

DREW PEARSON

# Demos Televised with Vengeance

WASHINGTON — This is a column which will make a lot of TV executives sore. It may also make some viewers skeptical about the TV coverage of the recent Chicago convention.

We attended both political conventions and witnessed violence in both Miami and Chicago. Outside agitators came to both cities to foment trouble that they hoped would attract the spotlight and tarnish the U.S. image.

Anyone who watched the two conventions on television might think that Chicago was exploding with violence while Miami was comparatively peaceful.

Yet in Miami, six persons were killed, and the riot area was put under curfew. In Chicago,



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sniper fire was reported, but only one policeman was wounded. A bullet also thudded into a bus. The outbreaks never became serious enough to require a curfew.

After the Miami convention we reported that the TV networks, angry over the \$3 million it was costing them to pull up their cables and transfer everything to Chicago, intended to retaliate by focusing attention on Democratic "disturbances."

The networks got their revenge. In Chicago they played up the violence which they had virtually ignored in Miami. They complained about tight security restrictions, which, incidentally, had also been imposed by the Republican convention. They sought out the dissidents and featured them while the Democratic orators were expounding.

**THIS RAISES TWO** important questions about the role of TV at the Democratic convention.

1. Did the TV cameras help incite the violence? There is little doubt that the provocations were planned largely for the benefit of television. We stayed at the Conrad Hil-

ton Hotel, which was the center of most of the trouble. During the disturbances we mingled with the hippies and Yippies. We found almost no action outside the circle of the TV kleig lights. Aside from some shouting and surging, little was happening in the darkness.

2. Did the TV networks make news? There is evidence that the TV networks, perhaps in their eagerness to generate high ratings for TV sponsors, encouraged dissidents to fake inflammatory statements and helped to stir up controversies. When the networks sell convention time to cigarette and oil sponsors for several million dollars, they have to keep up the viewing interest. One way of doing this is to pick fights, stimulate excitement, interrupt dull speeches and roll calls. Once, the sound was switched on before the cameras focused on a TV newsman about to interview a prominent Democrat. The interviewer was overheard coaching his subject: "Let's keep this Kennedy story going."

The TV networks also presented an outrageously biased picture of the events in Chicago. They gave the impression, for instance, that the police were beating up innocent young people who had come to Chicago for peaceful demonstrations.

**CERTAINLY, THE** police were too zealous in swinging their billy clubs, and a lot of innocent people were hurt.

But the TV networks scarcely mentioned the provocations that finally made the police lose their tempers. The hippies shouted obscenities, hurled rocks and bottles, sprayed police with caustic chemicals, damaged police cars and generally defied police orders.

One group tore down the American flag and tried to raise a Communist flag in its place. Other agitators waved red flags and North Vietnamese flags. A couple of demonstrators slammed a huge chunk of cement through the window of a police car. Others stoned police cars, tossed cherry bombs and stink bombs, smashed windows,

broke into liquor stores.

Jerry Rubin, the Yippie leader, cried through a bullhorn for violence against the police, whom he called "pigs." Black Panther leaders, taking the stump in Lincoln Park, urged the demonstrators to break up into small groups and go on a rampage through Chicago's Loop. Other agitators made speeches that sounded like Radio Hanoi and Radio Peking.

The same night that police began cracking heads, 70 policemen were also injured. Several officers had to be hospitalized. By the end of the convention week, 118 officers had been hurt.

This was a side of the story that the TV networks largely ignored. They had hundreds of newsmen and cameramen in Chicago who should have been able to get the facts. The two of us, operating alone easily dug out the full story.

**INDEED, WE** reported in advance what was in store for the Democrats in Chicago. We had studied government intelligence reports which warned that the militants planned a deliberate provocation of the police on the two most important nights of the convention.

We reported that the leaders ranged from Communists and anarchists to sincere pacifists. They were directed loosely by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. The co-

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chairmen are Dr. Sidney Morris Peck, a former Communist, and David Dellinger, a pacifist who has been to Hanoi and is an apologist for Ho Chi Minh.

We reported on August 25: "The committee has trained a group of militant demonstrators to attempt a 'crash-in' to break into the convention amphitheater. They will be directed by marshals carrying walkie-talkies. Calls have gone out for medics to give first aid to the demonstrators and electronic experts to operate the radio equipment."

This was published three days before the first violence. It all happened exactly on schedule. And the TV networks showed it all exactly as they had threatened.

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