

The Black Uprisings

NEWARK 1967 DETROIT

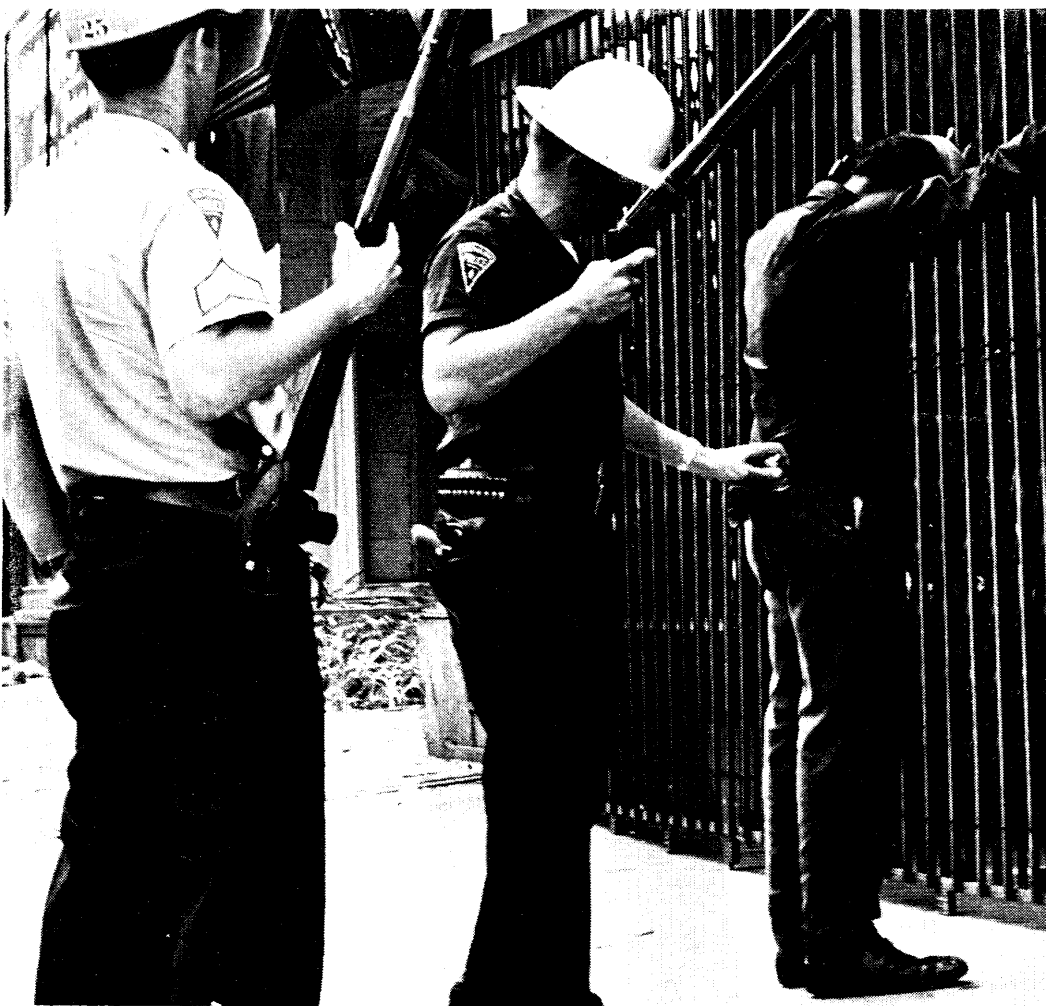


Introduction by Paul Boutelle

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Photo by Randy Abbott

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Introduction

by Paul Boutelle

Detroit and Newark, two cities with large black populations, have exploded, shocked white America, and heralded a new era in the struggle of black Americans to win freedom from all forms of exploitation.

The experiences in Watts, Harlem and other areas from 1964 to 1966 did not teach the rulers of America anything. Their immediate answer to those rebellions was more troops, more police and tougher laws. And then, as soon as the smoke settled, they proceeded to hand out a few crummy jobs, set up phony anti-poverty projects, and organize a commission to study the victims of white America to find out why the rebellions occurred.

I was attending the Black Power Conference in Newark when I heard that Detroit was burning down. White America did not have time to recover from the shock of Newark before it had to deal with an even more massive black rebellion in its model city of Detroit.

Why did this happen? What is the future of white America faced with the rising discontent of black Americans which is becoming more uncompromising and violent in nature?

This pamphlet analyzes the reasons for the rebellions and their meaning for future struggles. In addition, there are first hand accounts reprinted from the socialist newspaper, *The Militant*, of what happened in Newark and Detroit. These reports help destroy the lies and slanders about the recent disturbances which have been spread by the white racist press and so-called Negro leaders such as Whitney Young, A. Philip Randolph, and Roy Wilkins.

Lawrence Stewart of Newark and Derrick Morrison of Detroit

are black activists who uncompromisingly oppose this racist capitalist system. George Novack, an outstanding Marxist scholar, is co-author of "Watts and Harlem: The Rising Revolt in the Black Ghettos," and numerous other articles, books and pamphlets on revolution, philosophy, and politics.

This pamphlet is especially valuable because it points to the main lesson to be drawn from the rebellions—the need for black organization. It projects the idea of an all-black political party which could organize black people to take power in their own community and work more effectively toward the destruction of this racist system.

Paul Boutelle
August 18, 1967

Eyewitness Newark

by
Lawrence Stewart



The following article appeared in the July 24, 1967, *Militant*.

It is now 2 a.m. Monday morning. I was last on the streets 7 p.m. Sunday night. The street where we live is quiet now. But from time to time shots, like fire crackers, puncture the air; singly and sometimes in series. They seem to come mostly from Hawthorne Avenue and Clinton Place, a business area. I've moved the table at which I'm typing away from the window to the center of the room. My wife and son are in bed . . . asleep? I don't know.

"A City's Shame." That was the heading on a *Newark News* editorial. But black people aren't buying that line. Our racist governor managed to get one thing straight when he said it's like people laughing at a funeral. There's a feeling of elation at having struck back at the criminal, hypocritical power structure that has ground us down for so long.

Last Thursday night, without knowing it, I was about six blocks away from where it all started. A black cab driver was arrested over some trivial business of following too close behind a squad car. The police were seen to brutally beat him and drag him to the Fourth Precinct a few blocks away. Any number of people testified to this.

Some of the local "Negro leaders" appeared and attempted to calm the people who gathered at the station house. Most of them were from the big Hayes Project which is just across the street.

The "leaders" weren't successful and the people attacked the precinct with rocks and bottles and whatever else they could lay hands on. It was the climax of a long series of insanely brutal acts by the cops. The "riot" was on.

That night was bedlam. There was widespread burning of buildings owned by white businessmen. Molotov cocktails were used. All kinds of stores were smashed to hell and were looted.



Photo by Randy Abbott

OCCUPATION FORCE. If it weren't for the signs on the shop, this could easily be taken for a scene in Vietnam when U.S. forces move in to "pacify" the rebellious natives." It's a scene from the military occupation of Newark's black ghetto.

Snipers holed up in abandoned buildings and opened fire on the hated cops. In my neighborhood sirens screamed and the police cars were constantly on the move.

On Friday morning I drove as close to the center of the outbreak as I could get. At Belmont and Avon Avenues I pulled over behind a car with the trunk lid open. Two men were loading it with an assortment of goods from one of the ravaged stores. At first I thought the owner was selling things at a discount because of damage. But it soon became apparent the men were appropriating the goods. They were quite casual about it.

I got out and asked if they weren't worried about being arrested or shot at by the cops. They replied "F . . . the cops."

I stopped in at a tavern. The order for closing hadn't been made official yet and the place was crowded. The owner was selling whiskey like a Saturday night. He meant to make all he could before closing. Then too, he didn't know but what these same customers might wreck the place later on.

Of course everyone was discussing the riot. There was a real feeling of elation. They were making their presence as human beings felt by the "white bastards" who run things.

One fellow said to me: "Hell they rob us every day we live and breathe."

A middle-aged woman said: "With all the Toms in soft political jobs and thousands of kids have nothing except to go to Vietnam and come back in boxes, what do you expect?" She added: "I don't approve of rioting, but what do you expect?"

What do you expect? She put her finger on it. The whites are deaf. How else can you make them hear?

Her friend chimed in: "I don't understand all this talk about 'looting.' They rob us every day. They rob us on the rent! They rob us on food, on the job! They rob our kids on education! *Everything!* What in hell do they expect!"

"They're worried about their pocketbooks," she said. "It's just too bad our people have to get shot and killed!"

Friday the National Guard moved in. It was a long night of hell. Automatic fire rent the air from all directions. People stayed under their beds, in bathtubs, cellars— any place where they thought they'd be safe from the wild, steady fire from the weapons of the clean-cut American boys from the suburbs upholding "law and order."

The volume of sniping increased. Also the "self-service" from the smashed store fronts. All black-owned business places had signs reading "soul brother" or "black owned." A lot of those had their windows smashed in by the gun butts of white guardsmen.

The so-called leaders are at least correct in their demand that the Guard get out. They're full of Klan and Birchite elements. Driving around the city I saw just two black guardsmen.

Meanwhile the Mayor and Governor have been busy saying it was all the fault of "criminals," "hoodlums," "black insurrectionists who hate America."

At the beginning some of the Mayor's people said the whole thing was started by Stokely Carmichael, who they insisted was in the city. Later he was reported to be in London, England. But this doesn't dampen their efforts to find scapegoats—"outside agitators." Now they're reporting "carloads of Negroes" arriving with guns from New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, everywhere.

Addonizio has insulated himself with a coterie of self-seeking Negro politicians who do what they're told. Saturday they and the preachers were out with leaflets and loudspeakers urging the people to "cool it" and shake the hands of the cops and guardsmen in the spirit of true Christian charity, to help restore "peace" and "order."

But as of Sunday most people showed little confidence in them. Damned few accepted their leaflets.

Some of the Negro-owned businesses got it too. On Clinton Avenue, above Bergen Street, there is a real estate office which used to have as part of its window display a beautiful white model house of dollhouse size. Until recently, one of the names on the window of that office was of the woman who was Addonizio's secretary when he was a congressman. Now she's in charge of the City Welfare Department. That nice realestate office was smashed.

I remarked to someone that I was surprised that it would happen to a colored-owned place. He said: "I ain't." Someone else said: "Those niggers down in City Hall think they're better than us. They've been taking us for years."

Practically everyone could see this thing coming. But when it came no one could believe it, that it was really happening. And people reacted in ways you couldn't expect.

One fellow I know called me up. He was a charter member of CORE but dropped out because it was too "conservative." He was always talking about Black Power, Black Action, direct action with gun in hand. When he called up he told me that the people are "only hurting themselves."

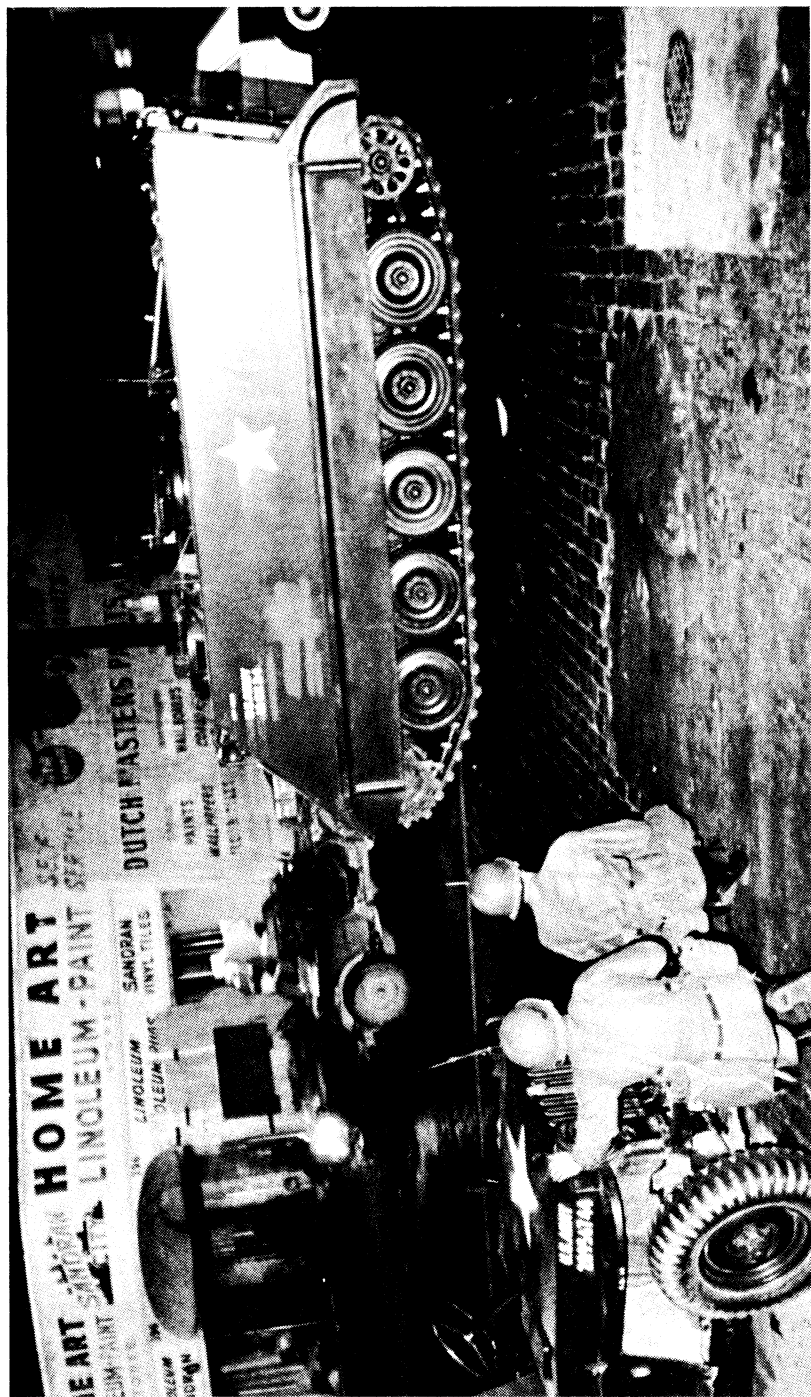
On the other hand people who you would think of as completely brainwashed—who you would expect to consider direct action and riots as "self-defeating" have been showing reactions that would do credit to Marxists.

Sunday morning I walked down to the corner of Alpine Street and Elizabeth Avenue where a group of people were talking about the latest happenings. A couple of guardsmen were posted there. A late model Cadillac came down the street with some Uncle Tom preacher blasting through a loud-speaker against opponents of peace and Christianity. A fellow said, "He's right. Rioting don't get you no place." A couple of people nodded wisely in agreement. The speaker was putting it on for the benefit of the guardsmen.

But one little guy couldn't take it, even that way. He glanced at the soldier boys and said: "It's not a matter of whether you're for or against rioting. Hell, who wants to get shot by a bunch of peckerwoods!"

He glanced at the guardsmen again and went on: "God damn it, what else can we do! We've prayed, preached and protested long enough. It ain't done no good. And finks like that Tom in the Caddy help them. If there's any snipers around, I hope they get him too!"

Black people have been delivered into the hands of landlords and leeches. There is cruelty, degradation and death. The responsibility for Newark and all the other Newarks rests squarely on White America.



Newark street during the uprising.



Eyewitness Detroit

by *Derrick Morrison*

The following article appeared in the Aug. 7, 1967, *Militant*.

In the city where they said it could never happen, it finally happened. Detroit, the "Model City," the city where blacks were supposed to have it so good, the city where so much progress was made in the last 25 years in police-community relations, finally saw, in the words of one of the Brothers, "red flames in the east and black smoke in the west." And in those red flames the myth of racial "peace and progress" in the Motor City.

The "Thing" was on, and when it was over, white America had experienced the biggest and costliest black uprising in its history. This was the first time in 24 years that the federal government had to send in troops to quell a civil disturbance. The last time they were used was in the 1943 anti-black riot here. And this is only the prelude to the Black Revolution.

As I walked through the area that was in upheaval, I could see and feel the sense of togetherness and the new pride and dignity that had been acquired during those four days, but which had been shaped under 400 years of white-racist oppression. The feeling was especially evident in those Afro-Americans of my generation.

According to one of the Brothers, the Detroit uprising began around 4:30 Sunday morning. This was after the cops had raided a speakeasy on 12th St. near Clairmont and brutally beat up one of the men there. This was the spark that started the explosion in Detroit. The ingredients were the inhuman treatment suffered by blacks at the hands of police, the wholesale looting of black pocketbooks by the devil-like white merchants, and the general concentration-camp conditions that exist in most ghettos across the country.

On Sunday, the blacks took over 12th St., appropriating commodities and burning stores at will. Heavy black smoke

could be seen rising from 12th from miles around. By the middle of the afternoon, the uprising had spread all over the west side, and people were waiting to see if the east side would respond in appropriate fashion. The response was manifested that Sunday night. With the uprising so widespread, the police could do nothing, the sparks flew everywhere. Even with 7,000 National Guardsmen, the uprising could not be contained, the area being so vast.

While I was on 12th on Sunday night and Monday afternoon, the people were busily appropriating commodities out of food, clothing, and shoe stores. Buildings that had been burned on Sunday were still smoking Monday afternoon. I saw the same thing on Linwood, Grand River, and Dexter. The mood of the people was that the eruption was "long overdue."

One of the traits that a lot of the people exhibit, especially the younger blacks, was an open defiance of the occupation forces—the police, National Guardsmen, and the paratroopers. Several times on Sunday afternoon, it was impossible for the cops to arrest anyone on 12th because of the resistance put up by the people. And even when arrests were made, the police were taunted and insulted.

On Monday afternoon, while I was eating at a restaurant on Linwood, the police rode up and caught three older Brothers in the process of appropriating the wares of a store across the street. Two of the Brothers submitted to the arrest, but the third put up so much resistance that the cops handcuffed his hands behind his back and forced him into the car. This action immediately drew verbal attacks from the people standing around. The main cry was that the cops didn't have the nerve to try to arrest and subdue a young black, instead of an old one. The police, who had guns and rifles drawn, hurriedly left the scene.

One of the biggest ironies among the paratroopers sent into the city was that a lot of them were blacks who had fought in Vietnam and had relatives in Detroit. One black Vietnam veteran on leave said that if rice paddies were placed in the rebellious area, there would be no difference between Detroit and Vietnam.

In the rebellious area, I got a taste of how a Vietnamese or a Dominican felt when American forces occupied their homelands. The occupation forces had brought out all of

their artillery—rifles, machine guns, tanks and helicopters with mounted machine guns. During the day you could hear the sirens of police and fire trucks as they made mad dashes through the streets to put out over 1,000 fires set during the upheaval.

At night, all you could hear were more sirens, the noise of the choppers a couple of hundred feet above your head, and the blaze of bullets coming from the machine guns and tanks of the occupation forces.

But at the same time, you could hear the cracking of rifle fire produced by those Brothers who had taken up the struggle against the invaders. The white press correctly labeled this phase of the rebellion guerrilla warfare. However, they incorrectly labeled the Brothers doing the shooting as snipers. If the term is not used to describe those American revolutionists who shot at the British from their rooftops, it cannot be used in this instance. The correct designation for those Brothers would be that of revolutionary fighters, or simply: urban guerrillas.

The guerrilla warfare reached its apex on Monday and Tuesday nights. On Monday night, it came from the east side, and on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, it came from the west side. And on all three nights, the occupation forces were routed by the black guerrillas. When the occupation forces were driven away from certain pockets of the ghetto, the white press described the action by the troops as "leaving the area to the snipers." Before the cops and National Guardsmen were driven out of one area, 200 of their forces were pinned down by a handful of guerrillas.

One Brother fired upon the invading forces for one hour and forty minutes without being caught. There were several instances of armed attacks on the police in the daytime. Four police stations, six fire stations and a National Guard headquarters were under heavy attack by the ghetto guerrillas. And again the Brothers were able to elude their grasp. Such tactics created panic and frustration among the occupation troops. The cops were firing everywhere except in the right direction. This confusion resulted in the cops killing innocent people.

One sister lit a cigarette in her dark apartment near 12th one night, and received a barrage of machine-gun fire. Her four-year-old daughter was killed in this barrage. Many apart-

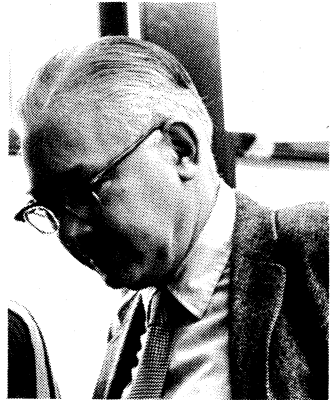
ment buildings near 12th had the tops raked with machine-gun fire. The gun fire of the infading forces was indiscriminate. They suspected every high dwelling. Such actions are similar to the operations carried out by the Yankee imperialist forces in Vietnam. Every Vietnamese village contains the enemy.

When Detroit blew, it served as an example for other black ghetto areas in Michigan and around the country. These black rebellions are symptoms from which the conclusion can be drawn that white American capitalism is doomed. At this stage, the revolution is unorganized, sporadic, and spontaneous. It shows the revolutionary consciousness that is growing among the black ghetto masses. This growing consciousness creates the objective conditions for the formation of a revolutionary black leadership and organization. Such leadership and organization is a task which all black radicals must undertake and solve if the revolution is to win.



COPS RIOT. Police line up Texas Southern University students after routing them from dormitory. Many are still in bedclothes. May, 1967.

The Black Uprisings -1967



by *George Novack*

The following article appeared in the Sept. 4, 1967, *Militant*.

The capitalist rulers of the United States are waging war upon insurgent colored peoples on two widely separated fronts. One is across the Pacific in Southeast Asia; the other is in the core of its major cities from the East Coast to the West. And, despite its panoply of powers and massive means of repression, the titan of world imperialism is not winning either of these wars.

As the diplomatic correspondent of the *New York Times*, C. L. Sulzberger, observed July 30: "Today our nation is a fractured giant; incomparably huge and mighty when viewed from without, but deeply ailing from within."

The quandaries besetting the American ruling class should not be underestimated but rather constitute the point of departure for the freedom fighters and their supporters. While they will have to make heavy sacrifices and solve complex problems, the difficulties of their antagonist are already enormous and are bound to multiply as the struggle enfolds.

In the black revolts which have erupted throughout the country, the Afro-American masses are acting in accord with that honored battle cry uttered by Patrick Henry of Virginia in 1775: "Give me liberty or give me death!" And in the same spirit as the Cuban revolutionary slogans: "Fatherland or death! We will win!" These sentiments were echoed even by one of the most conservative Negro spokesmen, Whitney Young of the National Urban League, when he told a Senate committee: "Exterminate us or liberate us."

The uprisings come as no surprise. They climax a series which began four years ago in Birmingham, the principal industrial city of the South. Ironically, that year, 1963, marked the one hundredth anniversary of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Birmingham came nine years after the U. S. Supreme Court decision illegalizing segregation in the public schools and eight years after the bus boycott in the former capital of the Confederacy, Montgomery, Alabama. This was the city-wide action of the black people of Montgomery, which launched the civil rights movement and propelled Reverend Martin Luther King into the limelight.

After Birmingham the outbursts spread to the North. Harlem in 1964, Watts in 1965, Chicago in 1966, and now Newark and Detroit in 1967, are the main milestones along this road to revolution.

The authorities and their flunkys black and white try to besmirch the participants as "criminals": lawless rioters, hoodlums, looters and killers. In reality, the black rebels represent the vanguard of the Afro-American revolution which is in turn a harbinger and stimulator of the coming socialist revolution in the United States.

SNCC chariman H. Rap Brown told a cheering crowd in Queens, New York, that the uprisings were "dress rehearsals for revolution." And CORE leader Floyd McKissick noted: "History will likely record the explosion of this summer as the beginning of the black revolution."

The determined demonstrations by so many black working people constitute an ultimatum to the upholders and beneficiaries of the white supremacist system. "You enslaved us for three hundred years; held out the vision of equality and democracy to us for over a century; tantalized us with lavish promises and then tricked and treated us to miserly tokens throughout this decade. We're fed up with all your deceit and double-talk. The time of reckoning is at hand. If you won't give us what we need, we'll take what belongs to us by right. Or else, we'll make it impossible for you to operate your system."

One Newark resident exclaimed: "The Negro is the most disgusted person in the world; some of them think it's better to be dead than hungry." Another black rebel there cried out: "I don't care about dying: I'm hardly living." They want liberty — or death.

These confrontations were foreseeable and foreseen. This spring a diversity of black spokesmen predicted more upheavals during this fourth of the "long, hot summers." Before his assassination Malcolm X declared it would take the most violent exertions to get the heels of the white masters off the necks of the black masses.

After the Harlem events three years ago, I wrote in *The Militant*: "The outbursts in New York are only the beginning—the first of their kind in the Northern cities. Whatever the laments of Negro and white liberals, they will be succeeded by others even more stormy and protracted, so long as the ruling rich refuse to remove the conditions that have generated them and make their recurrence virtually mandatory."

The heedless governors of the United States thought they could buy off discontent cheaply by allotting a few millions for anti-poverty projects here and there as fire insurance against further large-scale flareups. They preferred to reserve the lion's share of the federal budget for the Vietnam war. Meanwhile they kept adding fuel to the fires of indignation simmering in all the black districts from New York to San Francisco. They got an escalation of the revolts as a result.

The authorities were well aware that eruptions were building up in many localities and had prepared to deal with them. They put their contingency plans into operation as well as they could. However, their measures of suppression ran into far more cohesive, fierce and deep-going resistance than they expected.

The white rulers of capitalist America are like the representatives of all outmoded master classes in history. They are blind to the surging power of a national and social revolutionary process. Like King George III and his men, they rush to seal off the insurgency and subdue it as quickly as possible. But no sooner do they stamp it out, or it burns out in one place, that it bursts forth in another. The nationwide revolt hit 70 or more cities (forty in one week).

It made no difference what combination of tolerant or tough tactics they used in the formative stage. Detroit, for example, has been praised as a model of race relations. Its city government boasted that it has done more for its black population than any other metropolis, though that is not saying much. Certainly, its record is better than that of Newark which has been aptly described as "a basic training camp for the poor."

Detroit Afro-Americans have some influence in municipal politics and the unions. Unlike the Newark officials, the Detroit mayor and police commissioner hoped to contain the explosion without the immediate use of maximum force. That policy did not work because they had seriously underestimated the scope and speed of the explosion.

The basic causes of the current upheavals are the same as those that produced their precursors: racial segregation and injustice; rent gouging; price extortion; substandard, rat-infested housing in crowded, dirty slums; inferior and racist education; bad health facilities; few recreational areas and opportunities; police harassment, insults and brutality; indifference on the part of city, state and federal officials who are as long on promises as they are short in performance. Out of this misery comes frustration, anger, anguish, despair—and unrestrainable rebelliousness.

Each black community is goaded by special grievances. In Newark, for example, the administration plans to build a state medical complex on 150 acres in the middle of the Central Ward without providing new housing for its residents.

Burning building on Woodward Avenue, Detroit's main street.



Where were the thousands of displaced people to move in a segregated, high-rent, scarce-housing area? Afro-Americans are constantly reminded that they do not get high posts because so few of them have the requisite training. Imagine the indignation when the Newark mayor named one of his henchmen as secretary of the board of education over a much more qualified black candidate favored by the black majority of the city.

Again, in most cases, incidents of police brutality first incensed the people and brought them into the streets. In Newark the arrest and manhandling of a black cab driver and the rumor that he was beaten to death in a station house touched off the conflict. The story was so readily believed because this past year the cops wantonly killed at least nine men in that district, behaving as "trigger-happy" as any Southern sheriff's deputies. And the police, state troops and national guards did not show much mercy as the conflicts intensified. In Detroit, under cover of the curfew, they brutally lynched three young men at the Algiers Motel, and more such cases are coming to light.

The Vietnam war has injected two more grounds for discontent into an already overheated atmosphere. The mounting military budget has led the White House and Congress to slash anti-poverty and social welfare appropriations which were scanty enough at best. President Johnson has asserted that the United States is rich enough to carry on the war in Vietnam and handle its urban problems at home. These outbreaks controvert his lying assurances.

Black parents are growing angry because their sons are being drafted and dying in disproportionate numbers. More and more young Afro-Americans are saying, "Hell, no, we won't go!"

Congressmen clamor to know where so many so-called "snipers" are coming from. Instead of blaming "outside agitators," they should address themselves to the Pentagon. Thousands of servicemen are coming back from Southeast Asia with excellent military experience and poor job prospects.

The uprisings have other noteworthy features. One has been the high degree of unity of the black communities in their battles against the racist system and its armed defenders.

Another has been the mood of elation animating the participants. Their festive spirit shocked Governor Hughes of New

Jersey, and Detroit Mayor Cavanaugh deplored the "carnival" atmosphere at the start of the revolt in his city. These obtuse liberal Democratic politicians cannot understand how urgently the frustrations which are part and parcel of the unremitting racial, economic and social repression suffered by all Afro-Americans seek some outlet.

The counter-attacks upon their foes afforded relief and release from incessant personal indignities. When they broke into stores and supermarkets and took consumer goods, they felt they were at last getting back a tiny fraction of what white shopkeepers extort from them every day in the week. They wanted then and there a little share in the bountiful American Way of Life pictured in TV commercials and magazine ads. It was an elemental attempt to alter the extremely unequal distribution of worldly goods in the most affluent capitalist country where the gap between rich and poor has widened as the economic boom has proceeded. The so-called "looters," said one black spokesman, were simply shoppers without cash or credit cards.

They also seized the occasion to strike back hard at their most obvious oppressors, the agents of "law and order." Frantz Fanon has explained how peoples long subjugated by an alien power tend to turn their anger and frustration inward against their own fellows and themselves, until entry into a movement of national and social emancipation permits them to redirect their violence toward the creators and sustainers of their misery and servitude. In this way the victims can transform themselves into victors, as the Algerians did. Such a political-psychological conversion process powers all popular uprisings.

Perhaps the most distinctive and important aspect of the events is the leading role taken by the youth in the street actions. Not only children from eight years old up, but Southern college students, who now prefer reading Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon to Gandhi and Camus, have spearheaded the struggles.

The members of this new generation are very different from their elders. They are the offspring of the specific circumstances of our time, a characteristic American expression of the youth radicalism burgeoning the world over. They have been brought up in the atmosphere of the colonial revolution, the resurgence of Africa, the awakening of the black masses, and the black

freedom movement which has been progressing step by step since 1954.

Their militancy has spurred the revolts forward. These youthful rebels have found a sacred cause: the fight for black liberation—and they are resolved to fight to the death for their just rights. Their heroes are Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali and the SNCC leaders who have directly defied the power structure and told Whitey to "go to hell."

The officialdom on all levels from the besieged localities to the national capital have had a rigidly repressive attitude, tempering their harsh punitive measures with fear and caution only as long as the ghetto dwellers were united and up in arms. The one-sided casualty statistics of the wounded and dead indicate how recklessly the police, state troopers and panicky national guards fired upon the insurgents, hitting many innocent victims.

The trumpeter of "The Great Society" in the White House first kept silent and passive, hoping the storms would blow over in New Jersey so that he could focus full attention on Vietnam. But the extension of the insurrections forced him to send paratroopers to Detroit. Johnson stands ready to dispatch armed forces to occupy other cities when necessary. The President organized prayers on Sunday, to make it easier for the powers he represents to prey on the black communities for the rest of the week.

Finally, to give the appearance of action, he appointed a committee of notables to look into the causes of the disorders and bring back recommendations to prevent their recurrence. Meanwhile, the administration announced there would be no increased grants to the riotous cities, although the need is greater than before.

Instead of moving to provide the jobs, education, housing, health services and other essentials whose lack has brought about the revolts, the House gave priority to an anti-riot bill making it a crime to cross state lines to incite violence. The House Committee on Un-American Activities scheduled hearings to expose the alleged subversives who presumably fomented the uprisings.

Rather than eliminate the crying causes of agitation, they want to get all agitators out of the way and put the SNCC and other aggressive leaders behind bars. The House, which had killed rent supplements earlier this year, callously voted

down a plan to eradicate rats in the nation's slums.

Most Negro leaders ran true to form. Martin Luther King, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young issued a statement condemning the acts of the ghetto rebels as "criminal," while calling upon Congress to enact legislation to protect civil rights and relieve the unutterable wretchedness. One prime motive for their concern was candidly confessed by Bayard Rustin who justified "whatever force is necessary" to stop the rioting because "if the rioting continues, an atmosphere will be created in which the established civil rights leadership will be robbed of standing" and the direction of the masses will fall to more extreme elements.

Many of the militants were present at the four-day National Conference on Black Power held in Newark following the explosion there. The nearly one thousand delegates, mostly in their twenties, extended from the Urban League, the NAACP and SCLC on the right through CORE, SNCC, the OAAU and the Black Muslims to the ultra black nationalists.

Among the resolutions they adopted, one condemned white responsibility for the riots and their violence. Another requested the United Nations to investigate conditions in Newark under the authority of its charter on colonial territories, an application of Malcolm X's project to internationalize the struggle for human rights. A third demanded the release of all prisoners and indemnities for the victims.

Perhaps the most significant was a resolution which ratified the right of black people to revolt when they have no other alternative. Every great popular movement for freedom and progress has explicitly affirmed this democratic principle as the Declaration of Independence did in 1776. The boiling rebelliousness of the black masses is reflected in the endorsement of this abstract right by some leaders who don't mean it or intend to go all the way with it. But their half-heartedness does not diminish the symptomatic character or the historical import of the pronouncement.

These developments in the freedom struggle vindicate the ideas and foresight of Malcolm X. He is the spiritual, ideological and political inspirer of the best of the black warriors. His bold views have taken hold of the minds of the insurgents and become increasingly influential in a remarkably short time after his death. "We lost our great Malcolm," one black

militant in Newark said, "but in return we've gained a lot of little Malcolms."

With the uprisings the movement for black emancipation has crossed a Great Divide. It has passed from the stage of petitioning, praying, non-violent attitudes and hopeful reliance upon the glib promises of capitalist politicians to the most aggressive actions, including forms of armed warfare in the major cities.

Regardless of the censures and moanings of the Kings, Rustins and other moderate leaders, there will be no reversion to the previous ways which have been transcended by the most combative and dynamic forces. The maturing black revolt is advancing step by step with an implacable drive powered by the same impulses that imbued the Algerian, Congolese and Vietnamese freedom fighters. Its course and pace are being determined by objective laws of struggle which are more compelling than the wishes of its would-be directors or the present ideas of most of its participants.

From their experiences over the past period the bitter and impatient ghetto dwellers have concluded that they must break windows, hurl Molotov cocktails, burn buildings and use guns to make the callous rulers up above take notice of their needs. Through such desperate deeds they not only retaliate against their oppressors but hope to force the authorities to relieve their sufferings.

The revolts have shaken the entire country. They disclose that the internal structure of U. S. capitalism is not so sturdy, stable and shock-proof as it has seemed. The alarmed editors of *Life* magazine wrote Aug. 4: "Not for 102 years . . . has the essential fabric of the Republic been so cruelly strained." That social fabric is being ripped along one of its main seams, causing more disruption than was thought possible.

The shocks administered to the system have provoked diversified repercussions in ruling circles, ranging from Virginia Senator Byrd's demand for all-out bloody suppression to the lamentations and confusions of the liberals. The equilibrium of the nation has been upset and its political and social atmosphere will become more radicalized, with polarizations both to the right and toward the left as various elements among the population come to grips with the momentous issues posed by the uprisings.

The black masses are today in the front firing line of the

struggle for a new order in the United States. Their vigorous fight for their own needs can assist the cause of all the poor who suffer along with them from low wages, unemployment, inadequate social services, lack of decent low-cost housing and other ills. Everyone concerned with bettering American life must support their aims and efforts.

Johnson stated that the Negroes were the principal losers in the riots—and many well-intentioned whites ask: What did they get out of the destruction except more grief? Such bystanders look upon the uprisings as an isolated episode rather than viewing them in proper perspective as a critical turning point in the evolution of a popular liberation movement as important as any in the colonial world. The encounters in Newark, Detroit, Milwaukee and other places are tests of strength between the contending forces in which both sides find out what the adversary is ready to do—or not do—at this stage.

The Afro-American freedom struggle has exhibited the power and creativity of an oppressed giant and even greater potential and promise in the street mobilizations against the authorities. At the same time the movement suffers from extremely heavy handicaps and serious shortcomings at this point in its progress.

The actions are spontaneous, spasmodic, uncontrolled, undirected and localized. They need to be unified, coordinated, better organized and led. But the movement has no authoritative national leadership or organization. In time Malcolm X could have filled that bill; that is why he was gunned down. SNCC has a limited number of scattered organizers and, like other partisans of black power, is in a crisis of reorientation and reeducation. Most of the local groups have shown more capacities for loud claims than for the persistent, patient organizational work that the present situation demands.

Above all, the resistance movement lacks the necessary political program, leadership and organization to promote the colossal objectives it has set for itself of overturning the power structure and engaging in a revolutionary transformation of American society. Though it is now hard to credit, in 1964 almost 95 percent of the black voters and almost all their chiefs cast their ballots for Johnson. Despite deep disillusionments since then, many of the most defiant black power spokesmen have still to break clearly and completely with capitalist

politics or the Democratic Party and hesitate to call for genuinely independent all-black political action. This default is all the more glaring in view of the impending presidential campaign when the issues which precipitated the black revolts will take the center of national debate.

Most advocates of black power have been trying to evade the problems posed by politics. They fail to see that politics is more than electioneering or bargaining with office holders; it is the means through which the most important bread-and-butter questions affecting jobs, housing, education, the cops, and such life and death questions as the war in Vietnam, are decided one way or the other.

In order to implement the popular slogan of black power, Afro-Americans need to build a permanent political party which can mobilize and educate black voters to oust the tools of the white supremacist parties and place reliable representatives of their own in office. Such an independent political vehicle would quickly become a battler for the interests of the black people in the big cities, the states and national politics. By combining forms of mass action with electoral and legislative action, it could lift the movement onto a higher level of consciousness and strength.

Political activity is often construed too narrowly, as though a new black political organization would simply copy the methods of the existing vote-catching machines. An independent black party can encourage and engage in any mode of activity that is required to advance the interests of the black people—from the ballot to the bullet. Its operations may range from campaigning for candidates through mass demonstrations for local improvements to the most militant measures demanded by the struggle for power. It would be guided by the slogan of all oppressed peoples: "Freedom by any means necessary."

The sharpened nationalist feelings and deepened nationalist consciousness generated by the recent developments have strengthened the urge among blacks to gain control of their communities. The careful selection of targets, including stores that were put to the torch, was a manifestation of this trend.

For example, in the middle of the conflict in Detroit, the Malcolm X Society, recently launched by Milton and Richard Henry, submitted a list of demands to the authorities which were designed, among other things, to secure black control

over the police forces and schools and provide funds for groups of black people to establish "community-owned businesses and cooperatives." This was an effort to introduce certain programmatic demands into the spontaneously evolving situation which could promote the larger nationalist objective of deciding and directing their own affairs.

Following the precedent set by Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael took a gigantic forward step by going to Havana and dramatically and unambiguously proclaiming before the Organization of Latin-American Solidarity the alignment of the black struggle for freedom with the guerrilla fighters of Vietnam and Latin America. This international alliance against U. S. imperialism is a revolutionary challenge of a high order. It helps to further the strategy projected by Che Guevara of creating a "second and third Vietnam" to disperse and enfeeble the forces of repression commanded by the U. S. military octopus.

The heroic resistance of the Vietnamese has inspired the vanguard of the ghetto freedom fighters—and the revolts in the heart of the imperialist colossus have in return provided moral reinforcement for the embattled people of Vietnam. This interconnection has been recognized not only by the left but on the right. Bishop Sheen of Rochester, one of the McCarthyite ornaments of the Catholic hierarchy, recently urged Johnson to withdraw U. S. forces immediately from Vietnam in order to further reconciliation between blacks and whites and avert another Civil War.

The uprisings have been denounced as "race riots." Actually, so far, there have only been a few small encounters between black resisters and white hoodlums and no large-scale clashes between the races as in previous years. Almost all combats have taken place between the forces of authority and the black rebels.

Yet there unquestionably exists deep racism among white workers and antagonisms between white workers and black communities. Although they should be allied against their common exploiters and enemy in the capitalist class, they are in fact divided. This is the baneful heritage of four centuries of white supremacy and racism; of a consistent policy of dissension between black and white inculcated by the possessors of property, power and propaganda; by a conservatized and bureaucratized union leadership which discriminates

and even excludes blacks in some sections; and by the materially privileged positions of the more favored elements of the working class and their general political backwardness and prejudice. President Walter Reuther of the Auto Workers gave no more assistance to the ghetto dwellers of Detroit than an offer to clean the streets of debris after the assaults upon them.

These heavy handicaps isolate and weaken the black resistance movement by depriving it of the most potentially powerful partner against the corporate rich. The black minority is compelled to fight on alone while manning the outposts of the most formidable revolutionary undertaking in history. This situation also raises the grim specter of racial warfare in which the plutocratic regime which exploits them both will try to incite white workers against black and pit them against one another.

The revolutionary socialists, along with other defenders of the just cause of Afro-American liberation, will do their utmost to explain the reasons for the revolts and win support and understanding for their aims among white Americans. But under the given circumstances in this "world we never made," the most strenuous efforts to show how bigotry and racism damage their own interests can have only a restricted effect.

Unity between the black masses and white workers is the indispensable condition for any effective long-term struggle to abolish capitalism in this country. However, such collaboration can be achieved in practice only in so far as the still unaroused and unenlightened white workers see their immediate welfare directly threatened by the bosses and their government.

A dramatic instance of solidarity in struggle took place early in July in the wildcat strike at the busy Newport News shipyard in Virginia where 21,000 white and black workers were employed. Both banded together and forced their company union to buck a court injunction against their strike. After that, they had to do battle with scabs, cops and state troopers. One racist policeman who came up against these Southern workers exclaimed later in dismay and disbelief: "The white and colored attacked us together like they were brothers." In Detroit hundreds of poor whites joined their black neighbors in the slums to help themselves to a few consumer goods.

Such instances of combined action are few and far between. They presage a future stage in the anti-capitalist struggles and are not now a strong or characteristic factor. Today the two main social forces that ought to be arrayed against the powers-that-be remain separated by a deep and wide abyss that will not be soon or easily bridged.

This unpleasant prospect is lodged in the prevailing situation and its disposition of forces. But that is no reason for the black fighters to abate their struggles or their supporters to fall into despair. Twenty-two million Afro-Americans can accomplish great things even though they may have to go forward for some time with more powerful and dependable allies abroad than at home. It rather means that the black people and their radical allies cannot count upon immediate victory over the oppressors. They have to realistically gird themselves for a prolonged and costly course of conflict which will take many surprising twists and turns before the final showdown arrives.

Whatever the dangers, difficulties and delays, they can take heart from the fact that with all their resources the Johnson administration and the American ruling class face thornier problems. They will find it as hard to handle the resistance in their own backyards as in Vietnam.

The full import of the social crisis arising from this higher stage of the black freedom movement has not yet been grasped by the decision makers in Washington. In a Detroit speech Vice President Humphrey talked about a "Marshall Plan" for impoverished Americans while warning that it will take a long time to wipe out "the injustices of a hundred years." But the present disposition of the White House and the conservative Congress is to keep on fiddling while more Newarks and Detroit's get ready for burning. Their motto is "Big Business as Usual."

How are the agents of monopolist domination to cope with the unpostponable problems arising from the black revolts? There are two extreme "solutions." One is the Hitlerite method of genocide; the other is South African *apartheid*. Both of these possibilities are now under discussion from different viewpoints.

For example, Prof. Philip Hauser, University of Chicago sociologist, said Aug. 5 that nobody could predict today whether white America would choose repression or a march

toward equality. But, he added, if the road to repression is taken, there are "inherent" possibilities in such a choice of transforming the inner ghettos into concentration camps guarded by the police, the National Guard and federal troops. "Repression by the whites could eventually lead to genocide," he remarked. Thus the two "ultimate solutions" tend to merge into one.

However, the rulers of America are restrained from pushing the logic of repression to its end by powerful international and internal considerations. Washington can hardly imitate the Nazi extermination of the Jews so long as it pretends to be a democratic government, the banner bearer of "the free world," and friends of the African and other colonized lands. Apart from South Africa, Portugal and a few puppets, almost every other country in the world would be appalled by and opposed to such atrocious conduct.

Domestic factors are no less inhibitive under present conditions. The major block in its path is precisely such furious, stubborn and large-scale protective battles as are being waged against the official forces of oppression. The authorities now know they would have to crush the colossal resistance put up by 22 million Afro-Americans who comprise the largest, most compact and influential minority in most big cities; they are a majority in the national capital and Newark and soon will be elsewhere. This cannot be done without racial and civil war.

The economic cost of such a policy would be as great as its political and social dangers. Male and female black workers make up the bulk of the industrial reserve army, that super-exploited, low-paid, last-hired and first-fired segment of the total labor force which is indispensable for the operation of the capitalist system of production and its accumulation of wealth. If the black proletariat is taken out of the labor market, some part of the white working class will have to be substituted, a remedy that in the long run could prove as bad as the disease.

Stern enforcement of *apartheid* would not only reverse all civil rights and equalitarian trends. It would entail the abolition of democracy and the imposition of some form of naked dictatorship over the entire American nation. The inevitable large-scale popular opposition to white supremacist and fascist totalitarianism could likewise spark civil war and raise the

specter of a socialist revolution which would bring continued capitalist rulership into question.

To be sure, the only kind of pacification that would satisfy Washington's requirements in either Southeast Asia or the United States would be the peace of the grave. Short of that, it cannot hope to break the wills of both insurgent peoples to be free. But whatever it may inflict abroad, genocidal war is the most hazardous of all courses it could embark upon at home.

On the other hand is the alternative of conciliation and substantial concessions which are more than token. Liberals still hope to goad the consciences of the Democratic and Republican politicians and persuade them to step up reforms and allot the money to give Afro-Americans the rights, equality, jobs and comforts they have been denied for a full century. Can the capitalist regime that failed to remove or even alleviate the most elementary injustices and inequities during the height of prosperity be expected to do more if the economy continues to stagnate or takes a downturn?

After six years of the biggest boom in American history and 13 years of civil rights agitation the black masses are worse off than before. The authorities have shown themselves quicker to call out the National Guard than to act effectively against the conditions responsible for the revolts.

More and more black Americans have become convinced that any changes coming from the white power structure will be too slow and too limited to offer them any hope of salvation in their lifetime. They are pounding with bare fists, and sometimes with weapons, against the framework of the established order to break it down and find a way to freedom.

Their impulses, their demands, their drives are profoundly revolutionary and progressive. They sense, although they do not yet consciously formulate their feelings in political terms, that what they are striving for—justice, decent living conditions, jobs, dignity and human rights—cannot be secured if things remain as they are.

They are right. The whole structure of capitalist power and ownership will have to be dismantled and replaced if the workers of America, black or white, are to go forward to a better life. This socialist conclusion is the ultimate lesson that ought to be derived from the conflicts that have convulsed so many American cities and resounded through the world this summer of 1967.

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