

Convention Crashes!

Blackout Wrecks Republicans

MaxZine Weinstein

NEW YORK, NY — August 31 (Dissociated Press) The campaign to re-appoint George Bush President is in full swing as a heat wave continued with Central Park recording its third consecutive 95 degree-plus day.

Delegates to the Republican National Convention (RNC) were arriving in droves. Tens of thousands of anti-Republican demonstrators were already in the city, gearing up for massive protests and showdowns with New York's finest storm troopers. The corporate media was set to cover the coronation and the expected melee. They were looking for some new spin on a story they were billing as a rerun, as in "The Battle of Seattle, Part 6: Republicans at Ground Zero."

Last night, at 9:11 p.m., just ten minutes into the RNC welcome speech by California Gov. Arnold Schwarznegger, history skidded to a halt when the 2nd Annual Northeast Summer Power Outage plunged the Big Apple into darkness and electrified a week of joyous revolt. It also set off a torrent of police repression, resulting in casualties.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg immediately ordered the police to protect all Republican and corporate leaders in attendance at Madison Square Garden.

When the lights first went out there was a calm shock; Republicans are known for their calm. Soon, however, panic took over; smoke wafted into the arena. Screaming erupted from the delegates; thousands of them were rushing to get to the exits. In the crush, eight people, including Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee, were trampled to death.

But where could the delegates run? The subways had stopped and all nearby stations were closed for security reasons, anyway (not that many of them were likely to take the subway). Traffic ground to a halt when the stop lights stopped working. Most of the busses and limousines that brought in the delegates were parked blocks away at the Port Authority terminal and couldn't get to their patrons.

The bright stadium lights of Madison Square Garden illuminating the police barricades set up for a five-block radius went out, plunging the area into darkness. Hundreds of activists seized the opportunity to rush the barricades. Police were swinging wildly as they could not see their targets clearly. Dozens of protesters and police were seriously injured. Police horses panicked. One officer was thrown from his horse and crushed to death.

At 9:48 p.m., protesters clad in black (black bloc or agent provocateurs?) were some of the first to reach Madison Square Garden and to begin smashing windows. Numerous affinity groups got together and decided they would try to de-escalate the situation to minimize injuries and deaths.

At 9:53 with the temperature still a balmy 86 degrees, thousands of protesters left the Convention site to regroup and discuss tactics and safety.

Motorcades of cabinet members, Congressional delegates, governors and CEO's were escorted by police to boats on the Hudson River.

Meanwhile, hundreds of protesters reached the remaining delegates and attempted to engage them in discussion about actual issues. Betsy Johnson, a Nebraska housewife, explained "I felt like I was left behind like the poor

people who were not saved when the Titanic sank. The VIP's were whisked away, and I got angry and was willing to engage with the protesters because I was out of sorts.

"They were actually reasonable people, although some of them smelled awful bad," she added.

Mayor Bloomberg and New York Governor George Pataki asked New Yorkers to remain calm and polite.

Homeland Security czar Tom Ridge raised the security alert to the highest level, Code Red, and called for an immediate shutdown of all US borders while the government carried out an inquiry to determine whether terrorists caused the blackout. Other security measures included the grounding of all planes over US airspace.

After two hours President Bush announced he would release a statement declaring the Northeast—from Baltimore north to the Canadian border, and west to Pittsburgh—a national disaster area, but White House spokesman Scott McClellan said the President would not appear in public that evening for security reasons. 40,000 National Guardsmen were ordered to patrol the streets of northeastern cities—half of them in New York City.

The President left Tucson, Ariz. for an undisclosed secure location. He was touring the Southwest with a campaign swing known as the Taco Express. His campaign spent \$20 million providing free Mexican food (meals and groceries to all who attended) at Republican "Celebrate the Pride of Farm Work" rallies in seven swing states in an attempt to win Latino votes.

Back in New York, a "Disco of Discontent" party took place in Times Square. Over 500 Critical Mass bicyclists spread throughout the city in groups of ten to announce this dance of dissent. By midnight, hundreds of drummers and other musicians responded to the call and provided un-amplified music in what has been called "New York's largest ever jam session." At one point, the crowd chanted, "That's the Night that the Lights went Out in the Garden." Tens of thousands of sweaty, shirtless revelers filled the streets and were fed by Food Not Bombs, who brought food and gas stoves on bike trailers.

"I don't know what this all means, but it is totally fabulous," said Mike Schnepfer of Tulsa, Oklahoma. "I feel like I have finally gone over the rainbow."

As daylight broke, there was still no power and the cause of the massive blackout could not yet be determined. Reaction abroad was swift: Prime Minister Tony Blair called for extra security in London, just in case terrorists would strike the British capital. "We offer full support to the United States in this, their hour of need," he said; President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela offered to send food aid to the United States; Saudi Arabia refused calls for an emergency meeting of OPEC nations as oil prices increased \$9 a barrel overnight.

Thousands of Iraqis celebrated in the streets. Signs in Baghdad alluded to the lack of electricity in their country every day since the US invasion; and a tape reported to be the voice of Osama bin Laden declared the blackout "an act of God." He added, "Allah is on our side and he shut off the lights on Broadway, signaling an end to the domination of the decadence of the West." He called for increased attacks on American troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Kuwait, Turkey, Germany, The Philippines, Japan, Colombia, and New York.

Both major American political parties sought to use the crisis to gain votes in the upcoming election. Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry accused the Bush Administration of loose energy oversight. Bush shot back with claims that Democrats had weakened the power grid. Campaign records showed that contributions from electric utility executives were running close to 1:1 for the Democrats and Republicans. Anindhati Roy of India, who was denied entry to attend Convention protests, said that the United States "is straining the whole world's resources and destroying ecological balance with its obscene energy use."

Stories filtered in about the trials of Republican Convention delegates who were stranded in New York. "I had to walk miles through that sin-ridden city to get to the George Washington Bridge and escape from that city," said Mary Ford of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. "I broke a heel on a \$346 pair of shoes."

Some delegates returned to the Hyatt where hotel management provided all guests with flashlights and room service. There was no relief from the relentless heat, and there was no air conditioning. "The party must go on," said Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. "We are the greatest country in the world and I am here to celebrate President Bush's re-election with thousands of concerned Red, White, and Republican countrymen."

By the next morning, hundreds of protesters were reported missing and unaccounted for. The Internet was filled with speculation about the "new disappeared" in New York. Rumors of police brutality filtered in from all over New York City.

Targets included demonstrators and neighborhoods with large immigrant populations. In Brooklyn, police shut down all businesses in an African-American neighborhood, claiming that they had received threats. "I'll show you what blackout means to me," one white officer said as he swung his baton at the knees of a grocer.

The stories continue to roll in. At press time, former NYC Mayor Giuliani was reported missing, and there were rumors that he had been taken hostage. No ransom note has been made public. Even the President chimed in on the "Save Rudy" campaign. "He is my friend," said George Bush in a statement released by the White House, "and I urge the police to pull up every plant in every community garden in the city until they find the former mayor."

Neighborhood and community groups throughout New York have begun a movement to secede from the United States. "New Yorkers are tired of all the crap we suffer from," said Joe Minella, a grocery clerk in Queens. "The United States government is the biggest threat to our safety, with their lies and throwing our money at war games," he added. Echoed Betsy Floss, a Harlem-based artist, "Ordinary people are not going to take this Bushit anymore. The US needs New York more than we need them, and it is time to stop paying taxes and get New York out of the US. We invite others to leave this country by staying home and dismantling all support for the empire."

FE note: Obviously, this account is fictional, but it will be interesting to see whether nature will cooperate in the attempt to halt the grotesquerie the vile Republicans are bringing to New York. We'll probably be on our own, so let's make it happen. See *Calendar of Resistance*, page 61.

See you in New York.

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Fifth Estate #365, Summer, 2004

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