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SUBVERSIVE INFLUENCES IN RIOTS, LOOTING,
AND BURNING
PART I

HEARINGS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

OCTOBER 25, 28, 31 and NOVEMBER 23, 1925

(INCLUDING INDEX)

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726 SUBVERSIVE INFLUENCES IN RIOTS, LOOTING, AND BURNING

Mayor Yorty was a Member of Congress in 1950 to 1954 and mayor of Los Angeles since 1961.

His tenure in the California Legislature in the mid-1930's gave him an opportunity to study the subject of communism. Since that time, the witness has maintained an interest in Communist activities.

In answer to a question concerning his opinion of underlying factors which caused the riots in the last few years, Mayor Yorty replied:

I would certainly say that one of the factors is the constant repetition of subversive propaganda, the agitation, and propaganda conducted by the Communist Party within the framework of their historic objective to break down the respect for government, certainly for law and order, and to personalize, as they always do, this objective mainly in the police officer.

Asked if he believed these riots have been spontaneous or planned, the mayor said, "I think that there are some of both." He added:

I think that the propaganda over the years has been so constant and at times very effective . . .

I also think there are some riots where subversive forces have actually planned . . . incidents that they would hope would spark a riot.

Mayor Yorty introduced an exhibit into the record, a pamphlet entitled "The Big Lie." The pamphlet, produced by the Los Angeles city government, contained a short history of the charge of police brutality over a period of 21 years—or since 1946, by the Communist Party.

The witness stated that law enforcement has been handicapped "by the reinterpretation, really the rewriting of the Constitution by the United States Supreme Court . . ." He cited examples of the exclusionary rule of evidence, the rules of search and seizure, and the registration of known criminals.

Mayor Yorty recalled that Lenin, in his writings, as early as 1902, had made reference to police brutality and noted that he knew of no period in history where the "campaign against the police has been quite as effective as it is today."

The mayor was asked if police brutality charges were made in his city during the Watts riot. He replied that an attempt was made "to blame the police for the rioting," and added: "This led to my unpleasant confrontation with Dr. Martin Luther King, who—

persisted in arguing that the police were to blame for the rioting. Then he went out and got before the cameras and newspapers and made that same charge. I felt it necessary to answer that charge and to tell him that it was very unfair for him to come out to Los Angeles and try to blame the police for the rioting.

Mayor Yorty then stated that he did not "know of any case where an officer has had to be dismissed for brutality."

The mayor noted that there were many people who made charges of police brutality whose motive was to discredit the police department and to carry on the so-called Communist struggle campaign to "break down respect for the law enforcement officials and . . . eventually . . . break down the ability of our Government to operate."

The Los Angeles mayor said that:

Unfortunately, the nature of news is . . . usually negative. The bizare makes more news than the everyday hard work of law enforcement.

Mayor Yorty saw a need for people to understand the Communist Party and its apparatus. He said:

ness, inadequate housing and education, poor health, and a myriad of other social ills based on poverty and racial discrimination to bear their lot in silence. Their anger at the obvious injustice of their plight and at the lack of massive programs which would end poverty and racism must be recognized. So long as people feel they have nothing to lose, appeals to logic and reason will fail.

The question is not, then, whether rioting is "compatible with the American system of government," but whether the American system of government has been as flexible and as energetic as it should be in including all American citizens in the fruits of our society. If we were to take immediate steps to end the racial gap which condemns a disproportionate number of Negro citizens to poverty and inadequate necessities of life, we would not have to worry about rioting.

The second question posed by the chairman is: "Whether or not Communists sincerely have the interests of the Negro at heart and Negroes therefore can accept them and work with them in their efforts to achieve full equality in this country."

In every country in which there exists a poor and downtrodden group in the population, the Communists have found their strength in that group. In every country that is, but the United States. The Communist Party has spent much time and effort in wooing the Negro population, all to no avail. If anything, its appeal to the Negro population in the United States has been less than with any other group of citizens.

Negro citizens do not want to change the American way of life. The whole history of Negro efforts to secure equality is an indication that Negro citizens desire, above all else, inclusion on an equal basis in American society.

There is little evidence that Communists have any significant influence on the civil rights movement. Their record is not one which inspires trust among Negro citizens, and Negro citizens do not accept them and do not work with them.

The National Urban League welcomes this opportunity to comply with a request for information by a committee of the United States Congress. The National Urban League, Inc. is a professional community service organization committed to securing equal opportunities for Negroes and other minorities in all areas of American life. It is nonpartisan and interracial in its leadership and staff.

[The joint statement referred to on p. 767 follows:]

From: Public Relations Department, National Urban League, 55 East 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 751-0342
Contact: Guichard Paris.

The following is the text of a statement issued jointly by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Whitney M. Young, Jr., on July 26, 1967, and released from the headquarters offices of the NAACP—20 West 40th Street, New York City:

Developments in Newark, Detroit and other strife-torn cities make it crystal clear that the primary victims of the riot are the Negro citizens. That they have grave grievances of longstanding, cannot be denied or minimized. That the riots have not contributed in any substantial measure to the eradication of these just complaints, is by now obvious to all.

We are confident that the overwhelming majority of the Negro community joins us in opposition to violence in the streets. Who is without the necessities of life when the neighborhood stores are destroyed and looted? Whose children are without milk because deliveries cannot be made? Who loses wages because of a breakdown in transportation or destruction of the place of employment? Who are the dead, the injured and the imprisoned? It is the Negroes who pay and pay and pay, whether or not they are individually involved in the rioting. And what for?

Killing, arson and looting are criminal acts and should be dealt with as such. Equally guilty are those who incite, provoke, and call specifically for such action. There is no injustice which justifies the present destruction of the Negro community and its people.

We who have fought so long and so hard to achieve justice for all Americans have consistently opposed violence as a means of redress. Riots have proved ineffective, disruptive and highly damaging to the Negro population, to the civil rights cause, and to the entire nation. We call upon Negro citizens throughout the nation to forego the temptation to disregard the law. This does not mean

and to accentuate racial issues. The riots and disorders of the past 3 years clearly highlight the success of this Communist smear campaign in popularizing the cry of "police brutality" to the point where it has been accepted by many individuals having no affiliation with or sympathy for the Communist movement.

So, we have a pretty good authority there, I would say, certainly the best in the world, on the effectiveness of this campaign against the police.

Another statement before the Appropriations Subcommittee, which I am certain that you all recall, was made by Mr. Hoover on February 10, 1966. He said:

At a still higher level, the national headquarters of the party, on August 15, 1965, instructed the southern California party district to prepare articles concerning the riots for early publication in *The Worker*, an east coast Communist newspaper. Special efforts were to be made to play up the "police brutality" angle. Major portions of subsequent issues of *The Worker* and *People's World*, a west coast Communist newspaper, were devoted to the uprising in Los Angeles and its aftermath. Each article faithfully followed the line set by party headquarters.

Mr. McNAMARA: Mayor Yorty, were police brutality charges made in your city during the Watts riot?

Mayor YORTY: Yes. An attempt was made, of course, to blame the police for the rioting. This led to my unpleasant confrontation with Dr. Martin Luther King. We had always welcomed him to our city on previous occasions and tried to work with him in the field of civil rights. But, during the aftermath of the rioting, he rushed out to Los Angeles and in a private meeting with some of his aides and our chief of police, Mr. William Parker, he began to blame the police for the rioting.

I pointed out to him that the police department of Los Angeles is run by a civilian commission; they are actually the head of the department. I also pointed out to him that three of the five members were from minority groups and, also, that one of the persons at the meeting with Dr. Martin Luther King was the father of a member of the police commission.

But he persisted in arguing that the police were to blame for the rioting. Then he went out and got before the cameras and newspapers and made that same charge. I felt it necessary to answer that charge and to tell him that it was very unfair for him to come out to Los Angeles and try to blame the police for the rioting.

Mr. McNAMARA: Your exhibit, Mayor, and various items that we have read in the Communist press over the years indicate that many charges of brutality have been made against the police in Los Angeles, as in the case of other cities.

Will you tell the committee whether or not any police officers in Los Angeles, since you have been mayor, have been dismissed for brutality?

Mayor YORTY: I don't know of any case where an officer has had to be dismissed for brutality.

We, of course, investigate every charge that is made to us of police brutality, first within the department, and then I have instructed our civilian police commission that if people are not satisfied with the action of the department that they can ask the commission to hold a hearing.

I think the best example of the big lie technique was the case where one of the newspapers in Los Angeles, not a Communist newspaper, but one that circulates only in the Negro area, had a picture of two

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oppression . . . as well as to the anti-U.S. struggle of the people of the whole world.

"The American Negroes' struggle is by no means isolated. They will for ever receive boundless sympathy and resolute support from the 700 million Chinese people . . ."

Peking Radio Broadcast, July 23, 1967:

"By its ferocity and its ruthless methods in suppressing the Negro movement, the Johnson administration has given a profound lesson to more and more Afro-Americans by negative example. This has greatly hastened their awakening. On the day Johnson made his speech, H. Rep Brown, a young Negro leader who has stood out prominently in the current struggle, forcefully and pointedly replied to Johnson's threats when he gave a press conference and attended a mass meeting in Washington. Brown said that 'the black man has the immutable will to be free and has no recourse but to rebel.' He stressed that 'violence is necessary' and that the black people must get their guns because the white rulers 'don't respect nothing but guns. . .'. His militant speech reflects the determination of the awakening Afro-American masses to rebel."

Peking Radio Editorial Comment in English on Detroit Riot, July 30, 1967:

"The swift and vigorous spread of the Afro-American people's armed struggle against racial oppression has thrown the White House into complete confusion. This proves to the hilt that the US ruling circles who appear to be formidable are no more than a paper tiger. . . ."

"The roaring flames in Detroit have scared the US ruling circles. . . ."

"It is not the fighting Afro-Americans who are afraid of the US ruling circles; it is the US ruling circles who are afraid of the Afro-American masses. . . ."

"More and more Afro-Americans have embarked on the road of combatting counter-revolutionary violence with revolutionary violence. This is what the US gangsters fear most. . . . If the people in the United States unite, the revolutionary people of the world unite, and together wage a common struggle, the handful of reactionaries in the United States will be completely isolated and besieged ring upon ring by the masses of the people thus accelerating the doom of US imperialism."

Peking Radio Broadcast, August 1, 1967:

"Stoges like Martin Luther King issued statements publicly supporting the Johnson administration's violence against the Afro-Americans. This at once unmasked these champions of 'nonviolence' for what they really are—opponents of the revolutionary violence of the oppressed and supporters of the counter-revolutionary violence of the oppressors."

"However, the level of political awareness of the Afro-American masses is daily rising and they have come to realize more clearly than ever the need to resist violence with violence. . . . Neither the US ruling circle's violent suppression nor the humbug of 'nonviolence' preached by Martin Luther King and his ilk can prevent the Afro-American masses from taking the road of struggle by violence and promoting the Afro-American movement."

Peking Radio Broadcast, August 2, 1967:

"Lyndon Johnson . . . made a speech on 27 July calling for the intensified suppression of the armed struggle of Afro-Americans . . . and asked the Afro-Americans to be 'law-abiding' and 'responsible' and to 'share in America's prosperity.'"

"But what kind of stuff is American law? Friedrich [sic] Engels pointed out long ago that bourgeois law is a 'whip' against the proletariat. . . . To the Afro-Americans, such laws mean that they must put up with the privation of monopoly capitalism. . . . The broad sections of Afro-Americans and working people in the United States must destroy such laws and smash the state apparatus."

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organizers prevents virtually the whole of Harlem and the other New York ghettos from being organized into tenants councils right now. Moreover, block councils firmly based on building councils would offer a natural basis for the organization of self-defense. . . ."

SPARTACIST, MAY-JUNE 1963, P. 5:

"The illusion of 'non-violence' spread by King and others is a criminal discrediting of black people, and is consistent with the role of these leaders' as agents of the power structure. The movement must scrap these illusions once and for all and begin to organize the Negro people to defend themselves from violence. . . ."

SPARTACIST, MAY-JUNE 1967, P. 54:

"It is the duty of a revolutionary organization to intervene where possible to give these outbursts [riots] political direction."

HARLEM RIOTS, 1964

SPARTACIST, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1965, PP. 1, 5:

"On this basis SPARTACIST stated early in July . . . the bourgeois state now prepares to fight openly in the streets through its police arm against the resurgence of the struggle. This prediction was strikingly confirmed on July 18 and the days that followed as wave after wave of armed, specially trained elite police—the Tactical Patrol Force—swept through Harlem indiscriminately beating and terrorizing all who crossed their paths, when the mood of the ghetto made it clear that the killing of 15-year-old James Powell by an off-duty police officer would not go unprotested.

"James Robertson, SPARTACIST editor, described the role of the cops in creating the riots and, in reference to attempts being made to blame the riots on Communists, said that 'unfortunately there aren't many Reds in Harlem now—but there will be!'"

REVOLUTIONARY ACTION MOVEMENT (RAM)

2811 W. Diamond Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

ORIGIN:

Winter 1963

PURPOSE:

From the Ram Manifesto of 1964: "RAM was officially organized . . . by Afro-Americans who favored Robert F. Williams and the concept of organized violence. . . . ONE PURPOSE—To free black people from the universal slave-master . . . ONE AIM—To develop black people through struggle to the highest attainment possible. ONE DESIRE—To follow in the spirit of black revolutionaries . . . and to create a new world free of colonialism, racism, imperialism, exploitation, and national oppression."

In hearings before the subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, on February 16, 1967, J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, described the Revolutionary Action Movement as "a Negro organization . . . dedicated to the overthrow of the capitalist system in the United States, by violence if necessary, and its replacement by a socialist system oriented toward the Chinese Communist interpretation of Marxism-Leninism."

ORGANIZATION:

Less than 50

Precise membership figures cannot be stated owing to the clandestine nature of the organization. However, it should be noted that RAM does not seek mass membership. Instead, it operates on the principle of a tight-knit, highly selective inner circle of leaders who accomplish their aims through infiltration and subversion of other Afro-American groups, through fronts, and through use of Negro teenage gangs schooled in urban guerrilla warfare.

RAM has units in Philadelphia (home base), Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, and New York City.

There are three levels of membership in the RAM organization: (1) field organizers, (2) active members, and (3) associate members.