

Chicago: Yippie!

Vicky Smith

(LNS) Some 100,000 people including hippy-Yippies, McCarthy kids and SDS organizers, are expected to converge upon Chicago sometime before the Democratic National Convention, August 25–30.

Some will be there to do their thing, others to attempt serious political organizing, others to disrupt and demonstrate, others to do all three.

The big hope of many radicals and disaffected liberals is that the week will be a political event, not a massive freakout. But how the scene will develop is up for anyone's speculation. Even the men who seem to be behind the big political actions scheduled, Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden, can't paint a clear picture of what's really going to happen.

Davis and Hayden, spokesmen for the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, a coalition of some 100 anti-war organizations, exude an aura of tremendous but flexible organization for the great drama of the year.

Davis outlined the master plan this way:

1. There will be a "vast, decentralized people's organization" in the form of movement centers located throughout the city where people can get together and rap. People can also use these sites as meeting places for their own delegations or affinity groups.
2. Some 100 Chicago targets are being chosen for decentralized demonstrations throughout the convention, aimed at issues of exploitation. One prime target may be, for example, the Illinois Institute of Technology.
3. A daily paper will be issued from the National Mobilization office at 507 S. Dearborn St., which will keep people informed on actions, demonstrations and other events.
4. The first of two big actions planned will be a celebration of LBJ's birthday, August 27. Davis said that the Democratic party is scheduling a huge celebration with a 600 lb. cake, out of which will fly a flock of pigeons. The Mobilization wants to have its own celebration with a giant pavilion to depict, through guerrilla theater, films and dances, the real LBJ.
5. And since what's the use of mobilization without a general demonstration, there will be one on August 28, complete with hundreds of trained marshals. As the Democrats start to nominate their candidate, people will move toward the Amphitheater with NLF and American flags in what may be the confrontation of the year.

If all goes well, this demonstration is to be the climax of a great dramatic event in which, as Hayden puts it, the people "march on a political theater, whose targets are the heads of state, the delegates and the institutions that stand behind them." Of course, the climax—the apocalyptic blood-bath as many see it—may come earlier in the week, due to all kinds of variables that cannot be controlled. But at some point, people are expecting "the Pentagon 30 times over," as Terry Robbins, Cleveland organizer, puts it.

National SDS has generally been opposed to the concentration of radical energies on mobilization around the convention. The reasons for SDS' opposition still remain: first, no clear political message can be communicated through a mass mobilization, because of the obvious complexity involved in a critique of Democratic politics and electoral process; second, because of the limited scope of the movement and the distortions surrounding it in the public eye, a mass convention demonstration would have little effect on the Democratic Party.

The main emphasis of SDS organizers who go to Chicago will thus be on reaching McCarthy kids in a week-long organizing effort. The convention is seen as an important event in view of on-going movement building.

Inherent in the SDS tactics is the belief that McCarthy will not be nominated. Jones commented that SDS is banking on a short-run strategy and even if it fails, the movement will suffer no great setback. It is expected that SDS people will involve themselves in the demonstrations, even though they have well-reasoned arguments against mass mobilization; but "the only official SDS action in Chicago will be person-to-person organizing," Eric Mann, New England SDS organizer, said in the *Guardian*.

The tremendous security measures now underway in Chicago, however, communicate a message in themselves.

As Davis points out, the Chicago police, now 11,000 strong, and the Illinois National Guard, will determine the perimeter of the August 28 demonstration. People will probably be unable to get within six blocks of the Amphitheater.

The 5,500-man 33rd Brigade of the Illinois National Guard will attend drills in five Chicago armories throughout the convention period. The guard has received permission from the city to deploy troops in playgrounds near the Amphitheater. The guardsmen, of course, have undergone intensive riot control training.

And if the National Guard isn't sufficient to keep things under control, the Army Reserve units in the Chicago area will be ready for action.

The Chicago intelligence police, hundreds of federal agents and bomb and arson squads will be out in force. A good percentage of the Chicago police force will be on round-the-clock duty near the Amphitheater and up and down Hallstead St., even, as Mayor Richard Daley said, "at the expense of police protection in the rest of the city."

Anyone who knows anything about Daley knows better than to think: Great, the pigs will be at the Amphitheater so we can screw up the rest of the city. It just isn't that simple. But the fact remains that the most visible targets are going to be under the strictest surveillance: hence, the decentralized disruption tactics.

None of the leading radical figures in the convention plans however, seems to have a clear conception of who really is coming to Chicago.

Youth International Party leaders are playing things by ear. They don't know who is coming, what they will do, how the Yippies will fit into other activities. Several rock bands are scheduled to appear and Abe Peck of Chicago YIP is attempting to get a park for the love fete, but for the most part people and things are just going to happen.

Peck noted, however, that the Yippie scene might well turn out "more politicized" than in its original conception.

Terry Robbins of Cleveland, who is organizing a large contingent from his city to participate in Chicago actions, indicated that he can't believe that Davis and Hayden have things as organized as they say. Cleveland is relying on local organization prior to the Chicago excursion.

Organizations in some localities, it seems, think that what happens in Chicago is irrelevant to their local organizing efforts. The general apathy toward the mobilization and convention in San Francisco offers a good example of this position.

But events and attitudes change rapidly and although the political significance of the mass mobilization looks somewhat vague, the Pentagon model looms large in the analysis.

Like Hayden says, the event is part of a great drama, the national orgasm of the year, which could be a vitalizing function for the movement. All kinds of people will be forced into each other's company, on the beaches, in the streets, in local workshops and demonstrations and finally at the Amphitheater. Heads will be busted and, barring a complete press blackout, the whole country will know it.

The politics behind this kind of event cannot be lucidly articulated. No single line can come out of such a diversified conglomeration of people: At best, we can say they are the politics of gut participation, tactical experience and internal education for the movement and those peripheral to the movement.

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