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Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
I <i>Wednesday: John Smith Starts a Riot</i>	9
II <i>Thursday: The Community Takes Over</i>	23
III <i>The Occupation</i>	37
IV <i>The Terror</i>	45
V <i>From Riot to Revolution?</i>	63
APPENDIX: <i>The Dead and Brutalized</i>	73
<i>The Dead</i>	74
<i>The Killings of Toto and Moran</i>	84
<i>Testimony from the Brutalized</i>	88

Maps appear on pages 11 and 25.

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Rebellion in Newark

Introduction

THIS BOOK describes the riot that shook Newark, New Jersey, from July 12 to 17, 1967. More than that, this book seeks to clarify why America is the **only** affluent Western society where insurrection is a **regular** happening in its major cities.

White Americans trying to understand without prejudice the violent events of the last four summers will find two themes developed here. The first is that **riots** are much more than "antisocial behavior." They **must** be viewed both as a new stage in the development of Negro protest against racism, and as a logical **outgrowth** of the failure of the whole society to support racial equality. The second theme is that **Americans** have to turn their attention from the law-breaking violence of the rioters to the original and **greater** violence of racism, which is supported **indirectly** by the white community as a whole. Thirty

years after the New Deal and five years after the rediscovery of poverty, the question concerned Americans must ask is whether this country is capable, here and now, of dealing with the social problems being violently protested in the slums.

This book is also for people who have actively participated in the civil rights and anti-poverty efforts of the last decade. The riots represent the assertion of new methods of opposing the racism that politics, nonviolence, and community organization have failed to end. This new reality in the ghetto is causing a crisis of strategy, and perhaps of conscience, among those used to acting as spokesmen or organizational representatives of the Negro community. The riot is real; the civil rights activists will have to decide whether it is legitimate and, more important, how to work in relation to it. These issues deserve the fullest possible discussion in the civil rights movement.

The author of these pages is a white man who has spent the past four years in the Newark ghetto organizing around issues of housing, welfare, and political power. During the riot I listened, watched and worked with people. Immediately afterwards I decided the most important task for myself was to suggest to "the outside world" a way of understanding the violence that took place. All of the instances cited in this book are documented by eyewitness accounts or newspaper reports.

Some may wonder whether an objective analysis can be given by one so deeply committed; each reader

will have to judge this question for himself, but it is **hoped** that this record of experiences is honest and **clear** enough to be used by others who may not share **all** the conclusions.

* * *

Most of the book is about the five days of crisis, **but** a few statements about Newark on the eve of the **riot** may serve as background to the real story.

When Newark exploded, *Life* magazine called it "the predictable insurrection" because conditions in Newark were known to be terrible.

Leaders of the business and political communities **knew** as much long before the violence broke out. **Business** officials announced in January 1967 that **their** own studies showed Newark's problems to be "more grave and pressing than those of perhaps any **other** American city." Political officials described this **grim** reality in their spring application for planning **funds** under the Model Cities Act. According to the application, Newark has the nation's highest percentage of bad housing, the most crime per 100,000 people, the heaviest per capita tax burden, the highest rates of venereal disease, maternal mortality and new cases of tuberculosis. The city is listed second in infant mortality, second in birth rate, seventh in the absolute number of drug addicts. Its unemployment rate, more than 15 per cent in the Negro community, has been persistently high enough to qualify Newark

as one of the five cities to get special assistance under the Economic Development Act.

But knowledge of the problems was not enough. Important business and political figures were deadlocked with civil rights groups over the proper solutions. The elites tended to propose pouring money into job training and social service programs through the existing agencies of government. Their priority was to restore Newark as a city suitable for business, commerce, and middle-class residents. The Chamber of Commerce newsletter, *Exec*, called for a new convention arena downtown as part of a development plan to "overwhelm the creeps" currently inhabiting Newark. The summer issue of the Chamber of Commerce magazine promised a "new life in Newark" on its cover. The article within complained that the positive features of Newark, especially its closeness to New York City and its rich undeveloped resources, are overlooked too often because of the "partially true" rumors that Newark is "crowded, it has slums, and the Negro population is growing rapidly." The city's vast programs for urban renewal, highways, downtown development, and most recently a 150-acre Medical School, in the heart of the ghetto, seemed almost deliberately designed to squeeze out this rapidly growing Negro community that represents a majority of the population.

Civil rights and anti-poverty activists saw the proper solution in terms of power, rather than money, for the

black majority. Black people occupied only token positions in city administrative and political life, and these positions were more dependent on the Mayor's will than the support of ghetto voters. Negro leaders blamed government and social agencies for fostering and neglecting problems, using federal funds to bolster their patronage rolls rather than meeting the crisis of the city. In the weeks before the riot, tensions between the government and the Negro leadership were never greater. Nearly 1000 Negroes disrupted Board of Education meetings when Mayor Hugh Addonizio tried to appoint a Democratic Party ally to an educational post over a fully-qualified Negro candidate. Another large group carried on a filibuster for weeks at Planning Board hearings on the decision to declare "blighted" the site for the Medical School. Addonizio changed his mind only slightly on the education appointment, leaving the post filled by the man who held it before. The Planning Board ended its hearings without yielding to the protest against the Medical School. Many speakers at the hearings, including leaders of the Negro Democratic "establishment," warned that Newark was on the verge of bloodshed and destruction.

Many analysts of the riot will believe that the stage was set by these developments. Newark had not improved; in fact, it had become worse in the eyes of middle-class Negroes who previously had

stakes in law and order. The angry outlook of the middle class was spreading into the consciousness of the total black community.

Yet neither city officials nor the civil rights leaders quite believed that a riot was coming. The Chamber of Commerce magazine quoted Addonizio as confidently saying that his "open door" administration had the confidence of Newark Negroes. The only people who wanted violence were a few agitators, the Mayor's side told the *New York Times* in May. Civil rights leaders, too, despite their militant warnings, tended to feel that Newark might remain quiet. After all, Newark was quiet when riots were breaking out in nearby Jersey City and Paterson three years ago. The gossip of many civil rights activists centered on the mysteries of *whether* Newark would explode rather than on what to do *when* Newark did.



Wednesday:

John Smith Starts a Riot

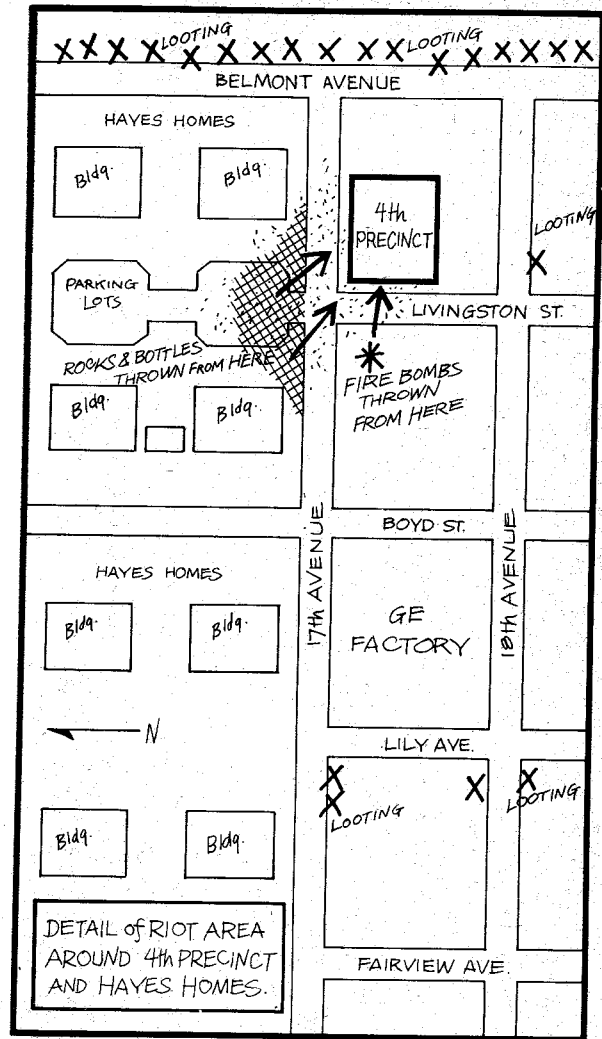
AS IF to prove its inevitability, the Newark riot began with an ordinary police-brutality incident against a man with an ordinary name: John Smith, driver of Cab 45, in the employ of the Safety Cab Company. Early Wednesday night, Smith's cab drove around a police car double-parked on 15th Avenue. Two uniformed patrolmen stopped the cab. According to the police story given to the *Star-Ledger* of July 14, Smith was charged with "tailgating" and driving the wrong way on a one-way street. Later they discovered his license had expired. The officers charged that Smith used abusive language and punched them. "They only used necessary force to subdue Smith, the policemen asserted."

This "necessary force" was described more fully

by Smith at his bail hearing on July 13. "There was no resistance on my part. That was a cover story by the police. They caved in my ribs, busted a hernia, and put a hole in my head." Witnesses on the stoops saw Smith dragged, paralyzed, to the police station. Smith was conscious, however: "After I got into the precinct six or seven other officers along with the two who arrested me kicked and stomped me in the ribs and back. They then took me to a cell and put my head over the toilet bowl. While my head was over the toilet bowl I was struck on the back of the head with a revolver. I was also being cursed while they were beating me. An arresting officer in the cell block said, 'This baby is mine.'"

It was about 8 o'clock. Negro cab-drivers circulated the report on Smith over their radios. Women and men shook their heads as they stood or sat in front of their homes. The word spread down 17th Avenue west of the precinct, and across the avenue into Hayes Homes. Called the "projects" by everyone, Hayes Homes was erected in the wake of "slum clearance" in the mid-Fifties. Each of the six buildings holds about 1000 people on twelve floors. People know them as foul prisons and police know them as "breeding grounds" for crime. As the word spread through Hayes Homes, people gathered at the windows and along the shadowy sidewalks facing the precinct.

What was out of the ordinary about John Smith's case was the fact that the police were forced to let



respected civil-rights leaders see his condition less than two hours after the beating happened. The police were trapped and nervous because they were caught by civil-rights leaders who could not be discredited. A neighborhood resident had called several of these leaders—activists from CORE, the United Freedom Party, and the Newark Community Union Project, among others—minutes after Smith was brought in.

After heated argument about Smith with officers in the precinct, an inspector arrived from central police headquarters who let the group see Smith in his cell. "Don't listen to what he says. He's obviously upset and nervous as you might expect," the inspector advised. The group was incensed after seeing Smith's condition, and demanded that he be sent immediately to the hospital. The police complied, and Smith was taken to Beth Israel Hospital. Others searched for witnesses, lawyers, and members of Smith's family.

It was at this point, witnesses who were in the precinct house say, that the police began putting on riot helmets. None of the activists felt there was going to be an explosion, and none remembers a crowd in the street of more than a hundred at this point.

Poverty-program officials, whom the activists had phoned from the precinct, arrived next. Among them were Timothy Still, president of the poverty program, a resident of Hayes Homes and for ten years president of its Tenants' Council, and Oliver Lofton, administrator of the Newark Legal Services Project.

A former assistant U.S. attorney, Lofton would later become the Governor's informal liaison with different elements of the organized Negro community and a member of the Governor's "Blue Ribbon Commission" to investigate the riots. With the knowledge of the police, the leaders determined to organize a peaceful but angry demonstration in front of the precinct. They were given a bullhorn by a police official who hoped they could calm the crowd which was now growing. It was 11 o'clock.

Atop a police car outside the precinct Bob Curvin of CORE, Still, and Lofton called for a militant demonstration. Curvin declared that the police were conducting a war against the black community. Still spoke not as an official, but in his informal role of neighborhood leader, expressing anger at "sadists" in the precinct but urging the people to be peaceful. Lofton reiterated the need for an orderly demonstration, promising that all his legal resources would go to the defense of the cab-driver.

But this was one of those occasions in which people take leadership in their own hands. Although each speaker was loudly cheered, the people were in no mood to march, as certain of the organizational leaders could sense. A few marched behind Tim Still, but the line soon fell apart. A local man took the police bullhorn and simply said, "Come down the street, we got some shit." In the darkness across from the precinct young men from the neighborhood were picking up bricks and bottles, and looking for some gasoline.

Missiles started to fly at the precinct, where 110 windows would eventually be broken. A friend pulled Curvin away from the front of the station, and the rest of the assembled crowd moved back in anticipation of the police. The police came out with helmets and clubs but were driven back inside by a torrent of bricks and bottles. People started to move back across the street as the front of the precinct became a battle zone.

Just after midnight, two Molotov cocktails exploded high on the western wall of the precinct. A stream of fire curled fifty feet down the wall, flared for ten seconds, and died. The people, now numbering at least 500 on the street, let out a gasp of excitement. Fear, or at least caution, was apparent also as many retreated into the darkness or behind cars in the Hayes parking lot.

After three years of wondering when "the riot" would come to Newark, people knew that this could be it. While city officials pointed with pride to Newark's record of peace, most of the community knew it was only a matter of time until the explosion: "And when Newark goes," according to street wisdom, "it's going to really go."

Much of the community predicted that Newark's riot would be triggered by a police incident. While unemployment, housing and educational problems are created far from the ghetto, the police are seen as direct carriers of intimidation, harassment and vio-

ence. Dominated by the Italians who run Newark politics, tainted by alleged underworld connections, including a token of about 250 blacks among its 1400 members (all of them in subordinated positions), the police department seems to many Negroes to be an armed agency defending the privileges of the city's shrinking white community.

The police have been assertive about their rights and stature. When CORE marched against police brutality in 1965, police were heavily involved in a counterdemonstration that lasted five days and included over 5000 people. Police director Dominick Spina was outspoken against "leftist" influences in the civil rights and anti-poverty organizations. A month before the riots, he warned the Rotarians that if businessmen didn't soon become involved in the city's problems, he feared either "the fall of our civilization or a right-wing dictatorship."

The police have always been highly defensive about the brutality charge. Since 1960 they have had a complaint-taking system of their own. Of 60 complaints made in six years, the police investigators have substantiated the charge of brutality two times. In addition, although rejecting CORE's demand in 1965, for a civilian review board, the Mayor decided to refer future complaints of brutality to the FBI and county prosecutor. From September 1965 until August 1967, 7 cases were reported but no action was taken on any. The case of cab-driver Smith was the first referred to the FBI in more than a year.

The police were well-trained in methods of "human relations." Sophisticated crowd-control techniques were used at the hearings on the Medical School and education in May where Negroes disrupted the proceedings. The many watching police were ordered to make no arrests. In the year preceding the riot, the Justice Department funded the country's largest "police community relations" program in Newark, bringing 150 police together with 150 community residents in workshop discussions. Seven superior officers were assigned to "community relations" work before the riot, and 30 worked part-time to "avert disorder." The Police Athletic League became involved in running summer playstreet programs. Negro community leaders were invited to ride in patrol cars to observe police behavior.

Yet none of this seemed to be enough to affect the responses, real and potential, of the average officer. By early summer there were reports that many police were burning over what seemed to be a "soft line" by city officials toward militant Negro groups.

On the front lines against the police that night were the men between fifteen and twenty-five years old from the projects and the nearby avenues. They were the primary assailants and the most elusive enemy for the police. They were the force which broke open the situation in which masses of people began to participate. Few of them had ever been involved in civil-rights organizations, although some were known to

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Newark Community Union Project organizers who had worked from an office three blocks away beginning in 1965. They were friendly to the organizers, approved of the program of community organizing, but "joined" only to the extent of hanging out or playing music. They liked and understood the slogan "black power." They were "organized" on a very loose basis; Newark has no major gangs. But these youths still are capable of communicating and acting on an effective citywide basis. Phil Hutchings of SNCC described them as "young people with nothing to do and nothing to lose."

Fathers and mothers in the ghetto often complain that even they cannot understand the wildness of their kids. Knowing that America denies opportunity to black young men, black parents still share with whites the sense that youth is heading in a radically new, incomprehensible, and frightening direction. Refusal to obey authority—that of parents, teachers and other adult "supervisors"—is a common charge against youngsters. Yet when the riot broke out, the generations came together. The parents understood and approved the defiance of their sons that night.

So while the young men grouped their forces, shouted and armed themselves against the helmeted police with whatever they could find on the ground, the older generation gathered in greater and greater numbers in the rear. The Hayes projects are a useful terrain for people making war. The police station is

well lit, but the projects are dark, especially the rooftops a hundred yards above the street. Each room in the projects can be darkened to allow people to observe or attack from their windows. There is little light in the pathways, recreation areas, and parking lots around the foot of the tall buildings. The police thus were faced with the twin dangers of ambush and searching through a shadow world where everybody and everything appears to be alike. It was in this sanctuary that parents came together. It was here also that their sons could return to avoid the police.

Less than an hour after the bomb hit the precinct, the looting phase began. A group of twenty-five young people on 17th Avenue decided that the time was ripe to break into the stores. They ran up 17th toward Belmont as the word of their mission spread along the way. "They're going up to Harry's," a mother excitedly said. She and her friends looked quizzically at each other, then started running up to the corner. A boom and a crash signaled the opening of the new stage. Burglar-alarm bells were ringing up and down Belmont and 17th within fifteen minutes. People poured out from the project areas into liquor and furniture stores as the young people tore them open.

The police now began patrolling on foot in small teams. It was clear that they were both outnumbered and uncertain of themselves in the streets. Police violence began. The next day Newark Human Rights Commission Chairman Al Black would report to the Mayor on what the police were capable of doing when

"order" collapsed: a Negro policeman in civilian clothes was beaten by white policemen when he entered the Fourth Precinct to report for duty; Mrs. Vera Brinson was told to "get the hell upstairs" and hit on the neck with a club in Hayes Homes; Gregory Smith said police shouted "all you black niggers get upstairs" at project residents; two men were seized by police as they returned from work, one beaten by eight police at the precinct and the other punched and kicked by fifteen police at the entrance to his building. These people were not "criminals," Black told the Mayor, but working people.

But in the first hours the police could not control the streets in spite of nearly a hundred arrests and numerous attacks on people. After a while they developed an uneasy coexistence with the crowd, the police in twos and threes taking up positions to "protect" stores that were already looted, the people moving on to other stores. More police tried in vain to regain control of 17th Avenue and Belmont but were trapped in a pattern of frustrating advance-and-retreat.

One hope of the police may have been to keep the riot from spreading. Again, however, this was beyond their control. If they had used greater force on Belmont and 17th, the result would probably have been to spread the riot by making people move beyond the zone of fire. Furthermore, though all of Newark's 1400 police were being mobilized, it is doubtful there were enough men to cordon off a spreading mass of rioters effectively. Therefore the question of when

and how the riot would spread was more in the hands of the people than the police. That it did not spread may indicate the lack of real organization. All around the original riot zone people were sitting on their stoops or sleeping in their homes within earshot of the window. Yet word did not spread until the following day.

Moreover, an incident involving Smith's fellow cab-drivers Wednesday night tends to indicate that the spreading word by itself is not sufficient to spread the action. The cab-drivers were the one group equipped to let thousands of people in the city know what had happened. Within a few hours of Smith's arrest, the black cabbies were deciding by radio to meet at the precinct and form a protest caravan to City Hall. Between 1 and 2 A.M. at least twenty cars were lined up along Belmont at the corner of 17th, creating new noise, excitement, and fury. After nearly an hour of waiting and planning, the cabs roared down to police headquarters, located behind City Hall, to demand release of Smith. They carried close to a hundred passengers from the riot area with them. At headquarters they were able to secure a promise that Smith would be adequately treated and released after arraignment in the morning. At the same time the police closed off traffic on Broad Street in front of City Hall, thus helping further to alert citizens who had not been affected by the rioting or the cab-drivers' caravan. Police by this time were swinging their clubs freely, even at confused motorists, perhaps out of fear

that bombs would be thrown against the City Hall building itself.

Yet the riot did not spread. At 4 A.M. most of the participants had gone home. About fifty people, mostly young, stood on the corner of 17th and Fairview watching and occasionally taunting police who had "secured" 17th Avenue. Police cars and wagons patrolled up and down 17th; now and then, policemen would leap out of their cars to charge at the people on the corner, only to watch them vanish up alleys and between houses. By 5 A.M. everyone had vanished from the streets, except the police.

Newark's officials must have viewed the riot as a plague for which there were no doctors, no medicine. In this sense they were right: there was no one with whom they could deal or bargain. A week after the riot a Newark official told the New York *Daily News* (July 21):

After the first night of rioting, the Mayor spent all day trying to get through to the kids. He was making contact with the adults and adult leaders, but who was speaking for the kids? We couldn't even understand what demand they had.

Exactly.

II



***Thursday:
The Community Takes Over***

THURSDAY morning's paper denied what everyone knew was true. Mayor Addonizio called the events of the previous evening an "isolated incident," not of genuine riot proportions. In their behavior, however, city officials gave plenty of indication that they were worried.

The Mayor called in civil rights leaders, including both moderate ministers and some of his more militant opponents. Concessions were made. Addonizio decided to ask for City Council funds to allow additional police captaincies so that a qualified Negro officer, Eddie Williams, could become the first Negro captain. He requested that Human Rights Director James Threatt and Police Director Dominick Spina separately investigate Wednesday's conflict. He re-

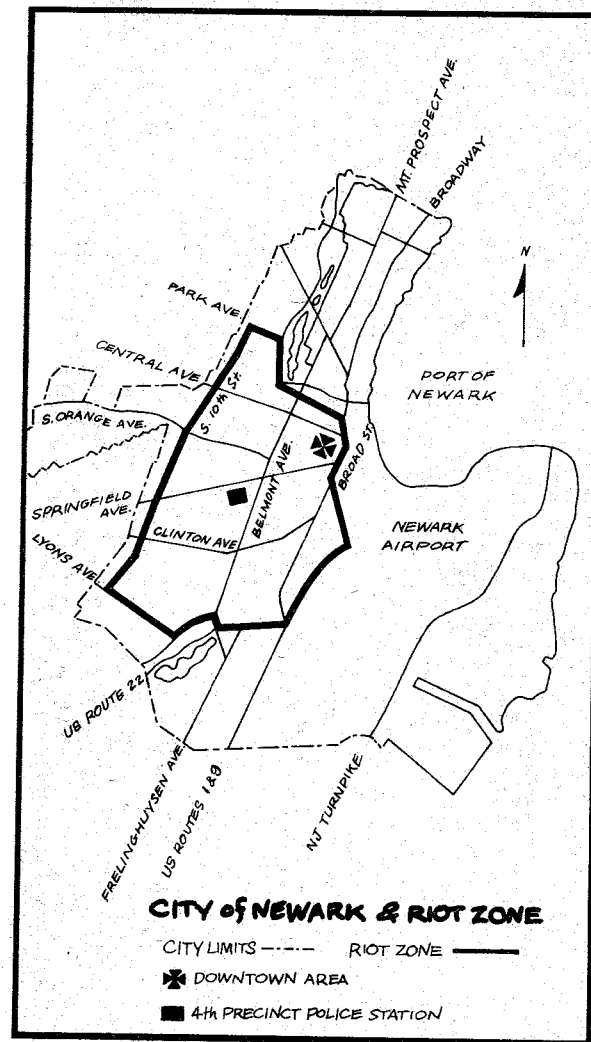
Rebellion in Newark

assigned the two patrolmen who beat Smith to "administrative positions." He referred the Smith case to the county prosecutor and FBI. He announced formation of a Blue Ribbon Commission, like the McCone Commission that investigated Watts, to examine this "isolated incident." The Mayor was doing what militant politicians were demanding. But when someone told him point blank that the people had lost confidence in his administration, Addonizio replied: "That's politics. Sit down. You've said enough."

There was no civil rights leader, no organization, capable of determining what was to come. Sensing this, some community activists refused to engage in what they felt were fruitless meetings downtown. Others tried to warn the Mayor of what might happen in full knowledge that the Mayor was now powerless. Others worked desperately for a proposal that could be brought to the community in an effort to bargain for peace. Many jockeyed for position, worrying about who had the Mayor's ear, who might be blamed, who would be the channel for resources from the establishment to the community.

Some community activists settled on the idea of a demonstration in the evening at the precinct. At a neighborhood anti-poverty center near the precinct, they ran off a leaflet that said simply: "Stop! Police Brutality!" It would be given out to motorists, calling a 7:30 demonstration at the precinct. Some organizers of this demonstration probably thought it might

Thursday: The Community Takes Over



channel energy away from violence. Others knew the violence was there, not to be channeled into symbolic protest, yet conventional protest was the only avenue of expression familiar to them. So they proceeded. Police Director Spina would later claim this activity helped "fuel" the explosion later that night.

Regardless of what the Mayor did, regardless of what civil rights leaders did, regardless of what planners of the demonstration did, the riot was going to happen. The authorities had been indifferent to the community's demand for justice; now the community was going to be indifferent to the authorities' demand for order. This was apparent to community organizers who walked around the projects Thursday afternoon talking to young people. All the organizers urged was that burning of buildings be minimized so as to spare lives.

Meanwhile the leaflets were going out as planned. By late afternoon about twenty-five people were picketing the precinct, mostly young kids. By 6 P.M. a somewhat larger number were picketing in the street where traffic had been blocked off. More than a hundred people gathered in the parking lot of the projects. An equal number lined 17th Avenue on both sides. These were people of the community. Almost no one from the poverty program or existing organizations was involved in leading the pickets. An Afro drum group arrived and started playing.

Word spread. At a bar five blocks away, for ex-

ample, people heard the news and started for 17th Avenue. Only one out of the twenty-five or so remained behind; he didn't want a riot to break out because in his view, one inevitable result of a riot would be that Negro prisoners in the jail he had just left would be beaten.

Back at the precinct where the tempo was increasing by the minute, Human Rights Commission Director James Threatt arrived with a message to the crowd from the Mayor. Threatt said Addonizio promised a Negro police captain by July 17 if the demonstration would stop. People told Threatt to get off the precinct steps where he was standing. A Negro detective possibly FBI agent John Randall who was identified in the *New York Times*, July 14, started moving back the crowd now surrounding Threatt. When he failed, several community activists cleared the stairs. Another Negro detective then stood on the steps to ask "Why don't you people just go home?" Someone threw an object at him, but the man did not move. Rocks and bottles started flying. The detective was pulled out of the way, then rocks and bottles were thrown at the precinct. A lady in white started punching out precinct windows with a stick.

David Crooms, a black free-lance photographer, was on the scene. "The rioting would have broken out anyway," he believes, but it began at the precinct when the demonstration was disrupted by Threatt's appearance with the empty offer. With other press

members, Crooms moved across the street to the gas station. There he heard one officer inside the station yelling "When the hell are we going out there?" Then the side door opened. Crooms tells this story:

Big white cops came out yelling "Let's go get these mother-fuckers." Myself and the other newsmen, four of them, ran along behind the charging police. We followed them out to the court in the middle of Hayes Homes. On the way, they caught one black newsman off to the side and beat him. They chased this colored fellow who was running in the court. Twelve or fourteen cops got on him, dropped him, and beat him. We were still behind the cops. Next thing I knew, one yelled, "get that black mother-fucker." The rest of the newsmen stood and wondered what was going on. There were no questions asked. They hit me on top of the head, and I went out for maybe five seconds. When I came to, one of them hit me just below the eye. They ran off. I went back to the precinct. The captain said he was sorry and told me to file a complaint.

Al Black, the chairman of the Newark Human Rights Commission, was around the Fourth Precinct from 7 that evening to 3:30 the next morning. He heard the police "using vicious racial slurs on Negroes, including calling them black S.O.B.'s." He saw police beating young Negroes under arrest as they were being taken to the precinct. Police dragged in Negroes with their hands handcuffed behind their backs while other officers were striking them with night-

sticks on the head and on the body. "I tried to prevent the police from beating Negroes they arrested. I demanded that the police take jailed persons who were bleeding profusely to the hospital and they complied." Director Spina was inside the station.

Heavy looting soon began on Springfield Avenue, three blocks from the precinct, the largest commercial street in the ghetto. By midnight there was action everywhere in the ghetto although the Mayor announced that the disturbance was being brought to an end. Partly the expansion was caused by people moving in new directions outward from the looted areas where police were concentrated. Partly it was people in new neighborhoods following the example of people in the original area. A human network of communication was forming, with people in the streets its main conductors.

The youth were again in the lead, breaking windows where the chance appeared, chanting "Black Power," moving in groups through dark streets to new commercial areas. This was more than a case of youth stepping in where parents feared to tread. This was the largest demonstration of black people ever held in Newark. At any major intersection, and there are at least ten such points in the ghetto, there were more than a thousand people on the streets at the same time. A small number entered stores and moved out with what they could carry; they would be replaced by others from the large mass of people walking, running, or standing in the streets. Further

back were more thousands who watched from windows and stoops and periodically participated. Those with mixed feelings were not about to intervene against their neighbors. A small number, largely the older people, shook their heads.

People voted with their feet to expropriate property to which they felt entitled. They were tearing up the stores with the trick contracts and installment plans, the second-hand television sets going for top-quality prices, the phony scales, the inferior meat and vegetables. A common claim was: this is owed me. But few needed to argue. People who under ordinary conditions respected law because they were forced to do so now felt free to act upon the law as they thought it should be. When an unpopular store was opened up, with that mighty crash of glass or ripping sound of metal, great shouts of joy would sound. "Hey, they got Alice's!" "They gave that place what he deserved." "They did? G-o-o-d!"

The riot was more effective against gouging merchants than organized protest had ever been. The year before a survey was started to check on merchants who weighted their scales. The survey collapsed because of disinterest: people needed power, not proof. This spring the welfare mothers spent a month planning and carrying out a protest against a single widely hated store. The owner finally was forced to close his business, but only after nineteen people were arrested in a demonstration. There was no effective follow-up against the other stores, though

frightened merchants cleaned up their stores, offered bribes to organizers, and chipped in money to outfit a kid's baseball team. But it was too late for concessions.

The Negro middle class and "respectable" working people participated heavily on Thursday night. Well-dressed couples with kids in their car were a common sight. One woman who said she already could afford the "junk" sold in the ghetto decided to wait until the rioting spread to fancier sections where she could get expensive furs. Doubtless the Mayor's failure to act on issues such as education caused disaffection among the black middle class. Doubtless, too, the middle class willingness to consider rioting legitimate made it more likely that a riot would happen.

But it is doubtful that any tactics by the Mayor could have divided the black middle class from the ghetto in such a way as to prevent a riot. The poor were going to riot. The middle class could join. Many did, because their racial consciousness cut through middle-class values to make property destruction seem reasonable, especially when the white authorities cannot see who is looting. During the Watts riot the story was told of a black executive who regularly stopped to throw bricks before attending suburban cocktail parties and barbecues; the same attitude was present in Newark. When police systematically attacked Negro-owned stores later in the week, they were only confirming what the black middle class,

reluctantly, was starting to understand: that racism ultimately makes no distinction between "proper" and "lowly" colored people.

Black unity, solidarity, spirit, the feeling of being home: by whatever name the fact was plain. There is no question whether the majority of Negroes gave support. People on the street felt free to take shelter from the police in homes of people they did not know. What concerned Governor Hughes greatly the next morning was the "carnival atmosphere" of people looting even in daylight. What for Hughes seemed like "laughing at a funeral" was to many in the community more like the celebration of a new beginning. People felt as though for a moment they were creating a community of their own.

Economic gain was the basis of mass involvement. The stores presented the most immediate way for people to take what they felt was theirs. Liquor was the most convenient item to steal. The Governor's announcement on Friday morning that he would "dry the town out" came a little late. But liquor was hardly the sole object of the looters. Boys who had few clothes took home more than they had ever owned before. Mattresses were carried into apartments to replace the second-hand or over-used ones purchased on installment. New television sets, irons, tables and chairs, baseball bats, dishware and other household goods were carried out in armloads. People walked, ran, or drove off with their possessions. There were Negro gangsters and hi-jackers,

with connections in the white mob network, on the scene too, but most of the people were taking only for themselves. One reason there was so little quarrelling over "who gets what" was that there was, for a change, enough for all.

For the most part the rioting was controlled and focussed. The "rampaging" was aimed almost exclusively at white-owned stores, and not at such buildings as schools, churches, or banks. The latter institutions are oppressive but their buildings contain little that can be carried off. To this extent the riot was concrete rather than symbolic. There were no attacks by Negroes on "soul brother" stores. There were people injured by glass on the streets where they fell, but they typically fell because police chased them, not because of stampeding into each other in the rush for goods.

Basic feelings of racial hate were released at white people far less often than was suggested by the media. Many missiles were thrown at cars driven by whites but not often with murderous intent. Several times such cars were stopped, the occupants jeered at and terrified, and a few actual beatings occurred. However, no white passers-by or store owners were killed and very few, if any, were shot at. No white neighborhoods were attacked, though rioting reached the borders of at least four separate white areas. Several white community workers felt able to move around on foot freely by day and even at night, especially in the company of Negroes. Driving was

more difficult because all white people appeared to be outsiders. These conditions remained the same throughout the week, though the tensions between whites and blacks intensified as the stage of spirited looting was replaced by that of bitter confrontation with the troops.

Police behavior became more and more violent as the looting expanded. The size of the rebellion was far too large for 1400 patrolmen. Their tactic seemed to be to drive at high speeds, with sirens whining, down major streets in the ghetto. Thus they were driving too fast for rock-throwers while still attempting a show of force. As a result of this maneuver a woman was run down and apparently killed on 17th Avenue. The sight and sound of the police also stirred the community into greater excitement.

As darkness fell, the number of arrests increased sharply. Police started firing blanks. According to the *New York Times* of July 14, police were asking by radio for "the word" to shoot, and when news came in that policemen in one car were shooting real bullets, another voice shouted over the radio: "It's about time; give them hell." At midnight orders were given for police to use "all necessary means—including fire-arms—to defend themselves."

Murdering looters now was possible. A short time afterwards, twenty-eight-year-old Tedock Bell walked out of his Bergen Street home to see what had happened to the nearby bar where he was employed.

When the police came, his wife left in fright. But Tedock told his sister-in-law and her boyfriend not to run because they weren't doing anything. They did run, however, while he walked. He became the first victim a minute later.

About 4 A.M. two patrolmen reported they saw four men emerge with bottles from a liquor store on Jones Street. They called halt, the officers told the *Newark News*—calling halt is a prerequisite to shooting someone—but the looters ran. One was shot and killed going through a fence.

More than 250 people were treated at City Hospital that night, at least fifteen reportedly for gunshot wounds. Less than one-quarter of them were held for further diagnosis and treatment. The police took over the ambulances from the Negro drivers and rescue workers. Snipers were shooting at the ambulances, police said. By 2:20 A.M. Mayor Addonizio was revising his midnight estimate that the situation was under control. Announcing that things had deteriorated, he asked Governor Hughes for aid in restoring order.

By early morning Friday 425 people were in jail. In addition to five dead, hundreds were wounded or injured. The *Newark News* that morning expressed hope that Newark might again become a city "in which people can live and work harmoniously in a climate that will encourage, not repel, the expansion of the business industry that provide jobs for all." In the *Star-Ledger's* opinion, there was a need for com-

Rebellion in Newark

munity leaders "to act with dispatch to putting to rest false reports that sometimes touch off violent transgressions."



The Occupation

"AN OBVIOUS open rebellion," asserted Governor Hughes after his tour of Newark at 5 A.M. Friday. From that announcement until Monday afternoon, the black community was under military occupation. More than 3000 National Guardsmen were called up Friday morning from the surrounding white suburbs and southern Jersey towns. Five hundred white state troopers arrived at the same time. By mid-afternoon Friday they were moving in small convoys throughout the city, both clockwise and counter-clockwise, circling around seven parts of the ghetto. Guardsmen were moving in jeeps or small open trucks, usually led or followed by carloads of troopers or Newark police. Bayonets were attached to the Guards' .30-caliber M-1 rifles or .30-caliber carbines, which they carried in addition to .45-caliber pistols. Personnel carriers weighing as much as eleven tons,