CHAPTER 6

Agitative Mobilization
Chicago, August 1968

The activist leader Tom Hayden outlined some of the significant events of 1968 that had an effect on dissent during that tumultuous year: "The Tet offensive, student uprisings, Lyndon Johnson's resignation, and the killing of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy led to a meltdown of the system's core. The breakdown happened not only in Chicago, or only in America; in some mysterious way, it was a global phenomenon." He then asked, "But why did so many forces flow toward a climax in this one particular year, the watershed year for a generation? Surely there has been no other year quite like it in American history."[1]

The events of 1968 reflected a sharp rise in political activism and in the confrontation and violence associated with agitation. Much of the violence occurred on campuses, including the occupation of several buildings at Columbia University by antiwar activists in the spring of 1968, but the most momentous violence occurred during the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, August 25–29. Historian David Farber claimed that the violence in Chicago was different from previous occasions because "it occurred at a time when and a place where the nation watched and knew that what they were watching was themselves. . . . It offered Americans an irrefusable opportunity to consider what they thought of themselves and their country."[2]

Much of the dissent in 1968 focused on national policies, particularly the war in Vietnam as well as "the civil rights movement, the peace movement, the changing role of universities, the changing emphasis of organized religion, the growth of an affluent middle class, the power of television, the stresses of urbanization, and the failure of federal, state and city governments to find solutions to social problems."[3] Young dissenters and their supporters focused on what they believed were oppressive elements in American society. They had been stunned by the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy earlier in 1968; had witnessed and participated with blacks, Chicanos, women, gays, and other groups in their pursuit of equality; were being

drafted to fight in a war that many thought imperialistic and immoral; and felt their demands on a variety of important issues were being ignored.

The protests at Columbia University in the spring of 1968 and the violent confrontations between students and police during those protests encouraged some young radicals to conclude that confrontation was the most effective way to challenge the political establishment in Chicago. Hayden believed that the students at Columbia had been successful in creating "the image of a revolutionary student movement threatening the priorities of a larger society."[4] The lessons learned during that conflict were applied to the protest during the Democratic National Convention.

The dissenters and their supporters in Chicago responded to injustices in society through public demonstrations and acts of protest. Members of the establishment and their supporters attempted to counter and to suppress the dissent. The protests and suppression in Chicago were particularly significant because of television. The events, particularly the violence, were broadcast across the nation. As Mark Kurlansky stated, Chicago was "one of the seminal events in the coming of the age of television."[5] The agitation and establishment responses that occurred during the Democratic National Convention were controversial in the 1960s and continue to be hotly debated today.

Background

This chapter will describe and analyze the rhetorical activities of three groups of agitators and the establishment. The agitating groups analyzed include the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (MOBE), the Youth International Party (Yippies), and the Coalition for an Open Convention (Coalition). The MOBE and the Yippies were clearly agitational groups—MOBE was more politically focused, and the Yippies promoted a countercultural, uninhibited lifestyle. Coalition, a group consisting mainly of young people who supported the presidential candidacy of Senator Eugene McCarthy, confined its preconvention activity to petition and traditional political activities. Because of the actions of the establishment during the convention, Coalition became an agitative group, lending moral and sometimes physical support to the protests by other groups. Although the chapter will focus primarily on these three groups, there were others, including the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which had its headquarters in Chicago and whose leaders saw the convention as a fertile ground for recruiting young people to its cause.[6] The city of Chicago, the leadership of the Democratic Party, the military, the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies, and President Lyndon Baines Johnson all represented the establishment.

Chicago was tense on the eve of the convention. Telephone, taxi, and transit strikes had affected the city for months. Members of the broadcast

media were dissatisfied because new phone lines were needed for events occurring in places other than the convention center or outside the convention hotels. The phone strike prevented the installation of those lines, meaning that any camera footage needed to be processed before it could be broadcast.[7] Some broadcasters had argued that the convention should have been moved to Miami where there were extensive facilities that had been used during the recent Republican convention.

A number of delegates to the convention were also unhappy. Some had tried to force the Democratic Party to move the convention out of Chicago because of earlier actions in which Chicago's mayor, Richard J. Daley, had violently suppressed protests in Chicago. Tom Brokaw described the setting for the convention:

> Mayor Daley had put the Chicago police department on full alert. Streets were cordoned off. Cops were on every corner, watching as long-haired kids carrying backpacks and shouting "Peace now!" mingled with earnest middle-class couples who had come to show their solidarity with the antiwar movement. At first it was all relatively festive, a movable feast of political theatre in the clear and uncommonly comfortable August weather in the heart of one of America's great cities. But the climate very quickly took an ugly turn.[8]

Mayor Daley had absolute control of the city of Chicago, and he was also a powerful force in the Democratic Party. Daley, the police, and many residents of Chicago perceived the agitating groups as "outside agitators" invading the city. The mayor believed that demonstrations were "an insult to what he most believed in. It threatened his politics, a politics in which personal loyalty outweighed loyalty to any policy."[9] Daley was also concerned that the outside agitators would encourage the large black population of Chicago to participate in the protests. In order to increase its control, the city passed new ordinances aimed at controlling potential riots. Those ordinances included one that made it illegal to "make any unreasonable or offensive act, utterance, gesture or display which . . . creates a clear and present danger of a breach of peace."[10]

Chicago police officers resented the demonstrators, believing that they "did not respect the way real people lived their daily lives. Many police believed that the American political system that maintained stability and order was being destroyed by the enemies of their way of life."[11] Many police officers felt that the news media actively supported and encouraged the activists in their dissent. The city's intelligence unit and police actively infiltrated agitating groups in order to gain information and to sabotage their activities. More than a thousand federal agents supported the city. The number of city and federal infiltrators was staggering: "military intelligence estimated that one in six demonstrators was an undercover government agent."[12]

In January of 1968, the city began its preparation for the convention and the anticipated protests. City authorities forecast that at least

150,000 protestors would be active in Chicago. The actual number was much smaller (about 10,000) because of the massive preparations by the city, an ongoing program of harassment of activists in the months before the convention, the lack of permits for parades and access to the public parks for sleeping and rallies, and the fear of potential violence. Columnist Mike Royko summarized the situation: "Never before had so many feared so much from so few."[13]

Ideology of the Agitators

The agitators disagreed on the best method to achieve the changes they sought, but they agreed on many issues of ideology. As Brokaw says,

> Some of the elders in the antiwar leadership, such as David Dellinger [the leader of MOBE], had counseled the young people to protest with dignity, but that message was overwhelmed by the steadily rising tension between the working-class Chicago cops and the younger demonstrators, most of whom came from college campuses. There were also the provocateurs such as the yippies, led by Abbie Hoffman, a cunning master of public theatre, and his sidekick, Jerry Rubin.[14]

The agitators proposed that the American economic/political system, as represented by the Democratic Party, was deficient. Specifically, the activists considered the war in Vietnam unjust and imperialistic; they believed that the government of the United States had misrepresented the nature of the war to its citizens. The groups further agreed that the system discriminated against minorities, women, and other groups and that the Democratic Party had not done enough to eliminate that discrimination. Finally, they alleged that both the government and the Democratic Party had failed to live up to the ideals of democracy because certain groups, including professional politicians and those who financially benefited from the war, held too much power in the country. If the people knew the truth, the agitators maintained, they would reject that power. The agitators supported their claim by arguing that the candidate who would be nominated at the convention, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, had not entered a single primary election. He had been chosen by the established leaders of the party rather than the voters.

The agitators were also undergoing a change in tactics that they described as moving "from protest to resistance." They had learned at earlier demonstrations against the draft in California and at the Pentagon in 1967 that they could effectively "confront the war makers at their own corrupt institutions."[15] They hoped to extend and refine their tactics in Chicago.

Each group of agitators planned to have its own separate demonstrations but, in the end, they were forced to cooperate because of actions by the city of Chicago and its leaders. The ideological differences of the

three agitational groups lay in the means they adopted to correct the perceived weaknesses in society.

The Yippies believed they could subvert the dominant ideology through the mass media. They argued that radicals had to "learn to manipulate the tools of mass communication and the symbols of mass society if they were to bring down the modern warfare state."[16] The Yippies hoped to manipulate the mass media through a series of events that would attract media attention but would also make the flaws of the establishment readily apparent to the nation.

The MOBE was created as an umbrella organization to support protest against the establishment. Its members hoped to bring down the capitalist system and replace it with a more desirable economic system. In Chicago, MOBE wanted to confront the war machine and those who supported it. When plans for Chicago were initiated, MOBE believed that President Johnson would be nominated for another term, and they planned to use him as a symbol of society's evils and to confront him on his policies. Their slogan was "Confront the Warmakers." Many MOBE members accepted the view that violence might be necessary in order to challenge the establishment.

Coalition hoped to work within the system to nominate an alternative candidate, Senator Eugene McCarthy. Many SDS leaders saw their organization as the vanguard of the coming revolution. An SDS document stated that the organization must "change the emphasis from building a radical movement to using the radical movement in the work of making a revolution."[17]

Ideology of the Establishment

Establishment leaders believed in a dominant national ideology that was based on their confidence that the status quo, particularly in the political arena, had only minor deficiencies. They felt that a "well-functioning system of political control and public order that maintained a stable life came before all else. . . . Politics was what made sure that things stayed about the same."[18] They felt political leaders possessed legitimate power because the public elected them and granted them decision-making power. Once decisions were made, other Americans should willingly support them. They had a strong belief that they were the most qualified individuals to guide the nation. Their judgment could be verbally questioned but not through dissent and protests. They proposed that their ideology had carried the nation triumphantly through World War I, the Great Depression of the 1930s, World War II, and the Korean War and would keep the United States in a premier position in the world in the foreseeable future.

The establishment justified the war in Vietnam as being in the best interests of the nation because it maintained national prestige and

power. Supporters of the war argued that economic, social, and political inequities in the United States should be eliminated, but the war took precedence over other issues during this time. National pride and honor demanded that the country win the war against communism.

Leaders of the establishment argued that political conventions operated fairly in the revered traditions of the American political system. The Democratic Party granted each delegate an equal voice in choosing the party's presidential candidate. Party leaders accepted the fact that the methods used by individual states to select convention delegates varied but believed that those methods were a matter of custom in each state rather than attempts to exclude segments of society, especially members of minorities and women, as dissenters alleged. There had been significant challenges to the fairness of delegate selection and seating at the 1964 convention in Atlantic City, but the leaders of the Democratic Party believed that the system had been effective in the past and would continue to work in the present and in the future. The party's chosen candidate would be the people's choice and, ultimately, would be elected president.

Even if inequities did exist in the system, they were not sufficient to justify disruption. Law and order must be preserved. America's political system could not operate amid chaos; those who caused chaos should be discouraged and punished.

Petition and Avoidance

In late 1967, the MOBE and the Yippies began planning their campaigns for Chicago. They followed the normal channels to petition the city for permits. Both groups requested that the city suspend its 11:00 PM curfew for activity in city parks so that the protestors would have a place to congregate and to sleep. They also requested authorization for marches from the parks to the convention site at the International Amphitheater and around downtown hotels where the delegates would be staying. MOBE also applied for a permit to use Soldier Field for a rally and for a concert featuring many major performers. In its application, MOBE estimated that 150,000 people might participate in events during the convention.

Much of the negotiation was held with Chicago's Deputy Mayor David Stahl; activists were soon joking that the spelling should be "Stall." At one point, Al Baugher, a low-level official who worked in the Chicago Youth Authority, was designated to head the city's negotiations, although he was not given any power to negotiate agreements. In the three months he supposedly led the negotiations, not one city official asked Baugher for information on the subject.[19]

City administrators postponed action on all the permits until August 5. On that date, they denied permission to sleep in the parks and announced that the 11:00 PM curfew would be enforced. The city post-

poned action on the march and rally permits until August 21, just four days before the convention began. It then rejected marching permits to the Amphitheater and around the downtown hotels, proposing instead alternative routes. Agitators found these alternatives unacceptable. City officials also denied the use of Soldier Field. At first they used the rationale that the stadium was needed for a celebration of President Johnson's birthday and later explained that National Guard troops would be quartered there. Hoffman described the effect of the city's actions: "When the breakdown of negotiations made it clear the city would force a confrontation, we knew only the bravest of our generation would answer the call."[20] Carl Oglesby described confrontation as being "unavoidable because the police wanted it, convinced it was time for a showdown. Mayor Daley wanted it, ready to show that his was the fist that ran Chicago. FBI director Hoover wanted it, tired of playing games with these crypto Commies. . . . And the media people smelled hot copy."[21]

The MOBE appealed the decisions in the courts. On August 23, almost on the eve of the convention, Judge William J. Lynch, Mayor Daley's former law partner, denied the appeals. Hoffman described the city's actions toward the requests for permits: "We saw Lynch and we got lynched, we met Stahl and we got stalled, like in a comic book."[22]

Finally, on August 27, two days after the convention began, the city issued a permit to MOBE for an afternoon rally the following day in Grant Park. The city's stalling tactics succeeded in discouraging a number of dissenters, but the actions also insured that only the most radical and determined would travel to Chicago. Jay Miller, the executive director of the Illinois branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, said that the city's actions had insured that "the most radical elements among the dissenters would gain ascendancy."[23]

Escalation/Confrontation and Suppression

On August 25, 1968, agitators began arriving in Chicago for the opening day of the convention. Many had no place to stay because of the denial for permits to sleep in the parks. Since most of their activities were scheduled to take place in the parks, the activists decided to violate the curfew. The city responded with suppression. Police were put on twelve-hour shifts with no days off during the convention. The city enforced its laws to the letter: no loose livestock in the city limits, no marches or rallies without permits, no defacing of public property. Each night, the police cleared the parks at 11:00 PM. On August 26, 1,000 activists remained in Lincoln Park after curfew. The police clubbed and maced demonstrators and reporters. Sixty were injured, including 10 police officers and 17 journalists.[24]

The limitations on the broadcast media in Chicago made it possible for the city to carry out suppression in many locations with virtually no

media coverage. Live television cameras were permitted only in the Amphitheater. In addition, the city and police deliberately interfered with reporters' efforts to cover the violence. Finally, the lack of central sites for agitation made any reliable coverage impractical early in the convention.

The General Strategy of the Agitators

The agitators faced the difficult task of getting their message to the public in a favorable light. Many believed that they should force the city of Chicago to take extreme actions that could be viewed as a microcosm of the United States' own oppressive foreign and domestic policies. That is, if the Chicago police responded brutally to orderly demonstrations or minor violations of the law, then the agitators could use such brutality as evidence of systematic oppression in American society.

The news media covered the events in Chicago extensively. National political conventions always attract blanket coverage, and the conflict in 1968 made the situation even more newsworthy. The agitators believed media reports of violence by the city would illustrate how the protestors were underdogs in their fight against the establishment. The agitators' chant, "The whole world is watching," during the most violent police suppression made it clear that protestors recognized the value of television coverage and knew the images would influence public sentiments about both agitators and the establishment. The media also covered speeches on the convention floor by delegates who disagreed with the dominant ideology, like Paul O'Dwyer of New York and Julian Bond of Georgia. Their positions amplified the protestors' messages to Americans. On August 27, ABC news anchor Frank Reynolds reported that seventeen newsmen had been beaten in the last 48 hours in Chicago, and four were hospitalized. In his commentary, Reynolds said that city hall seemed to think that reporters and cameras cause riots. He stated that police have no right to use force on citizens who are not causing a disturbance and demanded responsible conduct from those enforcing law and order.[25]

The convention and the events surrounding it provided the agitators with unusual media opportunities to make their message both explicit and widespread. The agitators devised a combination of tactics that would lead to public, direct, and violent suppression by the city. Their strategies escalated the intensity of the conflict between agitators and establishment into an eventual violent confrontation.

The Tactic of Contrast

The dissenters knew that Mayor Daley and the Chicago police had a history of violently suppressing dissent. During the rioting following Martin Luther King's assassination on April 4, 1968, Mayor Daley had instructed the police to "shoot to kill arsonists and shoot to maim looters." That statement inspired Hoffman to label him "Shoot-to-kill Daley."[26] The

police had also used excess force to break up a peace march later that same month. Agitators exploited their knowledge of these previous reactions and forced the city to overprepare for the worst conceivable threats and then to overreact to events. The agitators believed the contrast between the establishment's position of supporting law and order and its brutal repression of demonstrators would reveal the true nature of the establishment.

The agitators had been very successful in organizing large rallies. On April 15, 1967, MOBE, as an umbrella group for approximately 150 organizations, had staged a peaceful protest march of 100,000 people to the United Nations building in New York City. On October 21, 1967, MOBE sponsored a major march on the Pentagon that drew 50,000 participants, about five thousand of whom had provoked some violence.[27]

The politicized context enhanced the chances for huge demonstrations in Chicago. Lyndon Johnson was in the White House and he seemed virtually assured of renomination by his party. The agitators had frequently and successfully used Johnson as a flag individual for their protests. During the fall of 1967 and early in 1968, forecasts like the following were entirely credible: "We may find that we meet each other again in Chicago . . . because the tactical situation will be good. . . . If there are 100,000 people on the streets, prepared to do civil disobedience, what should their demands be?"[28]

MOBE's prospects for a massive demonstration in Chicago were supported by statements from representatives of other groups. The black comedian and Chicago activist Dick Gregory promised to recruit 100,000 blacks. Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin estimated the Yippie contingent would amount to tens of thousands. One individual estimated that a million demonstrators might come to Chicago.[29] The unpopularity of both Lyndon Johnson and the war in Vietnam combined to give credibility to such estimates. Chicago began preparing for at least 150,000 agitators.

A series of dramatic events occurred in early 1968 that should have caused the leaders of the city to reconsider their estimates of the number of possible dissenters. The United States and other countries involved in the Vietnam War agreed to begin peace talks in Paris, thus undercutting some of the protest against the war. In February, Senator Eugene McCarthy's candidacy for the presidential nomination proved to be a threat to Johnson's nomination and brought large numbers of young people into the political process who opposed Johnson and his policies. Those young people were potential agitators who decided to work within the system to support McCarthy rather than demonstrating in the streets. On March 12, the potential of McCarthy's candidacy was dramatized by his unexpectedly strong showing against President Johnson's stand-in in the New Hampshire primary.

Senator Robert Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination on March 16, which encouraged thousands more potential agitators to work within the system. Hoffman

recognized Kennedy's potential as an establishment leader who could draw the support of potential agitators away from the Yippies:

> But Bobby there was the real threat. A direct challenge to our theater-in-the-streets, a challenge to the charisma of Yippie. . . . Come on. Bobby said, join the mystery battle against the television machine. Participation mystique. Theater-in-the-streets. He played it to the hilt. And what was worse, Bobby had the money and power to build the stage. We had to steal ours. It was no contest.[30]

The greatest blow to the agitators' hopes for a massive show of support occurred on March 31, 1968, when Lyndon Johnson shocked the nation by announcing that he would neither seek nor accept his party's nomination. The most powerful flag individual for the agitators had withdrawn. There was no other dominant flag individual against whom the dissenters could unite.

The city's stalling on permits and threats of violence began to have an effect on the activists. In order to attract demonstrators, the leaders had contracted with prominent bands and other performers to perform during the convention. Without the necessary permits and the city's reputation for violent suppression, musicians began to cancel, and the dissenters lost an effective means of attracting young people to Chicago. Prominent individuals, including Senator McCarthy, also encouraged young people to avoid Chicago because of potential violence.

In late April and early June, two events occurred that gave new life to the need for protest. Hubert Humphrey announced his candidacy for the nomination, and Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. However, Humphrey's impressive credentials as a liberal made him a less powerful flag individual than Johnson, even though Humphrey pledged to carry on the Johnson policies in Vietnam. Many of the Kennedy followers changed their allegiance to McCarthy, Humphrey, or Senator George McGovern, who announced his candidacy on August 10, 1968.

Despite this chain of events, MOBE and the Yippies continued to claim that the demonstrations would draw up to 150,000 potential agitators. The establishment leaders took the inflated estimate seriously and prepared for an invasion of hostile hordes. Chicago had 12,000 police available for service. In addition, the mayor put 11,000 National Guardsmen under the command of the police.[31] These troops, backed by armor and tanks, were assigned to control the 10,000 agitators that MOBE and the Yippies assembled. The overreaction provided exactly the contrast between an establishment intent on preserving the status quo using violent suppression against the protestors advocating change.

Threats to Disrupt

The MOBE and the Yippies effectively threatened to disrupt the convention. Some of their threats apparently were serious while others were

Media literacy

obviously put-ons. The city, following the generalization that establishments must prepare for the worst, took all warnings seriously.

The MOBE threats were frequent and public. As mentioned above, the organization had proven itself capable of violence during the massive march on the Pentagon in October of 1967. Some early MOBE statements clearly outlined their intent to employ the tactic of Gandhi and guerrilla: "We have to have two hats—nice and violent."[32] Some MOBE leaders, including Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden, issued statements denying any plans to disrupt. After a July 1968 MOBE meeting, Davis stated that slogans such as "Stop the Convention" should be interpreted as meaning a desire to end politics as usual in America rather than a literal interpretation of disrupting the convention.[33] Hayden consistently issued statements disclaiming any intent to disrupt. However, he clearly understood that disruption could result from the agitation because of the city's preparation for 150,000 protestors:

> Consider the dilemmas facing those administering the regressive apparatus. . . . They cannot distinguish "straight" radicals from newspapermen or observers from delegates to the convention. They cannot distinguish rumors about demonstrations from the real thing. . . . The threat of disorder, like all fantasies in the establishment mind, can create total paranoia.[34]

The Yippies made a series of threats that the city of Chicago could not ignore. In February, they had satirized a police raid by staging their own Yippie raid on the Stony Brook campus of the State University of New York. On March 21, they held a "party" for about five thousand people in New York City's Grand Central Station. Both demonstrations had involved violence—and in both cases the establishment had been unprepared to meet that violence.

Yippie statements about Chicago included the following language:

> Be realistic, demand the impossible. An immediate end to the War in Vietnam. . . . The legalization of marijuana and all other psychedelic drugs. . . . The total disarmament of the people, beginning with the police. . . . The abolition of Money. . . . We believe that people should fuck all the time, anytime, whomever they wish.[35]
>
> People will be attempting to use guerrilla theater techniques. People will be attempting to use satire. People will be attempting to talk to other people and people will be passing out newspapers. And some will be stoned and some will be fucking on the grass, and people will do whatever they want to do.[36]
>
> See you next August in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention. Bring pot, fake delegate's cards, smoke bombs, costumes, crud to throw and all kinds of interesting props, also football helmets.[37]

According to Chicago's postconvention statements, the city took all these threats seriously. The planning to prevent disturbances began in

January 1968 and became more and more detailed as the months passed. The city received briefings on how San Francisco had successfully dealt with dissenters at the 1964 convention but rejected that advice.

Nonverbal Offensive

The actions of the Yippies epitomized the use of nonverbal provocation. As one of them stated, the very presence of these freaky-looking people was disruptive. The Yippies nominated a pig for president and asked that the pig receive Secret Service protection. A campaign song included the lyrics: "She's a grand old pig, she's a high-flying pig."[38] Jerry Rubin nominated Pigasus for president at the Chicago Civic Center Plaza on August 25; the media had been notified about the event.[39] Rubin, the pig, and six others were arrested. The humans were released, but the pig was not. Some Yippies practiced self-defense tactics in the park, possibly for the benefit of news media and police cameras. At the marshal training session, Brad Fox brought "Mrs. Pigasus" to Lincoln Park to plead for her husband's release.[40] Fox had been warned that releasing the pig in the park was a criminal offense; both he and the pig were arrested.

Obscenity, Verbal and Nonverbal

The tactic that probably prompted the violent suppression witnessed by millions on their television sets was the use of obscenity. Although token violence will be discussed later, the violent confrontation of police and agitators probably would have occurred even without any violent incidents. Much of the agitators' violence was in response to police attacks and was defensive rather than aggressive.

Verbal obscenity was common and clearly intended to be provocative. Nonverbal obscenity was often symbolic but also included offensive physical actions, such as throwing disgusting materials (e.g., feces, urine, and toilet paper) at the police. The following examples illustrate the agitators' provocative use of verbal and nonverbal obscenity:

> A policeman on duty in front of the hotel later said that it seemed to him that the obscene abuses shouted by "women hippies" outnumbered those called out by male demonstrators "four to one." A common epithet shouted by the females, he said, was "Fuck you, pig." Others included references to policemen as "cock suckers" and "mother fuckers."[41]

> Shouts from some of the demonstrators [included]: "Hell no, we won't go!" . . . "Fuck these Nazis!" . . . "Fuck you, L.B.J." . . . "Pigs, pigs, pigs!"[42] A policeman on Michigan later said that . . . a "female hippie" came up to him, pulled up her skirt and said, "You haven't had a piece in a long time." A policeman standing in front of the Hilton remembers seeing a blond female who was dressed in a short red minidress make lewd, sexual motions in front of a police line. . . .

> Earlier in the same general area a male youth had stripped bare and walked around carrying his clothes on a stick.[43]

> Abbie Hoffman was arrested at the Lincoln Hotel Coffee Shop, 1800 North Clark, and charged with resisting arrest and disorderly conduct. According to Hoffman's wife, Anita, she and her husband and a friend were eating breakfast when three policemen entered the coffee shop and told Hoffman they had received three complaints about an obscene word written on Hoffman's forehead. The word was "Fuck." Hoffman says he printed the word on his forehead to keep cameramen from taking his picture.[44]

Daniel Walker, head of the commission that studied the violence at the convention, remarked that the FBI believed "all of the wild hippie claims that they would parade naked girls on the beach to distract the conventioneers . . . that they would poison the water supply. All of those were taken as gospel . . . although it was just great drama to Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. They wanted to drive the police up the wall and they succeeded."[45]

Eyewitnesses reported that police also used obscenity freely both before and during violence.

> You'd better get your fucking ass off that grass or I'll put a beautiful goddamn crease in your fucking queer head.[46]

> Move! I said, move, god dammit! Move, you bastards![47]

> Get the hell out of here. . . . Get the fuck out of here. . . . Move your fucking ass![48]

Certainly those kinds of statements failed to calm the agitators. City officials' postconvention statements confirm that obscenity was instrumental in producing violent confrontation. Explanations of police behavior frequently pointed to the obscenity of the agitators, usually with a modest refusal to quote the language explicitly. In an interview on August 30, Mayor Daley asked CBS reporter Walter Cronkite, "What would you do, Walter?" His question implied that any normal American would react to obscenity with violence.

Token Violence

Some agitators had consciously adopted a strategy of "Gandhi and guerrilla." They would physically attack the establishment in hopes that the response would be more violent than necessary. This was the final step in the escalation strategy of the agitators in Chicago.

Carl Oglesby provided an intriguing example of how the threats of violence led to the police overreaction. On August 28, the day of the worst violence in what became known as the Battle of Michigan Avenue, he was asked to speak at the rally at Grant Park, for which MOBE had

finally been granted a permit. Police surrounded the crowd and officers had reportedly "roughed up" some demonstrators. As he spoke, someone in the crowd threw an object toward the police: "From the way it fluttered and lost speed in the air, I could tell it was something light, certainly not a rock. . . . It flew well over the cops' heads and dropped harmlessly to the ground." Oglesby thought it was probably the core of an apple. The police, however, immediately formed two lines and marched toward the person who had thrown the object, "clubbing people to their left and right, people who did not know what was happening and had nowhere to run because they were hemmed in by the cordon." Oglesby was shocked that police were striking innocent, unresisting people who had committed no crime—and "doing it in the light of day in full view of hundreds of witnesses."[49]

The permit was for a rally in Grant Park only. Police distributed pamphlets warning protestors that they would be arrested if they attempted to march to the Amphitheater. When it was announced that the peace plank had been defeated at the convention, one agitator lowered the flag to half mast and was arrested.[50] The rally ended with an announcement to march to the Amphitheater. "Over and over, Dellinger and the others yelled into bullhorns that the march was to be nonviolent and that anyone who could not abide by such a rule should leave the march."[51] The superintendent of police also urged officers to use restraint.

> But almost from the start, other policemen lost all control. In a matter of minutes, hundreds of people—some just bystanders, some peaceful protestors, some violent militants—were beaten, bloodied or Maced. . . . Dozens of enraged officers, screaming curses, used their clubs, fists, knees, and Mace to hurt people. Some demonstrators met the charging police head-on. Armed with caustic sprays of their own, sticks, rocks, concrete chunks, they ganged up on isolated police or picked out a target in a line. Policemen were punched, kicked, and struck. Each injured policeman further enraged already furious officers. People were beaten to the ground and then hit again and again. The TV cameras filmed the beatings. . . . The police ravaged protestors and bystanders alike while the TV cameras recorded the violence.[52]

Mayor Daley was outraged at the media coverage of this confrontation. He felt that the police and his city had been unjustly vilified. He accused the protestors of being nothing but "groups of terrorists . . . equipped with caustics, with helmets and with their own brigade of medics. . . . This administration and the people of Chicago have never condoned brutality at any time but they will never permit a lawless violent group of terrorists to menace the lives of millions of people, destroy the purposes of this national political convention and take over the streets of Chicago."[53]

Aftermath and Rhetorical Assessment

The events in Chicago forced members of the establishment and the agitators to publicly justify their actions. The city produced a documentary (*What Trees Do They Plant?*) and published a booklet (*The Politics of Confrontation*) that mentioned agitators' plans to bring hundreds of thousands of dissenters to Chicago.[54] Reported police violence was attributed to the limited "overreaction" of a few rogue police. In order to counter these documents, the American Civil Liberties Union also produced a film (*The Season's Change*) and distributed a magazine (*Law and Disorder: The Chicago Convention and Its Aftermath*). All of these productions and documents contained significant bias in the selection and treatment of evidence. Numerous other rhetorical documents were produced, including a satirical Yippie film. A commercially successful film, *Medium Cool*, used the confrontation as a backdrop. The events in Chicago also led to the carefully written but outspoken *Walker Report*.

The events in Chicago forced the nation and the media to contemplate whether the media had contributed to the violence. The debate "tore through the profession and public discourse for the next several years and helped create a new consciousness about the impact of the mass media on society."[55]

The agitation had other consequences. Eight of the agitators were arrested for conspiracy and crossing state lines to incite violence. The trial began in September 1969, and the defendants adopted the same rhetorical strategy in court that they had adopted in the streets. They intentionally behaved in a manner that would result in Judge Julius Hoffman's overreaction, and the trial became a media circus. Judge Hoffman declared a mistrial for Black Panther leader Bobby Seale, who had been bound and gagged in the courtroom after several outbursts. When the restraints were removed and he resumed shouting epithets, he was found in contempt of court and sentenced to four years in prison. The trial for the remaining seven defendants ended in February 1970. David Dellinger, Rennie Davis, Tom Hayden, Abbie Hoffman, and Jerry Rubin were convicted of crossing state lines to incite violence. They were fined $5,000 and sentenced to five years; the convictions were appealed and overturned in 1972.

The agitation resulted in a number of political changes. As Tom Brokaw wrote, "The Democratic Party would never be the same."[56] The party discontinued its unit rule, thus making delegates more responsive proportionally to the membership of the party. Some organizations, mostly academic ones, showed their frustration with the actions of the city of Chicago by canceling or moving conventions and conferences scheduled for Chicago. Among these organizations were the American Sociological Association, the American Political Science Association, the

American Psychological Association, the Modern Language Association of America, the American Historical Association, the American Association of University Professors, and the Speech Communication Association (now the National Communication Association). The Chicago demonstrations and subsequent confrontations made Hubert Humphrey a focus of controversy. During a period when issues of law and order were important to many Americans, the events in Chicago may have been a major factor in Richard Nixon's defeat of Humphrey in the 1968 presidential election. As Hoffman wrote, "What had happened in the streets had destroyed any chances the Democrats might have had in holding onto the presidency."[57]

In Chicago, four policemen were fired and forty others disciplined. Several policemen were indicted on civil rights charges resulting from disturbances at the convention.[58] The disturbances may also have had some effect on Chicago's political system. Mayor Daley's two handpicked candidates were defeated in a special City Council election, a rare event in Chicago.[59] The events surrounding the convention may not have been a direct cause of this political change, but they were probably contributing factors.

Rhetorically, the agitators demonstrated considerably more sophistication than the city. MOBE and the Yippies predicted Chicago's reaction with remarkable accuracy. Coalition took no part in the agitative planning. Perhaps because they protested only in support of their candidate, police violence against Coalition left the most lasting impression on the American public.

The city suffered, both actually and rhetorically, because of its intransigence. The control strategy of avoidance may have been wise from the city's point of view in the months preceding the convention and certainly discouraged some potential agitators from coming to Chicago. However, it also virtually assured that moderates who might have tempered the actions of the more extreme dissenters would not come. As Tom Hayden noted before his sentencing at the Chicago Seven trial: "We would hardly have been notorious characters if they left us alone on the streets of Chicago [but instead] we became the architects, the masterminds, and the geniuses of a conspiracy to overthrow the government—we were invented."[60]

It is surprising that Chicago did not learn a lesson from the 1964 Republican convention in San Francisco, where violence was also threatened yet law enforcement officers took a different stance: "We had decided to consider all this as similar to the conditions at a football game, where rooters are not necessarily arrested because they tear down the goal posts or are drunk. We treated it the same way—no arrests."[61]

The San Francisco police believed that they should act as an interface between contending groups, not as a separate contending group.

> In meeting with representatives of [agitative] groups, [Undersheriff] Pomeroy gave assurance that if arrests of demonstrators had to be made, there would be no rough handling on the part of the police. . . . The policy and the strategies developed apparently worked, for the Convention was not disrupted, constitutional rights had been protected by the police, and not a single arrest was made during the course of the Convention, not even of a drunken delegate.[62]

Representatives had met with the Chicago police to discuss San Francisco's tactics but Chicago decided to take a different stance. In Chicago, laws were strictly enforced for all potential agitators, and beatings, including beatings of reporters, far outnumbered arrests. If Chicago had adopted the more lenient strategy of adjustment to the agitators' means, dissenters would have been permitted to sleep in the parks, minor violations of the law would have been ignored, and substantial concessions would have been made by the city concerning parade routes and the use of Soldier Field. These concessions would have freed the police to make arrests when actual instances of unprovoked physical aggression occurred. Control agencies would not have been placed in a highly defensive and sensitive situation in which wholesale violence was virtually inevitable.

The agitators were successful in establishing their argument that the city of Chicago was a surrogate for the United States. The city had acted brutally and oppressively, thereby standing in symbolically as representative of the brutal and oppressive nature of the entire U.S. government. The events of Chicago radicalized many activists, including many who had come to the convention convinced that they could work within the system. The events caused many frustrated activists to become convinced that there was a need for violence to challenge the establishment. A prime example was the movement of many members of SDS to found the Weathermen (later called The Weather Underground), a group committed to violent confrontation with the establishment. Carl Oglesby, a former president of the SDS, gave a fitting benediction to the events when he argued that the week-long battle in Chicago "ended with both sides in tatters."[63]

The events in Chicago did lead to significant changes in the Democratic Party. After the 1968 convention, the Democratic Party changed its rules, allowing more representation by all groups in the party: "Those changes abolished the use of 'winner take all' delegate selection procedures, and required state party delegations to include women, young people, and minorities 'in reasonable relationship' to their presence in the population."[64] By 1972, the party had undergone significant reform but dissenters in Chicago could not have foreseen such change.[65]

Notes

[1] Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988): 254.
[2] David Farber, *Chicago '68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988): xiii.

[3] Daniel Walker, *The Walker Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence: Rights in Conflict* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968): 14.
[4] Hayden, 282.
[5] Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004): 284.
[6] Although they did not represent a large number of the dissenters, the SDS sent many of its top recruiters to the convention in hopes of convincing the activists to support their views and actions.
[7] Accessed 2/21/2009 from http://www.cgi.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/conventions/chicago/facts/chicago68/index.shtml
[8] Tom Brokaw, *Boom! Voices of the Sixties* (New York: Random House, 2007): 98–99.
[9] Farber, xiv.
[10] Quoted in Farber, 146.
[11] Farber, xiv–xv.
[12] Farber, 170.
[13] Quoted in Kurlansky, 276.
[14] Brokaw, 98. Dellinger had a long history as a dissenter. For a discussion of his history, see Andrew Hunt, *David Dellinger: The Life and Times of a Nonviolent Revolutionary* (New York: NYU Press, 2006) and David Dellinger, *From Yale to Jail: The Life Story of a Moral Dissenter* (New York: Pantheon, 1993).
[15] Farber, xv.
[16] Farber, 11.
[17] Quoted in Farber, 98.
[18] Farber, 246.
[19] Farber, 42.
[20] Abbie Hoffman, *Soon to be a Major Motion Picture* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980): 150.
[21] Carl Oglesby, *Ravens in the Storm: A Personal History of the 1960s Antiwar Movement* (New York: Scribner, 2008): 189.
[22] Farber, 55.
[23] Quoted in Farber, 113.
[24] Convention Week Timeline—August 23–30. Accessed 2/21/2009 from http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma05/luckey/chicago/timeline.htm#week
[25] Ibid.
[26] Hoffman, 148.
[27] For an excellent summary of the events surrounding the march, see Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night* (New York: The New American Library, 1968).
[28] *Liberation*, November 1967, quoted in Walker, 88.
[29] *Chicago Daily News*, quoted in Walker, 88.
[30] Abbie Hoffman, "Why We're Going to Chicago," in *Telling It Like It Was: The Chicago Riots*, Walter Schneir, ed. (New York: The New American Library, 1969): 13.
[31] City of Chicago, *The Strategy of Confrontation: Chicago and the Democratic National Convention—1968* (Chicago: City of Chicago, 1968): 47.
[32] Informant's report of an anonymous speaker at a MOBE meeting, January 26, 1968, quoted in Walker, 30.
[33] Rennie Davis, quoted in Walker, 37.
[34] Tom Hayden on *Ramparts* Wall Poster, August 25, 1968, quoted in Walker, 36–37.
[35] Yippie Flyer, quoted in Walker, 44.
[36] Jerry Rubin, *Village Voice*, November 16, 1967, quoted in Walker, 88.
[37] City of Chicago, 4–7.
[38] Quoted in Walker, A-6.
[39] Farber, 167.
[40] Farber, 171.
[41] Quoted in Walker, 235.
[42] Quoted in Walker, 243.
[43] Quoted in Walker, 248.

[44] Quoted in Walker, 279.
[45] Quoted in Brokaw, 101.
[46] Quoted in Walker, 237.
[47] Quoted in Walker, 253.
[48] Quoted in Walker, 253.
[49] Oglesby, 196.
[50] Convention Week Timeline.
[51] Farber, 197.
[52] Farber, 200.
[53] Farber, 202–203
[54] Quoted in Walker, A-6.
[55] Farber, 205.
[56] Brokaw, 102.
[57] Hoffman, *Soon to Be,* 160.
[58] Associated Press, September 23, 1969.
[59] Donald Janson, "Daley Man Defeated in Chicago: Another Is Forced Into a Runoff," *New York Times,* March 12, 1969, 28.
[60] Douglas Linder, The Chicago Seven. Accessed 2/21/2009 from http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/trials2.htm
[61] Joseph Kimble, quoted in Gordon E. Misner, "The Response of Police Agencies," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 382 (1968): 118.
[62] Misner, 118.
[63] Oglesby, 187.
[64] John Harwood, "A Fault Line That Haunts the Democrats," *New York Times,* Week in Review, May 4, 2006, 2.
[65] Hayden, 1968.