

# VIOLENCE REPORT DECLARES NATION IS 'BLOODY-MINDED'

Panel Finds a Tradition of  
Using Force Obscured by  
'a Historical Amnesia'

## CAUSE NOT PINPOINTED

Presidential Group Sees  
Trouble Persisting in U.S.  
but Dropping Elsewhere

Conclusions of the report will  
be found on Page 23.

By JOHN HERBERS

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 5

—A study group of scholars appointed by a Presidential commission told Americans in 350,000 words today that they had become a "rather bloody-minded people in both action and reaction."

The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence issued, without comment, the work of a study group appointed last August to evaluate the history and foreign parallels of contemporary violence in this country.

The 22-chapter report, issued on the anniversary of the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, was ordered by the commission last August in an effort to help bring about a better understanding of the use of violence in domestic affairs.

The 13-member commission was appointed by former President Johnson after Senator Kennedy had been shot in Los Angeles while campaigning for the Presidency.

### A Sweetening of Memories

Participating in the study were historians, political sci-

tists, anthropologists, lawyers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and sociologists, many of whom wrote chapters of the report.

The study was directed by Dr. Hugh Davis Graham, associate professor of history at Johns Hopkins University, and Dr. Ted Robert Gurr, assistant professor of politics at Princeton University. They wrote a conclusion.

The report, the first broad study of its kind, documents in great detail a violent tradition in America, with various interest groups using violence to gain their ends. But the co-directors said in a conclusion to the study that this had been obscured by "a kind of historical amnesia."

"Probably all nations share this tendency to sweeten memories of their past through collective repression," they said

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"but Americans have probably magnified this process of selective recollection, owing to our historic vision of ourselves as a latterday chosen people, a new Jerusalem."

This might explain why many Americans have been shocked at the violence of the 1960's, acknowledged by the authors of the study to be one of the nation's most violent eras.

Most other Western nations share the tradition for violence, the study showed, but what remains to be explained is why violence persists in the United States while it has diminished in other countries.

### 'Unresolved Grievances'

"The first and obvious answer is that some fundamental grievances in the United States have not only gone unresolved but have intensified in recent years," the authors said.

A less obvious answer, they said, is that "the myth of the melting pot" has obscured the fact that the United States is made up of a myriad of ethnic, national, religious, regional, and occupational groups involved in competition and conflict.

Throughout history, virtually all groups involved have used violence both for protection and to promote their causes, the study showed.

"Almost every major act of violence in our history, wheth-

er public or private, has antagonized one group at the same time that it satisfied another," the authors said, adding:

"The grievances and satisfactions of violence have so reinforced one another that we have become a rather bloody-minded people in both action and reaction. We are likely to remain so as long as so many of us think violence is an ultimate solution to social problems."

Charles Tilly, professor of sociology at the University of Toronto, contributed a long chapter on the European tradition and concluded that "historically, collective violence has flowed regularly out of the central political processes of Western countries.

"Men seeking to seize, hold, or realign the levers of power have continually engaged in collective violence as part of their struggles," he continued. "The oppressed have struck in the name of justice, the privileged in the name of order, those in between in the name of fear."

The odd thing, Mr. Tilly said, is how quickly people forget.

"When Lincoln Steffens visited London in 1910, he found distinguished members of Parliament convinced that England was on the brink of revolution as a result of the angry strikes of the time.

Only comfortable hindsight permits us to congratulate ourselves on our peaceful resolution of conflict," Mr. Tilly said.

Richard M. Brown, professor of history at the College of William and Mary, wrote that although there was general alarm at the urban violence of today "the fact is that our cities have been in a state of more or less continuous turmoil since the Colonial period."

There were multiple murders dating back to the 18th Century, one example being the Harpe Brothers of Kentucky and Tennessee who accounted for 20 to 30 victims, Professor Brown said.

During the American Revolution, Mr. Brown said, both sides adopted the operational philosophy that the end justifies the means.

"Thus given sanctification by the Revolution, Americans have never been loathe to employ the most unremitting violence in the interest of any cause deemed to be a good one," he wrote.



# Text of Conclusions in Report to

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 5—

Following is the text of the general conclusions of a report entitled "Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives" made to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence and issued by the commission today:

## I. Historical Perspectives

Has the magnitude and form of American violence in recent years been unprecedented in our history? Historical evidence suggests two responses.

First, even excluding the American Revolution and the Civil War, there have been periods in the American past when relative civil commotion—as measured by deaths, injuries, and property damage—has exceeded that of the 1960's.

A statistical study of American newspapers over the past 150 years largely confirms the historical impression that America experienced several periods of greater relative turbulence during the 19th century.

The most violent urban riot in American history remains the New York draft riot of 1863. The largest vigilante movement was the San Francisco Vigilance Committee of the 1850's.

Proportionately more deaths occurred as a result of racial lynching and labor violence around the turn of the century than in the contemporary period.

Americans have always been a violent people, although this violence has assumed different forms, and analysis of these varying patterns tells us much about basic social transformations that civil turmoil reflects in a bellwether fashion.

But Americans have been given to a kind of historical amnesia that masks much of their turbulent past. Probably all nations share this tendency to sweeten memories of their past through collective repression, but

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# Commission on Violence

## in America

Americans have probably magnified this process of selective recollection, owing to our historic vision of ourselves as a latter-day chosen people, a new Jerusalem.

Second, it is nonetheless clear that the 1960's rank as one of our most violent eras, and several of the forms that recent violence has taken are essentially unprecedented in our history.

Whereas labor, frontier and agrarian violence have waned, urban racial violence has witnessed a fundamental transformation in the twentieth century, from what were essentially white pogroms to the recent pattern of black aggression—albeit an aggression vented far

more on symbolic white property than on white lives.

Contemporary antiwar protest is unprecedented both in scope and magnitude, as is university unrest and the chilling recent contagion of political murders of national leaders.

Although our historical evidence on violent crime is generally inadequate, it suggests that rates of violent crime may have generally declined as the industrial metropolis matured, only to have spiraled alarmingly in recent years — much of it reflecting the pathology of the black ghettos.

The persistence of higher rates of murder and assault in the American South suggests that such violence requires a historical as well as a sociological explanation, and the insights derived from regional comparisons suggest similar comparisons internationally.

## II. Comparative Perspectives

In contemporary compari-

son with other nations, acts of collective violence by private citizens in the United States in the last 20 years have been extraordinarily numerous, and this is true also for peaceful demonstrations.

In numbers of political assassinations, riots, politically relevant armed group attacks, and demonstrations the United States since 1948 has been among the half-dozen most tumultuous nations in the world.

When such events are evaluated in terms of their relative severity, however—rating peaceful demonstrations as having the least serious impact, civil wars the most serious impact on political systems — the United States stands below the midpoint, 46th among the 84 nations compared.

A detailed comparison of civil strife in 114 nations and colonies from mid-1963 to mid-1968, reveals the following patterns:

¶Eleven of every thousand Americans took part in civil strife—almost all of it turmoil rather than conspiracy or internal war—compared with an average of seven per thousand in 17 other Western democracies.

¶Six of these 17 had higher rates of participation than the United States, including Belgium, France and Italy.

¶American casualties average 48 per million population, compared with an av-



erage of 12 per million in other Western nations.

¶ Strife was also of a longer duration in the United States than in all but a handful of countries in the world.

In total magnitude of strife, the United States ranks first among the 17 Western democracies, and 24th among the 114 larger nations and colonies of the world.

Despite its frequency, civil strife in the United States has taken much less disruptive forms than in many non-Western and some Western countries. The nation has experienced no internal wars since the Civil War and almost none of the chronic revolutionary conspiracy and terrorism that plague dozens of other nations.

¶ Of 170 reported antiwar demonstrations, which involved a total of 700,000 people, the participants initiated violence in only 20.

¶ The most extensive violence occurred in 239 hostile outbreaks by Negroes, which resulted in more than 8,000 casualties and 191 deaths.

¶ The most consequential conspiratorial violence has been white terrorism against blacks and civil rights workers, which caused some 20 deaths between 1963 and 1968, and black terrorism against whites, mostly police, which began in 1968.

Although 220 Americans died in violent civil strife in the five years before mid-1968, the rate of 1.1 per million population was infinitesimal compared with the average of all nations of 238 deaths per million, and less than the European average of 2.4 per million.

Paradoxically, we have been both a tumultuous people and a relatively stable republic. These data reflect the comparative evidence that, from a worldwide perspective, Americans have seldom organized for violence.

Most demonstrators and rioters are protesting, not rebelling. Though greater in magnitude, civil strife in the United States is about the same in kind as strife in other Western nations.

The antigovernment demonstration and riot, violent clashes of political or ethnic groups, and student protests are pervasive forms of conflict in modern democracies. People in non-West-

ern countries also resort to these limited forms of public protest, but they are much more likely to organize serious conspiratorial and revolutionary movements as well.

Strife in the United States and other European countries is quite likely to mobilize members of both the working class and the middle classes but rarely such members of the political establishment as civil servants, military officers, and disaffected political leaders, who so often organize conspiracies and internal wars in non-European nations.

Strife also is likely to occur within or on the periphery of the normal political process in Western nations, rather than being organized by clandestine revolutionary movements or cells of plot-

ters. If some overt strife is an inevitable accompaniment of organized social existence, as all our comparative evidence suggests it is, it seems socially preferable that it take the form of open political protest, even violent protest, rather than concerted, intensively violent attempts to seize political power.

### III. Private Violence and Public Response

Force and violence are likely to be successful techniques of social control and persuasion when they have widespread popular support. If they do not, their advocacy and use are ultimately self-destructive, whether they are used as techniques of social control or of opposition.

Governmental uses of force are likely to be successful in quelling specific outbreaks of collective violence, except when the balance of force favors its opponents. But historical and comparative evidence also suggests that governmental violence often succeeds only in the short run.

Even if popularly supported, public force is likely only to contain specific outbreaks of violence, not to prevent its recurrence. If groups have severe and persisting discontents, they are likely to resort repeatedly to collective violence whether or not they are successful.

Labor violence persisted in the United States despite repeated military intervention so long as labor grievances were unremedied.

The long-range effectiveness of governmental force in maintaining civil peace depends upon three conditions: 1. Public belief that governmental use of force is legitimate.



2. Consistent use of that force, and

3. Remedial action for the discontents that give rise to collective violence.

Illegitimate and inconsistent use of public force can so alienate a people that terrorist and revolutionary movements arise to challenge and overthrow the regime. This occurred in Cuba, 1956-1958.

Collective violence seldom succeeds as an instrument for accomplishing group objectives. It can succeed when one group so overpowers its opponents that they have no choice but to die or desist. But modern governments are much more likely to succeed in such contests than their opponents.

In the contemporary United States, attempts at revolution from the left are likely to invite massive repression from the right. The occurrence of violence in the context of protest activities is highly likely to alienate groups that are not fundamentally in sympathy with the protestors.

The chronicles of American labor conflict suggest that violence, when it occurred, was almost always ineffective for the workers involved. The more violent the conflict, the more disastrous the consequences for the workers.

Peaceful protest is likely to have positive effects if demonstrative protest is regarded as a legitimate way of expressing grievances, and if the grievances themselves are regarded as justified.

If public opinion is negative, demonstrative protest is likely to exacerbate popular hostility whatever its legality.

Labor strikes met this re-

sponse during much of American history. Violent antiwar protest has similarly been unpopular during most of America's wars and at present, even though the Vietnam war itself commands less popular support than any previous American international war.

Governments can respond to protest and outbreaks of collective violence in two general ways:

1. Systems of forceful social control can be strengthened; or
2. Efforts can be made to alleviate the conditions leading to discontent.

Civil peace is most likely to be established through a judicious combination of social control and concessions by government, and institutional development among the aggrieved classes of society. Such a combination led to the resolution of widespread and violent working-class protest in 19th-century England.

Violent labor strife in the United States declined after the establishment of mediation procedures and recognition of labor organizations.

Some discontents are more easily remedied than others. Worker discontent in the United States could be met by single employers or industries. But if discontent gives rise to demands that impinge on privileges of wide sections of the community, those demands are apt to be met with greater opposition.

If discontented groups regard their social environment as completely overpowering and threatening, they are likely to withdraw defensively and to establish barriers that preserve their cultural identity by minimiz-

ing their relations with the larger society.

Such defensive withdrawals have been attempted in the United States, for instance, by the Mormons, the Amish, and the Black Muslims. But in Western historical experience, collective violence has usually declined when discontented groups developed effective means for satisfying their members' discontents and for participating in the economic and political affairs of the larger society.

As probably the most ethnically and culturally pluralistic nation in the world, the United States has functioned less as a nation of individuals than of groups.

The myth of the melting pot has obscured the great degree to which Americans have historically identified with their national citizenship through their myriad subnational affiliations. This has meant inevitable group competition, friction and conflict.

Nevertheless, our historical and comparative analysis confirms the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin, who sagely observed upon signing the Declaration of Independence, that "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."