

The Alternative Society—IV

Politics Of Survival Replaces The Politics Of Revolution

EDITOR'S NOTE: Within the Alternative Society, the politics of survival have replaced the politics of Revolution Now. This dispatch, another in a series from the AP Special Assignment Team, details why.

By KEN HARTNETT

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — For the handful of Yippie agitators working the crowds jamming the sidewalks of Mifflin Street, Palm Sunday was a frustrating day. Nothing was working.

For the most part, the 400 policemen were ignoring the taunts, the teasing snake dances through their lines, the eggs and the occasional rock or bottle thumping at their feet.

But more importantly, the young people weren't reacting either. They showed up 1,200 strong for a forbidden street dance in the radical enclave near the University of Wisconsin. But most had come to watch, to laugh at antics like the brief duel between a Yippie with a wooden sword and a policeman with a riot stick, and to see the riot start.

All the ingredients were there for a riot like that of two springs ago when the Miffland Community fought police for three nights over a street dance, banned by City Hall.

But this time there was no riot. True, there was a skirmish after dark when police took a 19-year-old paralytic into custody for repeatedly riding his wheelchair into the street. But it was far from a riot in the Miffland manner.

Not only in Mifflin Street, but throughout the Alternative Society, the politically minded are rethinking the tactic of wild-in-the-streets violence.

That doesn't mean it is being discarded. The potential remains whenever large numbers of radicals confront large numbers of police. But the tactic is being reexamined.

In the Alternative Society, where substantial numbers of disaffected young people are trying to lay the groundwork for their own tomorrow, violence and those who urge it are becoming increasingly suspect.

Since the widespread out-

bursts against the Cambodian invasion, demonstrations likely to become violent have drawn fewer and fewer participants.

Part of the reason is pure frustration. The war goes on. Part of the reason is awareness of increased police sophistication. Part of the reason is the rise in the importance of the women's liberation movement, which pushed the macho, or male-oriented, revolutionary backstage by stripping him of his glamour.

Even the Yippies acknowledge the change.

"No one, not even Yippie media wizards, has come out with a line on violence clear enough to overcome the mistrust of millions of uptight youth who suspect that the movement has cast them in the role of revolutionary cannon fodder," confesses a Yippie position paper distributed at the Madison conference.

The vision of revolution-around-the-corner, a dream widely shared just a year ago, has suddenly been succeeded by a less romantic dream that revolution will come only if young men and women work together, building, organizing and learning to survive in co-existence with a society perceived as hostile and doomed.

The politics of survival have replaced the politics of Revolution Now.

The energy that a year ago poured into demonstrations is now being used to organize food cooperatives, free medical clinics, free stores, free schools.

There is still room for demonstrations—and major ones are planned as part of the spring offensive to end the war. But demonstrations and confrontations are no longer the central

Take revolutionary Jeff Dowd of Seattle. He is only 20 but already he knows how it feels to be caught between Women's Lib and the FBI.

Dowd and his colleagues in the Sun Dance Collective of the Seattle Liberation Front were not only indicted on federal conspiracy charges, they were denounced within the New Left as male chauvinist pigs. "I just got my legs shot off," he said.

A year ago, Dowd and the other Sun Daniefs were riding high as leaders of the SLF—a high energy, swaggering hip collective of collectives designed to bring the revolution to the Pacific Northwest in a hurry.

During the day, the Sun Dancers goaded, confronted, demonstrated and occasionally—so the government says—(engaged in random vandalism). At night—or so the revolutionary women of Seattle say—they grooved on dope, beer, wine and women.

"The problem was not merely that women did the organizing while men made the speeches," wrote the Seattle women in a letter circulated through the elaborate newspaper network that serves the Alternative Society. "Our humanity was denied to us... The reality of our lives was peripheral to their revolution. And we began to realize we could not trust them to fight for anyone's liberation. They exploited women in their daily lives."

Not only in Seattle—where the liberation front exists only as a bad memory—but throughout the Alternative Society, the out-front "macho" is in trouble. If he's too far out in front, the authorities will notice him. If he's too macho, the women will cut him down and they'll have the

do not have a sense of what is going on, cannot develop strategies that grow to include large numbers of people, have become 'us' and 'them'."

In Seattle, Peggy, briefly a Weather person herself, is thinking of spending part of the summer studying painting.

"We've taught how to hate really well," said the doe-eyed revolutionary who just four years ago lived in a world of nuns and rosary beads at a San Francisco area Catholic women's college. "But we haven't learned to love well at all."

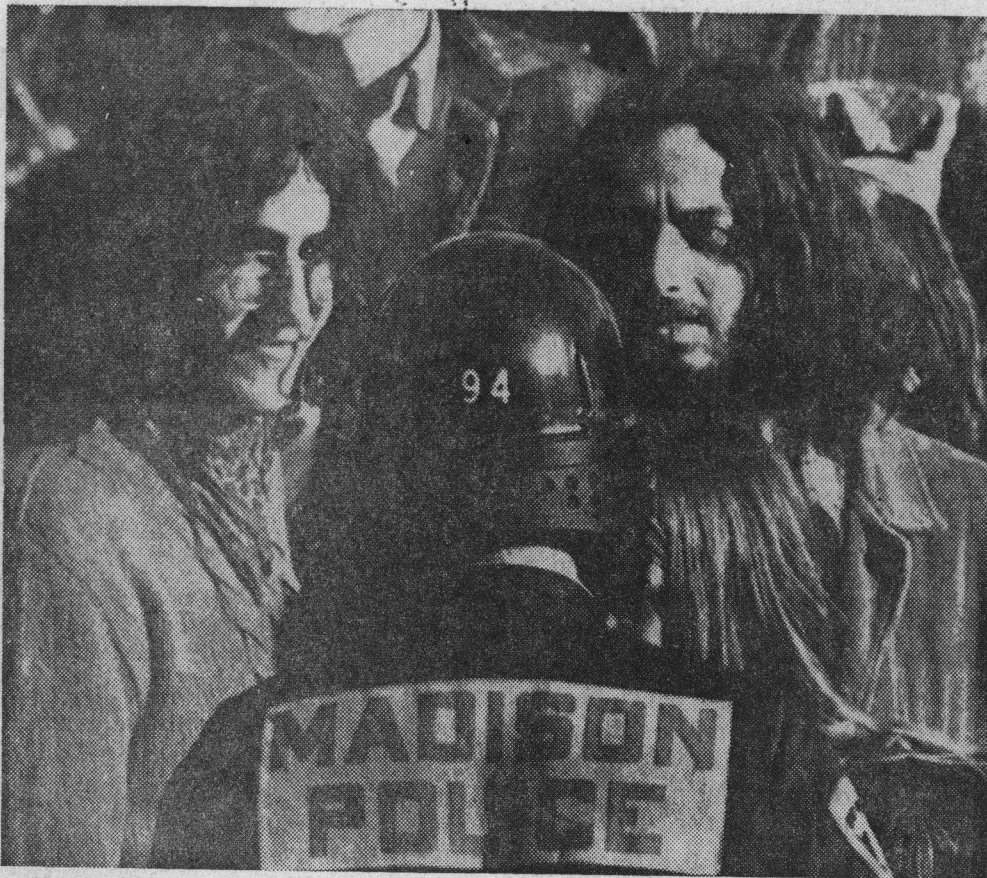
She recalled the frantic pace of life in the Liberation Front.

"If we didn't free Bobby Seale tomorrow, it was disastrous. I used to be an artist. As soon as I got into politics, I suppressed a lot of talents, a lot of my own feelings. I just didn't have time to develop things that I can see now were valid in me."

She sees the new emphasis on community building as a way to act politically while growing humanly. "You can't have revolutionary people," she said, "unless they are happy. The Vietnamese are together. They are a happy people."

Carol, a former SDS member at the University of Georgia, sat in her apartment off Atlanta's Strip and told of a conversation she had with Mark Rudd before the Weather person went underground.

"We disagreed on something," she said. "I asked him what would happen if we continued to disagree after the revolution. He said we would talk about it. Then I asked him if after we talked about it, we still couldn't reach agreement. He told me, 'I guess then we'd have



Demonstrators heckle police on Mifflin Street in a radical enclave near the University of

Wisconsin in Madison known as the Miffland Community. The Mifflanders wanted to

hold a street party and the police said no, touching off a reaction by the young people.

ciety. Tom Byers is the more representative revolutionary.

Byers, who is helping build the Country Docor—a free medical clinic in Seattle, studied at Cornell under the Rev. Daniel Berrigan a Jesuit priest now in prison for destroying draft records.

"He used to talk about patience," Byers said, "and he

would say that as far as he could see, the Vietnamese people had greater love and patience for the American people than American radicals did.

"I thought that out and I thought that the kind of impotence and hatred involved in the movement is in reality bitter self hatred and guilt...

"We were children in that we

thought we could end this war. We didn't realize what we were up against. When we began to find out—in Chicago and at Kent State—we began to create a lot of new thinking. Now those who emerge from that have a different kind of hope, hope that recognizes the odds and what it costs."

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“I think I’m doing more right here to subvert America than by going out and getting my head busted,” said a clerk in the Miffland Co-op—a store that looks dingier than it actually is because its barricaded windows shut out the sunlight.

A new realism is dawning in the hip districts.

Alderman Paul Soglin of Madison was one of the first of the youth culture radicals to be elected to a straight society office (radicals now share the power in the Berkeley, Calif., city government).

Soglin’s success was one of the bits of evidence some radical theoreticians seized on to project the idea of “liberated zones”—Alternative Society districts such as Miffland and Berkeley that could eventually be self-governing, self-supporting and even self-policing.

“That idea was baloney,” said Soglin. “No one here ever really had the power in the long run to make Miffland liberated. All you could hope to build was an enlightened zone. It is true that police are more reluctant to hassle people here but on the other hand, it is an area where the police when they come in, they really come in.” The shattering of dreams is felt most by the dreamers.

Men, once relegated to movement drudgery jobs, are now demanding, and as often as not getting, an equal say with men. And with machos out of the way, they can and are sharing leadership roles in communes and collectives and in organizing.

Men who refuse to struggle with their chauvinism are having to struggle with uncompromising women. “The enormous energy of sisters working together has not only transformed the movement internally, but when it moves out, it is a movement that confuses and terrifies Amerika,” wrote Bernardine Dohrn, a Weatherwoman who has eluded the FBI for the past year on charges of flight to avoid prosecution for mob action, violation of federal anti-riot laws and conspiracy.

But women are not the only modifying force operating in the Alternative Society. Counter measures from law enforcement agencies, such as the federal conspiracy charges against the Seattle Liberation Front, are building a widespread sense of frustration and paranoia.

At the same time, the fallout from incidents such as the bombing that killed a graduate student while damaging an Army research center at the University of Wisconsin, has helped rekindle the flower children legacy with its emphasis on love and non-violence.

Super freak Don Boyle sat in his free-form commune in Albuquerque and summed up his views:

“You cannot destroy hate, bigotry and violence with hate bigotry and violence,” he said. “If you have to become like them out there, I don’t want it. Look, if I thought there was a chance to save this civilization for the next generation, I’m sure a lot of people would dedicate their lives to bringing the change about. But this society is definitely a police state and they come down heavy. I hate to say this, but there is no justice.”

Says a veteran of several violence-studded clashes with police in Madison: “I’m tired of being sad, desperate and hostile. I’m looking for more positive things. I don’t want to be surrounded by gloom and doom. I want to find things to make me live, not give up.”

The mood is hardly the kind that power-headly revolutionaries can easily exploit with Marxist rhetoric or an “off-the-pig” stance.

Even the fanatical left Weather Underground has rethought its terror campaign. “This tendency to consider only bombings or picking up the gun as revolutionary, with the glorification of the heavier the better, we’ve called the military error,” read a statement—“New Morning, New Weather”—signed Bernardine Dohrn.

“We became aware that a group of outlaws who are isolated from the youth communities

such talk in the Alternative So-

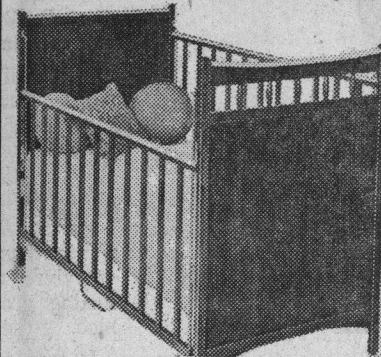
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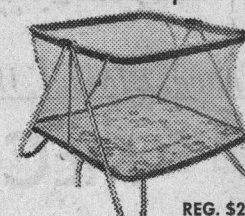
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