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13 March 1973

SPECIAL INFORMATION REPORT**The Black Power Movement**

The conflict between black and white Americans is deep and cuts across such complex issues as prejudice, employment and poverty. Those conflicts cannot quickly be resolved, and as the President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders reported in 1968, even the best and most costly solutions might not forestall further disorders. The Commission concluded that "if the Negro population as a whole developed even stronger feelings of being wrongly penned in and discriminated against, many of its members might come to support not only riots, but the rebellion now being preached by only a handful."

There are black Americans who are convinced that black people as a group are relegated to a permanent minority status and that the white majority will never - without great pressure - allow black people to achieve full equality. Those who hold such deep-seated convictions are offering alternative philosophies to the American black people; and each of those philosophies hold the prospect of further civil conflict. Although there are scores of black activist organizations, most fall within the definition of one of three philosophies: the Nationalists, the Integrationists and the Revolutionaries.

The Integrationists reached their pinnacle of prominence in the mid-1960's following several years of sit-ins and massive civil rights marches, principally in the southern states. Their tactic was "massive demand." They demanded entrance to universities, open housing, unrestricted use of public facilities. They challenged

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and confronted existing institutions and practices. They demanded change. Their demands pricked the conscience of America and led to far reaching civil rights legislation. By the latter 1960's the movement had lost its thrust, and urban riots produced a growing resistance to black activism. Society was no longer responsive to the Integrationist movement, and the old coalition of integrationist leaders and groups began to break apart. There are still prominent black leaders who believe that the Integrationist movement is the most reasonable and least dangerous form of black activism. Some of those leaders are attempting to revive the tactic of massive demand while broadening their base of appeal on such issues as poverty and unemployment.

The Nationalists offer the ideology of separatism. They do not believe that integration can ever achieve full equality for black people, and thus advocate withdrawal from the mainstream of society and the establishment of a parallel and self-sufficient black society independent of "white patronage." They seek self determination arguing that only black people can deal with black problems. They concentrate on black capitalism where produce from black-owned farms will be hauled to black communities by black-owned-transportation systems. According to a nationally recognized authority on black nationalists and revolutionary movements, black nationalism has emerged since 1970 "spectacularly to displace both the integrationist and revolutionary movements in the black community." The more than 70 Muslim sects in the United States - including the Black Muslims - are considered nationalist in philosophy. Most nationalists can be characterized by an intense mistrust and hatred toward white people. In many respects the growing influence of the nationalist movement tends to endorse the warnings of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders that the United States is moving toward two separate societies.

Like the Nationalists, the Revolutionaries also see no hope for black people to achieve equality through integration. But unlike the Nationalists, the Revolutionaries believe that equality and justice can only be achieved by destroying government as it exists today (or prompting it to destroy itself) and replacing it with a system that insures equality.

While it is comparatively easy to describe philosophies, it is almost impossible to neatly fit existing organizations into one or another category. In practice, most activist groups and individuals draw from each philosophy. And each of the practicing philosophies supplement and complement each other. While the Nationalists as a group claim that they are not aggressively violent (but admit advocating violence in self defense), adherents of that persuasion accounted for the recent hotel-roof shootout in New Orleans, the Muslim sect massacre in Washington, D. C. and the two-day sporting goods store seige in New York. While the Integration Movement was founded on the principle of non-violent civil disobedience, their marches and protests often led to violence. And while revolutionaries discount the value of the integrationist theory, they support their activities because they contribute to confusion in society.

It should be understood that black extremists can enjoy some degree of influence only when social conditions exist within the black community which lend credence to their philosophies. It is perhaps a universal human law that as people become more desperate in their search for quality of life, they will progressively resort to more desperate means to achieve it.

The real question is what the majority of black Americans perceive their situation to be. Are they so desperate that frustration will lead to renewed racial disorders? Are they so desperate that they would resort to the extremes of revolutionary violence? Are black Americans so frustrated that they would answer the call of the Nationalist movement and divorce themselves from mainstream society? Or do commentators, columnists and spokesmen for and analyzers of the black movement exaggerate the plight of black Americans?

Arthur Fletcher, director of the United Negro College Fund, and formerly an Assistant Secretary in the Labor Department, said in January that the nation's blacks are facing the same kind of moral despair they faced in the 1940's and 1950's, and that "the generation of peace will become a generation of hell for black youth if they are allowed to grow outside this country's mainstream."

On 2 February, Dr. Alvin Poussaint, professor of psychiatry at Harvard University sounded an even stronger warning. According

to him, rage and frustrations are rising explosively in black communities all over America, particularly among ghetto young people. "Black communities too are increasingly becoming victims of violence born in the frustrations of joblessness, loss of self-esteem and a feeling of powerlessness to compel change." He finds that the vast majority of white Americans "don't really believe in equality and integration, and are actively running away from it . . . until that attitude changes within the American majority, the danger of explosion with the dehumanized American minority will grow." The consequence, he warns, may yet be renewal of "open warfare in the streets."

On 2 February, the Copley News Service reported the impressions of Vernon E. Brown, a black news service columnist: "The blacks are united in what I call black suicidal tendencies. It means that Black America is no longer afraid to die. This means that Black America feels there is no longer any hope. It means that many blacks no longer say, 'We shall overcome', but now say, 'Whatever the price, let us begin'. Black America's leadership is not able to solve its problem. Henry Kissinger can't come and make peace with an angry people. Congress has no time to debate. President Nixon has no time to confer with his aides over a long period." Brown further pointed out that just as the blacks are becoming more violent over frustrations, real or imagined, white America is also becoming aroused: "The police are getting tired of being called pigs and dodging black bullets . . . and Whites are tired of getting beat up and humiliated when they go into the black community." Another Copley columnist, John Pinkerman, assessed Brown's impressions as follows: "If Brown is right, we are in tough shape. If Blacks no longer are afraid to die and whites are getting near the end in tolerating black violence, we are nearing the bursting point in domestic danger."

Harris Opinion Polls taken in November 1972 found that blacks have the least confidence in the leaders of American institutions; blacks tend to feel that American society generally has turned its back on the poor; blacks do not feel they have shared in the general recovery that has been taking place in the economy; blacks feel that white America has lost interest in the problems of black America.

If America's 20 million black citizens are in fact losing faith in American society as reports would seem to indicate, then society

will surely be faced with conflict and crisis. With America's pain-tolerance level heightened and her skin toughened by years of antiwar protests, it is unlikely that mere massive protests would produce the immediate changes sought. The Nationalist Movement while currently growing in strength would probably appear too philosophical and the benefits too distant to appeal to the impatient black youth in the long run. Violence - in an age of violence - would appear more likely. Whether spontaneously ignited out of deep felt frustration, or inspired by cunning design, renewed street violence of massive proportions cannot be discounted.

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