

A look at Chicago, or The U.S. is ripe for Revolution



By JOHN KING
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CHICAGO — The first thing that struck me was the soldiers. Were they all going to Vietnam? About half the people at O'Hare Airport seemed to be soldiers or sailors.

Then I saw the headlines in the Chicago papers:

"43 seized in SDS raid"

"Cop near death from sniper fire"

"Radicals' invasion crushed by city"

"SDS beats infiltrator"

"Youth dies, 10 policemen and girl shot on W. side"

"SDS group protests at County Hospital"

Then I wondered if the troops were just here to defend Chicago.

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If you ever want to see filth, go for a ride on the Chicago rapid transit. It's an overhead subway, and you see some of the worst views of the city.

It will cost you 40 cents to get on the train, but you'll see some of the worst looking slums and garbage heaps you've ever come across.

I was in Chicago Saturday to march with the Revolutionary Youth Movement-2 (a faction of the Students for a Democratic Society) through downtown Chicago, in the culmination of a four-day offensive to stop the war in Vietnam. Wednesday RYM-2 had held a rally at Chicago's Federal Building to protest the trial of eight people arrested at last year's Democratic National Convention, Thursday they had rallied at the International Harvester plant to protest a plan to close it down and Friday they had held a protest outside the Cook County Hospital, protesting that it is a "white supremacist, male supremacist genocidal butcher shop." The four-day offensive had been dubbed Bring The War Home Week.

I also wanted to find out for myself if Chicago cops are really "pigs" and if the United States is really ripe for another revolution.

I still haven't decided if Chicago cops are pigs — maybe because that's too broad a generalization. Some were pret-

ty vicious in their words and deeds, but others seemed fairly friendly.

I did decide that the United States is ripe for another revolution. People in Chicago seemed to be amazingly polarized politically. Everyone in the city I met was either ultra-conservative or ultra-radical. There seemed to be no in-between.

When I got off the subway at Diversey station I saw my first Chicago cop. The sight of him really relieved me.

I'd read a lot about crime in the States and Diversey Parkway looked like a typical spot for me to get mugged — even at 10 o'clock in the morning.

I'd read a lot about Chicago "pigs" too, but this guy, sitting in his patrol car, really looked more like a policeman than a pig.

I found the RYM-2 movement center without too much problem — luckily I had guessed the right station to get off the subway, and the movement center was in a church on the opposite corner.

The center was very well organized. RYM-2 had promised a disciplined march and they were doing their best to make sure nothing went wrong.

Before anyone could get into the church they were frisked for guns, knives, any sharp objects, drugs — and cameras. There was a rule against taking cameras into the church.

The other precautions were to try to avoid any confrontation with the police when the march started to make sure the police couldn't arrest anyone for carrying a lethal weapon.

When you got inside the church you had to register. This involved writing down your name, address, telephone number and your bail contact, in case you were busted, and his address and phone. If you didn't have a place to stay overnight the registration desk could find one for you. Then you paid a dollar registration fee and sat down in a pew to read some of the mimeographed instructions and underground papers in the room.

There were never more than about 150 people in the church, but people kept coming and going all morning.

I started to feel my first twinges of fear when I read over the handouts telling me what to expect from the pigs.

"No long rap is necessary to explain the plain fact that fascist tactics are used day in and day out in this city against the masses of the people. Fighting the pigs in a thousand ways for survival is not new to the people of Chicago . . . This action represents a new level of militancy — we are reaching out to masses of people to demonstrate that the just struggles of the people here must be linked with the struggles of the Vietnamese . . ."

"There are no (legal and medical) rights. Your health rights dissolve as your constitutional rights dissolve. All injured persons should be pulled out of the action immediately . . . If injured or arrested, demand attention immediately. In a mass arrest, once inside the wagon, all injured people should be cared for by the uninjured. . ."

Another sheaf of papers told me what to do if I came across someone suffering from a gas attack, a clubbing, a bayonet slash or a bullet wound.

The march was scheduled to start at noon. About 11 o'clock the organizers started to tell us more about first aid. Everybody went over the proper first aid procedure for when the police made their attack. We were asked to write the emergency first aid and legal aid phone numbers on our arms, and to tape dimes to our bodies so we would have the money to make telephone calls. We smeared vaseline on our eyelids in case we were gassed. Vaseline absorbs gas.

I started to feel I had real reason to be afraid.

At 12:10, while we were walking to People's Park, the starting point of the march, we saw our first cops on foot — with blue riot helmets and plastic face shields.

I was going to take a picture, but I got the impression they might try to bash my skull in if I tried. They looked pretty slovenly as policemen go — buttons undone, hands in their pockets — but they looked like they could mean business.

People's Park was an empty lot on the corner of Halsted Street and Armitage Avenue at the edge of the Latin quarter of Chicago. There was a jungle jim and a makeshift



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