacted to the violence of the Chicago police was itself shocking. The repression had been expected. Complete silence on the part of the press, indifference on the part of the middle class, had been expected. But not the shock, not all that pious indignation, not midnight vigils with candles. This was an exposure of the hypocrisy, the two-faced character, the double standard of the American press and the American middle class.

For years the press has reported the poisoning, maiming and murder of "Vietcong terrorists," "peasant guerrillas," black "snipers" and "looters," with the same cool indifference that one would use to describe the extermination of insects. The reader was always made to understand that "our boys" did what they did for the sake of "freedom" and to maintain "law and order."

However, when the press was attacked, gassed and beaten by "our boys," the Chicago cops, adjectives like "vicious," "sadistic," "violent," and "cruel" were used in the finest papers of the country, not to describe "terrorists," but to describe "our boys," the agents of "law and order."

For years American whites have known about the carnage which American forces unleash daily in Vietnam, about the beatings and murders of black people perpetrated by the cops of every American city. Recently they've been learning of the pot-busts, beatings and arrests of "long-haired hippies." And American whites continued to live in peace and quiet. Whether or not they liked Vietnamese people, black people or hippies, they continued to live out Business as Usual: "another day, another dollar."

However, when some middle class American whites, perhaps even some White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, were attacked by the police and the National Guard, shouts of indignation went up and candlelight processions were launched.

If these people are not hypocritical, if they learned about repression in Chicago, if they are sincerely against violence, cruelty and sadism, and not merely against the violence, cruelty and sadism unleashed on American middle class whites, then these people will fight to withdraw American troops immediately from Vietnam and from other parts of the world; they will put an immediate end to the repression of black people in the U.S., and they will dismantle the entire

repressive machinery: the army and police.

This is not what the respectable indignant white people were doing when the Convention ended. They had started to channel their indignation, to mobilize their energies, to depose Mayor Daley, the functionary who had dared to unleash the repression against them.

The publicity and the public shock about the irrationality, irresponsibility and megalomania of Mayor Daley, the campaigns to expose him and the petitions to depose him, reveal the racism of American middle class whites, and their profound indifference to other people's lives. Daley's orders, and the violence of the Chicago police, cannot even be compared to Johnson's orders and the violence of the American army in Vietnam. Numerous mayors (including Daley some months earlier) ordered their cops to "shoot and kill" black people, and the cops shot, and killed. But then there wasn't so much publicity or shock, such campaigns or petitions—white liberals accept the beating, gassing, maiming and killing of Vietnamese people and of black people.

Old liberal politicians promised "radical reforms" to young people in Grant Park. When they said Yippies and New Leftists would be the next mayors and governors, and would be in charge of the military and the police, the liberals exhibited a sclerosis of the mind, or of the imagination. They had completely missed the Point. The radical young people were in the park precisely because they didn't want to step into the old liberals' shoes, they were demonstrating precisely because they didn't want to become mayors or police chiefs, administrators, managers or college presidents.

The liberals exhibit mental sclerosis because they cannot even imagine social relations which are not hierarchic, they cannot imagine a society without cops and soldiers, they cannot imagine a community where people organize their own social activities. The liberals still assume that the young radicals share the Liberal Dream of a Better Future: what the liberals offer as "radical reform," after a long, slow process of change lasting decades and perhaps centuries, an Imperialist America with a Yippie as President, Black Panthers on the Board of Directors of General Motors, an SDS militant as President of Columbia University, Chicago Daily Rat as the official paper, Allen Ginsburg as Mayor of Chicago, and a Resister as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. This is not a different society. It's not even an alternative fantasy. It's the same one.

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October, 1968

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