

Philadelphia Girds For Panther Rally

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PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 4—The police here are wearing black silk ribbons over their shields, a mark of mourning for the sergeant gunned down at his desk last Saturday night.

On the North Philadelphia street corner near a Black Panther headquarters, young Negroes say: "That's one less pig. We're not afraid to die."

Frank L. Rizzo, the burly police commissioner, holds non-stop press conferences to denounce the Panthers as "yellow dogs . . . creeps . . . psychopaths." And to challenge them to a Western-style showdown.

Paul Dandridge, Municipal Court judge, former assistant district attorney, black and thoughtful, coolly predicts many more acts of "revolutionary" violence from those who feel trapped in an oppressive system and says: "I can't blame them."

"We are a community of victims here," observes Alvin Echols, a Negro designer of community organizations who ran an experimental orientation course



FRANK L. RIZZO
... hero of the whites

for police that he terms a total failure. "There are the dirty workers—the police—and those against whom the dirty work is done—the blacks."

This is the city of Brotherly Love on the eve of a convention called by the Panthers to write a new constitution for "fascist, genocidal" America.

See PHILLY, A4, Col. 1

PHILLY, From A1

Philadelphia is a tryout town for new plays and a lot of the language loosely used here is dialogue aimed at audiences. Commissioner Rizzo obviously enjoys performing before the press and coaches TV cameramen when to roll their machines: "This is going to be interesting." Even the Panthers here have been saying, "Ignore our rhetoric (like "kill the pigs") and judge us by our deeds" (meaning the breakfasts served to ghetto children).

But theater can be incitement as well as sedition. Six police were wounded and one killed here in three days last weekend and two more were shot in nearby Norristown last night. Panthers who fired on police making a pre-dawn raid on Monday were stripped in the street to the delight of Rizzo ("Imagine the big bad Black Panthers with their pants down," he said at one point), and the humiliated outrage of the city's Negroes.

The most sensitive opinion here holds that it was pure chance that Philadelphia and not some other aggravated city was the scene of three successive days of gunfire between police and blacks. The dreary, defeated black belts here appear to be no worse than their inner city counterparts in Cleveland, New York, Chicago or other towns.

In some respects, Philadelphia's blacks appear to be better off. A substantial number own their own row homes; 21 per cent of the police force is black, a share

that perhaps only Washington exceeds, and the municipal government is said to be a model of equal opportunity.

But blacks here also suffer from the disabilities common to ghettos everywhere: a massive share of poverty; high unemployment, especially among youths; a deteriorating housing stock; crowded schools.

Above all is the pervasive hostility toward and distrust of the police in the very communities where their protection is most needed. The complaints are familiar and denied by white police although endorsed by the black: the uniformed men in the ghettos won't respond to calls for help; they guard liquor stores and not people; they conduct needlessly harassing searches and push around those arrested to a degree from which whites are thought to be exempt.

Echols, the community organizations builder, says that blacks know "the numbers operator, the whore, the drug pusher all pay off the cops. So blacks blame police for the environment in which they live."

The police are not monolithic and talks with those in a South Philadelphia district, the Third, turn up several who believe blacks have genuine grievances and many who point to their black partners as proof that they harbor no racial animosities.

But none of them can understand how any grievance could justify taking their lives. So they tend to agree with Commissioner Rizzo that a conspiracy, probably

"communistic," is behind it all.

A striking feature of the scene here is the widespread belief among those sympathetically in touch with the radical fringes that Philadelphia and the country is in for a wave of anarchistic outrages—assassinations of police to be followed by the killing of black moderate leaders; the destruction of utilities, of public buildings.

David M. Gracie, a white minister who serves as the liaison with radicals for the Episcopal bishop of Pennsylvania, says: "In every city, there are young whites and young blacks ready to blow up police stations, university buildings, banks. Assassination is the next step. These are splinters off the mainstream of revolutionary groups, people who can't stand the discipline of self-defense invoked by the Panthers."

The black judges, Dandridge, describes these terrorists as the "thoroughly alienated, those who say 'I don't give a damn if you're hurt; that's revolution.' Of course, it doesn't promote 'revolution' and these kids know they'll be caught. They have a death wish, a martyr wish."

That is why even the police critics accept the official version of last Saturday's happening, that a band of half a dozen deliberately set out to kill lonely police in Fairmount Park and succeeded in murdering one and badly wounding another.

Dennis Kirkland, a black reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer, went to school with three of those arrested in the Saturday shooting. He recalled that he had run into his former friends at a meeting he was covering last year and "all they wanted to do was kill white people."

"They talked of 300 years of tyranny, told me to come out in the streets and join the revolution. They called me an Uncle Tom because I was working for a white newspaper."

The Sunday night wounding of two more policemen who stopped a stolen car is not for many connected to these events. It is, however, another random indicator of the prevalence of guns and the readiness to use them.

The dawn raids on three Panther headquarters Monday were in the now-classic pattern, with the police saying they first knocked and announced themselves and their critics charging that the police began battering down doors without warning. Commissioner Rizzo has explained the

raids on the grounds that the suspects in the Saturday night killing have acknowledged that they attended Panther "educational" meetings. As usual, rifles and pistols were picked up in the barricaded Panther offices.

Rizzo's critics, black and white, contend he, like everyone else, knew that Panthers perennially keep guns and he could have seized them any time in the past. Therefore, they reason, his Monday assault was in retaliation for the shootings, a show of strength he felt he must make in an effort to create a climate that might lead to the cancellation of this weekend's "Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention."

At any rate, Rizzo's words and deeds have made him a hero to most whites here. Hundreds now greet his frequent street appearances and some cry, "Rizzo for mayor in 1971."

Rizzo is coy about his own plans but does say he enjoys making other political aspirants "squirm."

He has, however, alienated some pillars of the business establishment here, most of whom had praised Rizzo in the past. One of the groups, the Greater Philadelphia Movement, asked to meet with the commissioner to discuss his inflammatory language. He scornfully and publicly told them he was "too busy" and asked where they were when Panthers were poisoning the air and his men were being shot.

A partly overlapping group of community leaders, the Urban Coalition, has now declared that "heated rhetoric by either side" is dangerous, thereby lumping together the commissioner and the Panthers.

All this provides a tense background to the three-day convention due to start here Saturday. No one really knows whether the host Panthers can restrain all the "revolutionaries" coming in, particularly since 13 of 14 local leaders arrested on Monday are being held in \$100,000 bail each. (Just today, bail was cut to \$2,500 for the No. 1 Panther here, Richard R. (Reggie) Shell.) The police are tired; they have been working 12-hour shifts all week.

The best hope for a bloodless weekend lies in two factors: the Panthers appear to be deeply determined to bring the event off and write a manifesto for themselves and other dissidents. The police, tired and angry though they may be, appear determined to demonstrate their "professionalism," particularly under the public gaze.



Associated Press

Black Panther leader Huey Newton is surrounded by newsmen on his arrival at Philadelphia's International Airport.