

Heavy Time in Pig City

Report from Chicago

Fifth Estate Collective
Liberation News Service

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CHICAGO—Hundreds of SDS members, responding to two separate calls, moved in the streets of Chicago and braved police gunfire on several occasions in the opening days of the Oct. 8–11 action against U. S. imperialism.



On the first night four hundred young people, mostly members of SDS's prominent Weatherman faction—wearing helmets and carrying sticks—charged through Chicago's fashionable Gold Coast district, smashing left and right the windows of stores, banks, cars, apartments and hotels.

The street action followed a bonfire rally in Lincoln Park at which it became clear that the Weathermen had brought virtually none of the thousands of "working class street kids" whom they had hoped would join their "white fighting force" on the side of peoples colonized by the U. S. Empire. —

The Weathermen went there to affirm and dramatize through a national action what they had been saying in a dozen cities for months—that the revolution is now, that it is winning, and that white people are ready to fight alongside black; brown and Third World people. The drama in the streets—the helmets, sticks, the shattering glass, the pigs with drawn guns—presumably made the vision seem more real.

Twisting through the streets, Weatherman's main group held together Wednesday night, October 8, maintaining the offensive for about eight blocks before being dispersed by police. Seventy-five people (including 40 Weathermen) were arrested.

The Weathermen report that sporadic police gunfire injured seven demonstrators (the Establishment press reported only three of these injuries, while the pigs admitted to only one shooting). A dozen cops were injured.

Workers at Harvester Plant in Chicago say "Right On" to demonstrators. photo / LNS

The next day, a crowd of 2,000 defied court regulations and rallied in support of the Conspiracy Eight (organizers of the August 1968 Chicago Convention protests). They gathered in a plaza just outside the Fed-

eral Building where Judge Julius “Magoo” Hoffman’s kangaroo court moved into the second week of the conspiracy trial.

The rally was organized by the Revolutionary Youth Movement II (RYM II), faction of SDS with the endorsement of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Organization (a revolutionary Puerto Rican group). Yoruba, Deputy Minister of Information for the Lords in New York City, drew loud cheers of “Right on!” when he said, “All power to the Conspiracy Eight. May their conspiracy grow!”

The crowd was enthusiastic as Yoruba pictured the spectrum of revolutionary forces, “We’re making a revolution to free everybody...black, brown, white, yellow, red.”

This rally was the first in a series of events planned by groups critical of Weatherman’s activities.

Fred Hampton, the leader of the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panthers, criticized Weatherman for being “adventuristic, opportunistic, and Custeristic.”

He accused the Weathermen, who decided to scrap their own plans for an action outside the court in order to join the larger rally, of “leading people to confrontations they are not prepared for.” Hampton sternly warned the Weathermen in attendance not to engage in any provocative acts at the rally.

Mike Klonsky, last year’s SDS National Secretary and a top RYM II leader, told the rally, “The key is reaching out to the masses of people, not running in the streets by ourselves.

About 500 SDSers moved from the Federal Building in downtown Chicago to a RYM II/Panther rally outside an International Harvester tractor-producing plant. More than 100 workers, most of them black, joined them.

The company plans to close down the plant soon and offer the workers who get laid off slots with no seniority in another plant which happens to be located in a lily-white suburb an hour away.

The rally sought to link up the struggles of students and industrial workers and avoid immediate battles with the police.

Addressing the crowd, one black worker said: “This is where the struggle begins. This is where we struggle together—the students, the workers, the blacks, Chicanos, Indians—a mass revolutionary movement.”

The factory had in effect been shut down by the rally. Almost 90% of the workers stayed out. Yet only a few white workers appeared at the rally and it is unclear whether most white workers stayed home because they supported the rally or merely to avoid confronting it.

While Weatherman’s Wednesday night window-breaking action clearly showed them seizing the offensive, the Weathermen were later frustrated in various attempts to pull off other actions.

On Thursday morning, October 9, 65 Weatherwomen—the “women’s militia”—gathered at Grant Park across from the Hilton Hotel to rally for an announced attack on an Army induction center.

More than 100 uniformed cops stood by while many plainclothesmen, dozens of reporters and cameramen, and a few bystanders watched as the helmeted, stick-bearing women sang, chanted and listened to speeches.

Bernardine Dohrn, a Weatherman leader, told her comrades, “A few buckshot wounds, a few pellets, mean we’re doing the right thing here.”

Women must smash past the social role of “white young ladies, growing up in America,” Bernardine insisted.

“The fear that people feel in this demonstration has to be put up against the hunger, fear, death and suffering of black, brown and yellow people in this country and all over the world.” Those who refuse to follow Weatherman’s lead, she said, are like the Germans who acquiesced to Nazism.

The women, marching out triple-file with Vietcong flags up front, ran up against a dozen uniformed pigs when they attempted to leave the park. The women refused to halt, however, and tried to push their way past the cops.

When the cops maintained their position, the women pushed on and the pigs began to make arrests. Some of the women fought hard with the pigs; in some cases it took 4 pigs to restrain a single Weatherwoman.

One woman, thrown into a paddy-wagon, screamed “You dirty fuckers, the people of the world are going to kill you.”

As one pig rubbed his hand up and down a woman’s body he said: “We love you, baby, you’re beautiful.”

Twelve women, including the leaders, were arrested. The rest, seeing they were outnumbered, yielded to police demands that they take off their helmets and put down their weapons.

The women, clearly humiliated and frustrated by their sudden defeat, clustered together, surrounded by a horseshoe phalanx of helmeted police. The women then walked into the street and were escorted to the subway. The pigs accompanied them into the station and photographed them as they went through the turnstile.

In the wake of the failure of this action—and in the realization of their small numbers and lack of support—Weatherman called off a high school “jailbreak,” canceled a rock-culture “wargasm” and dropped their original plan to “tear up the fascist court.”

After the courthouse rally dispersed, Weatherman’s people lingered in a cluster (their helmets held in brown paper bags), but decided that heavy pig deployment made a militant street action impossible.

Elsewhere, tight police security was instituted in 57 city high schools.

Student IDs were checked, fire alarms were turned off and extra cops patrolled the halls inside the schools ‘and kept an eye on nearby streets.

In addition, Gov. Ogilvie called up 2,500 National Guardsmen after Chicago police officials requested additional reserve forces. The Guardsmen waited in local armories but received no further orders as the week drew near its close.

Despite Weatherman’s intentions, the regulars of the Chicago police managed to contain and control Weatherman’s efforts at disruption and dislocation.

Friday afternoon, October 9, a rally across from Cook County hospital drew 1000 people who gathered to express their opposition to the racist and genocidal practices going on in the hospital and the unresponsiveness of institutions of medical care to the needs of the people. It was also to express support for hospital workers who have been organizing against their oppression at the hands of the hospital.

Demonstrators heard speeches by members of the RYM II faction, saw a skit performed by a military welfare mothers group, and listened to Chairman Fred once again bombard the Weathermen for their actions.

The end of the four days of activities ended Friday, Oct. 10, for both groups with the Weathermen engaging in more street fighting with the pigs in the Loop (downtown Chicago) while RYM II, in conjunction with the Young Lords, sponsored a march through the largest Puerto Rican neighborhood in the city.

The Weatherman action began with a rally at The Haymarket Square, scene of a bloody massacre of workers 90 years ago, where SDS national secretary Mark Rudd was busted for his participation in Wednesday night’s romp on the Gold Coast. Marchers moved into the streets followed closely by the pigs.

After moving up the street several blocks the marchers broke from their police escort and began smashing windows and fighting with the cops once more. After the melee the streets were spotted with bodies of both police and Weathermen, injured during the fighting.

Among those injured was Richard Elrod, Corporation Counsel for the city and mastermind of the conspiracy trials; he suffered a broken neck after being hit with a brick.

Held on charges of attempted murder was David Flanagan of Southampton, New York. Bond was set at \$100,000. Over 80 persons were arrested during the action as two 150 national guard units were brought in to patrol the area.

In another part of the city, 4,000 demonstrators took to the streets and marched four miles to Humbolt park for a rally.

The RYM II supported march started in People’s Park, the scene of much struggle in the Puerto Rican neighborhood since the city’s power structure decided to use the land to build a tennis club for the rich cats from Lake Shore Drive, and headed through the heart of the neighborhood.

The procession was led by the Young Lords Organization and the response of the community was one of complete support and elation. There was no violence during the action and marchers wore no helmets at the request of the Young Lords who didn’t want demonstrators marching through the community decked out in battle gear.

The rally at Humbolt Park was also led by the Young Lords and those gathered listened to speakers rap about the oppression of Puerto Rican people, women’s liberation and the necessity of defeating U.S. imperialism.

Weatherman actions have to be understood in the context of the Weatherman political analysis.

Conscious of the role that U.S. imperialism plays in the oppression of blacks and Latins at home and Third World people overseas, and inspired by the struggle of the Vietnamese and other guerrilla forces in Africa, Asia and Latin America, Weatherman feels that it is the responsibility of white people in this country to “open up a new front behind enemy lines.”

Frustrated by the difficulty of gaining white support for such a movement, Weathermen argue that white people benefit from exploitation of the colored peoples of the world, obtaining extra wealth and comforts from imperialism—“white skin privilege.”

Since this “privilege” encourages whites to support the status quo, Weatherman says it is necessary to convince whites in a different way—by showing them that the Third World struggle is the winning side in a relentless war, one which is taking place right now, and that whites who mean business, who intend to “take a toll”, are opening up a domestic front NOW.

Weatherman’s movement critics argue that this position excludes the possibility of organizing a mass white revolutionary movement to join with the liberation struggles of blacks, browns and Third World people in this country and abroad. They argue that Weatherman fails to make the distinction between the U. S. ruling class which thrives on imperialism and the vast majority of American whites who suffer from it.

Whatever their mistake, the Weatherman analysis has resulted in tactics which fail to define, and isolate the enemy—the Empire’s ruling class—and which fail to show masses of Americans how capitalism ruins their own lives and what might be possible without it.

In the Wednesday action, for example, the Weathermen hit Volkswagens as well as Cadillacs, barbershops as well as banks. Most important, the material damage was done to targets peripherally associated with imperialism and did not interfere with the functioning of any major imperialist institutions, nor did they educate people about the nature of these institutions.

On the other hand, the RYM II group seems to indicate a path for the movement that will lead to actively engaging the masses of working people in revolutionary struggle as well as provide a context for the unification of forces of the oppressed peoples of all colors.

The RYM II analysis states that the vast majority of workers in this country suffer at the hands of the imperialists and can be won over to the struggle providing the movement serves the people instead of fights the people.

At the rally at Humbolt Park, Les Coleman from RYM II summed up the position of the faction he represents by stating: “We didn’t march today on the plastic buildings down in the Loop. We marched down here with the people to win the people over to our way of struggle. When we march on the Loop it’s going to be the last time anybody will do so ‘cause when we go we’re going to take the people with us and nothing can stop the power of the united people.”

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