

The *Negro* is like the rat on a cylinder. The rat is running but he ain't going nowhere. He's got to keep running just in order to stand still!

It was necessary and revolutionary for the Muslims to come saying the white man is the devil because the *Negro* thought he was "God."

The emphasis on white oppression is no longer sufficient; we must also begin to praise Black achievement.

We must make warriors out of our poets and writers. For if all our writers would speak as warriors our battle would be half won. Literature conditions the mind and the battle for the mind is the first half of the struggle.

We must not be so busy showing our superiority as Nationalists that our audience leaves before we do.

We have an advantage in that the white boy doesn't take us seriously. The problem is neither does this *Negro*.

We must tell Blacks they are great and then make them so.

We have come to undermine the myth of white superiority.

Only thing non-violence proved was how savage whites were.

Racist minds created racist institutions. Therefore we must move against racism, not institutions. For even if we tear down the institutions, that same mind will build them up again.

The Black pacifist will have to give up his love for philosophy in order to satisfy his people's need for security. For phrases and formulas, quotes and quips, are poor protection in the street, or even at home, against bombs, bullets and beast-like men.

The white man tricked us into fighting to be given civil rights when all along we should have been fighting to exercise human rights. For human rights cannot be given, they can only be exercised.

If we can anticipate history, then we can make it.

We must not ask anything from the world but take something to it. We are not here to be taught by the world, but to teach the world.

CHARLES V. HAMILTON

Riots, Revolts and Relevant Response

The United States has experienced, as of 1967, its fourth consecutive summer season of major explosions in its cities' ghettos: burnings, lootings, killings, injuries and mass arrests. The mass media and public officials have consistently referred to these occurrences as riots—race riots. It is clear that the events have become virtually institutionalized; they have become part of what we might call "societal expectations." Around January and February of each year questions will be asked whether we can expect "another long hot summer," what cities we can expect to explode. Local mayors and others will get busy putting together remedial summer-time programs to occupy the potential "rioters": give them menial summer jobs; take them on little trips out of the ghettos to nice, green farms on week-ends; provide them with make-shift little swimming pools to splash around in in front of suffocating tenements. And in some places, when the inevitable happens, we can expect a "commission" of "blue-ribboned" persons to be appointed to "investigate" the causes. At times (as in Watts in '64 and Detroit in '67), we will hear great surprise expressed because those places "were not typical ghettos." They either were not like the tall-tenement-type of Harlem ghetto or had an "enlightened" mayor who had received Negro support (and had rewarded that support with Negro appointees to public office). Perhaps we will hear that a certain city was an unexpected target because the anti-poverty program there was "considered" a success.

Invariably, we can expect officials and private commentators to conclude: 1) these are riots having nothing to do with civil rights; 2) only a very small percentage of black people participate; 3) law

and order must be maintained. There will be variations, but not too many.

This article will deal with various aspects of the above mentioned expectations. And it will suggest that:

- 1) what many official and unofficial decision-makers call "riots" is a serious misnomer in terms of understanding what is happening and for charting solutions;
- 2) the society is confronted with the overt manifestations of repetitive revolts (not just riots) against a presumed legitimacy of the system—a presumption held by the larger society. These are revolts born precisely out of a growing alienation from and rejection of many of the basically irrelevant premises and principles of the society;
- 3) a viable response demands that the decision-makers stop treating the problems solely as matters of control (anti-riot laws, maintaining law and order) or solely as matters of remedial distribution of goods and services (a few jobs here and there, a few housing units remodeled, etc.). It demands that we begin to accept the fact that this is a systemic problem, that is, the socio-political, economic system as it now stands is invalid for treating the causes of the revolts.

A In other words, if absolutely tight control is clamped on the ghettos—curfews, armed guards, apartheid—this will only increase the danger, not alleviate it. Likewise, if black people are simply given more handouts, this will only perpetuate the present status of ghetto colonialism. Until black people actually have their full share in decision-making power, this society has not begun to address itself to its most crucial problem. And to provide for that, we are talking about the drastic transformation of the nature of the socio-political system itself, its values as well as its institutions. Let me deal with each of the three categories separately.

The Misnomer of Riots.

We may define an act of rioting as one constituting the unlawful and chaotic destruction of property, such as burning and looting, which, as has occurred in the racial explosions, frequently involves armed sniping at law enforcement and fire officials. In the riot situation, we see people, collectively in small or large groups and individually, breaking into stores, helping themselves to whatever merchandise they can carry, then perhaps applying

a match to the premises. We see snipers from rooftops attempting to impede the work of firemen called to put out the fire, etc. These acts are clearly identified by the laws of the larger society as criminal acts. There are statutes on the books spelling out penalties. Invariably, then, we hear that the ghetto explosions are simply riots performed by "hoodlums," the riff-raff, by not more than two or three per cent of the total Negro community. We are told that the "right thinking" Negro community condemns these unlawful acts as much as the property owner whose store has been destroyed. And when the pronouncement is made (usually on the second day) that "law and order must be restored and chaos will not be tolerated," this means that the rioting will be suppressed by whatever military force is available and necessary.

The entire episode is interpreted as an event caused by "mad dogs" (California Governor Ronald Reagan's term) who are interested in getting something for nothing. This opinion is fortified by the view that while only the slightest incident ignited it (an arrest attempt, normally), the flames of excitement are fanned by agitators—inside and outside—who take advantage of mob frenzy to perpetuate the seemingly uncontrollable, emotional situation. Therefore, if the riot was not, in fact, caused by an organized group, it is perpetuated by organized bands who then effectively stir up the people and prolong it.

Thus, whatever effective remedies to end the situation are taken, those control remedies are sanctioned by the overall public. If it is "necessary" to shoot looters (or even those suspected of looting) in the back, this is acceptable. If a person does not respond readily to a national guardsman's command at bayonet point to "move on," the public sanctions the harshest solution to move him on—rifle butt or whatever other means.

> The society's full attention is focussed on the acts of looting, burning and sniping. And the entire confrontation is thereby characterized as a "riot"

The fact is that this is a misnomer because the overt, observable acts are the least important of all. In whatever way the society's opinion-leaders decide to characterize the explosions, the fact that black people run through the streets with color television sets and other items on their shoulders is not at all the essence of the problem. It may well be that focussing on such things is the only

way this society can relate to the question. But to label the situation as a "riot" and to proceed to deal with it solely in terms of effective control, solely in terms of criminal law enforcement, clearly blinds the decision-makers to the more fundamental problems involved. The goal of the political leaders becomes merely to end the riotous disturbance, to restore "law and order," to impose obedience to duly constituted authority.

Political Legitimacy and Revolts.

We cannot term these events riots precisely because, in the minds of many of the people breaking the windows and burning the property, that authority is not duly constituted. They are, in fact, revolts. By this we mean that they are acts which deny the very legitimacy of the system itself. The entire value structure which supports property rights over human rights, which sanctions the intolerable conditions in which the black people have been forced to live is questioned. They are revolts because the black people are saying that they no longer intend to abide by an oppressive notion of "law and order." That law and that order mean the perpetuation of an intolerable status quo. Imbedded in that status quo is an ingrained racist attitude which relegated the black people to a subordinated, suppressed status in the first place. That relegation was deliberate and conscious and vicious, having absolutely nothing to do with inaccurate views about the basic character of the black man. That status quo meant that black people would continue to be sacrificed to a more valued goal of maximizing profits from the colonized ghetto. That status quo meant that the traditional political procedures for alleviating one's ills were not sufficient.

Black people are told that if they have grievances they should take them to court or to the "bargaining table." Occasionally they are told that they must pursue the traditional political processes of the ballot.

But we know that these accepted principles of legitimacy are no longer applicable to vast masses of black people in the ghetto. These people have become alienated from those principles. For them, the system is no longer legitimate. By this we mean that the institutions of the society (the courts, the traditional political parties, the police, the educational institutions) are no longer seen

as willing or able to meet the pressing needs of a majority of black people—qua black people—in this society. If an individual black person wishes to escape the oppression, he must renounce his black heritage, act as if he were white, conform to white standards and ideas of himself, and maybe then he will be permitted to climb out of the muck and mire. This is interpreted to him as conformity to the Anglo-Ethic of Work and Achievement; if he works hard, he will achieve, just like all other minority groups in the past. The fact has come home, however, that the Ethic (if ever it was applicable to white America) has no relevancy in the lives and history of masses of blacks. In addition, the explosions in the ghettos are not participated in by the handful of black middle class, but rather by the large lower class who correctly see themselves as perennial victims of public policy. They know that the system, as it is now constituted, has no intention of making room for them. Too much history to the contrary has shown otherwise.

Therefore, the revolts are the overt denials of legitimacy. True, they are threatening "law and order"—not to get a color television set, but to say to the larger society that a wholly new norm of "law and order" must be established. These are revolts against white America's conception of legitimacy vis-à-vis race in this country. This is a legitimacy which says that black people should accept their subordinated and suppressed status, that since they are only ten to twelve per cent of the total population, they must always accept the crumbs which the remaining majority (with all the economic, political and psychological power) is willing to drop down to them. This is a legitimacy which says that in a pluralistic society each group ultimately gets its grievances attended to, that changes do not come "overnight," but rather they come by stages. The accepted legitimacy says that we must pursue a politics of limited objectives, that the "democratic" mystique provides for ultimate alleviation of grievances.

The acts we have been witnessing for the last four consecutive summers are properly described as revolts against these anachronistic principles of legitimacy. They are revolts which say in no uncertain terms that the black people no longer believe in this system. They no longer believe that they will ever be able to improve their condition—even by stages—through the normal processes. This is their conception of socio-political reality; and

their conception is the relevant one precisely because they are the ones doing the suffering.

Neither is this conception inaccurate. There is more than substantial evidence that while white America was lauding itself on the "progress" it had been making in race relations, the objective fact is that the day-to-day lives of the majority of black people were becoming progressively worse. Housing conditions were deteriorating, not improving; schools in the ghettos were getting worse and worse, not better and better; jobs were becoming harder to find, not easier. And yet we had more civil rights laws, more judicial decisions favoring black people, more white people marching side by side with blacks against segregation and discrimination. These were the surface impressions which covered up the fact that all those outward manifestations of systemic adaptation to black demands were sheer myths. The fact that a few black people received high public office or "made it" in the white world was set forth as living and breathing evidence of "progress," but this was blatantly irrelevant to the daily lives of the masses of blacks. And so when the revolts came, white America was shocked. It had actually believed its rhetoric, its concepts of what was legitimate. White arrogance is so imbedded that it could not allow for any notions contrary to its own.

Thus, the simmering summers of the sixties have been revolts, not just riots, and realization of that fact would be advisable for a society that must now give a response.

The revolts speak to the society in still another way. It has been assumed that oppressed, minority people in the country would ultimately not push their demands to the point of violence. After all, the assumption was that, given a majority in possession of the overwhelming predominance of power, the minority surely would capitulate. This assumption has completely overlooked the fact that the power equation is not entirely stacked in favor of the majority. The revolts have been saying: "You see, we too have some modicum of power, if it's only the power to destroy, to disrupt." Like all power, this minority weapon is as useful in the fact of its potential threat as in its actual use. Therefore, given clear evidence, now, that black people are willing to destroy their oppressors' property, to disrupt their normal business cycle, it may well be that the white decision-makers will be forced to view the relations between the races in different terms; the cards

are *not* all stacked in their favor. The revolts have established the credibility of the blacks' willingness to use their power if they are forced to do so. Now, when the ground rules for bargaining are discussed, and when the agenda to be discussed is drawn up, it will not be a completely unilateral affair. The fact is—and apparently this was never quite clear to white America before—that black people have the power at their disposal to deny peace and stability to the larger society.

Relevant Response or Repressive Reaction.

At all times it has been clear that the ultimate decisions to change lie with the white community. That community can choose to listen to the demands of the black revolts and attempt seriously to deal with them, or it can diligently pursue a policy of extermination. If it chooses the first alternative, it must be clear what that involves.

Such an alternative clearly means that precisely because this society has lost its legitimacy vis-à-vis the black American, the solutions must take into account the imbedded distrust and suspicion blacks have of whites. Not only must programs be devised and funded to rebuild the black community, but black people must have a major share of the decision-making process. Black people need much more than benefits from the decision-making process; they must be viable participants in that process. It is not enough to develop and implement a crash educational program for the ghettos; blacks must control their local school systems, just as other ethnic and racial groups control theirs. It is not enough to implement employment programs; black people must have an initial voice in the planning of those programs. It becomes crucial to understand that this does not mean white hand-picked Negro leaders. The black participants must be products of the black community from which they come, and they must, first and foremost, be responsive to that community. I am suggesting that this is the only feasible way at this juncture to establish legitimacy in the minds of the black people. We need not talk at this point about the particular new forms or structures that will be devised to implement this. The fact is that those new forms will be devised to fit the particular indigenous situation.

Relevant responses on the part of the larger society will recog-

nize that only when black people feel a personal stake in the society will they move to protect that society. Only then will the society deserve protecting. Only then will the society be legitimate.

Thus far, most of the suggested remedies (short of military control) have overlooked this crucial factor of legitimate participation in decision-making. The "maximum feasible participation" formula in the Economic Opportunity Act is a farce and has been sacrificed to the priorities of irrelevant local political parties. Even the investigating committees have overlooked the possible contributions to be made by adding ghetto citizens to their deliberations, officially. All these decisions have been widening the legitimacy gap. And as these things happen, we should not be heard to register shock when the revolts occur time and again. We should not delude ourselves into thinking that incremental, half-hearted, non-participatory solutions will suffice.

The alternatives are clear, and the money used to rediscover this should be diverted to stimulating a relevant response. It is senseless and wasteful to continue mouthing the old clichés, advocating the anachronistic principles, issuing the same meaningless statements. This society is not faced with a traditional type of problem that lends itself to traditional approaches. If the revolts say anything, they speak to this with loud and unmistakable clarity.

FLOYD B. McKISSICK

Programs for Black Power

Hillel, the Jewish philosopher, once said,

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
 If I am only for myself, what am I?
 If not now, when?

This quotation summarizes in a real sense what Black Power is all about.

The time spent in definitions and in arguing the many ramifications of this concept has little significance if programmatic measures have not evolved to give life and breath, as it were, to the doctrine.

We should remember that the Black Power Movement attempts to secure power for Black Americans in six specific areas; in other words, it seeks to achieve power for Black people in six different ways. These are:

1. The growth of Black *political* power.
2. The building of Black *economic* power.
3. The improvement of the *self-image* of Black people.
4. The development of Black *leadership*.
5. The attainment of *Federal law enforcement*.
6. The mobilization of Black *consumer* power.

It is incontrovertible that these important ideals must pass beyond mere rhetoric. Programs must be initiated and relentlessly pursued in order to develop the wide organizational base necessary to achieve our ultimate goal of equality in American life. Some of these programs are herein described.

Among these efforts, none has been more difficult to implement than our political projects. In Louisiana, under the leadership of Ike Reynolds, CORE has developed a political movement that was instrumental in creating a series of Voter Registration organi-